

From Deficit to Possibility: Indigenous Knowledge, Asset-Based Approaches, and the Advancement of SDG 4 in Rural Africa

Kemi Olajumoke Adu^{1*} 

AFFILIATIONS

¹Department of Initial Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Walter Sisulu University, Komani, South Africa.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email: kadu@wsu.ac.za*

EDITORIAL DATES

Received: 14 June 2026

Revised: 16 September 2026

Accepted: 17 September 2026

Published: 10 October 2026

Copyright:

© The Author(s) 2026.

Published by [ERRCDF Forum](#).

This is an open access article distributed under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence.



DOI: 10.38140/ijrcs-2026.vol8.2.02

Abstract: Efforts to advance Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in rural Africa are habitually framed through a deficit lens that foregrounds shortages of infrastructure, qualified teachers, learning materials, and finance. These shortages are real and severe, yet the framing that organises them conceals the knowledge, relationships, cultural practices, local institutions, and social networks already present in rural communities. This theoretical article argues for a shift from deficit-oriented educational development towards an asset-based perspective that treats Indigenous knowledge and community resources as productive foundations for inclusive, equitable, and relevant quality education. Bringing Asset-Based Community Development into dialogue with Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and using the Community Capitals Framework as an operational tier, the article theorises how rural African communities can be repositioned from sites of lack to active knowledge and resource partners. Three documented African cases, drawn from the Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu-Natal, and Uganda, serve as analytical illustrations rather than as sources of new empirical evidence. The article develops the Indigenous Asset-Based Model for SDG 4, a four-

layer construct comprising epistemic recognition, asset mapping and mobilisation, relational connection and co-production, and structural support and accountability. The model retains community agency while refusing the romanticism that would license state retreat from rural schooling.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge systems, asset-based community development, community capitals framework, rural education, Africa, deficit thinking.

1. Introduction

The global education project has entered a period in which the distance between commitment and delivery is widening rather than closing. By 2024, some 273 million children and young people remained out of school, and the global out-of-school rate had fallen only marginally, from 17.4% in 2015 to 16.8% in 2024 (United Nations, 2026). Three-quarters of all out-of-school children, adolescents, and youth are located in sub-Saharan Africa and in Central and Southern Asia (UNESCO, 2026). In sub-Saharan Africa, only 68% of children complete primary education, 47% complete lower secondary education, and just 28% complete upper secondary education (United Nations, 2026). Learning outcomes track the same pattern: 86% of children in the region were in learning poverty in 2019, a figure that rose to 89% following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank et al., 2022). Against Target 4.1 of SDG 4, which promises free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education for all children by 2030, these figures represent a substantial and, on present trends, unrecoverable shortfall.

The dominant policy response to this shortfall has been to specify what rural African education lacks and then to design interventions that supply it. This is an intuitive response, and in one important sense it is the correct one. The material constraints are neither imaginary nor exaggerated. More than one fifth of primary schools worldwide still lack access to electricity, safe drinking water, or basic

How to cite this article:

Adu, K. O. (2026). From deficit to possibility: Indigenous knowledge, asset-based approaches, and the advancement of SDG 4 in rural Africa. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, 8(2), a02. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijrcs-2026.vol8.2.02>

sanitation (United Nations, 2026). Sub-Saharan Africa alone requires an estimated 15 million new teachers by 2030 within a global requirement of 44 million, while teacher attrition at the primary level almost doubled between 2015 and 2022 (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). The annual financing gap for low-income and lower-middle-income countries to reach their national SDG 4 targets stands at approximately US\$97 billion, of which sub-Saharan Africa accounts for the largest single share at around US\$70 billion each year (Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2025). No serious argument about rural African education can proceed while pretending that these constraints are matters of perception.

What can be contested, however, is the framing that surrounds them. There is a difference between documenting material scarcity and constructing communities as constituted by scarcity. The first is empirical description. The second is what Valencia (2010) named deficit thinking, a mode of explanation that locates the cause of educational failure in the supposed internal deficiencies of learners, their families, and their cultures rather than in the systemic and institutional arrangements that produce unequal outcomes. Deficit thinking is not confined to the classroom or to national schooling systems. Aikman et al. (2016) demonstrated that research and policy in international education and development have operated within a deficit framework as a matter of habit, characteristically opening the discussion of a community by describing what its members lack rather than what they know or do. When this habit is applied to rural Africa, the community appears in the policy imagination as a void awaiting external filling.

The consequences of that framing are practical and not merely rhetorical. If a rural community is understood as a deficit, the appropriate role of its members is that of beneficiary and the direction of expertise runs inward from outside. If the same community is understood as a repository of knowledge, relationships, institutions, and capabilities, its members become co-producers of educational provision and the direction of expertise becomes reciprocal. The choice between these framings determines who is consulted, what counts as a resource, whose knowledge enters the curriculum, and where accountability is located when interventions fail.

This article argues for the second framing, and it does so on theoretical rather than sentimental grounds. Its central claim is that progress towards SDG 4 in rural Africa depends not only on filling resource gaps but also on recognising, connecting, and strengthening the assets that rural communities already possess. To develop this claim, the article brings Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) into dialogue with Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and with the normative commitments of SDG 4, using the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) as the operational tier that translates the general asset orientation into categories usable by schools and districts. The argument is anchored in three documented African cases, and it culminates in a conceptual model that specifies the sequence and the conditions under which asset-based educational development can advance SDG 4 without collapsing into either romanticism or austerity by another name.

1.1 Problem statement

The problem this article addresses is not the existence of scarcity in rural African schooling but the intellectual architecture through which that scarcity is interpreted, and the practical consequences that follow from it. Four dimensions of the problem can be distinguished.

First, deficit framing is entrenched in the research literature on rural education itself, not only in policy documents. Moletsane (2012) argued that after nearly two decades of post-apartheid reform, South African rural communities had experienced minimal tangible improvement, and that a significant part of the explanation lay in the research paradigms that dominate the field, which ignore the voices of those most affected by the interventions they design and foreground pathology at the

expense of community agency. If the research that informs intervention is organised around absence, the interventions it generates will reproduce that organisation.

Second, deficit framing in African education is historically constituted rather than incidental. Cossa et al. (2025), analysing 70 years of scholarship in a leading comparative education journal, showed that the education and development relationship in Africa has remained anchored in functionalist human capital and modernisation theory rooted in Western frameworks, and that defining African advancement against Western benchmarks produces a circular logic in which modernisation is perpetually deferred and structurally unattainable. Deficit, in this reading, is not a finding about African education but a property of the measuring instrument.

