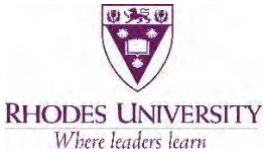

The 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy in Ga-Matlala Schools in the Limpopo Province

A half thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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By

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Declaration

I, Lesego Angelinah Monyai, Student number g19M4490, hereby declare that this Masters dissertation for the degree in Political and International Studies at Rhodes University, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or any other University, and it is my own work and execution. All reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT: MONYAI LA DATE: 18 August 2025

Abstract

This study examines the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy. It first does this by asking whether the policy advances broad social justice objectives of equity and redress at the centre of educational transformation in South Africa. Secondly, the study examines the implementation of the policy, specifically its impact on historically marginalised rural schools in the Ga-Matlala area of the Limpopo province. In this second examination, this study argues that the Limpopo Department of Education's (LDoE) inconsistent compliance with policy regulations and delays in implementation undermines broad social justice objectives of educational transformation.

The study employs a qualitative research method. Drawing on interviews with school teachers, principals and School Governing Body members, on-site observations and a review of the policy and the LDoE reports, the findings reveal persistent infrastructure deficits, including inadequate classrooms, unsafe sanitation and a lack of essential resources, which undermine the constitutional right to quality education. Despite the policy's stated goals and legal mandates, various factors, such as a lack of accountability by the LDoE hinder its implementation.

This research underscores the disparity between policy intentions and practical outcomes, highlighting the urgent need for accountability, effective planning and equitable resource allocation to ensure meaningful educational transformation. The study concludes with reflections on the South African education system moving forward, calling for immediate action from policymakers, and Provincial Education Departments to fulfil the policy's transformative potential by ensuring equitable access to quality education for all South African children, regardless of location or background.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANA- Annual National Assessments

ANC- African National Congress

BELA- Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill

CEM- Council of Education Ministers

CSIR- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

DBE- The Department of Basic Education

EE- Equal Education

HEDCOM- Heads of Education Departments Committee

ICT- Information Communication Technology

LDoE- Limpopo Department of Education

LRC- Legal Resources Centre

MST- Maths Science and Technology classes

NEIMS- National Education Infrastructure Management System

NEPA- National Education Policy Act

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

NP- National Party

PEDs- Provincial Education Departments

SALS- Southern Africa Legal Services Foundation

SASA- South African Schools Act

SGB- School Governing Bodies

TIMSS- The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Key terms

Regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy ('the policy') - Legally binding regulations enacted by the former Minister of Basic Education outlining the infrastructural conditions of what constitutes a school.

Black rural schools - schools situated in the rural areas or farm schools.

Post-Apartheid - After 1994.

Infrastructural Conditions - School buildings, equipment that includes teaching aids, computers, typewriters, computer science and laboratory equipment, water, sanitation facilities, sporting facilities, administration and staff areas, not excluding other education areas that enable a school environment.

Social Justice - The distribution and provision of access to resources and services in a fair and equitable manner to promote fairness and the advancement of all. In the South African legal and educational context, this may require the state to implement measures that advantage historically disadvantaged groups.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Context

The 2014 incident of a five-year-old boy, Michael Komape, who drowned in a pit toilet at Mahlodumela Primary School in Chebeng Village, Limpopo (Ryan, 2021) reflects many of the repercussions of eroding and unfavourable learning conditions that children in rural schools are confronted with. Even more so, this incident highlighted the LDoE's persistently high tolerance for the use of unsafe pit toilets in about 1,500 schools across the province. This is despite the promises of former Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga in the regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Preamble to make education a key priority and enhance the level of basic school infrastructure in all public schools, especially those schools that were historically marginalised (Department of Basic Education, 2024:4). Conditions in many schools across the Limpopo province remain unsafe, with unfavourable learning conditions.

It is imperative for historical justice that we do not overlook the unsafe and unfavourable conditions in these schools, as educational transformation should happen holistically and at the same time as social and economic transformation (Ramose, 2003:140), particularly when we take into consideration historical events that led to the need for educational transformation. The African National Congress, the governing party of South Africa since the end of apartheid, was confronted with an immense duty of transforming and reconstructing the South African education and training system after 1994 and to restore the dignity and ensure the safety of Black learners within their school environments. The education system in South Africa was in dire need of change, to transform and restructure it to end racial inequality, segregation and discrimination which characterised the apartheid system. The African National Congress (ANC's) interventions represented their commitment to the building of a democratic order as a "newly elected government" (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:61). The party's promise of transforming the education system provided hope to the majority of Black South Africans that they would have access to quality education which would enable them to acquire skills and access to opportunities the apartheid system deprived them of (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:61).

For example, during apartheid, the Limpopo province was located in the Transvaal region (Equal Education, 2017:13). The region had three homelands, namely, Gazankulu, Lebowa and Venda. In these homelands, schools and educational institutions were scarce for Black learners (Equal Education, 2017:13). Apartheid educational policies such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act No 47 were aimed at reinforcing racial discrimination and domination (Equal Education, 2017:13). Black learners were confined to an education that deliberately prepared them for unskilled and semi-skilled labour through underfunding and a differentiating school curriculum (Equal Education, 2017:13). Although funding cuts were applied to all Black schools, rural schools were severely underfunded. As a result of these racially discriminatory policies and practices of the apartheid system, the post-1994 Limpopo province inherited great infrastructure backlogs. This legacy is evident in the poor infrastructure and lack of access to basic resources in Ramalapa and Ga-Mahoai schools that are situated in the Ga-Matlala *a Thaba* village in the Limpopo province, a village situated about thirty kilometres west of Polokwane in the Capricorn District (Mokgokong, 1966: 15). Despite having an impressive number of about 156 Secondary Schools and 253 Primary Schools in the area (Profile and Analysis District Development Model, 2022:21), there has been little or no educational transformation in schools in the Ga-Matlala *a Thaba* area.

The South African Constitution, legislative frameworks and universal bodies interpret educational policies in light of the transformation agenda. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' slogan of "Education for all" found in its preamble sets out educational standards to be followed universally. In the preamble, "everyone has the right to access basic educational opportunities that enable them to develop their full capacities while they make significant contributions to societies they live in" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2022:2). Article 3 of UDHR further outlines that for the right to education to be fully realised, there should be an expansion of basic education services while measures are taken to eradicate shortfalls and inequalities in the education system (UNESCO, 2022:4). In light of these standards, the UNESCO propels educational transformation in South Africa to be characterised by values of social justice and equity (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014:1). In fact, the operational building blocks for attaining social justice in the South African education system rest on equity and redress (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014:1). These operational building blocks are reflected in the policies and legislations established by the government to transform and restructure South Africa's

education system, such as the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training. It reaffirms the government's commitment to access quality education and educational opportunities (Department of Education, 1995). The 1996 South African Schools Act asserts the right to education and the redressing of past inequalities (Badat and Sayed, 2014:131). In fact, Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines the ANC's aspirations for educational transformation. The section outlines that everyone has the right to basic education and to further their education (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Although these policies and legislative frameworks showcase a great commitment to educational transformation on paper and represent the government's aspirations to transform and restructure the South African education system, a large number of schools (particularly in Black rural areas) are still confronted with poor and unsafe teaching and learning conditions. The case of Michael Komape bears witness to the effects of these conditions, especially in historically marginalised schools in the Limpopo province and provides the rationale on which this paper is based.

1.2 The post-1994 South African Education System and its Commitment to Achieving Social Justice

In order to promote and sustain the values of apartheid and to keep Black people in check, the apartheid National Party (NP) relied heavily on the state of the education system. This system ensured that all aspects of education governance, funding, professional training, and curriculum were defined and operated along racial lines in an unequal manner (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:3). This meant that the post-apartheid government was confronted with the crucial and challenging task of restructuring the South African education system to move towards a more racially equitable system. In their 1994 election speech, the ANC acknowledged this challenge and promised a framework that would move the country towards the transformation and reconstruction of the education system (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:61).

Educational transformation and reconstruction were to be predicated on social justice (Badat and Sayed, 2014:128), one of the bedrocks of our present constitution. Despite the ANC's efforts to implement policies and legislation to transform the South African education system and achieve a just society, Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene (2020:1) argue that the current education system remains exclusionary, which amounts to a contravention of children's rights to better education. Numerous schools in rural areas have poor infrastructure and lack the

resources needed for quality learning (Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene, 2020:1). This challenges the government's commitment to achieving social justice through educational transformation. Moreover, it threatens students' potential to achieve skills, competencies and values that are beneficial not only to themselves but to society. To remedy this, the Minister of Basic Education announced the publishing of legally binding Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (Equal Education, 2011), hereafter referred to as 'the policy' in this thesis. Published on 29 November 2013, the policy outlined the legal infrastructural conditions of what constitutes a school (Equal Education, 2011). These standard infrastructural conditions include the provisions that all public schools must have access to water, internet, electricity, safe classrooms (a maximum of 40 learners), working toilets, security, and other necessary facilities for the functioning of schools (Equal Education, 2011). It is important to note that the policy extends the scope of the 1996 South African Schools Act by outlining detailed provisions of measures to be taken to improve infrastructural conditions in public schools by setting deadlines and realising social justice.

However, in more recent amendments, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has published revised regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy which have removed the obligating deadlines by which the regulations in the policy must be met (Aneesa, 2024). The removal of these deadlines was due to the PED's inability to meet the originally set deadlines. The department's missing its own targets to resolve infrastructural backlogs in historically marginalised schools and continually extending them despite their 'strong' commitment to providing equal and safe learning environments to all learners raises questions on their stance on achieving social justice through educational transformation.

Although it is worth noting that social justice is defined and debated differently across the literature, for the purposes of this study the Social Justice Initiative's (2020:3) definition of social justice as the distribution and provision of access to resources and services fairly and equitably to promote fairness and the advancement of all will be used. This definition of social justice, from an educational perspective (Pendlebury and Enslin, 2004:31), raises important questions about the redistribution of educational goods and access to them in an equitable manner in South Africa post-1994 for the advancement of all South Africans. This definition, which encompasses equity at the centre of redistribution, takes into account historical implications that have affected the provision of and access to adequate resources in all schools

(especially historically marginalised schools) and may require the government to implement measures that advantage these schools.

The publishing of the policy indicated a significant policy improvement in the South African education system as thousands of Black rural schools in South Africa lack the infrastructural capacity to provide learners with quality education that is within their legal right to receive (Equal Education, 2011). Outlining an extended scope of interventions along with strict deadlines directed at infrastructural standards in public schools is a step towards redress. As Khumalo and Mji (2014:1522) have asserted, the lack of resources is also critical in education as it may negatively affect learning. Therefore, the publishing of regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy provided a sense of hope for South African public schools: that an equitable redistribution of resources will combat persisting infrastructural backlogs that compromise the dignity and safety of learners.

However, a decade after the enactment of these regulations, there are still deliberations on whether the policy reflects a commitment to social justice. This is partly because of numerous alterations made to the policy since its enactment. Aneesa (2024) points out an even more concerning alteration which places the policy's commitment to achieve social justice under scrutiny, namely that the set deadlines by when the school infrastructure relations should be met have been removed. In Aneesa's (2024) argument, the removal of these deadlines allows PEDs to use their own discretion to decide when and how school infrastructure projects should be met and completed. The same PEDs who have failed to meet previously set deadlines in the policy and prioritise addressing infrastructural backlogs in historically marginalised schools. In dragging their feet to address the infrastructural challenges faced in these schools, the PEDs compromise the dignity and safety of Black learners. Moreover, failing to address systematic inequalities faced by Black learners invalidates the former Minister of Basic Education's promise to make education the government's key priority by transforming the infrastructural conditions in all public schools, especially those schools that were historically marginalised (DBE, 2024:4). A promise our current Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube sought to follow.

As Ozturk (2001:1) has argued, education is a fundamental factor of development in every sense. This is because education provides people with the tools to better understand themselves

and the world around them (Ozturk, 2001:1). Therefore, evaluating and looking at the government's interventions in ensuring the provision of quality education in Ga-Matlala schools through the impact of this policy is of paramount importance.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

In this study two considerations were made: first, from a theoretical perspective, it examined whether, on its way to addressing systematic inequalities experienced by Black learners in historically marginalised schools, the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy advanced principles of social justice. Second, using an empirical approach, it evaluated the policy's impact on rural schools in Ga-Matlala, Limpopo, after a decade of implementation. Employing a qualitative method inquiry, this research relied on social justice theory premised on equity and redress. The aims and objectives of this study were:

- Does the policy in its context and purpose advance social justice?
- What impact has the implementation of this policy had on the infrastructural conditions of rural schools of Ga-Matlala in the Limpopo Province, 10 years after its enactment?

1.4 Significance of Research

Ramose (2003) stresses the importance of remembering our past, as it shapes our present and future aspirations. He cautions, however, against solely blaming the past, urging us to recognise the links between past and present: "Neither the present nor the future can be created out of nothing" (Ramose, 2003:137). Against this backdrop, while acknowledging the historical injustices of South African education under apartheid such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Ndimande, 2012) which restricted Black students' access to quality education, enforced racial segregation and created unsafe and undignified learning environments, it is important to look at contemporary efforts to address these inequalities. Specifically, how the post-1994 Constitution and policies like the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, grounded in principles of social justice, have been used as mechanisms to reform historical injustices and equalise the education system. This thesis, therefore, underscores the need for and significance of a continued investigation into the impact of the implementation of such policies, specifically the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy on rural schools in Ga-Matlala in the Limpopo Province.

These schools remain underrepresented in the scholarly literature on the policy, highlighting a critical gap in understanding the impact of its implementation on them.

1.5 Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which allowed for an in-depth and contextualised understanding of the implementation and impact of the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy on schools in the Ga-Matlala area, in the Limpopo province. A case study approach was chosen because it is especially helpful when it is difficult to separate the phenomenon being studied from its context, and when the goal is to understand how and why certain outcomes happen within a specific setting (Yin, 2014). This approach was most suitable for this study, which sought to evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of policy implementation in historically marginalised rural schools.

This study prioritises understanding participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

Setting and Context

The study was conducted in six public schools in Ga-Matlala *a Thaba*, a rural village located west of Polokwane in the Limpopo Province. These schools were selected due to their geographical location in a historically underserviced region and their relevance to the study's focus on infrastructural transformation post-2013. The community is characterised by high levels of poverty and historically under-resourced schools, making it an appropriate setting for examining the implications of policy implementation in real-world contexts.

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used throughout the thesis. Each teacher, principal, and SGB member was assigned a unique code (e.g., Teacher1, Principal, SGB member 1) based on their role. Where needed, school names were also anonymised (e.g., School A, School B, School C, School D, School E, School F) in line with university policy. A detailed breakdown of the participant profiles is provided in Appendix A**.**

Participants and Sampling

Participants included school principals, teachers, administrative staff and members of the School Governing Body (SGB). These people were selected from six schools in Ga-Matlala *a Thaba*. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants with direct experience and insight into school infrastructure developments.

The aim was to select participants who had been at the schools since before the policy was implemented in 2013 to allow for a meaningful comparison. However, due to high staff turnover, largely resulting from school closures or mergers due to declining enrolment, only a small number of participants met this criterion. Notably, 2 out of the 4 principals and 5 out of the 10 teachers interviewed had joined the school before 2013. This contributed to a balanced and information-rich sample, as it enabled the inclusion of both historical and more recent perspectives on infrastructure developments.

