

Transforming the Marginalised via IJRCS: The need to Rejig Rural and Community Studies towards Emancipation

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Abstract: Literature and social reality confirm that rurality and its people remain underprivileged, while groups within communities, even in urbanism, still demonstrate marginalisation and social inequalities. Not only that, but research is also limited to emancipate the perpetual deficiencies and the various inequalities that emerge within the context of rurality and community livelihood. Even the little research output in this category suffers revered outlets where rural and community studies could be disseminated. This forms the gap to which the Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies (IJRCS) intends to fill. This, therefore, is the inaugural statement of the Journal. The statement presents the historical background of the Journal, the focus of the Journal, and subsequently defines the conceptual understanding of the rural and community to enlighten the authors and readers about the kind of acceptable articles. The editorial process and the professional profile of our editors were presented with a conclusion that whatever knowledge

production is coming from the archives of IJRCS is authentic, productive and will definitely assume national and international standards without giving loopholes for contestation

Keywords: IJRCS, Rurality, Community, Marginalisation, Emancipation.

1. Introduction

It is not rocket science to prove to the world that development is concentrated majorly in urban cities and within its dwellers. Even among the urban dwellers, the literature showed a lot of inequalities and marginalisation, such as disparities between the privileged and the less privileged (Plein, 2011; Binelli, Loveless & Whitefield, 2015). Karl Marx described this as social disconnectedness between the proletariat and the bourgeois (Obo & Coker, 2014; Mavroudeas, 2018). In other words, among the privileged communities, there exist inequalities, powerfulness and less powerful social and political differentials (Tsoetsi & Omodan, 2020; Omodan, 2021), which further confirms that the world is full of imbalance and subjugation along social, economic, political misdemeanour. Limitless to the inequalities and marginalisation among the elite communities, the rural and the township communities are mostly hit by a lack of social amenities such as infrastructures, good standard of living, opportunities for equal and qualities education, quality health care, economic and political power for self-reliance, to mention but a few (Omodan, Tsoetsi & Dube, 2019). This further confirms that rural communities all over the world are still wallowing in abject poverty and disequilibrium in resources allocation, which further widens the gap between the people and their development when rural and urban development are compared.

Bock (2015) argued that rural communities are marginalised, and its development could not be compared with what is obtainable in urban communities. Chebanne and Dlali (2019) found out that marginalisation exists against the rural communities and within the underprivileged and, at the same time, minority groups of different kinds. From the above exploration, literature and social reality confirm that rurality and its people remain underprivileged, while groups within communities, even urbanism, still demonstrate marginalisation and social inequalities (Moore, 2015). Not only that, but research is also limited to emancipate the perpetual deficiencies and various inequalities that emerge within the context of rurality and community livelihood (Perret, Anseeuw & Mathebula, 2015). Even the little research output in this category suffers revered outlets where rural and community studies could be disseminated (Mbhiza, 2021). This forms the gap that IJRCS intends to fill by publishing research that provides solutions to rurally and

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community-related problems. This remedial approach is not limited to the exposition of educational, social, economic, political, ecological, agricultural, geographical, and language deficiencies but all-encompassing beyond disciplinary purview. IJRCS will, therefore, produce knowledge through academic articles geared towards people's emancipation and development. The mission is not field-specific but rather interdisciplinary to address the issues related to communities and rurality. The Journal focuses on publishing articles that contribute to the sustainable development of rurally disadvantaged people and emancipate communities for self-reliance. Before exploring the scope of the Journal, it is imperative to give a brief historical background to shed more light on its emergence.

1.1 Brief Historical Background of IJRCS

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural & Community Studies* (IJRCS) was established by Education Research and Rural Community Development Forum (ERRCDF) in 2019 under the name "Journal of Education Research and Rural Community Development" with the publication of articles in education, rural and community studies. In January 2021, during the forum's annual report, the Journal was considered too encompassing and needed to be divided into two separate journals. The rural and community development aspect was made as an independent journal under the name *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, while the education research aspect was also designed to stand independently as *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research*. This was how the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies* (IJRCS) came into the limelight in January 2021. The scope of the Journal is, therefore, explained below.