Third, formal education systems marginalise Indigenous Knowledge Systems even where policy formally endorses their inclusion. In a systematic review of studies on the integration of Indigenous knowledge in primary schooling, da Silva et al. (2024) found that Indigenous knowledge is systematically positioned as inferior within formal schooling, and identified this positioning as the primary obstacle to curricular integration. Shabalala (2025) reached a similar conclusion for environmental education across much of Africa, finding that the field remains dominated by Western scientific paradigms and that Indigenous knowledge is treated as folklore rather than as rigorous knowledge in curricula, textbooks, and assessment systems, while African policies rhetorically endorse Indigenous Knowledge Systems without supplying implementation mechanisms.

Fourth, communities are positioned as recipients rather than as co-producers, and this positioning is reinforced by the very governance structures designed to include them. Mtiya and Kariyana (2023), studying parental participation in the governance of three rural primary schools in the Amathole East District of South Africa, found that negative school attitudes generated parental animosity towards the school, and that insufficient awareness of parental roles, weak professional connections, and language obstacles all restricted governance involvement. Participation, in such settings, becomes a formality that confirms rather than disturbs the assumption that expertise resides with the school and need resides with the community.

The convergence of these four dimensions produces a specific problem for SDG 4. The Goal commits states to inclusive and equitable quality education, and Target 4.7 explicitly includes appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Yet the dominant framework for pursuing the Goal in rural Africa treats the cultural and relational resources of rural communities as background conditions to be worked around rather than as constitutive resources to be worked with. The result is a persistent mismatch between the normative content of SDG 4 and the operational logic through which it is pursued.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The article addresses four guiding questions:

- How does deficit-oriented thinking shape dominant understandings of educational disadvantage and intervention in rural Africa?
- What Indigenous knowledge, social relationships, cultural resources, local institutions and community capacities can be understood as educational assets for advancing SDG 4?
- How can asset-based approaches mobilise these resources without romanticising rural communities or overlooking structural inequalities that require external investment and policy intervention?
- What theoretical principles can guide a community-centred model for advancing inclusive and equitable quality education in rural Africa?

Four corresponding objectives structure the argument. The first is to characterise deficit thinking as an organising logic operating across research, policy, and practice in rural African education, and to distinguish it from the legitimate documentation of material constraint. The second is to identify and

classify the educational assets held by rural African communities, using the Community Capitals Framework as the classificatory instrument and Indigenous Knowledge Systems as the epistemic content. The third is to specify the conditions under which asset mobilisation strengthens rather than substitutes for state provision, and to derive from the critical literature a set of safeguards against co-option. The fourth is to synthesise these elements into a conceptual model that specifies the layers, sequence, and feedback dynamics of an Indigenous and asset-based approach to SDG 4 in rural Africa.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The framework of this article rests on three theoretical resources brought into deliberate dialogue, together with a fourth element that supplies the normative reference point.

2.1 Asset-based community development

ABCD originated in the neighbourhood development scholarship of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), whose founding contribution was a contrast between two ways of representing a place. The needs map catalogues a community's deficiencies and, by doing so, positions residents as clients of external service providers and channels resources towards professionals rather than towards residents. The capacity inventory catalogues the gifts, skills, and capacities already present, organised into three concentric tiers: the gifts of individuals; the power of local voluntary associations and informal networks; and the resources of formal institutions such as schools, churches, businesses, and clinics. Kretzmann and McKnight argued that development that is asset-based, internally focused, and relationship-driven produces durable change, whereas needs-based funding streams create dependency. Mathie and Cunningham (2003) translated ABCD for use in Global South development contexts, grounding it in four converging streams: appreciative inquiry, social capital theory, community economic development, and the participatory development and citizenship literature. Their central move is the reframing of community members from clients of aid to citizens with capacities and claims. This distinction matters for schooling because it separates provision that is merely community-based, in the sense of being located in a community, from provision that is community-driven, in the sense of being shaped by internal agenda-setting.

2.2 The community capitals framework as an operational tier

ABCD supplies an orientation but not a taxonomy. The Community Capitals Framework supplies the taxonomy. Emery and Flora (2006) operationalised community assets as seven interacting capitals: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built. Their theoretical contribution lies less in the list than in the analysis of flows between the capitals. Investment in one capital, they argued, can generate assets in others, producing a self-reinforcing upward movement that they termed spiralling up; depletion in one capital can cascade into others in a corresponding spiralling down. Social capital, and specifically the distinction between bonding and bridging forms, functions as the pivotal capital through which change in the others is transmitted. Flora et al. (2016) elaborated the framework at book length and situated the capitals within political and economic structures rather than treating them as purely local endowments.

The CCF is adopted here as the operational middle tier for two reasons. First, it renders the abstract language of assets into categories that a school, a district office, or a governing body can actually inventory. Second, it has already been applied to precisely the problem this article addresses, by Mkhize (2025) in two rural South African schools and, earlier, by Mkhize and Davids (2023) in a study of rural resource mobilisation grounded in asset-based and resource mobilisation theory.

2.3 Indigenous knowledge systems and epistemic recognition

Indigenous Knowledge Systems constitute the epistemic content of the asset base. The claim advanced here is stronger than the claim that Indigenous knowledge is culturally valuable. It is that

Indigenous knowledge functions as cultural and human capital in the technical sense, and that its exclusion from schooling therefore constitutes a measurable depletion of the asset base available to rural schools. Two established traditions support this position. Moll et al. (1992) demonstrated, through a collaborative education and anthropology project in working-class Mexican-origin households, that households conventionally read as impoverished in fact contain accumulated bodies of knowledge and skill essential to household functioning, which they termed funds of knowledge; their methodological innovation was to reposition teachers as ethnographic learners rather than as diagnosticians of deficiency. Yosso (2005) advanced a parallel argument from critical race theory, challenging conventional accounts of cultural capital as a deficit lens and identifying six forms of community cultural wealth, namely aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital.

Applied to rural Africa, epistemic recognition means admitting Indigenous ecological, agricultural, linguistic, technical, and moral knowledge into the curriculum as legitimate content rather than as illustrative decoration, and recognising Indigenous languages as cognitive assets rather than as obstacles.