To address the limitations caused by staff turnover, the sample was diversified to include teachers who had joined after 2013 but had at least five years of service at the schools. This ensured that participants could still speak to observable changes and developments in infrastructure over time. A balance between pre- and post-2013 teachers was maintained to improve the comparability and probability of informed responses. Accordingly, a total of 16 participants were interviewed, comprising 4 principals, 10 teachers, and 2 SGB members.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, on-site observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in Sepedi and English, depending on the participant's language preference, and lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. Interviews were conducted on school premises, in designated private rooms provided by the principals, ensuring confidentiality and minimal disruption to daily activities. Interviews were recorded (with consent), translated where necessary, and transcribed for analysis.

Audio recordings were transcribed manually by the researcher. Where interviews were conducted in Sepedi, translations into English were also completed by the researcher during transcription to ensure faithfulness to participants' meanings. As a Sepedi speaker, the researcher was able to communicate seamlessly with participants and ensure the accuracy and

cultural relevance of the translations, which helped preserve the integrity and nuance of participant responses.

Timing and Access

Interviews were conducted during a less busy period in the school calendar, to avoid disrupting teaching and administrative responsibilities. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from Rhodes University and written authorisation from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct the study, these letters are attached in Appendix B and Appendix C. Furthermore, permission was secured from each school principal, and interviews were only conducted after the appropriate approvals were granted. The researcher's familiarity with the community and their customs made it easier to connect and relate to the participants during the data collection process.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to standard ethical research practices. Ethical approval was granted by Rhodes University's Research Ethics Committee. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and how their data would be used. All participants signed informed consent forms before taking part in the study. The participant informed consent form and interview protocol can be found in Appendix D. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process through the use of codes and removal of identifiable information.

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

A key limitation was the small number of school personnel who had been employed prior to 2013 due to school mergers and closures. To mitigate this, a stratified purposive sample was developed to include both pre-2013 and post-2013 participants. Additionally, participants who joined after 2013 but had served for a minimum of five years were able to comment on visible infrastructural changes over time, contributing meaningful insights into the study.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, coding and categorising recurring themes across participant responses. After transcription, interview data was read multiple times to identify meaningful patterns, which were then grouped into key themes related to infrastructure changes, policy awareness, and implementation challenges. Coding was done manually to maintain close engagement with the data.

Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying insights obtained from interviews with observational field notes and school infrastructure documents. This methodological triangulation enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings.

1.6 Chapter Outline

The introductory chapter provides context on the enactment of the policy. The chapter outlines a brief historical background, the purpose of the research and methodological processes followed for data collection and social justice as the theoretical framework on which this thesis was premised. In **Chapter Two,** literature-based content providing debates around educational transformation, liberal constitutionalism and social justice is unpacked. **Chapter Three** provides an in-depth discussion of the social justice theory that drives the enactment of the policy. **Chapter Four**, which addresses the main objective of this paper, provides an investigation of the implementation of the policy in Ga-Matlala schools. This chapter also investigates the impact of the implementation of these regulations, based on teachers, SGBs and principals' observations of the conditions of the selected schools. Based on discussions on the impact of the implementation of the policy and the identified challenges and issues in its implementation, **Chapter Five** identifies how these challenges and issues undermine the objective of social justice. Analysing both the theory and evidence provided in chapters three and four, this chapter outlines how the lack of implementation of this policy exacerbates systemic problems in rural schools. Lastly, **Chapter Six** presents the findings, revealing that while the policy aimed to address inequalities in historically marginalised schools, there was a significant gap between its intent and actual outcomes. Although, there was a strong emphasis on the critical need for educational transformation, realities on the ground highlighted persistent infrastructure deficiencies. The LDoE's repeated delays and lack of accountability undermined the policy's objectives, leaving schools in disrepair. To contextualise these findings, the following chapter reviews key literature on educational transformation, policy implementation, and school infrastructure development in South Africa.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Educational Transformation

Fisher (2006:294) argues that the word 'transformation' is often used in connection with modern educational change. Hence the term 'educational transformation' carries positive overtones of change being 'for the better' (Fisher, 2006:294). Existing literature extensively focuses on educational transformation in higher education institutions. Although the transformation of higher education institutions forms part of a broader process of South Africa's transition politically, socially, and economically as Van Wyk (2006:181) has argued, educational transformation should begin at the foundational phase of learning. South Africa's transformation means the country's transition from the segregationist apartheid system to democracy, which requires the reviewing and rethinking of all existing discriminatory practices, institutions, and values and making way for a "new democratic era." Van Wyk (2006:182) identifies education transformation in South Africa as a need for fundamental change, not reform. A fundamental change is achieved through recognising the interconnectedness of components of knowledge production, seeing new problems and imagining new ways to approach old problems, reflexive action, deconstruction, and reconstruction or exploring deeply embedded issues. Higgs (2002:12) provides a more comprehensive definition of transformation as a fundamental and deep-rooted restructuring process that leads to national development where people are able to participate substantially and meaningfully in key initiatives in society. Higgs (2002:12) also argues that transformation involves the reorganisation of power relations and the focus on society's common interests rather than special interests while addressing issues of gender and racial inequality.

Like Higgs (2002), Van der Merwe (2000:82) describes transformation as change in transition in the sense of a total "metamorphosis", in that transformation implies an all-encompassing change in the redefining of values and organisational culture, as a "moral imperative that is deeply rooted and driven by the will to truth" (Van der Merwe, 2000:82). This means abandoning old ways of doing and knowing to adopt new and democratic ways. Ramose (2003:139) describes Makgoba's argument of transformation as an act that completely changes

or alters the form, shape or nature of something. These definitions of transformation and educational transformation share significant components that the South African government has incorporated into its education transformation process. The most significant of these is the need to change from a historical system of racial discrimination to redress historical imbalances and achieve equity (Mestry, 2014:853); redressing historical imbalances and achieving equality through a transition (change) from apartheid to a more equitable dispensation. These attempts by the government are demonstrated in the education policies and provisions that have been enacted post-1994 (Mestry, 2014: 853).

The ANC's Freedom Charter notes that educational transformation in South Africa post-1994 has meant that the "doors of learning and culture" are open to all, especially historically marginalised groups (Johnson, 1995:13). Education was used as a weapon to achieve social separation, a social philosophy (the racial and cultural ordering of the apartheid system) that legitimised white supremacy (Soudien and Baxen, 1997:449). The historical traditional missionary educational institutions were used to produce, reproduce and validate racial separation and hierarchy (Soudien and Baxen, 1997:449). Soudien and Baxen (1997:449) argue that modern truths about human progress and development were premised on the presumptions of European superiority and African inferiority. These are the 'truths' that formed the ideological foundations on which education during apartheid was built. The Bantu Education Act in 1953 legalised and cemented these ideological foundations. It meant an inferior type of education which maintained the subordination and marginalisation of Black people (Thobejane, 2013:2). This legacy determines the challenge that the South African government is confronted with to change a previously inequitable and oppressive system (racially and culturally) of education that will encompass equity, redress and social and cultural empowerment. It is on this basis that educational transformation in South Africa should be prioritised to acknowledge the realities of the impact of Bantu Education.

The South African government's attempt to effectively confront the challenge of educational transformation in South Africa has not been without controversy. Badat and Sayed (2014:128) argue that there has not been any significant change in the post-1994 educational order. That, twenty-nine years into democracy, the right to learn still "rings hollow" to many South Africans. In evaluating the context of educational change in South Africa, Badat and Sayed (2014:130) argue that the African National Congress's 1994/1995 Education and Training

Framework and Implementation Plan was short of strategy despite being established on good values and principles.

Ramose (2003:137) argues that although the final South African Constitution represents a substantive improvement in the rights of many South Africans, it is also an impediment to transformation in that it lacks the key elements that allow it to cater for South Africans, which is why systemic inequalities persist even post-1994 (Ramose, 2003:137). His arguments are premised on contestations about the applicability of liberal constitutionalism in achieving economic, social and educational development and transformation in South Africa post-1994 to the post-1994 Constitution. Madlingozi (2017:123) shares the same sentiments as Ramose (2003); although he is not dismissing the Constitution in its totality, he argues that it falls short of addressing severe questions of social justice. However, the purpose of this study was not to delve into a more detailed discussion of these debates. Its rationale is centred on the key argument of these debates, namely that most government policies continue to reproduce existing inequalities. For instance, the desegregation of institutions provisioned in Acts such as the South African Schools Act does not address differentiated access to different institutions. For example, students from the capitalist and middle classes are mainly found at historically white schools, while those from the working class and rural poor are mainly found in historically disadvantaged institutions. In this regard, it is clear that unfavourable historical geographic patterns continue to condition the capacities of historically Black schools to pursue excellence and provide high-quality learning experiences while achieving equal opportunities. Like Badat and Sayed (2014), Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene (2020:1) argue that historical geographic patterns continue to reproduce existing inequalities in that numerous schools in rural areas remain confronted with poor infrastructure, and lack of resources needed for quality learning (Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene, 2020:1).

Khumalo and Mji (2014:1521) expand on this debate that the government should provide proper and adequate school infrastructure to ensure that classrooms, libraries and laboratories provide favourable learning experiences. Their focus is also on the appalling conditions of schools in rural areas which cater to most Black students. Khumalo and Mji (2014:1522) argue that the South African education system is coupled with infrastructural shortages and problems. There have not been major infrastructural improvements in the rural parts of provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, notwithstanding the Minister of Education's statements that infrastructural backlogs would be eliminated by 2008 (Khumalo and Mji,

2014:1522). Equal Education (2017:3) also queries the lack of urgency with which the government attends to infrastructural backlogs in rural schools. The lack of infrastructure and facilities makes teaching and learning extremely difficult and consequently rural schools are unable to meet national goals to provide unfettered access to quality education (Khumalo and Mji, 2014:1523).

From these arguments, there is clear consensus amongst South African scholars that despite there being provisions in the form of policies to address the inequalities that persist in the South African education system, the effective implementation of these policies has been highly criticised. There are deeply rooted unaddressed inequalities in the education system and rural schools reflect this reality most starkly (Khumalo and Mji, 2014:153).

2.2 Legislative and Policy Attempts by the South African Government to Achieve Educational Transformation

In its 1996 mission statement, the Department of Education (2001:6) outlined its aspirations and vision for a South Africa where all people have equal access to "lifelong education and training opportunities" in order to improve the quality of life of all and to achieve a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. Moreover, the department claimed education was necessary for economic prosperity and to assist South Africans to escape the "poverty trap" (personally and collectively), which formed part of many South African communities (Department of Education, 2001:6). Education, provisioned in the Republic of South Africa (1996) constitution (Section 29), is a basic human right in that everyone has the right to access both basic and adult education without any discrimination (Department of Education, 2001). In their attempts at educational transformation, the government developed legal and regulatory policy frameworks which would facilitate change and also establish organisations and institutions which would prioritise creating conditions and structures for effective, transformative actions (Department of Education, 2001).

From 1994 to 1997, educational transformation was focused on systemic reform to dismantle apartheid structures and create a unified education system, as well as a more equitable system of financing (Department of Education, 2001). During this period, an equitable system for the financing of education was established where funds were available from the Reconstruction

and Development Programme and allocated based on racial equity and redress (Department of Education, 2001). To target social development, this programme also included primary school nutrition and school renovation projects. A way was paved from 1994 to 1997 to create sound legislative policies for educational transformation (Department of Education, 2001).

Numerous legislative frameworks seeking to improve and develop the South African educational system have been established since democracy. The first legislative framework that reflected the government's aspirations to achieve education transformation was the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which requires education to be transformed and democratised in accordance with the values envisaged in the constitution: the values of human dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, as well as non-racism and non-sexism (Department of Education, 2001). The White Paper on Education and Training, a fundamental policy framework, was established to reaffirm the government's commitment to access quality education and educational opportunities (Department of Education, 2001). Then the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), which inscribed in law the policy, legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Education, as well as formalising the relations between national and provincial authorities, was established in 1996 (Department of Education, 2001). This policy is meant to reflect co-operative governance, provisioned in Schedule Three of the Constitution. NEPA established the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) as inter-governmental forums responsible for collaborating to build a new system, provide for the determination of national policies, further education and training, the curriculum, assessment, language policy, and quality assurance (Department of Education, 2001).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) was also established in 1996 (Department of Education, 2001). This legislative framework is of significance to this research paper as it extends to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, the main investigating inquiry of this research. SASA provides provisions on how the right to education can be properly addressed, including redressing past inequalities, particularly in public schools (Badat and Sayed, 2014:131). This Act guarantees that all learners have the right to access quality education without discrimination and makes school compulsory for children aged 6 to 15 (Department of Education, 2001). It is with this Act that parents must ensure that every learner in their care attends school (Section 3(1) of the SASA, 1996). Moreover, the Act stipulates that school funding norms be prioritised to redress and target poverty in funding

allocations to the public-school system (Department of Education, 2001). Under this Act, there have been recent legislative provisions and policies that have been proposed to improve the South African education system. Some of the legislative provisions include the publishing of the policy (DBE, 2013), which forms the investigation in this study. There is very little literature on the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy. However, Equal Education (2011) has done extensive work to trace, investigate and track the establishment of this policy and its significance in addressing infrastructural inadequacies in public schools. This policy provides legally binding norms that outline the legal infrastructural conditions of what constitutes a school (Equal Education, 2011). The policy was passed after years of Equal Education's (2011) campaigns and mobilisations to ensure improved conditions in South African public schools' infrastructure and the publishing of the National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) report by the DBE in May 2011. The publication of this report indicated that schools in rural provinces and some townships were in the worst conditions and suffered from infrastructural inadequacies (Equal Education, 2011). The policy stipulates standard infrastructural conditions that should be provided in a public school at set deadlines such as access to water, internet and electricity, safe classrooms with a maximum of 40 learners, working toilets, security, and other necessary facilities for the proper functioning of these schools (Equal Education, 2011). It serves as one of the significant policy changes aimed at improving the lack of infrastructure in rural schools that is crucial to providing learners with the quality education that they are legally entitled to receive (Equal Education, 2011).

The policy serves as an amendment to Section 5A of the 1996 SASA that requires the Minister of Education to make regulations that prescribe Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. It also amends Section 58C which imposes the establishment of mechanisms to ensure the compliance of provinces with the norms required under Section 5A (Equal Education, 2011). The Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy outlines detailed provisions of measures that should be taken to improve infrastructural conditions in public schools to achieve education transformation by extending the scope of the SASA of 1996. The time frames stipulated in the draft of the policy suggested that water, electricity, classrooms, toilets, and fencing be provided to schools within ten years of the policy's enactment, and other norms by 2030 (Equal Education, 2011).

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA), now known as the BELA ACT (Ellerbeck, 2024), sought to change some provisions of the SASA and the Employment of Educators Act to align these Acts with developments in the educational landscape while ensuring improved systems of learning and excellence in education to promote and fulfil the right to basic education promised by the Constitution (Sobuwa, 2023). The Department of Education plans to set aside (once it has established funding for the Bill) about R16 billion, where about R12 billion would go towards infrastructure developments (Sobuwa, 2023). The passing and effective implementation of this Bill will mean significant infrastructural developments, which would set the goals of the policy in motion and could potentially address the infrastructural backlogs in public schools, particularly schools in rural areas. Significantly, the Bill aims to prioritise matters relating to the expansion of Grade R as a school-starting age in most schools, amend Section 6 of SASA to prioritise the language policy in schools to also take into consideration the language needs of the broader community, to prioritise the national curriculum, and oversee the appointment and elected budgets of the schools' governing bodies holding them accountable (Sobuwa, 2023). On the whole, the BELA Bill promises an all-encompassing solution to infrastructural provisions and national curriculum in the hope that this Bill will achieve significant changes in the South African education system in its implementation. However, with the establishment of legislative provisions, policies and bills aimed at achieving educational transformations, the burning question in debates is why the government has not been able to see through their implementation. How social justice premised on redress and equity has been reflected in the implementations of these policies, particularly the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, is the focus of this study.