1.2 Focus and Scope of the Journal

IJRCS, being one of the journals of ERRCDF, provides a platform for academics, practitioners and community development experts across all fields of studies to publish their findings. IJRCS welcomes articles that seek to provide empirical, conceptual, theoretical, opinions on current rural and community-related issues. It also encourages discourse on interdisciplinary rural development, policies and practices and community studies from the regional, provincial, community and global perspective. Our interest is limitless to thought-provoking multidisciplinary debates on the practical application of emancipatory studies, social studies, economic studies, political studies, environmental studies, local and urban studies, urban influence/dominance, and studies in resources allocation, among others. The predominant focus is to seek articles that contribute to the sustainable development of rurally disadvantaged people to emancipate them for self-reliance. The Journal is considered as an outlet for academic scholarships for all disciplines, including but not limited to the following perspectives: rural development and people's emancipation, community development, urban and regional integration, geographical, economic and political perspectives, social and educational perspectives, governance and administrative perspectives, sociological and psychological perspectives health and well-being, social and political activism, management and communication, natural and human science, humanities and literature, among others. To further understand the kind of rural and community articles published by IJRCS, the following concepts emerged.

1.3 Conceptualising issues according to ERRCDF

As an academic forum behind the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, ERRCDF provides an insight into the kind of articles that the Journal will publish. Among articles that seek to understand, interpret, interrogate and emancipate rural existence and its people. On the other hand, the Journal also accepts articles that seek to understand, interpret, examine, orientate and re-orientate groups of people, whether rural or urban, who could be categorised as a community of people. The concepts of rural and community, according to this Journal, is presented below.

1.3.1 Rural and Rurality

One would ask, what is rurality or what makes rural areas/people? Defining rurality could be complicated because rurality is viewed from two perspectives: the people and the geographical location. That is, rurally located people and their way of life could be conceptualised as rurality. At the same time, places commonly referred to as local townships could also be referred to as rurality. This is in tandem with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (2018) that rurality is “what is not urban” “populated land outside urban areas” which could be country-specific (Statistics Canada, 1999). There is no generally accepted definition of rurality; rather, each country has specific characteristics peculiar to its own situation. Some countries see rurality as a community that lacks social amenities, communities with abundant farmlands, a marginalised located people, people with little and no access to good roads, education, water and electricity supply (van Schalkwyk, Schoeman & Cilliers, 2014; du Toit, 2017) among others.

In contrast, some refer to rurality as a small village with little or no expansion opportunities like the cities where there are such opportunities. Since there is no generally approved definition of rural and rurality, the ERRCDF, with careful consideration, has decided to accept independent conceptualisation of rural issues based on the perception and social understanding obtained in the researchers or the researched country/community. However, having considered that rurality is mainly associated with the disadvantaged locations and its people, the Journal defines “Rural and rurality” as economically, socially, and politically underprivileged areas, people, and entities.

1.3.2 Community and Community People

There are contending perceptions and views about what community means. That is, people view communities based on what their intentions are during definition. This is perhaps why Green & Haines (2008) concluded that debates on how to streamline the concept of the community are an “on-going and never-ending” discourse. Based on this, the understanding of community is conceptualised from three perspectives: human ecology, system approach and field theory. These three perspectives are the most used perspectives when people try to understand the concept of community (Luloff & Krannich, 2002). From human ecology, community is viewed as a structure of relationships between populations with the same characteristics; a population with the same organisational goal (Hawley, 1950; Poplin, 1979; Luloff & Krannich, 2002). In the concept of Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012), community understanding revolves around society’s adaptive processes to achieve a common goal. On the system approach to community conceptualisation, the community is viewed as social connections with a particular social function, responsibilities and focus (Rosenblatt, Cheshire & Lawrence, 2009). That is, the sociality of people within confinement is significant when a community is being conceptualised. This was conclusively captured by Poplin (1979) and Matarrita-Cascante and Mark (2012) as a system that comprises social status and roles within groups or institutions. From the field perspective, the community is viewed as a social organisation within which interaction of any kind takes place. Understanding community cannot be excluded from the social interaction among different people within the same geographical milieu (Rosenblatt, Cheshire & Lawrence, 2009). Based on this analysis, one could opine that community is a conglomerate of people, entities, locations, and organisations that share common and conflictual characteristics. Therefore, studies within this purview are due for consideration in IJRCS.