2.4 SDG 4 as normative anchor

SDG 4 supplies the normative reference against which the framework is oriented, and its founding instruments carry more support for epistemic recognition than the technicist reading of the Goal usually admits. The 2030 Agenda commits states to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and Target 4.7 obliges them to ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills that include "appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Target 4.5 goes further and names Indigenous peoples explicitly among the groups whose equal access to all levels of education must be secured (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The Education 2030 Framework for Action, which translates the Goal into implementation commitments, reinforces this by requiring that education "facilitate intercultural dialogue and foster respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity" (UNESCO, 2016). Read together, these instruments supply an internal warrant for epistemic recognition rather than an external imposition of it, and they are consistent with UNESCO's (2026) more recent insistence that equity and inclusion, not aggregate enrolment alone, are the measure of progress. The argument here is therefore not that SDG 4 should be replaced by an Indigenous alternative, but that the Goal's own normative content is more consistent with an asset-based and epistemically plural approach than with the framing through which it is commonly pursued.

2.5 Synthesis

The four elements combine with a specific internal logic. ABCD establishes the orientation that development begins from what is present rather than from what is absent. The CCF supplies the taxonomy through which presence is identified and its interactions traced. IKS supplies the epistemic content the taxonomy would otherwise leave empty, since a capital inventory conducted through a Western epistemic lens will systematically fail to register Indigenous knowledge as cultural capital. SDG 4 supplies the normative destination and the accountability standard: because SDG 4 is a state obligation, an asset-based approach cannot be construed as relieving the state of it. That last point is the structural safeguard distinguishing this framework from versions of ABCD that critics have identified as compatible with welfare retrenchment.

3. Methodology

This article is theoretical rather than empirical. It generates a conceptual argument through the systematic interrogation and synthesis of existing scholarship, and it does not report new fieldwork, new instruments, or new participants. Three methodological commitments govern the analysis.

The first is conceptual synthesis. The article places three bodies of literature ordinarily developed in isolation, namely ABCD and community capitals scholarship, Indigenous Knowledge Systems scholarship in African education, and SDG 4 policy and monitoring literature, into structured dialogue, identifying the junctions at which each supplies what the others lack. The output is a model whose criterion of adequacy is analytic coherence and explanatory reach rather than statistical generalisability.

The second is the use of documented cases as analytical illustrations. Three published African cases anchor the argument: the Cofimvaba Indigenous Knowledge Systems school project in the Eastern Cape (Meyiwa et al., 2013), the Community Capitals application in two rural KwaZulu-Natal schools (Mkhize, 2025), and the integration of Indigenous knowledge into Ugandan secondary school geography (Kagoda, 2009). These cases are used as documented instances against which conceptual propositions can be tested for plausibility. They are not treated as a sample, and no claim of representativeness is made for them.

The third is critical reflexivity about the asset frame itself, since an article advocating an asset-based approach carries an obvious risk of advocacy displacing analysis. The argument therefore, incorporates the strongest available critiques, including the charge that the asset turn displaces attention from material inequality (Friedli, 2013), the charge that ABCD in its dominant deployment constitutes a capitulation to neoliberal individualisation (MacLeod & Emejulu, 2014), and the diagnosis that ABCD is analytically underdeveloped with respect to external power systems (MacLure, 2023). These critiques are treated as constitutive of the framework rather than as objections to be dismissed.

Sources were selected for verifiability and traceability, with priority given to peer-reviewed scholarship, to African-authored research, and to authoritative statistical sources produced by the United Nations system and the World Bank. Statistical claims are attributed to the specific monitoring publication that carries them.

4. Major Arguments

The argument of this article is developed through four connected propositions, each responding to one of the guiding questions set out in Section 1.2 and each tested against the available empirical literature rather than asserted on conceptual grounds alone. The first establishes that deficit framing functions as an organising logic in rural African education rather than as a stylistic habit. The second establishes that rural African communities hold educational assets that can be named, classified, and put to curricular work. The third establishes that mobilising those assets cannot substitute for structural investment, and specifies the safeguards that keep an asset orientation from being co-opted. The fourth establishes that where asset-based and Indigenous knowledge approaches fail in African schools, they fail at the institutional interface rather than at the community source. Taken in sequence, the four propositions supply the components, the ordering, and the boundary conditions of the model presented in Section 5.

4.1 Deficit thinking operates as an organising logic, not as incidental rhetoric

The first argument responds to the first research question. Deficit thinking in rural African education is not a stylistic tendency that better wording would correct. It is an organising logic that determines what is measured, what is funded, and who is consulted.

The definitional work supports this reading. Valencia (2010) characterised deficit thinking as a mode of explanation attributing school failure to the internal deficiencies of learners, families, and cultures, and traced its manifestations through neo-hereditarian explanation, the culture of poverty framework, and the at-risk designation. His inversion of the last, from at-risk students to at-risk schools, is precisely the reallocation of explanatory burden that an asset-based framework requires.

What distinguishes deficit thinking from the ordinary documentation of disadvantage is the attribution of causation to the individual, family, or community rather than to systemic arrangement.

This distinction protects the present analysis from a plausible objection. To report that 89% of children in sub-Saharan Africa are in learning poverty (World Bank et al., 2022) is not deficit thinking. To infer from that figure that rural African communities lack the capacity to educate their children is. The figure describes an outcome produced by a system; the inference relocates the cause into the population. The evidence that this relocation occurs systematically is substantial. Aikman et al. (2016) showed that policy discussion characteristically opens by describing a population in terms of what it lacks, using women's literacy as the paradigm case. Cossa et al. (2025) extended the analysis historically, documenting that sustained educational investment in African states produced debt accumulation without the promised growth, deepening dependency on external financial institutions, and identifying the dominance of European languages of instruction as a principal mechanism of epistemic marginalisation.

The logic reproduces itself at the national level. Moletsane (2012) located deficit assumptions within South African rural education research itself, arguing that dominant paradigms exclude the voices of those most affected and foreground pathology at the expense of agency. Her constructive response, participatory visual methodology, is significant less for the specific technique than for the underlying reallocation of epistemic authority from researcher to community. The logic also operates in the everyday relations between rural schools and their communities. Mtiya and Kariyana (2023) found in three rural Eastern Cape primary schools that negative school attitudes generated parental animosity, and that language obstacles and insufficient clarity about parental roles further restricted governance participation. When a school treats parents as a problem to be managed, parental knowledge and parental networks become invisible to the school as resources, and the deficit is confirmed by the institution's own conduct.