2.3 Conclusion

Educational transformation means the country's transition and change from the segregationist apartheid system educational system to democracy, where educational processes and access to education are open to all. Although there have been attempts by the South African government through legislative provisions, policies and institutions, such as the 1996 SASA and, even more recently, the 2013 Minimum Uniform and Standards for Public School Infrastructure policy, there are still many questions about the government's aspirations to achieve educational transformation. Authors such as Badat and Sayed (2014) and Mestry (2014) argue that the government's attempts to achieve educational transformation has been mainly symbolic,

without any substantive, tangible results on the ground. Moreover, organisations such as Equal Education are closely tracking the question of whether established policies have been able to address existing inequalities in historically marginalised schools as promised. Literature on questions and debates around whether the legislative provisions and policies aimed at educational transformation reflect the government's commitment to achieving social justice continue to spark more controversies amongst scholars and education activists.

Chapter Three: Social Justice and Policy Implementation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of social justice within the South African context, particularly its implications for educational transformation in post-1994 South Africa. Drawing on historical and theoretical perspectives, it examines how the notion of social justice has evolved globally and its adoption within South African policies aimed at addressing historical inequities.

The chapter also highlights the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy within principles of equity and redress, reflecting the government's commitment to achieving educational justice for historically marginalised communities. A critical analysis of the policy's enactment and implementation underscores the gap between policy ideals and practical outcomes, shedding light on the persistent challenges faced by rural schools in Limpopo. This analysis sets the stage for understanding how social justice principles have influenced, and at times fallen short, of reshaping the South African education system.

3.2 Social Justice and the South African Context

Many scholars have long been interested in defining 'social justice.' The use of this term varies according to different definitions, perspectives and social theories. However, the origins of this term can be traced back to thinkers such as Plato (427–347 BC), who argued for social justice to include virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation in an "ideal state" (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:9). Thinkers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas believed that justice was a form of natural duty owed by one person to another (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:9). Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) theory of social justice was based on the concept of selflessness and moral duty, the belief that one's actions are morally right if they are motivated by duty and not personal motive or self-interest (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:9). At a much later period, social justice was used by social reformers at the end of the 19th century so that the ruling classes could attend to the needs of new masses of uprooted peasants who had become urban workers (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:9). In the 20th century, the concept of social justice was mostly associated with the work of the moral and

political philosopher John Rawls in the *Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993), whose ideas of social justice were based on the doctrine of liberal egalitarianism (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:11). Rawls' views focused on the idea of a hypothetical society organised according to a theory of justice in which rational persons would set up a system of cooperation and fairness (Bankston III, 2010:173) – where social and economic benefits would be distributed fairly given that they were guaranteed and proportional for everyone in society and the disadvantaged would benefit the most (Rawls, 1971). Such conceptions can also be found in most social contract theories such as those of Rousseau and Mill, who emphasise the importance of a state that prioritises the "welfare of its citizens" and ensures that basic inalienable rights are protected (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:10). Accordingly, this term is mostly conceived in egalitarian societies based on the principles of equality, solidarity and an understanding of the value of human rights and the recognition of dignity for every human being (Zajda *et al.*, 2006:9).

Notwithstanding the different approaches to social justice, Bankston III (2010:165) argues that social justice is often viewed as a matter of redistributing goods and resources in a way that improves the situations of the disadvantaged in matters concerned with political and economic policy. Moreover, the redistribution of these goods and resources is not presented as a matter of compassion or national interest, but of the rights of those relatively disadvantaged to make claims on the rest of society (Bankston III, 2010:165). Most scholarly discussions on the concept of 'social justice' are derived from Eurocentric philosophers, theories and scholars. It was not until the end of apartheid and the establishment of a 'new just and democratic' South Africa that the concept of social justice was widely discussed and investigated by South African scholars. In most cases, scholars draw their definition of social justice from the ideas of these philosophers and scholars on what constitutes 'justice' (Bell, 2016:4). Often, definitions of social justice are derived from theories that affirm the significance of a fair and equitable social process and the recognition and respect for marginalised groups.

In the South African context, colonialism and apartheid were based on unequal racially discriminatory systems where Black people were denied equal educational access and opportunities (Badat and Sayed, 2014:128). To deal with the unequal and racially discriminatory system of apartheid, the post-1994 government's commitment to eradicate racial discrimination gave rise to a conception of social justice as racial redress, captured in a policy of affirmative action (Badet and Sayed, 2014:128). Social justice as an approach to

educational transformation post-1994 is implied in Section 29(1)(a) and (b) of the final Constitution of South Africa (Ramose, 2003: 140). Section 29(1)(a) states that "everyone has the right to basic education", while Section 29(1)(b) specifically outlines that "everyone has the right to further education, which the state through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" (Republic of South Africa, 1996). According to McConnachie, Skelton and McConnachie (2017:24), when interpreting this section using a context-based approach, the section indicates that basic education should be developmental to the goals of both individuals and society. Thus, in its application, it helps in eradicating the effects of apartheid by providing access to basic education of certain content or quality (McConnachie *et al.,* 2017:24). To do so, the section echoes the social justice ethos of redress and equity recognising that attempts to transform the South African education system must be predicated or accompanied by far-reaching social, political and economic reforms such as providing more resources to historically marginalised groups of society who need them most (Ramose, 2003:140).

Redress focuses on addressing past inequalities to achieve institutional transformation while realising the possibilities of a "global future" (Horsthemke, 2005:173). Redress as a prerequisite of social justice concerns itself with reviewing and rethinking all apartheid existing practices, institutions and values anew to forge a new and democratic era (Horsthemke, 2005:175). Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014:2) identify equity as taking into account existing inequalities in the distribution of wealth or resources and making required adjustments to allow for a more equitable redistribution. This is "levelling the playing field" and providing support to those who were disadvantaged in the past – it asks for the identification of existing inequalities to not only abolish existing forms of discrimination but to empower and bring about equal opportunities for individuals (Badat, 2008:6). Equity and redress are constitutionally protected building blocks of social justice that require redistribution to happen in a way that achieves educational transformation.

South African scholars like Mestry (2014:845) define social justice as a key component of government policy that is focused on achieving equity, redress, restoration, renewal and redistribution of resources. Similarly, Fraser (2008) views social justice relationally, in that it recognises and acknowledges racial, ethnic, sexual and gender differences and the redistribution of resources accordingly. The significance of equal treatment without discrimination is also a shared sentiment for Badat and Sayed (2014). They state that social

justice derives from achieving equality of treatment despite one's race, gender or religion and respect for human rights, dignity, fairness, and cultural diversity in ideology and policy or practice in South Africa post-apartheid (Badat and Sayed, 2014). Moreover, Liebenberg (2013:739) asserts that social justice is reflected in a just society where all people have access to basic services, can participate in deliberative processes of democracy through equal opportunities, and can pursue individual happiness. The Social Justice Initiative (2020:3) proposes a more radical approach to social justice, which involves the distribution and provision of access to resources and services fairly and equitably so as to promote fairness and the advancement of all. This definition of social justice speaks to the important question of how redistribution of educational goods and access to them can be achieved equitably. Bell (2016:4) argues that social justice refers to the reconstruction of a society premised on equity and redress by confronting ideological frameworks, historical legacies, institutional patterns and practices that reproduce inequalities and continue to marginalise groups to eliminate historical injustices.

Although different conceptualisations of social justice exist, they share a common concern with rectifying entrenched inequalities and ensuring equitable access to education. In the context of South Africa, this requires recognising the impact of apartheid-era policies on the distribution of educational infrastructure and services. Thus, a commitment to educational justice necessitates deliberate and targeted interventions that prioritise under-resourced schools. It is therefore, important to acknowledge that formal equality does not adequately address structural inequalities that continue to affect the majority of South African learners. We ought to recognise the role of substantive equality, which allows for differentiated treatment in order to achieve fair outcomes. This understanding is supported by Section 9(2) of the South African Constitution, which states: "Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken." In practice, this allows for fee exemptions, school nutrition programmes, and prioritised infrastructure investment in historically disadvantaged schools, forms of fair discrimination that are both legally sanctioned and necessary for the realisation of educational justice in line with the government's agenda to transform the South African educational system and achieve social justice. Thus, educational policies such as the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2013), should in their enactment and implementation reflect this approach.

3.3 An Overview of Concerns in Public Schools on the Implementation of the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy

South African rural schools are generally characterised by crumbling classrooms, unsanitary toilets, cracked fences and inadequate or non-existent libraries and laboratories (Draga, 2017:238). The disheartening reality is that there are a privileged few who are able to study in comfortable, well-resourced and safe learning environments. Mokoena and Hlalele (2022:11) describe this as a dual system of education, where there is an affluent system characterised by an abundance of resources that renders it functional on the one hand and a dysfunctional system that lacks resources and as a consequence is unable to meet the education needs of society on the other. According to the DBE NEIMS (DBE, 2015) statistics, there were about 23 589 public schools in the country and 77% of those schools did not have well-equipped and adequate libraries (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In addition, about 86% did not have laboratory facilities, and 5 225 schools had an unreliable supply of water or none at all (DBE, 2015). In terms of electricity, 913 schools did not have an electricity supply, and 2 854 had an unreliable supply. The number of schools with unreliable water supply has since increased to 5 836 in 2021 (DBE, 2021: Table 4). However, the number of schools that did not have an electricity supply decreased to 90, while the number of schools with unreliable electricity supply increased to 3 343 in 2021 (DBE, 2021). Fortunately, the percentage of schools without libraries decreased to 69.59% and laboratory facilities to 80.07% in 2021, showing a significant improvement in the provision of these facilities.

The DBE (2021) NEIMS report shows more positive insights than the 2015 report in that all schools in Limpopo had water supply and access to sanitation. However, Equal Education (2022:3) argues that a report by the South African Human Rights Commission found that there were about 113 schools that were still without water in the province. The conflicting data between these two reports shows the complex nature of the water and sanitation challenges in schools in the Limpopo province and that the reports might not be a true reflection of the lived realities of learners in the schools. Moreover, the DBE (2021) NEIMS report also shows that not much has changed regarding the challenge of plain pit toilets, particularly in the Limpopo province. Of the 5 167 schools that had plain pit toilets in South Africa, Limpopo alone had 2 144 (about 41%) schools with pit toilets and 219 of these schools relied on pit toilets as their only source of sanitation.

It is thus evident, that despite the significant increases in libraries and laboratory facilities in the Department of Education NEIMS report from 2015 to 2021, these statistics still show an unfilled gap in infrastructural backlogs, particularly in rural schools. They reflect how Black learners in rural schools, or former Bantustan areas, are confronted with the worst infrastructure conditions and are cheated of an acceptable learning environment (Draga, 2017:238). In terms of the school curriculum, South Africa's mean scores for literacy in Grades 3 and 4 were 19% and 27% in 2016, which placed South Africa last in different rankings done by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a quadrennial test done in 57 countries (Ndou, 2022). South Africa was also ranked last in the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study that tested the reading ability of 400 000 students globally (Durbin, 2023). In response to the shocking results of this study, the South African Minister of Education claimed that the education system was faced with significant historical challenges, such as poverty, inequality and inadequate infrastructure. Although the minister is correct in pointing out historical challenges which confronted the South African education system, the government had 30 years and hundreds of educational policies to turn things around.

The lack of urgency in the maintenance and fixing of public schools, particularly rural schools in relation to the regulations of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, is what continues to make Black learners and teachers even more vulnerable, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Mokoena and Hlalele, 2022:11). Draga (2017:238) argues that inequalities in the provision of resources in the schools entrench and perpetuate the legacy of apartheid education. Poor Black learners are expected to attend classes in school environments that do not empower them to learn and succeed (Draga, 2017:238). Lacking a reliable supply of clean water can negatively affect children's attendance rates and also their academic performance, especially after COVID-19 when school days were lost in order to prevent water-related illnesses (Equal Education, 2022:17). The lack of well-equipped and functional libraries has also negatively affected learners' academic achievement which is evident in South African learners' persistent low performance in local and international tests (Mojapelo, 2016:412). Learners in South Africa are doing badly in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) in reading and numeracy and in international tests. Therefore, in dealing with education and solutions to education problems the struggle for social justice must remain paramount in the search for solutions aimed at educational transformation and not pessimistic discussions (Sayed, Kanjee and Nkomo, 2013:376). Focusing on the values

that should drive education reforms is important. Proactive strategies are necessary and should be adopted to overcome failure. Moreover, these values should acknowledge the deep-rooted legacy of apartheid and avoid historical amnesia (Sayed *et al.,* 2013: 376). Mokoena and Hlalele (2022:9) propose that the solution to infrastructural backlogs and existing inequalities in rural schools lies in the completion, implementation and realisation of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy.

3.4 Equal Education's Advocacy of Social Justice: The Journey to Establishing the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy

The Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2013) was established after Equal Education (a non-governmental organisation) fought tirelessly against the government over the unacceptable state of school infrastructure in many of the country's schools (Equal Education, 2011). The battle to establish this policy involved numerous marches, petitions, countless letters to the Minister of Education, door-to-door community visits to gather support for the campaign, countless nights of fasting and sleeping outside of Parliament, and numerous court battles between Equal Education and government (Equal Education, 2011). The organisation was committed to holding the government accountable for its commitment to addressing historical inequalities by advocating the transformation of conditions in historically marginalised schools to promote social justice. Initially, the campaign was dedicated to ensuring that the Minister of Basic Education publishes a national policy on school libraries (Draga, 2017:239). However, the campaign evolved into EE requiring the minister to establish legally binding regulations for norms and standards for school infrastructure in line with her responsibilities under the SASA of 1996 (Equal Education, 2011). Although the organisation wanted to campaign to win political gains, it was apparent that it also had to resort to the courts in order to get the Minister of Basic Education to agree to publish the norms and standards policy. It was only after an application was filed in the Bisho High Court against the Minister of Basic Education by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) on behalf of Equal Education and infrastructure committees of two schools in the Eastern Cape that the minister agreed to publish the norms and standards regulations (Equal Education, 2011). These regulations were to set legal standards for the minimum physical resources all schools should have, to hold the government accountable and to also empower affected communities to not accept the dreadful infrastructure conditions at their schools (Draga, 2017:239). What prompted the need to fight for the urgent and proper implementation of the norms and standards

was the passing of Michael Komape, a six-year-old boy who fell into a latrine or pit toilet at his school in Limpopo in January 2014 (Draga, 2017:240). Michael Komape's case was an indication of the horrific and tragic dangers posed by school infrastructures that are poor and hazardous (Draga, 2017:240). Komape's case indicates the negative repercussions that Black learners in rural schools have to endure because of the lack of urgency in maintaining school infrastructure.

The policy, requiring the minister to ensure that all schools have basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, libraries and laboratories has four deadlines for when these norms and standards should be achieved (Draga, 2017:239, 241). The Minister of Basic Education has given the PEDs the discretion to set their own scope on how the norms and standards of the policy will be met. The PEDs were required to provide the minister with their Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy implementation plans one year after the policy was promulgated into law (Equal Education, 2022:1). These implementation plans were to outline details on school infrastructure backlogs in each province and how these backlogs were going to be addressed in line with the deadlines of the policy (Equal Education, 2022:1). The overall policy requires the replacement of all public schools which are entirely made of inappropriate materials such as mud, asbestos, metal or wood with new ones and that all schools must be provided with access to adequate water and sanitation and according to the law of this policy by 29 November 2016 (this was a three-year deadline) – plain pit latrines and buckets do not constitute access to sanitation (Equal Education, 2017). In the second phase, a seven-year deadline was set which involved the provision of all schools with an adequate supply of classrooms, electricity, water and sanitation by 29 November 2020 (Equal Education, 2017). By 29 November 2023, a 10-year deadline required that all schools should be equipped with library and laboratory facilities (Equal Education, 2017). The last phase requires all norms to have been properly implemented and for school halls, sports fields, walkways, parking lots and disability access features to be implemented by 2030 which is a 17-year deadline (Equal Education, 2011).

Meeting all the required deadlines to implement the regulations of the policy would signify an important step towards educational transformation because the school's physical environment contributes significantly to conducive learning. The physical environment of the schools should be in such a condition that they create favourable learning environments (Nhlapo, 2020:1). Therefore, a commitment of resources to the maintenance of school facilities should be the

government's priority. Equally, there should be increased access to education and an improvement in the quality of that education so that South Africa can achieve economic and social development (Ndou, 2022:2). Furthermore, the provision of quality education is essential for national development in South Africa (Ndou, 2022:2) as education provides people with the necessary knowledge to better understand themselves and the world around them, and is seen as one of the basic needs to escape poverty, generate different categories and levels of the workforce and achieve a prosperous society (Ozturk, 2001:1; Ndou 2022:2). Moreover, in South Africa, a commitment to provide quality education is a response to a long-awaited "transformation" from a system that dehumanised Black people and deprived them of necessary educational opportunities. It is therefore crucial that historically marginalised schools are equipped with materials and resources that will enable effective teaching and learning.

3.5 The Theory of Social Justice and the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy

According to Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014:1; Mestry, 2014:852), the government's education reform plans have been focused on access, equity and redress, quality, efficiency and democracy since 1994. Fundamental policy mechanisms in attempting to restructure South African education involve redressing historical imbalances and achieving equity (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014:1). These aspirations by the South African government are demonstrated in their education policies, particularly through the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2013). In its enactment, the policy focuses on redressing the deep-rooted legacy of apartheid in historically marginalised schools (public schools in townships and rural areas). The policy focuses on the long-neglected infrastructural conditions in these schools to provide better learning conditions for Black learners.

Redressing past injustices as a process of educational transformation and achieving social justice focuses on addressing persisting historical inequalities that confined Black learners to an education that deliberately prepared them for unskilled and semi-skilled labour (Equal Education, 2017:13). To achieve social justice in education, redress, and equity are seen as the operational building blocks (Motala and Pampallis, 2002). As indicated in earlier sections of this chapter, equity is about "levelling the playing field" which operates on the premise that the

poorest school will be given more money in line with its poverty ranking level (Mestry and Ndhlovu, 2014:2). The rationale behind the enactment of this policy was not to necessarily provide the "poorest schools" with more money, it was to provide the less advantaged and underprivileged schools with better infrastructural conditions, adequate and efficient sanitation and water facilities, libraries and laboratories to create a physical environment that contributes significantly to conducive learning in historically marginalised societies in order to "level the playing field" (to close the gap of inequalities between historically underprivileged schools and schools that are privileged).

Therefore, policy aims in South Africa are to redress historical imbalances and achieve equity to restructure the South African education system (Mestry, 2014:853). By assessing education policies, the intentions of the state to address equity and social justice are clear. The Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy provides a platform for the transformation of the school environment and the advancement of quality of learning. The intentions of the government through this policy enactment are clear. It is, therefore, crucial to scrutinise it carefully to see if this policy in its implementation adequately addressed infrastructural backlogs in rural schools so that rural learners can fully contribute to, and benefit from, the new democratic nation. Moreover, to assess whether the policy in its enactment has succeeded in addressing social justice. However, it is also worth noting that there is a pattern of government policy proving to be a double-edged sword, in that it may yield change but can also carry the danger of deepening inequalities between schools (Mestry, 2014:852–853). A huge gap exists between policy ideals and practice (Sayed *et al.*, 2013:3). On paper, legislative policies appear to prioritise social justice to redress the historical legacy of racism, segregation and economic exploitation which marginalised Black people and excluded them from receiving quality education. However, in practice, the implementation of these policies, or the lack thereof, seems to be reproducing the apartheid legacy of racial inequalities and exclusion – this will be depicted with practical data in the next chapter. As Carrim (in Jansen and Sayed, 2001:4) has argued, there appears to be a mismatch between policy and legislative discourses on quality education and what they translate to in actual practice. It is against this background that important questions will be investigated on whether this policy falls within the pattern of the numerous education policies and legislations that have been established with the "good" intention to achieve social justice and educational transformation falls short of reflecting these values in its implementation.

3.6 Conclusion

It is imperative that the South African national and provincial governments provide timely and adequate measures to improve the quality of education of learners in rural areas. To do so, there is an urgent need to prioritise the maintenance, fixtures and provision of school infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities, libraries and laboratories so that their condition creates favourable learning environments in rural schools. Providing urgent interventions and the adequate implementation of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy is not only a legally binding obligation, it also enables the government to fulfil its promise and commitment to provide quality education to all South Africans despite their race, gender, religion or geographical location. Moreover, it speaks to the government's aspirations to achieve social justice through educational transformation by redressing historical imbalances and the deep-rooted legacies of apartheid. This chapter drew attention to the process of enactment of the policy, and how this policy, in its enactment and implementation, reflects the values of social justice which characterise South African educational policies. Moreover, the chapter also shed light on the challenges that exist between policy ideals and practice which will be analysed by looking at the experiences of principals, teachers and SGBs of Ga-Matlala schools in relation to the implementation of regulations of this policy in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: The Impact of the 2013 Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the implementation of the regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy in Limpopo, specifically in rural schools of the Ga-Matlala region. The chapter investigates the processes and challenges of the implementation of this policy by analysing the experiences of principals, teachers and SGB members in their respective schools; Ramalapa, Tau Kwena, Sekgwari and Rachebole Primary Schools and Ipopeng and Mahoai High Schools.

The opening of this chapter provides an overview of the implementation of the policy in rural schools of Limpopo, particularly the LDoE's policy implementation status updates. Then an in-depth analysis of the environment and surroundings of the six schools based on on-site observations conducted during data collection is offered. In doing this, the analysis aims to evaluate the degree of alignment between the outlined policy frameworks and actual outcomes observed in the schools. The chapter recognises the persistent infrastructural challenges and policy shortfalls in these historically marginalised schools through the lenses of principals, teachers and SGB members, 10 years after the enactment of the 2013 transformative educational policy, the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure.

Drawing from interviews and on-site observations, this chapter highlights key issues such as the limited awareness of policy provisions among participants, the lack of trust in government implementation, and the profound inequities in resource allocation. In doing so, it seeks to uncover the systemic barriers to effective policy implementation and outline participants' potential avenues for ensuring that infrastructure policies are translated into meaningful improvements for their schools.

4.2 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy Implementation in Rural Schools of Limpopo, and the LDoE Policy Implementation Status Updates

The DBE's NEPA of 1996 outlines that the role of provincial departments is to adhere to and carry out regulations set by the Minister of Basic Education. In terms of this policy, the LDoE has the duty to ensure that enough schools are created for all learners in the province (Mansfield-Barry and Stwayi, 2017:78). It is according to their prioritisation and discretion that they meet the legally binding regulating standards that were passed by the Minister of Basic Education.

In carrying out this duty, the LDoE submitted its implementation plan of the policy. However, this was only two years after the prescribed deadline by the Minister of Basic Education (Equal Education, 2022:1). The implementation plan was submitted incomplete and was vague. In its defence, the LDoE stated that it did not have a credible and reliable database of the conditions of the schools' infrastructure when they were compiling the implementation plan relating to the policy and relied on the NEIMS database (LDoE, 2019).

This is even though the regulations set in the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy needed to be approached with urgency and prioritised to be met within the set deadlines before its 2024 amendments. Despite the department showing great enthusiasm in its 2019 policy status update about the number of projects that they had implemented in line with the requirements of the regulations (LDoE, 2019), they have consistently missed deadlines and extensions set to meet the provision of school infrastructural needs in terms of the regulations of this policy. The LDoE (2019) in its policy update claimed to have provided about 224 public schools with water supplies, 12 schools with electricity supplies, about 739 schools with sanitation facilities, built 2 502 classrooms, completed 21 new and replacement schools and fenced 33 schools since the 2011–2012 financial year.

Their 2019 status update, however, also pointed out a few challenges. The department expressed that, considering their other commitments at the time, they could not meet the targets set out in the regulations because of budget constraints (LDoE, 2019). The status update shows that the department allocated 20% of its infrastructure budget to address water and sanitation issues and should they use the full infrastructure budget to address the water and sanitation issues, it would take the department about three years to do so, with no additional expenditure

to any other infrastructure-related projects during that period (LDoE, 2019). This means that other infrastructure-related projects would be put on standstill and only be resolved in a 10–12-year time period, although there were classrooms at 3 894 schools in the province that needed to be constructed and maintained (LDoE, 2016, 2019). Even though the LDoE (2019) has acknowledged that there exist huge infrastructural backlogs in schools in the province, its 2019 policy status update shows that the department still needs to set out a strategic plan on how they are going to prioritise the implementation of all their projects within reasonable timeframes.

However, the report shows that the LDoE understands the need to address infrastructural, water and sanitation issues. According to Equal Education (2017:3), the department's approach to the provision of infrastructure following the legally binding Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy revealed a lack of urgency – particularly regarding the provision of water and sanitation facilities, which were supposed to be adequately provided to all schools in the province by 29 November 2016 and finally 29 November 2020. These specific regulations set out in the policy needed to be approached with urgency and prioritised to be met. Equal Education's (2017) findings in the 18 schools they visited in Ga-Mashashane, in the Capricorn District of the Limpopo province, showed that there had been little to no change in most schools in the province.

In more recent reports, the LDoE stated that more than R13 billion has been spent to create and maintain spaces that are conducive to teaching and learning (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2024). However, even with the provided R13 billion budget of 2015/2016 by the CSIR to evaluate and assess the conditions in the schools in the Limpopo province, the conditions in these schools still suggested serious infrastructural backlogs, lack of maintenance and shortage of facilities in terms of the norms (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2024). This is the period where all public schools which were made of inappropriate materials such as mud, asbestos, metal or wood should have been replaced with new materials (Equal Education, 2017). Moreover, adequate water and sanitation and classrooms should have been provided in all public schools according to the originally set deadlines in the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2013), before its recent amendments. Even more shocking, the LDoE report published this year does not contain up-to-date information on the conditions in the schools in the province.

According to the report about 69 schools in the province still have no water supply, 317 schools do not have access to adequate sanitation, while about 77 schools still use pit latrines (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2024:4). The number of schools still using pit latrines in the schools in the province indicated in the report is inconsistent with Section27's (2023) findings that more than 210 schools in the province still rely exclusively on pit toilets. In more recent findings by Equal Education (2024), it was revealed that about 1 900 schools in the entire province still have dangerous pit toilets and almost 2 000 schools in the Limpopo province need sanitation upgrades, even with ongoing cases of learners drowning in pit toilets. For instance, more recently during the ongoing court proceedings of the case of Michael Komape, a four-year-old in an Eastern Cape primary school who died after falling into a pit toilet in March 2023 (Human, 2024), the LDoE is still dragging its feet in resolving school infrastructural backlogs. The school infrastructure the department has to prioritise and resolve is not limited to issues of water and sanitation, it also includes other infrastructure-related projects (classrooms, electricity, library and science facilities). The LDoE seems to consistently miss its set legally binding deadlines to provide schools that rely solely on plain pit toilets with appropriate sanitation facilities, for instance, meeting their April 2023 deadline to address water and sanitation issues.

The lack of urgency from the department to address the undignified conditions in the schools has placed the province as one of the most underperforming provinces against almost any measure of educational attainment (Equal Education, 2017:14). Consequently, the degraded state of education in the province has resulted in the loss of academic integrity through the numerous exam paper leak incidents, the teaching of learners in unsafe classrooms built with inappropriate materials (Mokoena and Hlalele, 2022:12), the torching of schools during service delivery protests, the death of Michael Komape, and the non-delivery of textbooks (Equal Education, 2017:15). More than half of students in rural schools are more likely to repeat a grade before they reach the 10th Grade or complete schooling (Mokoena and Hlalele, 2022:14). and those who do, struggle to adapt to the advanced conditions of tertiary education or the workplace (in particular the digital facilities because of the lack of access to Information Communication Technology (ICT)), (Mokoena and Hlalele, 2022:12). The PED is failing to reverse the entrenched legacy of apartheid as the unavailability of sufficient infrastructure will continue to lead to overcrowding in many rural classrooms, which is a direct contravention of the policy (Mokoena and Hlalele, 2022:14). Overcrowding also creates the problem of teacher-

learner ratios. In severe cases, disadvantaged schools and underprivileged schools find themselves on the brink of closure, which results in learners staying at home or moving to schools in areas outside their communities. This is problematic as transportation is another undealt challenge that faces rural communities. Often, students have to walk kilometres in unsafe conditions to get to school, as will be shown in greater detail in the next chapter. Equal Education's initiatives have drawn attention to the conditions of most struggling schools in the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province.

However, there are still schools in "unrecognised areas" in the district with hazardous and undignified learning environments, such as schools in the Ga-Matlala area which I examine in depth in the next chapter to draw attention to the challenges that the schools in this area face. The LDoE's argument has always been that they are working under an already constrained norms and standards budget. However, their lack of credible plans, and even a sound system to take all possible strides and explore every avenue and appropriate alternatives to ensure the sufficient implementation of the regulations indicates otherwise.

4.3 An Assessment of the Environment and Surroundings of the Schools

The six focus schools were situated in four villages in the Ga-Matlala region and were close to each other. Ramalapa Primary School is situated in Ramalapa village, about a 15 to 20-minute drive to Matlala Road, where Tau Kwena Primary School was situated. Rachebole Primary School and Mahoai High School were found in Ga-Mahoai while Sekgwari Primary School and Ipopeng High School were neighbouring schools in Setumong village. These schools consisted of predominantly Black Sepedi speakers. The schools were either surrounded by or next to *mashemo* (fields) which means that learners passed by or would have to walk across the fields to get to their school premises. Within the school premises, there were about three to four long structured buildings used as either classes or staff rooms. Although Rachebole Primary School and Mahoai High School had mobile toilets, there were not enough to accommodate the population of learners. The schools did not have other school areas such as staff or administration rooms, even a principal's office (except Ipopeng and Mahoai High School). The principal and educators had to divide classrooms with steel stationery cupboards or move chairs and desks aside to create room for an office or a Maths Science, and Technology (MST) classroom.