Deficit thinking therefore has causal consequences. It shapes which interventions are designed, which actors are treated as competent, and where blame settles when interventions underperform. Correcting it requires changing the unit of analysis from what the community lacks to what the community holds, which is the substance of the second argument.

4.2 Rural African communities hold identifiable, classifiable and curricularly usable educational assets

The second argument responds to the second research question. The claim is not that rural communities hold vaguely defined strengths but that they hold assets that can be named, classified, and put to specific educational work.

The three anchor cases establish this at three different levels of the system. Meyiwa et al. (2013) documented, in the Cofimvaba area of the Chris Hani District Municipality, an impoverished rural setting characterised by high unemployment, subsistence farming, and food insecurity, a knowledge base that included totem animals, village cultural heritage, traditional agricultural practices, preferred foods, and contemporary ceremonies and rituals valued by the community. Working through participatory action research combined with the Reflect process, researchers, teachers, community researchers, and Indigenous knowledge holders converted this base into context-relevant teaching and learning materials. The lessons the authors drew are instructive for the model developed below: effective participation required planning adapted to local communication patterns, involvement of education officials from project inception, capacity building for participants, methodological flexibility, and continuous reflexive attention to power imbalance so that material ownership remained with the community.

Kagoda (2009) established the same point at the level of the individual learner and the subject curriculum. Ugandan secondary school students, she found, hold knowledge of local agricultural

practice, biodiversity classification systems, traditional weather forecasting methods, and soil conservation techniques developed within their communities. The critical finding is not that the knowledge exists, but that formal schooling excludes it: teachers emphasised modernisation, mechanisation, and Western agricultural methods while neglecting traditional ecological approaches. Kagoda's response was to propose lesson designs integrating this knowledge through community fieldwork, guest speakers, and collaborative activity. The pedagogical implication is exact. The learner who is treated as empty arrives already holding curriculum content that the geography syllabus is separately attempting to teach.

Mkhize (2025) established the point at the level of institutional resourcing. Using Free Attitude Interviews with 15 stakeholders across two rural KwaZulu-Natal schools, he identified five asset categories through which schools mobilised resources despite severe budgetary constraints: capacity building and human capital development through training and corporate support; sustainable partnerships generating social cohesion and school ownership through stakeholder forums; traditional leadership functioning as cultural capital that connects schools to wider resources; academic excellence operating as a magnet for further resource flows; and strategic political networking through municipal structures. The identification of traditional leadership as a capital category represents an Africanisation of the Flora typology that the original formulation does not contain. Table 1 below sets out the three cases comparatively.

Table 1: *Comparative summary of the three anchor cases*

Dimension	Cofimvaba, Eastern Cape (Meyiwa et al., 2013)	Two rural schools, KwaZulu-Natal (Mkhize, 2025)	Secondary geography, Uganda (Kagoda, 2009)
Setting and level	Rural Foundation Phase schooling in an area of high unemployment and food insecurity	Two resource-constrained rural schools and their district and municipal environment	Secondary school geography in central and eastern Uganda
Approach	Participatory action research combined with the Reflect process, involving teachers, community researchers, and knowledge holders	Qualitative case study using Free Attitude Interviews with 15 stakeholders	Curriculum analysis and lesson design with student teachers
Assets identified	Totem animals, village heritage, traditional agricultural practice, foods, ceremonies, and rituals	Human capacity, stakeholder partnerships, traditional leadership, institutional reputation, municipal networks	Local agricultural practice, biodiversity classification, traditional weather forecasting, soil conservation
Dominant capital	Cultural and human	Social, political, and cultural	Cultural and natural
Link to SDG 4	Relevance and quality of Foundation Phase materials (Targets 4.1 and 4.7)	Resource mobilisation for equitable provision (Targets 4.1 and 4.a)	Curricular relevance and applied learning (Targets 4.1 and 4.7)

Theoretical lesson	Recognition must be co-produced and reflexively governed to avoid extractive participation	Assets are mobilisable under constraint, and traditional leadership functions as capital	Learners arrive holding syllabus content that schooling excludes
--------------------	--	--	--

Note. Compiled by the author from the three published sources.

The wider empirical literature confirms that these are not isolated instances. Anlimachie et al. (2023), in an ethnographic case study of a Ghanaian rural school, found that learners' aspirations were shaped by their immediate environment and by cultural capital transmitted through families and teachers, and identified three enablers of rural educational success: teachers' understanding of learners' backgrounds, deliberate development of local competencies, and school and home collaboration. Ogegbo and Ramnarain (2024), reviewing 25 studies of pedagogical practice for integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems into science teaching, identified four effective approaches: learner engagement through argumentative discussion, culturally contextualised materials, collaboration with knowledge keepers and elders, and hands-on experiential learning. A pedagogical repertoire for asset-based teaching therefore already exists, which relocates the constraint from method to capacity.

Language constitutes a further and frequently overlooked asset. Cekiso (2026), studying six Foundation Phase teachers at two rural Eastern Cape schools, documented a substantial gap between South African language-in-education policy, which endorses mother-tongue instruction, and classroom reality, with teachers reporting difficulty with academic vocabulary in isiXhosa and receiving no formal preparation for translating curriculum content. Cekiso nonetheless concluded that mother-tongue teaching better supports cognitive development, linguistic foundation, and cultural identity at this phase. The finding is doubly significant: it confirms the language of the community as an educational asset, and it demonstrates that an asset cannot be mobilised by policy declaration alone.

Taken together, these findings support a specific formulation. Rural African communities hold cultural capital as Indigenous ecological, agricultural, and technical knowledge; human capital as knowledge holders, elders, and skilled practitioners; social capital as dense relational networks and reciprocal obligation; political capital as traditional leadership and municipal relationships; and natural capital as the local environment functioning as a curricular resource. What the deficit frame registers as an empty setting is, under the capital's taxonomy, a densely resourced one.

4.3 Asset mobilisation without structural investment is a category error

The third argument responds to the third research question, which is the most demanding of the four. If community assets are real, the temptation is to treat them as sufficient. That inference is false, and the critical literature explains precisely why.