Figure 4.1: Image of chairs and tables moved aside to create space for MST class which is also an office for the school curriculum manager at Rachebole High School. Photograph by the author (2024).

Figure 4.2: Image of long classroom structure at Sekgwari Primary School. Photograph by the author (2024).

The classrooms were not in good condition. Especially in Tau Kwena Primary School, the ceiling was falling apart and their classrooms lacked proper flooring/tiling. Moreover, poor, unsafe and unhygienic pits or toilets or unitary areas characterised most of these schools. Sekgwari Primary School used two mobile toilets (one for boys and one for girls) for the entire

school. Taking into account that there was no access to reliable water sources in these rural areas, most of these schools had not been provided with adequate water tanks by the government in line with the implementation of this policy. Notwithstanding that the rural setting often does not allow for fancy security and fencing, security in these schools was compromised. The school premises were covered by chain link fences with little to no security to regulate who entered or exited them. In terms of libraries, science laboratories, playground areas for foundation phase learners, sporting areas or other areas that make a school environment according to the regulations of the policy, these facilities were either non-existent, very limited or in ruins.

Upon my visits to these six schools, I also realised that the implementation of the regulations set out in the policy, let alone the existence of this policy, was a foreign concept to most of the teachers, SGB members and some principals in the schools.

My visit to these schools entailed arranging to visit the schools for on-site observations to observe infrastructural conditions in these schools mentioned above and also set up appointments with teachers, SGB members and principals who had been in these historically marginalised schools for more than 13 years for interviews. I conducted about 16 open-ended interviews with at least two teachers and a principal from each school, who were all Black. I initially needed teachers who had been in the schools since 2013 or before the enactment of the policy because they would be able to fully compare conditions in their schools before the enactment of the policy and after the policy was enacted. I found it challenging to find educators who had been in the school for more than 10 years because schools in the Ga-Matlala area are constantly merged or closed, which will be shown through some interviews conducted below. However, also conducting interviews with teachers who joined the schools after 2013 proved to have the same desired effect. They had been in the schools long enough to notice the achievement of one or two of the four deadlines set for achieving the policy regulations and could also speak on the schools' infrastructural conditions. Participants were anonymised and their personal information (age, qualifications, marriage status, etc.) was not revealed, only their race (Black), to validate the purpose of this research. I use descriptive codes to identify the participants. Herein, I refer to them as 'teacher 1 from school A', or 'teacher 2 from school B', 'SGB Member 1' and 'principal'. To further protect the participants in line with the university's ethical considerations, I also anonymised the names of the schools where participants were quoted. The schools herein are referred to as School A, B, C, D, E, or F.

Participants spoke mostly in Sepedi, however, because of their profession they could understand questions asked in English and were able to code-switch between the two languages during their interviews. They had a clear understanding of how education policies and legislation should work and serve the needs of their schools.

The interviews conducted sought to find out whether the policy had been implemented in the six schools chosen, how it had been implemented, and the impact and implications of its implementation in these schools 10 years after its enactment. It is fundamental to emphasise that there were deadlines set for achieving the goals of this policy so that we could measure the progress of its implementation – whether classrooms or sanitary toilets had been implemented at the time stipulated in the policy deadlines or if the PEDs were running behind the scheduled implementation of these regulations and why.

To understand what is meant by "educational infrastructure" referred to in this chapter, Nndweleni (2020: iv) categorises school buildings (classrooms, offices, etc.), equipment that includes teaching aids, computers, typewriters and computer science and laboratory equipment as educational infrastructural materials which are necessary for teaching and learning. As an extension of her categorisation of educational infrastructures necessary for teaching and learning, she includes teacher common rooms, toilets, restrooms, reading rooms and dispensaries as part of the categorisation. This study uses Nndweleni's (2020: iv–1) categorisation of infrastructural materials and includes water facilities, sporting grounds, laboratories, classrooms roofing, flooring and tiling and security fences in that categorisation. According to the four deadlines that were set for when the regulations relating to the policy should be achieved, by 29 November 2016 all public schools which were made of inappropriate materials such as mud, asbestos, metal or wood needed to be replaced with new materials (Equal Education, 2017). Moreover, adequate water and sanitation should be provided in all public schools. The second phase of achieving regulations set out in this policy required an adequate supply of classrooms, electricity, water and sanitation (Equal Education, 2017). All these should be implemented by 29 November 2020, and by 29 November 2023, all schools should have library and laboratory facilities. The deadline requires that in the last phase of implementing the regulations set out in the policy, all norms should have been properly implemented in public schools so that the focus could shift to implementing recreational facilities in these schools such as school halls, sports fields, parking lots, walkways and disability access features (Equal Education, 2011) – all which should be done by 2030. The

four-phase deadlines that were set to achieve regulations of this policy provided ample time for members of the Department of Education and districts to see through the implementation of some of the regulations provided in this policy in public schools.

Unfortunately for public schools in the rural areas of Ga-Matlala, 10 years after the policy was enacted, they did not know the luxury of having a consistent supply of water, sanitary toilets or even an adequate supply of classrooms.

4.4 Common Trends Noted During the Interviews

4.4.1 Class issues within the communities

There were some common trends or rather concerns that I identified during the interviews. Firstly, there were class issues among members of the communities. There existed subtle animosity towards parents who could send their children to better schools in urban areas and towns. As a result, parents in these villages unconsciously divided themselves into "parents who are disadvantaged" and those who "do not have it worse off". This created divisions among community members in that "poor parents are getting the wrong end of the stick" when they expressed the challenges their children faced in their schools or when the time to unite as the community to fight against the closure of schools in the village arose. SGB member 1 of School A explained her experience with the closure of the school:

> I went to the education circuit manager to plead that they provide us with transport or at least more time for parents to prepare themselves and get all that is needed (uniform and transport) for our children before the school's closure. To also get a chance to plead with other parents in the village to bring back their children to the school so that it reaches needed capacity to keep it open… However, parents who could send their children to 'better' functioning schools in more advanced areas were not at all helpful to us (Interview with SGB member 1 of School A, 30 April 2024).

In another discussion, Teacher 1 from School B expressed a similar view:

> There is not much care given to these schools anymore, that is why nowadays people build private schools and those of us who can afford to take our children to those private schools should because even the government does not care about schools in the rural areas (Interview with teacher 1 from School B, 2 May 2024).

In detailing her experiences, the former SGB sparked an interesting dynamic that I also noticed in other participants. Parents who could afford to send their children to private schools did not

show the same care for the challenges learners in schools in their villages faced. Just like the LDoE, “those challenges do not concern them”. This further promoted impressions that further diminished schools in the villages – that there was nothing to these schools and what they could offer. Moreover, the lack of urgency from the PEDs on challenges that learners in rural schools faced imitated the responses of the apartheid government in dealing with matters that affected Black schools. These were policies that were racially discriminatory and deliberately disadvantaged the education of Black learners (Equal Education, 2017:13). Parents started to perceive the government as one that did not cater for the needs of the marginalised. A more concerning implication is that they lost the “ideological trust” they had for the post-apartheid government and developed what is called “experiential trust”. Askvik (2008:517) refers to ideological trust as the promises that the newly appointed government offers that they will bring about change in society for the better, while experiential trust reflects people’s actual experiences concerning how policies are implemented and whether the services that they hope for are delivered. The lack of trust in the way the government performed in terms of delivering promised services could enable larger problems in how people within communities interact and relate with each other.

4.4.2 Little to no knowledge of the policy among participants

More than 60% of the participants did not have any knowledge of the policy prior to our interviews, although the trend among them was to quickly mention how the conditions in schools they occupied were in dire need of improvement because the current conditions of the schools were unconducive for learning. Even so, they had no knowledge of a policy that set out the standards they hoped for in their schools. Those participants who did know about the policy claimed that there were workshops held that partially introduced the policy to them when it was enacted. However, they could not elaborate on what it entailed:

> I have some knowledge of the policy, and my first impressions of the policy were that the policy is good, positive. We attended a workshop where we got to know about the regulations of the policy (Interview with principal of School C, 3 May 2024).

The participant did not elaborate on the regulations of the policy. Similarly, other participants who claimed to know the policy could not explain what its provisions were.

> I have reasonable knowledge of the policy. But not that much knowledge, what I have been told about the policy is that a class must have about 30-40 learners in a class (Interview with teacher 1 from School B, 2 May 2024).

> I have knowledge of the policy; the department ran a workshop through the Matlala District and Circuit for schools in line with the introduction of this policy. Money to oversee the implementation of this policy was done in terms of the learner-enrolment ratio. If the school has a low enrolment of learners, it means money provided in line with this policy will also be low (Interview with principal from School D, 2 May 2024).

Only principals of the schools claimed that they attended the workshop where the policy was introduced to them. Other educators had only heard about the policy from their social circles. This shows that although there was some knowledge of the policy, educators were sometimes unable to keep up with ever-changing education policies and legislation.

4.4.3 Lack of trust in the Limpopo Department of Education

Participants showed a lack of trust in the LDoE to provide any tangible resolutions to the challenges their schools were currently facing. Although words like "I do not trust the Limpopo Department of Education" were not explicitly uttered, they implied in their responses a lack of trust in the department because it did not seem to take their concerns seriously. After all, "they are situated in a small village in the rural area" as one participant commented when asked about the department's role in the implementation of the policy. Other participants who claimed that the department did not care about their grievances included SGB member 1 of School A (30 April 2024).

> As a parent, when the school was about to be closed, I was mostly worried about the financial implications of the closing of the school. My family and I survive off SASSA (South African Social Security Agency) grant and closing the school and my children integrated into another school in another village meant that I had to get transport for my children and new school uniforms off the SASSA grant that my family relies on as the only source of income. The government gives us social grants and then again takes these grants away from us in such cases, these grants do not serve their intended purpose, which is to feed our children because we have to use them for all other inconveniences that come with living in such conditions as ours.

Her response to the challenges she faced upon the closure of School A implied that the department overlooked the implications of closing schools in "disadvantaged villages".

Other participants expressed:

> People from the department come and do regular visits and checks in the school. However, even though they come to the school regularly, they are of no help… (Interview with teacher 1 from School C, 2 May 2024).

> The department does not do anything at all (Interview with teacher 1 from School E, 3 May 2024).

> We wait for the department to provide us with facilities for a long time, but when it comes to our schools, the department is not very hands-on (Interview with teacher 2 from School E, 3 May 2024).

However, in criticising the department for not taking challenges faced by rural schools in historically marginalised areas seriously, some teachers showed that they would rather find resolutions on their own or from external sponsors or donors than wait for the LDoE to come to their rescue. Moreover, they claimed that external sponsors showed more enthusiasm in assisting than the department.

In Tau Kwena Primary School, the sports centre at the school was provided by MultiChoice. They have also improved the school's kitchen and contributed to fencing around the school as one of the interviewed teachers explained. Moreover, the Enviro-loo toilets that the school was using were donated by the South African Lotto. At Rachebole Primary School, the school curriculum manager claimed that to try and manage overcrowding in the school, the school had gone to the extent of going to Harry Oppenheimer School (a school in a neighbouring village) to ask for a mobile class that they were no longer using. Even though the mobile class was not in good condition ("it was used and old"), the school had no choice but to take it because they were in dire need of classroom space.

The common trends identified during the interviews are detailed to indicate how far the effects of the lack of policy implementation can extend. It not only affects how educators in these schools perceive and relate to the government, but it can also affect how people in the community relate to each other and how they seek resolutions for problems. A more concerning image in this chapter is that a decade after the enactment of this policy, Draga's (2017:238) view that South African rural schools are characterised by crumbling classrooms, unfunctional toilets, cracked fences and inadequate or non-existent libraries and laboratories remain relevant.

4.5 Analysing the Infrastructural Conditions in the Six Schools

The conditions in South African rural schools reflect the failures of the government in their efforts to implement policies and legislation to transform the South African education system (Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene, 2020:1). Schools in the rural areas continue to face poor infrastructure and lack of resources that they need for quality learning (Kgomotlokoa and Nkadimene, 2020:1). Despite the government's enactment of policies to reform conditions in historically marginalised rural schools, the conditions in these schools still represent the inequalities that existed as a result of the historical discrimination and marginalisation of Black people. The enactment of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy was expected to transform public schools, particularly those in rural areas, given the circumstances under which it was introduced. However, the policy seems to have taken the same direction as hundreds of South African educational policies – falling short in its implementation.

When participants spoke about the infrastructural conditions in their schools, they mentioned mostly the regulations that were set to be achieved by 29 November 2020 under phase 2 of the policy implementation. The biggest challenges in these schools seemed to lie in the conditions of their classes, water supply, toilets, security, libraries, laboratories and sporting grounds. They all agreed that a good physical environment in a school contributed to conducive learning. Thus, the physical environment of a school should be an important priority when aiming to create a favourable learning environment (Nhlapo, 2020:1). In responding to questions about the infrastructural conditions in their schools the educators gave these responses about the state of their classes:

> Our classes are impossible to manage since they are overcrowded. We have more than 60 learners in the classroom. There exists no individual teaching and even teacher's attitudes toward teaching have changed. As long as *ke ile diklaseng* (as long as I have gone to class) to teach what I have to teach. There is nothing more I can do in such packed classes… The atmosphere in these classes is not conducive for learning as well because the space is so small and during winter days when diseases are easily spread, most educators and learners are susceptible to catching colds. I also cannot move around in our classrooms and identify learners who are struggling to grasp content (Interview with teacher 1 from School B, 2 May 2024).

> …Some of our classrooms are divided by lockers so that we can at least have two rooms to use- a classroom and an office or a kitchen. Teachers have no privacy as they do not have facilities designated for them. We are always in our classrooms and the principal doesn't have an office of his own. He shares

> the classroom we have divided with lockers with the administration. It is sometimes devastating to teach in such conditions (Interview with teacher 2 from School B, 2 May 2024).
>
> Ventilation in our classes is very poor, the windows in some classes are not in good condition, and even the flooring in these classes. Perhaps if the policy was implemented properly we could tile these classroom floors and they would look better. The number of classrooms we have cannot accommodate the number of learners we have (Interview with teacher 2 from School B, 2 May 2024).
>
> Our classes are not overcrowded, even though we have learners and teachers from Ramalapa Primary School integrated into our school, we do not have more than 37 learners in our classes because we had fewer learners in our school before the integration. But our classes are in bad shape. Look, our floors have bumps and we do not even have cleaners in the school (Interview with teacher 1 from School D, 2 May 2024).

In an interview with another teacher 2 from School D, she claimed:

> I can give the school 30-40 per cent in terms of the environment. By the environment, I mean whether it is clean for learners, and it is not conducive, even our foundation phase learners cannot play freely on school grounds … I have resorted to dividing this classroom into multiple sections for my learners. There is one section that I call the library area … I just improvised with the little resources I had but it is still a small space (Interview with teacher 2 from School D, 2 May 2024).
>
> We do not have enough classrooms in our school. As a result, I had about 71 learners in my class last year and this year I have about 50. … As foundation phase teachers we are required to do a method called 'shared' reading with our learners and this method requires us to sit down on a carpet with our learners but we cannot even do that because of space constraints. And classes are not easily manageable. I didn't have high-blood issues, but now I have because of the conditions in our classrooms that are not manageable. If we had about 30-35 learners like the policy stipulates then it would be easier to manage them (Interview with teacher 1 from School E, 3 May 2024).

During my on-site inspections, I noted that classrooms at Sekgwari, Rachebole and Tau Kwena Primary Schools were divided with steel stationery cupboards to create more room. There were three divisions in one classroom where it was an administration office, the principal's office, a library or even a staff room. The appalling conditions in these classrooms can lead to additional problems as some of the educators have claimed. It was not only impossible for educators and learners to function in the conditions in these classrooms, but the lack of ventilation or unmanageable classes was detrimental to their health. Nndweleni (2020:2) discusses how Black learners during apartheid were attending lessons under trees and in unhealthy dilapidated

old mud classrooms or the open sunny environment. During my on-site visits at Tau Kwena Primary School, some foundation phase learners were sitting under a tree on a sunny day while the teacher was reading them a book. These conditions continue to further disadvantage a historically marginalised group and degrade their dignity to learn in proper conditions in this democratic country, reproducing the conditions Black learners had to endure under apartheid. Though a large part of the problem of learners not being able to read for meaning stems from a lack of educational aids, the physical environment as Khumalo and Mji (2024) argue also contributes to learning. A learner being taught how to read a book under a tree on a sunny day would likely not grasp content as efficiently as they are expected to. Events such as COVID-19, having 'two in one' classrooms by dividing classrooms with steel stationery cupboards, and not having offices and facilities for teachers threaten the health of vulnerable children and elderly educators, not to mention the challenge of having adequate supplies of water and proper sanitation. How many learners or teachers have to die as a result of such appalling conditions in rural schools for the government to take them seriously? While some schools in rural areas are fortunate to have external sponsors that provide resources, schools in rural areas are neglected by the government because of their geographical location. I agree with Khumalo and Mji's (2014:1521) sentiments that it is the government's obligation to provide proper and adequate school infrastructure, especially classrooms, that would create favourable learning experiences.

There were exceptions where some participants claimed that the classroom conditions in their schools were satisfactory:

> Our School consisted of sufficient and well-functioning classrooms, there were security butlers on our classroom doors for security purposes. The infrastructural state of the school was satisfactory before its closure (Interview with teacher 1 from School A, 30 April 2024).

Unfortunately, the school was closed in 2023 due to low-learner enrolment. A former teacher 1 from School A (30 April 2024) explained the problem of low enrolments in the school as follows:

> The kids in the school did not meet the minimum number required for a school, there were no kids at the school as most parents in the village and surrounding areas have started a trend of taking their kids to well-resourced schools in town.

Although the former teacher and SGB member of the school claimed that the school consisted of sufficient and well-functioning infrastructure, the harsh reality is that the poor quality of resources in schools in rural areas discourages "well-off" parents because they can afford to send their children to what is known as "better and quality" education in urban or private schools. However, there has been an increase in Black parents sending their children to private schools and avoiding historically marginalised schools; because of this, teachers in these schools have contended that the quality of education offered in historically marginalised schools is deteriorating (Msila, 2008). This shows just how personally we should start taking a lack of implementation of educational policies that are aimed at improving conditions in historically marginalised schools. The standard of schools in rural areas should not be completely eroded to the point that they have to close and people in these villages who cannot afford to send their children to urban and private schools do not know where to send their children. The question of who deserves better education and educational opportunities should also not arise.

Moreover, the closure of the School meant that learners from the school had to be moved and merged into schools in surrounding areas whose resources were already strained. The former SGB member of the School discussed her concerns about parents like her, who could not buy their children new uniforms and incur other expenses such as transport to ensure that their children seamlessly transitioned into their new schools. The process of merging schools seemed to have major implications for parents who were already disadvantaged and learners, causing further disruptions and inequalities in these communities.

Furthermore, the closure of schools in the village without a substantial plan of what should be done with the school buildings or demolishing them created safety concerns in the community. For instance, the closure of Mapale High School, next to Ramalapa Primary School, created a hotspot for criminals to conduct illegal activities which compromised the safety of the community. Moreover, it contravened educational policies, such as the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy's objectives that there should be equitable access to education and no child should walk long distances to attend schooling in another village. Although the reason for the closure of both Ramalapa Primary School and Mapale High School was because of low learner enrolment, at the core of this problem was under-resourcing which led to dire infrastructural conditions that compelled parents to move their children from these schools to more advantaged schools in the urban areas.

The danger then of not regularly maintaining the infrastructural conditions in these schools left them vulnerable to inappropriate and unsafe use, creating long-term challenges for the community. Teacher 1 (a former teacher at School A and a community member), (30 April 2024) claimed:

> We are not safe surrounded by these abandoned buildings, at least if these buildings were reused for something purposeful such as youth centres that would have been helpful. Instead, these buildings become destructive to the village … criminals can rape young girls playing freely around the village and keep them in these buildings and we would not know. I am sure young boys go and smoke there. There are abandoned books, desks and tables that would have been put to good use there. And in our school, if it is not already happening, will be like Mapale High School … my kids used to school there, what would become of our village?

Figure 4.3: Images of abandoned Mapale High School. Photograph by the author (2024).

In terms of other infrastructural conditions such as water, toilets, libraries, and laboratories the participants claimed the following:

> Although we have water at the school, and even that it is not from the government. It was donated by Meropa Casino and Entertainment. The school does not have enough toilets. I even had to suggest a urinating wall to the school and SGB members so that our male learners can use and it has been helpful (Interview with teacher 2 from School B, 02 May 2024).

> There are only two blocks of ventilated pit toilets in the school (which is four ventilated toilets in total) for female learners to use, while boys only have one block (2 ventilated toilets in total) and a urinating wall to use… There is water in the school but it is not enough because our tanks do not get full. There are also no sporting facilities in the school and there is only one computer for the staff to use at the school but there are no computers for learners, no laboratory and library facilities (Interview with SGB member 2 from School B, 02 May 2024).

The current conditions in the school persist despite the phase 1 and phase 2 deadlines of achieving the policy regulations set out for 29 November 2016 and 29 November 2020. Other schools also faced a similar problem of lack of water and sanitation:

> There are no offices, a staff room or a kitchen for teachers and the principal. … We do not have toilets, our toilets are ruined, they were demolished because they were in a bad condition. Then we were provided with mobile toilets from an external sponsor, even these mobile toilets we have were once stolen… We have water, about eight tanks. … We also have a library in the school with books but there is a shortage of workbooks for our children because when the department provides us with books, they provide them using an un-updated number of children in the school. They are not updated on the number of children we currently have in the school so the resources they offer do not cater to the exact number of children we currently have (Interview with teacher 1 from School C, 2 May 2024).

> We have a sports centre that has been provided by MultiChoice and not the department. The toilets we have are also in better shape and they were donated by the South African Lotto, they are not part of a project from the Department of Education (Interview with teacher 1 from Primary School D, 2 May 2024).

In another interview with teacher 2 from School D (2 May 2024), she had a different opinion on the state of the toilets and other facilities in the school:

> We only have a total of four toilets in total for foundation phase learners (2 for boys and two for girls). They are toilets of normal sizes, but foundation phase learners should have toilets if their own sizes because they are small. The toilets we have are not safe for them. Even the ones we have, they were fixed in 2022 after an incident of a child who drowned in a toilet at his school in Limpopo, Chibeng. A researcher who

> was covering the story of that incident urged the government and organisations to take the state of toilets in rural schools seriously.

She proceeded to explain the incident of Michael Komape, discussed in earlier chapters of this study. The passing of Michael Komape is what prompted the urgent need to implement the regulations of the policy (Draga, 2017:240). It also served as a constant reminder of the consequences of inadequate conditions in schools in rural areas. Moreover, based on teacher 2 from School D's responses, it appeared as though changes in schools in the rural areas occurred only after "major incidents" such as the passing of Michael Komape. Perhaps unfortunate events are a wake-up call that the LDoE needs to take the infrastructural conditions of schools in the rural areas seriously and implement policies that will improve the conditions in these schools accordingly.

The majority of the schools I interviewed claimed not to have proper working toilets:

> Our toilets are not in good condition, even though we now have Enviro-loo toilets, they are not drained regularly as they should. We also do not have sporting grounds. The last time we had a sports ground was through the South African Lotto initiative a long time ago and the ground is far from the school grounds (close to Mahoai High which is a few streets away from our School) and it does not work (Interview with Teacher 2 from School E, 3 May 2024).

Other major concerns that the participants identified were inadequate supplies of water, no cleaners in the school and that teachers did not have any staff facilities such as staff rooms, offices or administration offices. Another challenge these schools faced was a lack of security. Although security in schools in rural areas has never been considered a prevalent concern, criminal incidents in these schools happen quite often. The participants claimed that because of low-quality fencing around the school grounds, no one at the school gate to regulate who comes into the school premises and a lack of surveillance, "community criminals" have become comfortable with stealing school resources such as food from the school feeding schemes, mobile toilets and window frame handles.

> There is no security in the school, they once stole our water tanks in the school and also window frame handles. They have also stolen cooking pots from the kitchen and whenever we report such issues they say that as the school we must, make a plan (Interview with teacher 1 from School C, 2 May 2024).

> Security is an issue, at the moment, people can come here and take whatever they would like to take because there is no one at the gate regulating people who come in and out. We do not have security and even if we look for security who is going to pay because our school resources are already constrained? (Interview with teacher 3 from School E, 2 May 2024).

Proper implementation of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy that promises a chance to improve the infrastructural conditions in rural schools should not be seen as just another task the LDoE needs to tick off the box – education is the key to maintaining our hard-earned freedom and continuing the growth of freedom throughout the world (Nndweleni, 2020:1). Therefore, recognising these key features of education in our country will make the proper implementation of this policy more impactful to our freedom as a country. Perhaps this is how policy implementers need to approach the implementation of already existing policies to achieve the desired changes.

While sporting facilities were of fundamental importance in some schools, they were not seen as primary concerns in other schools. Renovating classrooms, getting sanitary toilets and an adequate supply of water were seen as basic needs the schools needed to reach, what the principal of School C called "necessities for a conducive learning environment".

The infrastructural conditions in the six visited schools warrant a deeper analysis of the process of educational transformation post-1994. This analysis would show to what extent the changes that were made during the process to transform the South African education system have succeeded in achieving an educational system that is not characterised by historical injustices and is equitable as stipulated in the Freedom Charter.

4.6 Impressions of the Implementation of the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy in the Schools

When participants were asked for their views on the government's enactment of this policy their responses were initially positive. The policy, in its entirety, appeared to be a positive change in conditions in struggling public schools. The policy would exhaust every possible avenue to give effect to the norms and standards aimed at enhancing the level of basic school infrastructure in all public schools to address system inequalities experienced by all learners and teachers (DBE, 2024). However, when asked how the policy had been implemented in their schools and the impact thereof, educators claimed, "*Ga se ba ka ba phethagatsa selo*" (They have not implemented anything). During our interviews, they claimed:

> In terms of the policy, there has not been any changes in terms of its regulations since I have been in this school and even though people from the department used to come for regular visits at our school, our conditions remain the same. We are still waiting for change but they have promised us to do something, to provide us with toilets and renovate of our buildings (Interview with principal from School C, 3 May 2024).

> The department has come to the school to inspect the school multiple times but so far there has not been any change that they have implemented in the school. We used to see them a lot during Covid-19 times. That's when they used to come the most. I have been in the school since 2017 and there has been no infrastructural change in the school in terms of the 29 November 2020 deadline of implementing the policy's regulations that you are talking about. Besides painting the classroom roofs and putting tanks that are from Ramalapa Primary School after the schools were merged in 2023. So far nothing has been done, look, even our floors are in ruins… (Interview with teacher 1 from School D, 2 May 2024).

> I thought this policy was going to benefit more schools like ours… even though we have submitted some requests to the department so that can build us new classrooms and office structures, the budget seems to be constrained because most of the amount, about 60% of the budget goes to curriculum, while a small percentage goes to infrastructure renovations and maintenance (Interview with principal from School D, 2 May 2024).

Whereas it cannot be expected that a school with more than 1 000 learners would receive the same budget as a school with about 400 learners, the post-1994 government undertook a commitment to provide a quality, equitable, and democratic education system (Motala, 2006: 79). Therefore, the allocation of resources in these schools should be based on equity and redress. Provincial departments should ensure the proper facilitation and coordination of the responsibilities of the government agencies and entities that provide infrastructure-related services as noted in subregulation 12(9) of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2024). During discussions of educators' experiences in their respective schools, they believed the PEDs had failed to act in this regard.

Another educator had the following to say about the implementation of this policy in their schools:

> At first, I thought the policy could have a positive impact in terms of making sure that the schools have proper infrastructure buildings, and the schools are renovated where needed. However, the policy does not cover major issues that we face in our villages, that most schools are closed or merged. The closed school buildings are demolished or left abandoned. And these are mostly good schools. Which I think it affects

> the infrastructure in our current schools, merging schools lead to a lot of challenges like overcrowding in schools and strained resources (Interview with principal from school F, 3 May 2024).

The educators' response implies "empty promises without delivery", a characteristic that defines policy implementation and service delivery in South Africa, especially considering the constant extensions by the LDoE to meet the deadlines set out in the Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (Equal Education, 2024). It would be hard for participants to entrust the PEDs to carry out the implementation of the regulations of this policy as stipulated by the Minister of Basic Education.

It is important that we do not interpret the educator's little knowledge of what the policy entails as a lack of substance or relevance in their analysis of the conditions in their schools. Given their occupation, the educators were able to articulate and understand clearly what the policy regulations entailed when I explained them. Thus, they're not knowing what the policy entailed when they were asked at the beginning of their interviews should not nullify their responses on how they perceived the changes that have been happening in their schools and their impressions of the policy. Moreover, during the interviews, some educators showed great initiative by proposing resolutions on how the conditions in their schools could be improved in line with the regulations set out in the policy.

4.7 What Can Be Done to Improve Conditions in These Schools

Teachers have taken various initiatives to try and improve the infrastructural conditions in their schools. Teachers who worked in the selected rural primary and high schools did their utmost to ensure that education continued to be a priority for their learners even though they were not well-equipped with relevant resources. These included taking more classes to teach, voicing their concerns during teaching workshops and proposing new ideas to lessen the burden of under-resourcing in their schools. At School B, teacher 2 claimed to have proposed a urination wall for the male learners because the school did not have enough toilets. Although a urination wall has assisted in alleviating the burden of insufficient sanitation facilities, it contravenes 12(1) of the regulations under sanitation which requests that sanitation facilities provide privacy and security while promoting health and hygiene standards (DBE, 2024). The smell of urine coming from the wall cannot be easily cleaned which compromises the air around school facilities, in this case, a water tank. However, teachers desperately came up with these resolutions to resolve the challenges that came with a lack of resources, even though their

resolutions were often unconventional. In the same breath, teacher 2 claimed that the school tuckshop's money was used to build a shade for the teachers' cars. In more responses, other educators claimed:

> We have tried as educators to submit our grievances during teachers' workshops of what is needed in our classes and the school for our learners without success (Interview with Teacher 2 from School D, 2 May 2024).

> We do not have any facilities for Maths, Science and Technology in our school. As a result, we have taken one of the classrooms and made it an MST class, which has some equipment and learning aids needed for these subjects. But it is difficult to take all learners of one class to that classroom because there are a lot of them, it is also used as a staff room. Therefore, our learners are unable to access information in that class properly (Interview with Teacher 3 from School E, 3 May 2024).