Friedli (2013) formulated the underlying paradox with unusual clarity: as material inequalities grow, so the pursuit of non-material explanations proliferates. Asset-based approaches, on her account, are the leading instance of this displacement, in which psychosocial factors valuable in themselves become detached from material conditions and function as substitutes for confronting economic inequality and power. MacLeod and Emejulu (2014) developed the political version of the critique, characterising ABCD in its dominant deployment as neoliberalism with a community face. Their empirical finding, however, is more useful than a simple condemnation would be: the same method served divergent ends depending on who deployed it, with some practitioners repurposing ABCD to deepen democratic participation while others used it to recast structural inequality as individual

deficiency and to legitimate welfare retrenchment. This ambivalence identifies the conditions under which asset-based work becomes co-optable, which is what a usable framework requires.

Maclure (2023) supplied the analytical diagnosis. Assessing ABCD against Gaventa's PowerCube, he found the model well developed in relation to power with and power within, that is, associational life and individual capacity, but structurally weak in relation to power over, that is, the external systems that constrain what community assets can achieve. His proposed augmentation, drawing on anti-oppression frameworks and Freirean emancipatory pedagogy, targets external power while preserving fidelity to the original method. An asset-based model for SDG 4 must therefore contain an explicit structural layer rather than assume that structural questions will surface during asset mapping.

The empirical literature on rural African schooling makes the necessity of that layer concrete. Nkambule (2022), studying 11 teachers across five rural South African schools, documented falling ceilings, potholes in classrooms, absent chalkboards and insufficient textbooks, a teacher who had worked for 15 years without a staffroom, Grade R learners accommodated in converted kitchen space at three children per table, and secondary learners writing on their laps for want of desks. No inventory of community assets addresses a collapsing ceiling. Mtika and Sosu (2025) identified an even sharper structural pathology in Malawi, where a school-level teacher shortage coexists with a surplus of qualified but unemployed teachers. The binding constraint is not supply or community capacity but the state's fiscal inability to recruit, driven by debt servicing obligations and public wage bill restrictions. A community asset-mapping exercise in a Malawian rural school would correctly identify many things, and would not identify the debt architecture keeping qualified teachers out of its classrooms.

Olatoye et al. (2026) supplied the spatial version of the same caution, and it bears directly on the social capital that asset-based approaches privilege. Analysing the geographies of social capital in South African education, they found that urban areas benefit from networks providing bridging and linking capital that facilitate access to material resources and institutional power, whereas the dense bonding capital characteristic of rural areas and townships, though vital for resilience and solidarity, remains spatially bound within a political economy of scarcity that limits its conversion into broader educational mobility. Rural communities, in other words, are not deficient in social capital. They are deficient in the institutional connections through which social capital converts into resources, and that deficiency is a product of spatial planning rather than of community disposition.

Two further findings establish that asset-based approaches are contingent on state action rather than substitutes for it. Chen et al. (2024), surveying 522 respondents across the Upper West, Upper East, and Northern regions of Ghana and analysing the data through structural equation modelling, found that local resources, asset mobilisation, and citizen participation each significantly and positively predicted rural poverty alleviation, and that government policies significantly moderated the asset mobilisation pathway. Asset mobilisation, on this evidence, works better where the state is present and works less well where it is not. Skhosana (2025), studying 21 participants across four development centres in Tshwane, found that ABCD combined with a sustainable livelihoods approach fostered participatory and relationship-driven change in contrast to deficit-focused needs-based models, while identifying limited participation, insufficient assets and funding, inadequate capacity building, and sustainability concerns as recurrent implementation barriers. Her conclusion that sustainable intervention requires mobilising internal capability alongside external resources is the position this article adopts.

The South African statutory context illustrates the risk with precision. Mkhize and Davids (2023) noted that the South African Schools Act requires schools to supplement the resources provided by the state through stakeholder structures including school governing bodies. Where state provision is itself inadequate, a statutory duty to supplement can quietly become a duty to substitute, and the

language of community assets becomes the vocabulary in which that substitution is justified. This is the mechanism MacLeod and Emejulu identified, arriving through legislation rather than through ideology.

The argument, therefore, concludes as follows. Asset-based approaches to SDG 4 are necessary because deficit framing suppresses real resources and disables community agency. They are not sufficient, because the constraints that bind most tightly in rural Africa, including the US\$70 billion annual regional financing gap (Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2025) and the requirement for 15 million additional teachers by 2030 (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024), are structural and can be resolved only by state and international action. A framework that does not build this recognition into its architecture will be co-opted, and its co-option will be blamed on the communities it claimed to serve.

4.4 The constraint on asset-based practice is institutional capacity, not community capacity

The fourth argument responds to the fourth research question by identifying what a community-centred model must actually address. The evidence indicates that where asset-based and Indigenous knowledge approaches fail in African schools, they fail at the institutional interface rather than at the community source.

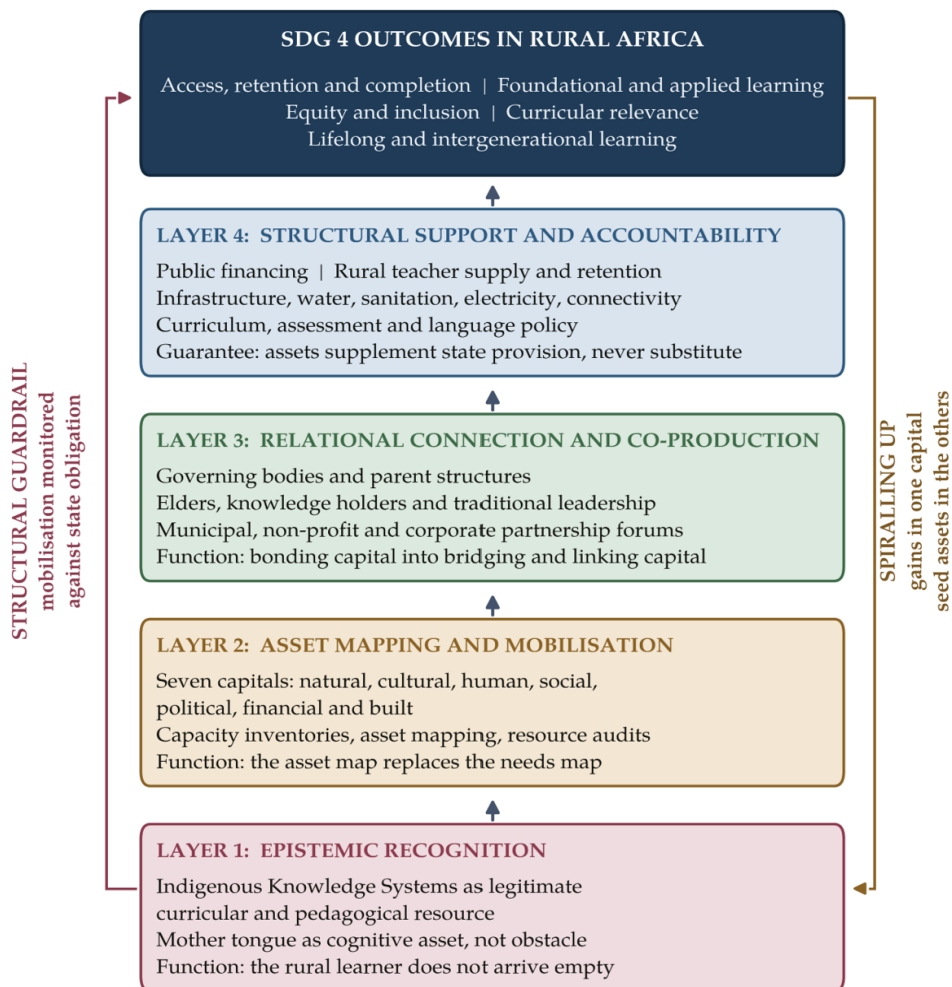
Teacher preparation is the clearest instance. Meeran and Niranjan (2026), observing two teachers in rural KwaZulu-Natal using the Indigenous game Kgati as an ethnomathematical tool, found high levels of learner engagement and successful teaching of geometric shapes, estimation, measurement, and perimeter at Grade 5, and reflection, rotation, and translation at Grade 6. The same study documented harm arising from insufficient pedagogical content knowledge, including inaccurate representations of measurement and incomplete explanations that generated learner misconceptions, and noted that curriculum policy does not mandate ethnomathematics. Both findings point to the institution rather than the community: the game was available, the community knowledge was intact, and the deficiency lay in preparation and policy specification.