However, the educators' responses illustrated that even though they took the initiative to create better teaching and learning environments in their schools with the resources they could use, their initiatives were not sufficient without the provision of proper resources.

4.8 Conclusion

Hundreds of educational policies and legislation have been passed to reform the South African education system. However, there has been no fundamental change, especially in the infrastructural conditions of historically marginalised schools in the rural villages of Ga-Matlala. Restoration and reform in these schools seem to be moving at a snail's pace. The discussions covered with the participants show that there is inadequate maintenance and provision of school infrastructure in Ga-Matlala schools that affect both learning and teaching activities in these schools. It seems as though the implementation of the regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy has not been carried out as outlined in the LDoE's 2016 and 2024 Infrastructure norms and standards Report. The LDoE has failed to take initiatives that address and tackle infrastructural backlogs in these schools, compromising the safety and dignity of learners and teachers in the schools (Equal Education, 2024). In the six schools visited, there has been little to barely any implementation that has taken place in terms of the regulations set out. Overcrowding in classrooms, unsafe sanitation facilities, and lack of basic school areas (libraries, technology and science classrooms, staff and administration rooms) to facilitate teaching and learning still characterise rural schools of the Ga-Matlala area more than 30 years post-apartheid. Thus,

consideration should be given to the challenges and concerns involved in implementing this policy to better understand the evident disconnect between policy enactment and implementation identified in this chapter.

Chapter Five: An Analysis of How the Current Conditions in the Six Visited Schools Undermine Social Justice

5.1 Introduction

Building on the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy framework discussed in chapters 3 and 4, this chapter provides an analysis of the challenges to the social justice agenda when implementing the policy in rural schools of the Limpopo province. It highlights gaps between policy regulation updates and the lived realities of rural schools, specifically Ramalapa, Sekgwari, Tau Kwena Primary Schools and Ipopeng and Mahoai High Schools.

This chapter begins by analysing how the implementation of this policy in these schools undermines the government's commitment to achieving social justice through educational transformation. The chapter emphasises the detrimental impact of inadequate infrastructure on learners' safety, dignity and access to quality education. It then provides reflections on teachers' perspectives on the LDoE's failure to uphold policy regulations, exploring factors such as budget constraints, poor planning and the LDoE's lack of urgency. Lastly, the chapter argues that for South Africa's social and economic development, all schools must meet the regulations of this policy to uphold the social justice agenda and prevent exposing learners to unsafe and undignified conditions.

5.2 Undermining the Government's Social Justice Agenda

The South African education system remains deeply marked by disparities rooted in historical, constitutional, and social inequalities (Van Dyk and White, 2019: S1). However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, the post-1994 government committed itself to addressing these inequities, particularly within the education sector (Van Dyk and White, 2019: S2). Educational transformation, as emphasised in the 1996 Supreme Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the SASA of 1996 legislation and the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, is founded on two fundamental principles: equity and redress. Without these principles, the vision of social justice remains unattainable.

The commitment to educational transformation post-1994 was rooted in recognising education as a cornerstone of democracy and a pathway to ensuring decent life for all citizens (Rembe, 2005:3). Through legislations and policies prioritising equity and redress, the government sought to redistribute resources and address systemic inequalities (Motala, 2006:80). However, the LDoE's lack of urgency in addressing the basic infrastructural needs of rural schools undermines these goals. Their consistent failure to meet legally binding deadlines, coupled with policy reports that are often inconsistent and lack actionable plans, reflects a disregard for the transformative objectives of social justice.

Although there is not much literature on the policy to evidence how the proper implementation of it should look like by 2024 and considering that there exists no straightforward policy implementation process, the discussions in chapters 3 and 4 show that the regulations of the policy before the recent amendment asked for the provision of sufficient classrooms to accommodate all learners enrolled in the school. It also asked for adequate perimeter fencing of the school area and access to proper and sufficient provision of water and sanitation areas. In addition, the regulations asked for an enabling teaching and learning environment equipped with necessary education areas (sports facilities, staff and administration areas) and access to a school library and laboratories for science, technology and life sciences (DBE, 2013) within stipulated binding guidelines.

However, the interviews and on-site observations revealed the LDoE's profound failure to meet the 29 November 2016 policy deadline, which required replacing all public schools constructed with inappropriate materials and ensuring adequate water and sanitation facilities (Equal Education, 2017). For instance, at Tau Kwena Primary School, classrooms were in severe disrepair, with crumbling floors and collapsing ceilings as highlighted in chapter 4. In addition, inadequate and unsafe water and sanitation facilities persist across the six schools visited, with five still reliant on unhygienic pit toilets, mobile units or shared areas. These conditions reflect how the LDoE is dragging its feet in meeting the set deadlines, undermining the social justice agenda by perpetuating educational inequities, denying learners their right to safe and dignified learning environments, and failing to address the historical disadvantages faced by marginalised communities.

Infrastructural challenges confronted in Sekgwari and Tau Kwena Primary Schools also starkly illustrate the LDoE's disregard for the urgency of meeting deadlines and implementing policy regulations to promote the social justice agenda. Over a decade since the enactment of this policy, the persistent poor conditions in these schools cannot be dismissed as mere implementation delays. Instead, they reflect a systemic failure and ongoing disregard for the educational and developmental rights of poor Black learners, perpetuating inequities the policy was intended to resolve. Overcrowded classrooms, such as those with over 60 students instead of the policy-mandated maximum of 40 (DBE, 2024:13), create hostile learning environments where students struggle to learn, and teachers face unmanageable workloads, as highlighted by teacher 1 from Ipopeng High School in Chapter 4.

Despite the 29 November 2023 deadline, critical facilities like libraries, laboratories and sports grounds remain absent in the six schools visited. For example, Tau Kwena Primary School's functional sports facilities were provided by external sponsors rather than through policy implementation, while other schools, such as Sekgwari Primary, prioritise basic needs like classrooms, water, sanitation and security over developmental facilities.

This lack of infrastructure forces schools to compromise, such as converting limited classroom space into makeshift libraries, depriving students of holistic educational opportunities. By failing to fulfil the policy's objectives, the LDoE violates the principles of equity and redress that underpin the social justice agenda. Consequently, schools like Ramalapa Primary and Mapale High were forced to close due to deteriorating conditions. Abandoned school buildings that remain in these areas have become hubs for criminal activity, further disrupting the lives of learners and educators. The lack of action from the LDoE only creates further problems and the continued marginalisation of historically disadvantaged Black schools in rural areas. For meaningful change, the LDoE must demonstrate transparency in its reports and provide detailed, actionable implementation plans that align with the lived realities of these schools.

Educational policies aimed at improving historically disadvantaged schools should not be met with pessimism. Instead, a genuine commitment to their implementation should be visible both in policy updates and in the daily experiences of educators and learners. The tragic loss of children's lives due to unsafe school infrastructure, along with the ongoing endangerment of others, underscores the urgency of aligning policy enactment with the principles of equity, redress and social justice. Unfortunately, the cases examined in this study highlight a stark

disconnect between these ideals and the current reality, demonstrating that the social justice agenda remains unfulfilled.

5.3 Reflections on Teachers' Perspectives on the LDoE's Failure to Uphold Policy Regulations

5.3.1 Budget constraints in the implementation of policy regulations

During an interview conducted with a principal from School D (2 May 2024), an interesting discussion of a major challenge in the implementation of the regulations was brought up. The principal identified budget constraints as one of the reasons why resolving infrastructural challenges is not a priority in their school.

> …I thought this policy was going to benefit more in schools like ours, but unfortunately the disadvantage of it is that the budget allocated to its implementation is based on the enrolment number of learners in a school and we do not have a high enrolment rate in the school. Even though we have submitted requests to the department so that can build new school structures for us, the budget seems to be constrained because most of the budget allocated goes to the curriculum, while a small percentage goes to infrastructure renovations and maintenance (Interview with principal from School D, 02 May 2024).

Taking into account learner enrolment is an important factor in allocating a budget for maintaining conditions in the school. Annexure D, Table D1 and D2 on the Norms for School Sanitation under the regulations relating to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy (DBE, 2024) outline what is considered enough sanitation facilities that are supposed to be accessible in the schools to promote required health and hygiene standards. For close accuracy, the regulations differentiate the total number of learner enrolments between micro-schools, small schools, medium schools, large schools and mega-schools to ensure that a sufficient number of sanitation facilities are provided according to the total learner enrolment. Nowhere in the policy does it prevent a school's infrastructure from being renovated and maintained sufficiently according to the minimum standards to provide for a safe learning environment because of its low or high learner enrolment. Whereas it cannot be expected that a school with more than 1 000 learners will receive the same budget as a school with about 400 learners, however, the government has undertaken a commitment to provide a quality, equitable, and democratic education system (Motala, 2006:79). Therefore, the allocation of resources in these schools should be based on equity and redress.

The South African quintile ranking system, designed to allocate more financial support to lower-ranked schools (Quintiles 1, 2, and 3), does not always translate into equitable resource provision for historically disadvantaged schools (Van Dyk and White, 2019: S2). While the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure policy has influenced the allocation of funds positively (Van Dyk and White, 2019: S2), its poor implementation in the schools it was intended to support perpetuates inequality.

This inequity arises because PEDs often fail to address infrastructural challenges in low-quintile rural schools with the urgency required, despite the financial resources available to meet the policy's regulations. Consequently, schools in these lower quintiles remain at a significant disadvantage compared to higher-quintile schools, which benefit from more affluent networks that provide them with societal, material and organisational advantages. As a result, the quintile system fails to eliminate historical disparities. Lower-quintile schools in rural areas continue to lack the resources and facilities that higher-quintile schools possess, perpetuating the inequitable distribution of educational opportunities and infrastructure (Van Dyk and White, 2019: S3). This ongoing disparity undermines the policy's intent to advance social justice and redress inequalities in the education system.

The LDoE states that more than R13 billion has been spent to create and maintain spaces that are conducive to teaching and learning. However, even with the R13 billion budget, the CSIR's evaluation and assessment of the conditions in the schools in the Limpopo province still suggest serious infrastructural backlogs, lack of maintenance, and shortage of facilities in terms of the norms (Limpopo Provincial Government, 2024). The evaluations and assessments were conducted during a period when all public schools which were made of inappropriate materials such as mud, asbestos, metal or wood should have been replaced with new materials according to the policy deadlines (Equal Education, 2017). Moreover, even the recent policy amendments cannot justify the missing of the deadlines by the LDoE to provide adequate water, sanitation and classrooms as these deadlines should have been met years before the amendments – especially when the LDoE report published this year does not contain up-to-date information of the conditions in the schools in the province. The disconnect that exists between the realities of these schools and the LDoE's implementation plans raises doubts about meeting the 2030 deadline for full compliance.

Essential infrastructural features, such as school halls, functional sporting fields, parking lots, disability access and walkways, remain unattainable. Persistent failures by PEDs to meet even basic requirements have resulted in repeated deadline extensions. Critical issues, including inadequate water and sanitation, classroom shortages and overcrowding, continue to hinder progress, reflecting the enormous effort still needed to address these deficiencies. Although no policy implementation process is perfect, urgency and prioritisation were essential to meet the minimum norms and standards within the original timelines. At a minimum, schools should already have access to basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, classrooms, sanitation facilities and libraries; yet, over 3 300 South African public schools still rely on pit latrines in 2024 (BusinessTech, 2024).

Repeatedly missing deadlines without any firm measures weaken accountability for PEDs (Aneesa, 2024). This retrogressive trend highlights the need for immediate and decisive action to ensure safe and functional school environments, as promised by the policy. The LDoE in missing several legally binding deadlines (2016, 2020 and 2024 sanitation deadlines) of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy continues to violate learners' constitutional rights without any consequences. It ignores the government's commitment to distribute and provide access to adequate resources and services to achieve educational transformation, especially in historically marginalised rural Black schools envisioned in the regulations of the policy.

5.3.2 The question of PEDs' competency and its implications

The LDoE's ignorance of the set law to meet the regulations of the policy at the expense of learners and school communities shows their disregard for the law (Equal Education, 2024). This lack of political will and urgency has become the norm. Challenges of inadequate funding, poor maintenance and a shortage of basic school facilities hinder the provision of quality and safe education. Moreover, the department violates the regulations of the policy which is a direct contravention of the policy's commitment to advancing social justice through educational transformation (Ndungane, Crafford and Moyo, 2024).

Participants interviewed for this study strongly believe that the PEDs are incompetent in carrying out their obligation of properly implementing the regulations set out in the policy. Based on their observations of the conditions in their schools, they show signs of defeat that

their conditions might change for the better. In an interview with Teacher 1 from School B (3 May 2024), they claimed:

> The government doesn't care…even with teachers in public schools understaffed with one teacher teaching classes from Grade 8-12 alone … even though the department has put out regulations that there should be a maximum number of 30-40 learners in class, they know very well that the classes in public schools in the rural areas are overcrowded and they are not doing anything about it…This is because these issues do not directly affect them, because they are able an can afford to send their children to better-equipped and expensive private schools whenever they want.

The teacher's assumptions about the lack of incompetency of the PEDs suggest that the government is failing in its educational goals to improve infrastructure and quality of learning in historically marginalised schools. Inadequate school infrastructure and an unequal distribution of learning and teaching resources in these schools are not only affecting learners' performance and achievement but also educators' ability to deliver to their best capacity (Ndungane *et al.*, 2024). The negative impact on teaching and learning activities in these schools because of infrastructural backlogs means that the post-1994 government is still yet to start the task of restructuring the South African education system towards transformation and reconstruction (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:61). The failure of the LDoE to see through the implementation of most provisions contradicts the policy as a substantial commitment to social justice. Without the provision of safe and quality education, South Africa cannot reach a stage of national development (Ndou, 2022:2). The lack of well-equipped and functional education infrastructure in these rural schools continues to negatively disadvantage those who were previously disadvantaged.

Participants' perceptions of the PEDs' incompetence further erode trust in the government, particularly the loss of ideological trust. This means a loss of confidence once placed in the government's promises to transform the South African education system post-1994 as many initially believed in the government's vision for positive change (Askvik, 2008:517). However, this trust has diminished over time, and instead, a shift towards experiential trust has occurred (Askvik, 2008:517). This reflects a loss of faith in the government's promises, as people's lived experiences of poor infrastructural conditions in their schools have led to disappointment and disillusionment.

This shift highlights the growing disillusionment caused by the PEDs' repeated failure to deliver on the commitments made by the Minister of Basic Education during the policy's enactment, as discussed in Section 4.2.1. The inability to fulfil these promises undermines confidence in the government's capacity to address systemic challenges and achieve meaningful educational transformation.

5.4 Realities Reflected on the Ground

It is essential for South Africa's social and economic development that all schools meet the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (Ndungane *et al.*, 2024). As argued by Ramose (2003:137), South Africa's development has to happen holistically which means educational transformation should also be the government's priority along with social and economic development. The lack of prioritisation of infrastructural school projects and the lack of agency in implementing regulations of this policy reinforces Mestry's (2014:855) argument that in South Africa, the changes in educational transformation have been mainly symbolic and linked to the political climate. Although the government aspires to achieve social justice in and through education, educational transformation has not translated into tangible improvements in classrooms and schools, especially for historically disadvantaged learners (Mestry, 2014:854).

In light of the Department of Basic Education's (2021) NEIMS reports and Equal Education (2024) findings which prove that infrastructural conditions in rural schools of the Limpopo province are worsening, the progress outlined in the LDoE (2016) and Limpopo Provincial Government (2024) infrastructure norms and standards reports do not reflect the realities of these schools on the ground. From my on-site observations and the participants in the six schools I interviewed, the conditions in these schools do not reflect the standard of schooling required in 2024. The LDoE in their failure to prioritise the provision of the above-mentioned regulations exposes learners in rural schools to unsafe learning conditions that strip them of their dignity. No child should be learning under a tree or using an unhygienic and unsafe sanitation facility in 2024.

5.5 Conclusion

Significant disparities remain between policy stipulations and the conditions experienced by school communities, as evidenced by reports from teachers, SGB members and principals. This

discrepancy suggests ongoing irregularities in policy implementation and a concerning neglect of the critical infrastructure needs of rural schools.

While a flawless policy implementation is unlikely, the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy require urgent attention to provide essential facilities such as classrooms, water, sanitation and libraries. However, the repeated delays in implementing these standards exacerbate existing infrastructural backlogs, especially in rural and historically disadvantaged schools, and undermine accountability within PEDs. Despite recent evaluations, significant numbers of schools still lack essential facilities, with inconsistencies across various reports on the extent of pit latrine use, creating a troubling gap in oversight and accountability (Equal Education, 2024). The government's commitment to equitable educational transformation is further weakened by these persistent backlogs, impacting school operations, learner safety and educational quality, therefore undermining their social justice agenda.

Chapter Six: Final Reflections and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate whether the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy has advanced social justice through its implementation, as intended at the time of its enactment. It specifically examined the policy's lack of impact on infrastructural concerns in rural schools in Ga-Matlala village, Limpopo Province, a decade after its introduction.

Chapter One established the foundation for this research, offering a contextual background on the South African education system and the critical role of educational transformation in achieving social justice. It provided an extensive discussion on the government's responsibility to create educational policies and legislation aligned with the values of a democratic society.

Chapter Two reviewed the existing literature and scholarly debates on educational transformation, drawing on perspectives from Van Wyk (2006:182) and Higgs (2002:12). This chapter explored the legislative and policy framework aimed at transforming the South African education system, including key documents such as the SASA of 1996, the White Paper on Education and Training, and the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy. It underscored the post-1994 government's commitment to advancing social justice through education.

Building on this foundation, Chapter Three focused on the rationale for educational transformation in South African schools, outlining the government's social justice agenda. This chapter explored the concept of social justice in the South African context and what its achievement would signify for the country's transformation. Chapter Three also detailed the origins of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy. In doing so, it highlighted the critical role played by non-governmental organisations such as EE and community members in pressuring the DBE to address the dire infrastructural conditions in schools (Equal Education, 2011). The chapter outlined the deadlines attached to the policy and provided an overview of its intended implementation. In providing a discussion

on the policy, this chapter identified how this policy falls within the pattern of the numerous education policies and legislations that are established in good faith to achieve social justice and educational transformation. However, it falls short of reflecting these values in its implementation which is evidenced in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four revealed the LDoE's inconsistent adherence to these regulations, marked by repeated missed deadlines and extensions. This lack of urgency reflects a broader failure to address the infrastructural backlogs in rural schools in the Ga-Matlala region (Equal Education, 2022:01) and threatens the government's social justice agenda. This chapter offered a sobering view of the dire conditions in South African rural schools, particularly those in the Ga-Matlala region. While the LDoE appears to recognise the importance of resolving infrastructural issues, particularly water and sanitation, its lack of urgency and failure to meet stipulated deadlines reflects a significant gap between policy intent and action. This failure is especially troubling given the tragic deaths of learners such as Michael Komape and another child who died in March 2023 after falling into a pit toilet (Human, 2024). These incidents underscore the grave consequences of the department's inaction, analysed further in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four also presented findings based on data collected through interviews and on-site observations. This chapter emphasised the perspectives of teachers, principals and SGB members regarding the policy's implementation. Participants from the six schools visited reported that their schools still lacked the basic infrastructure necessary for proper functioning. Common challenges identified included insufficient classrooms, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, unreliable electricity and poor security. Many participants admitted having little to no prior knowledge of the policy and expressed despair over the government's failure to address their schools' dire conditions. The chapter also highlighted how educators and community members have taken it upon themselves to improve their schools' infrastructure rather than waiting indefinitely for the government's intervention. In reinforcing these findings, the chapter provided on-the-ground evidence of the dismal conditions in six Ga-Matlala schools: Ramalapa, Tau Kwena, Sekgwari and Rachebole Primary Schools and Ipopeng and Mahoai High Schools. The on-site observations revealed that many of these schools are in severe disrepair, with some, like Ramalapa Primary School, having deteriorated to the point of total collapse and closure.

Chapter Five offered an analysis of how the current conditions in the six visited schools undermine social justice. Based on discussions of the government's commitment to educational transformation to achieve social justice in Chapter Three and the empirical evidence provided in Chapter Four, this chapter underscored the disparities in the policy's implementation and its failure to reflect the principles of equity and redress, which are fundamental to achieving social justice. The chapter demonstrated how the LDoE's inaction undermines the post-1994 government's commitment to transforming historically disadvantaged schools and its continued violation of learners' constitutional rights without consequences. The analysis in this chapter demonstrated that the LDOE's lack of urgency and accountability in addressing the infrastructural crises in rural schools in Ga-Matlala suggests their lack of genuine commitment to the principles of equity and redress, which are foundational to social justice.

Furthermore, chapters four and five highlighted the perceived disregard of the LDoE for the schools that formed the focus of this research. The ongoing failure to address infrastructural concerns in these schools perpetuates systemic disadvantage, further alienating rural schools and undermining the transformative goals envisioned by the post-1994 government. The integration of findings across these chapters revealed a troubling disconnect between the policy's commitments and their implementation, exposing the persistent marginalisation of historically disadvantaged schools and communities. Chapter Five stressed the significance of meeting the policy regulations to ensure the safety and restore the dignity of learners in South Africa for the country's social and economic development.

Overall, this study revealed that while the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy was conceived as a tool for advancing social justice, its inconsistent implementation has perpetuated disparities in rural schools. The findings highlight the urgent need for transparent, actionable policy plans and a renewed commitment to fulfilling the policy's promises to the communities it was designed to serve.

6.2 Conclusion

This study has examined the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy, with a focus on its implementation in rural schools within the Ga-Matlala area of Limpopo province. The study has highlighted critical challenges, including systemic inequalities, resource allocation constraints, and the persistent inadequacies of infrastructure

that continue to undermine the government's commitment to social justice and educational transformation.

The research reveals that, despite the policy's ambitious goals and the potential to redress historical inequalities, its implementation has fallen short of expectations. Many schools in historically marginalised areas remain unsafe and poorly equipped, impeding students' access to quality education and perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. The findings underscore the importance of addressing not only the material deficits in rural schools but also the broader systemic and administrative inefficiencies that hinder progress.

The analysis of the Ga-Matlala schools demonstrates that while policies aimed at equity and redress are essential, their success depends on practical and consistent implementation, adequate funding and robust monitoring mechanisms. Without these elements, the ideals of social justice and educational transformation remain unfulfilled aspirations.

In conclusion, the study calls for renewed urgency and commitment from all, including policymakers, PEDs, educators and civil society, to realise the transformative potential of the policy. It advocates more effective planning, resource allocation and accountability measures to ensure that every child in South Africa, regardless of their background or location, has access to a dignified and equitable education. By addressing the shortcomings identified in this research, South Africa can take meaningful steps towards achieving its constitutional promise of quality education for all.

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7. APPENDICES

List of Appendices:

- **Appendix A:** Table of Participant Profile and Coding System
- **Appendix B:** Ethical Clearance Certificate
- **Appendix C:** Permission Letter from the Limpopo Department of Education
- **Appendix D:** Participant Informed Consent Form and Interview Protocol
- **Appendix E:** Photographs of School Infrastructure

Appendix A: Table of Participant Profile and Coding System

This appendix presents an overview of the participants' roles, years at experience, and the coding system used to ensure anonymity in the reporting of interview data.

Code	**Role**	**School (Pseudonym)**	**Years at School**
Teacher 1	Former teacher	School A	Over 20 years
SCB Member 1	Former SGB member	School A	Less than 10 years
Teacher 1	Teacher	School B	6 years
Teacher 2	Teacher	School B	5 years
SGB Member 2	Departmental Head	School B	7 years
Teacher 1	Teacher	School C	8 years
Principal	Acting Principal	School C	3 years
Teacher 1	Teacher	School D	7 years
Teacher 2	Teacher	School D	19 years
Principal	Principal	School D	21 years
Teacher 1	Teacher	School E	21 years
Teacher 2	SMT Educator	School E	28 years
Teacher 3	Curriculum Manager	School E	10 years
Principal	Principal	School E	Over 13 years

Principal	Acting Principal	School F	9 years
Teacher 1	Teacher	School F	14 years

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Certificate

This appendix contains the ethics approval certificate granted by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee for conducting this study.

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Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727
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e: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
NHREC Registration number: RC-241114-045
https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/

23 February 2024

Miss Lesego Monyai

Email: g19m4490@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2024-7429-8365

Dear Miss Lesego Monyai

Title: Kholofalo ya ba Hlokomologa?

Researcher: Miss Lesego Monyai

Supervisor: Dr. Thapelo Tselapedi,

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HF-REC). Your Approval number is: 2024-7429-8365

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the Humanities Faculty REC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the Humanities Faculty REC should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

Dr Priscilla Boshoff

Chair: Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee

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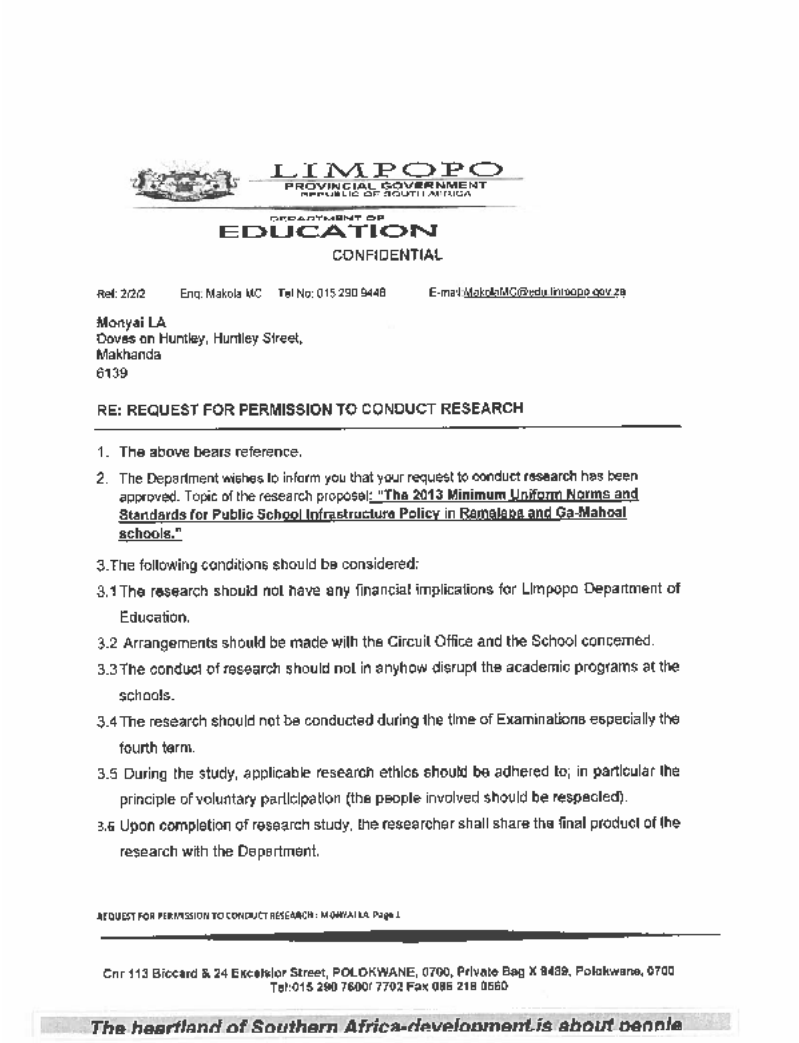
Appendix C: Permission Letter from Limpopo Department of Education

This is the official permission granted to conduct research in selected schools within the Limpopo province.



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: 2/2/2 Enq: Makola MC Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail:MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Monyai LA
Doves on Huntley, Huntley Street,
Makhanda
6139

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"The 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy in Ramalepa and Ga-Mahoai schools."**

3.The following conditions should be considered:

3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.

3.3 The conduct of research should not in anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.

3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.

3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MONYAI LA Page 1

Cnr 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X 9489, Polokwane, 0700
Tel:015 290 7600/ 7702 Fax 086 218 0560

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Appendix D: Participant Informed Consent and Interview Protocol

This includes a form that was signed by all participants prior to the interviews and a semi-structured interview guide used during fieldwork.

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: ***The 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy in Ramalapa and Ga-Mahoai Schools.***

Lesego Angelinah Monyai from the Department of ***Political and International Studies***, Rhodes University, has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The research project aims to investigate whether the 2013 Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure policy advances social justice and the impact of this policy on Ramalapa Ga-Mahoai schools in the Limpopo province.

2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project ***(2024-7429-8365),*** and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)

3. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards a scholarly research project that aims to provide critical and creative ways to improve the South African educational system to achieve educational transformation, specifically in marginalized rural communities, and promote national development.

4. I will participate in the project by voluntarily participating in interviews with the researcher, Lesego Monyai. The interviews will be recorded using a cellular device and will take a maximum of 30 minutes. I will answer open-ended questions provided by the researcher. The time and location of the interviews will take place at my discretion.

5. My participation is entirely voluntary, and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket

expenses will be reimbursed.

7. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a Masters' thesis and possible academic presentations. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and my name and personal identification will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, ***unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.***

8. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.

9. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).

10. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of digital files and a copy of a transcript unless ***I elect not to receive this feedback.***

11. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by Lesego Angelinah Monyai at g19m4490@campus.ru.ac.za.

12. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.

13. I ***agree/disagree*** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or videoing me as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happen it my consent is given.

14. I ***agree/disagree*** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately

recorded

I, ……., have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

…….. …… …….

Participants signature **Witness** **Date**

Interview Questions

1. What is your role and position in the school?
2. Can you describe what the school's environment and infrastructure were like before 2013?
3. What are your impressions of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy passed by the Minister of Basic Education in 2013?
4. What would it mean for you to teach or occupy a position in a school with access to water, internet, electricity, safe classrooms with a maximum of 40 learners, working toilets, security, sports centers, libraries, and science labs?
5. What are your present experiences in the school you teach or occupy a position in?
6. Can you please tell me if there have been any changes in your school's environment and infrastructure since the enactment of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure Policy?
7. What is your opinion on the implementation of this policy in the school you are teaching or occupying a position in?
8. What, in your opinion, could be done to improve the implementation of this policy in the school?

Appendix E: Photographs of School Infrastructure

Images taken during site visits used with verbal permission from school principals.

Figure 4.1: Image of chairs and tables moved aside to create space for MST class which is also an office for the school curriculum manager at Rachebole High School. Photograph by the author (2024).

Figure 4.2: Image of long classroom structure at Sekgwari Primary School. Photograph by the author (2024).

Figure 4.3: Images of abandoned Mapale High School. Photograph by the author (2024).