Shabalala (2025) generalised the pattern across African environmental education, finding that most educators lack training in Indigenous epistemologies and that some fear accusations of unscientific teaching, while policy endorsement remains unaccompanied by implementation mechanisms, pedagogical guidance, or assessment frameworks. Cekiso's (2026) finding on mother-tongue preparation is the same structural gap expressed in the language domain. Across these studies, the constraint is consistent: policy asserts inclusion, teachers are not equipped to deliver it, and assessment regimes continue to reward the knowledge that policy claims to be pluralising.

Two implications follow. First, an asset-based approach that invests only at the community level will not produce classroom change, because the transmission mechanism from community assets to learner outcomes runs through the teacher and the assessment system. Second, epistemic recognition must be operationalised in curriculum specification and assessment design rather than left at the level of policy affirmation. Marongwe et al. (2026) reached a compatible conclusion for rural South African schools, identifying cultural resistance, resource limitation, and historical inequity as the forces that perpetuate disparity.

5. The Indigenous Asset-Based Model for SDG 4: Presentation and Interpretation

The four arguments converge in the Indigenous Asset-Based Model for SDG 4 in Rural Africa, presented in Figure 1. The model is a four-layer construct with an outcome band, a feedback dynamic, and a structural guardrail. Its purpose is to specify not only what an asset-based approach contains but also in what order its components must operate and under what conditions the approach remains defensible.



Note. The author's construction synthesises Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), Mathie and Cunningham (2003), Emery and Flora (2006), Maclure (2023), and Mkhize (2025).

Layer 1: Epistemic recognition. The base layer establishes Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a legitimate curricular and pedagogical resource and Indigenous languages as cognitive assets rather than obstacles. It is placed at the base because it is logically prior to everything above it: a capital's inventory conducted by actors who regard Indigenous knowledge as folklore will not register that knowledge as capital, and the inventory will reproduce the deficit it was designed to displace. The evidence for this priority is direct, since da Silva et al. (2024) identified the positioning of Indigenous knowledge as inferior within formal schooling as the primary obstacle to its curricular integration, and Shabalala (2025) documented the same positioning across African environmental education. The layer's function is to reverse the presumption that the rural learner arrives empty, a presumption Kagoda's (2009) evidence directly refutes.

Layer 2: Asset mapping and mobilisation. The second layer applies the seven community capitals as the classificatory instrument, using capacity inventories, participatory asset mapping, and community resource audits (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Its defining function is the replacement of the needs map with the asset map as the basis of school planning. Mkhize's (2025) identification of traditional leadership as cultural capital illustrates what this layer produces when the epistemic layer beneath it is intact, since a mapping exercise conducted without epistemic recognition would have registered traditional leadership as a social fact rather than as a school resource.

Layer 3: Relational connection and co-production. The third layer addresses the conversion problem identified by Olatoye et al. (2026), namely that bonding capital which cannot be converted into bridging and linking capital remains spatially trapped. This layer therefore concerns brokerage: governing bodies and parent structures; elders, knowledge holders, and traditional leadership; school, household, and community relationships; and municipal, non-profit, and corporate partnership forums. Mkhize's (2025) findings on stakeholder forums and political networking describe this layer in operation, while Mtiya and Kariyana's (2023) findings on parental animosity describe its failure. The layer also carries the co-production commitment that distinguishes community-driven from merely community-based provision (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

Layer 4: Structural support and accountability. The fourth layer contains public financing and equitable school funding; rural teacher supply and retention; infrastructure, including water, sanitation, electricity, and connectivity; and curriculum, assessment, and language policy. It carries an explicit guarantee that community assets supplement state provision and never substitute for it. This layer is the model's answer to Maclure's (2023) diagnosis and to the co-option risk documented by MacLeod and Emejulu (2014). It is positioned above the community layers rather than beside them to signal that structural action is the enabling condition for asset mobilisation rather than an optional complement to it, a positioning supported by Chen et al.'s (2024) finding that government policy significantly moderates the asset mobilisation pathway.

Outcome band. The four layers deliver towards SDG 4 outcomes specified as access and retention, completion, foundational and applied learning, equity and inclusion, cultural and economic relevance of the curriculum, and lifelong and intergenerational learning. The inclusion of relevance and intergenerational learning is deliberate, since a model that recognised Indigenous knowledge while measuring success solely through conventional attainment metrics would subordinate the recognition to the metric and reproduce the hierarchy it set out to disturb.

Spiralling up and the structural guardrail. The right-hand feedback loop applies Emery and Flora's (2006) central mechanism: gains generated in one capital seed assets in the others, and outcomes replenish the asset base from which they were produced. A school that mobilises human capital through community expertise generates political capital through demonstrated performance, which attracts financial and built capital, a sequence visible in Mkhize's (2025) finding that academic excellence operated as a magnet for further resources. The corresponding risk of spiralling down applies with equal force, which is why the structural layer cannot be treated as optional. The left-hand element is the safeguard. It requires that asset mobilisation be monitored against state obligation, so that community contribution is recorded alongside, and never in place of, the provision the community was owed, responding to the statutory risk identified by Mkhize and Davids (2023).

The model's principal theoretical claim is sequential. Interventions that begin at Layer 2 without Layer 1 will inventory the wrong things. Interventions that stop at Layer 3 without Layer 4 will convert community assets into a substitute for public provision. Interventions that supply Layer 4 without Layers 1 to 3 will deliver resources into schools that remain disconnected from the communities they serve, which is a fair description of much of the intervention history that produced the present impasse.

6. Policy Implications

The model carries a distinct implication for each of three policy actors, and in each case the implication concerns the instrument rather than the intention.

For national ministries of education, the implication concerns specification. The recurring finding across the African evidence is that policies endorse Indigenous knowledge without supplying the mechanisms through which teachers could act on the endorsement (Shabalala, 2025). Affirmation that is not carried into curriculum statements, assessment frameworks, textbook specifications, and

qualification standards produces uncertainty rather than classroom change, as Meeran and Niranjana's (2026) observation that curriculum policy does not mandate ethnomathematics illustrates.

For district and provincial offices, the implication concerns the instruments through which schools are planned and monitored. Rural school improvement planning is generally organised around needs assessment, which the model requires to be complemented by a community asset inventory. The brokerage function in Layer 3 also implies a district responsibility, since converting bonding capital into linking capital requires an institutional actor with reach beyond the village, a role that Mkhize's (2025) evidence on municipal engagement suggests is achievable.

For donors, development partners and international agencies, the implication is a reporting one. Given that sub-Saharan Africa carries approximately US\$70 billion of the US\$97 billion annual SDG 4 financing gap, and that governments in low-income countries spent an estimated US\$55 per learner annually against US\$8,542 in high-income countries (Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2025), any framing that presents community assets as a partial answer to that gap misrepresents the arithmetic.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Three limitations qualify the argument. First, the article is conceptual, and its three anchor cases are documented instances used illustratively rather than a sample from which generalisation is warranted; two are South African and one Ugandan, which under-represents West, Central, and North African contexts and the variation in rural conditions, language ecologies, and governance arrangements across the continent. Second, the model is untested: its sequential claim is theoretically derived and empirically plausible, but has not been subjected to direct examination. Third, the article treats rural communities as holders of assets without disaggregating the internal inequalities of gender, generation, disability, land tenure, and status through which access to those assets is distributed. An asset held by a community is not thereby an asset available to every learner within it.

Four research directions follow: longitudinal testing of the model's sequential proposition by comparing schools that undertake asset mapping with and without prior epistemic recognition work; development and validation of an educational asset inventory instrument adapted to African rural schooling, since Mkhize's (2025) identification of traditional leadership as a capital category indicates that the Flora typology requires contextual extension; intervention research on teacher preparation for Indigenous knowledge pedagogy, given that under-preparation converts a promising method into a source of learner misconception (Meeran & Niranjana, 2026); and distributional analysis within asset-rich communities, examining which learners actually access community capital and through what mechanisms.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article set out to theorise a shift from deficit-oriented educational development towards an asset-based perspective in which Indigenous knowledge and community resources are treated as productive foundations for advancing SDG 4 in rural Africa. Four conclusions follow from the argument. Deficit thinking in rural African education is an organising logic rather than a rhetorical habit. It determines what is counted, who is consulted, and where explanatory blame settles, and it is reproduced across research paradigms, historical development discourse, national policy, and the everyday conduct of schools towards their communities. Correcting it requires a change in the unit of analysis rather than a change in vocabulary. Rural African communities hold educational assets that can be named, classified, and put to curricular work. Cofimvaba demonstrated the conversion of local knowledge into teaching materials, the Ugandan evidence demonstrated that learners arrive holding syllabus content that schooling excludes, and the KwaZulu-Natal study demonstrated that

schools mobilise human, social, cultural, and political capital under severe budgetary constraints. These assets are invisible to the deficit frame and legible under the capitals taxonomy.

Asset-based approaches are, however, necessary but not sufficient. The critical literature establishes that the asset turn can displace attention from material inequality and can be repurposed to legitimate state retreat, and the African evidence establishes that the binding constraints, including collapsing infrastructure, fiscal inability to recruit available teachers, and a regional financing gap of roughly US\$70 billion annually, are structural. Moreover, the constraint on asset-based practice lies at the institutional interface rather than at the community source: community knowledge is intact, and what is missing is teacher preparation, curriculum specification, assessment alignment, and brokerage capacity. The Indigenous Asset-Based Model for SDG 4 assembles these conclusions into a sequenced construct in which epistemic recognition grounds asset mapping, asset mapping supplies relational conversion, and structural support conditions the whole. Its contribution to the theorisation of SDG 4 in rural Africa is to hold two commitments together that are usually held apart: that rural communities are knowledge partners rather than sites of lack, and that recognising them as such increases rather than decreases what the state owes them.

The following recommendations are directed at the actors identified in Section 6:

- Rural district offices should require every school improvement plan to pair its needs assessment with a community asset inventory organised by the seven capitals and developed with the community, and monitoring instruments should record community capability alongside material shortfall, since indicators that measure only absence reproduce the framing this article contests.
- Ministries should specify, at the subject and phase level, which content areas are to be taught through Indigenous knowledge and how they are to be assessed, fund terminology development in Indigenous languages for numeracy and science, and create recognised governing body positions for knowledge holders and traditional leadership with defined curricular and brokerage functions.
- Every asset-based programme should publish community contribution against a stated public entitlement standard, and donors and ministries should rule explicitly that such contribution may not count towards closing the SDG 4 financing gap, so that a statutory duty to supplement state provision does not become a duty to substitute for it.

Teacher education should treat preparation for Indigenous knowledge pedagogy as a qualification requirement; district offices should bear explicit responsibility for connecting rural schools to municipal, corporate, and university partners; and research councils should fund testing of the model's sequence and of how community assets are distributed by gender, generation, disability, and status.

9. Declarations

Funding: This research did not receive any external funding.

Acknowledgements: The author makes no acknowledgement.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Usage: The author used an artificial intelligence assistant during the preparation of this manuscript for language editing, to structure and understand the reviewer comments. The conceptual argument, the selection and reading of sources, the analysis and all interpretations are the author's own, and the author takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Data Availability: This review is based entirely on publicly available data and information sourced from peer-reviewed articles, reports, and other academic publications cited in the manuscript. No

new primary data were generated or analysed during this study. Readers may refer to the cited sources for detailed information.

References

- Aikman, S., Robinson-Pant, A., McGrath, S., Jere, C. M., Cheffy, I., Themelis, S., & Rogers, A. (2016). Challenging deficit discourses in international education and development. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(2), 314–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2016.1134954>
- Anlimachie, M. A., Abreh, M. K., Acheampong, D. Y., Badu, S., Alluake, S., & Newman, D. (2023). Enacting culturally responsive pedagogy for rural schooling in Ghana: A school-community-based enquiry. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 33(1), 141–159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2023.2205861>
- Cekiso, M. (2026). Mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase: A comparison of classroom reality with the South African language-in-education policy. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 16(1), Article a1777. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v16i1.1777>
- Chen, H., Xu, Y., Tackie, E. A., & Ahakwa, I. (2024). Assessing the impact of asset-based community development approach on rural poverty alleviation in Ghana: The moderating role of government policies. *SAGE Open*, 14(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231226020>
- Cossa, J., Harris, K., & Barat, S. (2025). Modernist education and the myth of development in Africa. *International Review of Education*, 71(5), 959–978. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-025-10192-z>
- da Silva, C., Pereira, F., & Amorim, J. P. (2024). The integration of indigenous knowledge in school: A systematic review. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 54(7), 1210–1228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2023.2184200>
- Emery, M., & Flora, C. (2006). Spiraling-up: Mapping community transformation with community capitals framework. *Community Development*, 37(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490152>
- Flora, C. B., Flora, J. L., & Gasteyer, S. P. (2016). *Rural communities: Legacy and change* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Friedli, L. (2013). "What we've tried, hasn't worked": The politics of assets based public health. *Critical Public Health*, 23(2), 131–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2012.748882>
- Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development. (2025). *Closing the global SDG4 financing gap: Accelerating sustainable financing solutions for education*. United Nations. https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Brief%20Series%20-%20UNESCO_Financing%20Gap.pdf
- Kagoda, A. M. (2009). Integrating appropriate indigenous knowledge in the geography lessons in secondary schools of Uganda. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(3), 117–122.
- Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. ACTA Publications.
- MacLeod, M. A., & Emejulu, A. (2014). Neoliberalism with a community face? A critical analysis of asset-based community development in Scotland. *Journal of Community Practice*, 22(4), 430–450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2014.959147>
- Maclure, L. (2023). Augmentations to the asset-based community development model to target power systems. *Community Development*, 54(1), 4–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2021.2021964>
- Marongwe, N., Neethling, M., & Chiwandire, D. (2026). Enhancing learner support with culturally responsive pedagogy in rural South African schools using technology. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, 8(1), Article a04. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijrcs-2026.vol8.1.04>

- Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (2003). From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development. *Development in Practice*, 13(5), 474–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0961452032000125857>
- Meeran, S., & Niranjana, C. (2026). The game of Kgati as an implementation tool in teaching intermediate phase mathematics: A case of two schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Education Sciences*, 16(2), Article 294. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci16020294>
- Meyiwa, T., Letsekha, T., & Wiebesiek, L. (2013). Masihambisane, lessons learnt using participatory indigenous knowledge research approaches in a school-based collaborative project of the Eastern Cape. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(4), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.15700/201412171329>
- Mkhize, T. R. (2025). A community capitals framework for advancing sustainable development goal #4 through resource mobilization in rural schools. *Discover Education*, 4, Article 463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00907-7>
- Mkhize, T. R., & Davids, M. N. (2023). Resources mobilisation challenges in rural schools of South Africa: What can we learn? *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 13(3), 295–312. <https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>
- Moletsane, R. (2012). Repositioning educational research on rurality and rural education in South Africa: Beyond deficit paradigms. *Perspectives in Education*, 30(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v30i1.1726>
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534>
- Mtika, P., & Sosu, E. M. (2025). Understanding the paradox of primary teacher shortage in low-income countries: Insights from Malawi. *British Educational Research Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.70065>
- Mtiya, S., & Kariyana, I. (2023). Perceived home and school integration through parental participation in rural primary school governance in Amathole East District, South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 12(10), 104–112. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i10.3113>
- Nkambule, T. (2022). Exploring working conditions in selected rural schools: Teachers' experiences. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(1), Article 2013, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n1a2013>
- Ogebo, A. A., & Ramnarain, U. (2024). A systematic review of pedagogical practices for integrating Indigenous knowledge systems in science teaching. *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 28(3), 343–361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18117295.2024.2374133>
- Olatoye, T. A., Groenewald, E., & Fru, R. N. (2026). The geographies of social capital in South Africa's education systems. *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society*, 16(1), 48–59. <https://doi.org/10.26881/jpgs.2026.1.05>
- Shabalala, N. P. (2025). Decolonising environmental education in Africa through the early integration of indigenous knowledge systems guided by Zibanjwa Zisemaphuphu. *Discover Sustainability*, 6, Article 892. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-01822-5>
- Skhosana, R. M. (2025). Harnessing local strengths: Asset-based community development and sustainable livelihoods in South Africa. *Inkanyiso*, 17(1), Article a151. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ink.v17i1.151>
- UNESCO. (2016). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>
- UNESCO. (2026). *Global education monitoring report 2026 - Access and equity: Countdown to 2030. Summary*. UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.54676/LCIO5650>

- UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2024). *Global report on teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession*. UNESCO. https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2349-23_GlobalReportonTeacher_WEB.pdf
- United Nations. (2026). *The Sustainable Development Goals report 2026*. United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2026/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2026.pdf>
- United Nations General Assembly. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). United Nations. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ares70d1_en.pdf
- Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203853214>
- World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, USAID, & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (2022). *The state of global learning poverty: 2022 update*. World Bank. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

Disclaimer: The views, perspectives, information, and data contained within all publications are exclusively those of the respective author(s) and contributor(s) and do not represent or reflect the positions of ERRCD Forum and/or its editor(s). ERRCD Forum and its editor(s) expressly disclaim responsibility for any damages to persons or property arising from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referenced in the content.