2. The editorial process of IJRCS within international standard

Articles that fall within the Journal’s expected standard are subjected to editorial processes. To confirm if the article falls within the aim and scope of the Journal, the formatting and style must be within the Journal’s prescription, and plagiarism must be ten per cent or lower. Once this has been ascertained, the article is transferred to the

appropriate section editor for further academic screening. Upon ascertaining its suitability, the review process begins following the workflow below:

Step 1: Author registers and submits the complete manuscript in MS Word document following the peer-review policy and formatting prescription of the Journal.

Step 2: The managing editor checks the submitted manuscript (subject to rejection if not within the Journal's scope and not fulfilling the standard research criteria).

Step 3: The articles are subjected to a plagiarism test (above 10 per cent similarity result will be rejected and sent back to the author(s) for possible correction).

Step 4: The article will be assigned to a suitable member of the editorial team (content verification will be ascertained and may be rejected if found unsuitable).

Step 5: Two expert peer reviewers are selected from different institutions to review the manuscript. After that, the section editor evaluates the review results to make a decision based on the reviewers' recommendations. The likely recommendations are:

- i. Accept in its condition
- ii. Minor revision required
- iii. Major revision required
- iv. Resubmit for another review process
- v. Reject and resubmit elsewhere.

Step 6: In the case of 1, manuscripts are processed for publication. In the case of 2 and 3, author(s) have to submit the revised manuscript through the revision menu, and manuscripts are checked by the managing editor, section editor and one of the reviewers (may be rejected if not satisfying the reviewers' queries). In the case of 5, a new review process is initiated.

Step 7: The accepted manuscripts will be formatted and sent back to the author(s) for approval.

Step 8: Copy-edited version of the manuscript is uploaded and shared with the author(s) for final approval before publication.

3. Professional Background of Inaugural Editorial Team

The beauty, standard, and quality knowledge production of any journal lies in its editorial members' calibre. To this end, IJRCS has been able to secure the professional support of notable researchers across the world's renowned academics in their respective fields of study. "Our team comprises renowned researchers from all spheres of the educational, rural, social and community-related field of studies" (Omodan, 2019) with excellent records of interdisciplinary scholarly engagement. Our editorial teams comprise senior academics from various academic institutions across the world. This was carefully selected to meet up with an international standard for the editorial team's composition and assure an intellectual and scholarly disposition of quality knowledge production. Below are the profiles of our team members.

Prof Akinlolu Lucas Ogunlade: *Professor Emeritus, AU Washington, United States of America.*

Prof. Akinlolu Lucas Ogunlade (B.Sc OAU Ife, M.Ed Howard University, and PhD AU Washington) taught at Howard University and George Washington University, University of Port Harcourt, University of Ilorin, and Ekiti State University until mandatory retirement at age 70. He was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of Ekiti State University of Education. He was also the Director of Advancement Directorate at Ekiti State University. He was the Head of the Department of Educational Management at the University of Ilorin, and a regular educational policy analyst on state television networks. He was a Postdoctoral fellow of George Washington University. He lectured and conducted researches in several education planning, policy, administration and legal issues in education. He supervised 38 PhD theses and 67 Masters dissertations. He was the external examiner for PhD at OAU Ife, Universities of Ibadan, Benin, Ilorin, and an

assessor for professorships in the universities mentioned above. Prof. Ogunlade is the Editor-in-Chief of several reputable academic international journals, including the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research*. He is a fellow and member of several prominent international professional organisations and a recipient of several major international and local academic and community awards of excellence.

Prof Lere Amusan: *Professor at North-West University, South Africa.*

Lere Amusan is a professor of International Relations and Chair in the Department of Political Studies and International Relations. He holds a B.Sc and M.Sc from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and D.Litt et. Phill. From University of South Africa (UNISA). He holds an Advanced Human Rights Certificate on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and an Advanced Human Rights certificate on Comparative Human Rights from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. He also holds a certificate course on US Foreign Policy from the University of Delaware, USA. Professor Lere Amusan taught at Osun State University (2007-2012), he is now with the North-West University. He was the Head of Department at Osun State University, where he chaired many committees. He mentored many postdoctoral fellows at his present university. In 2012, he received the Osun State University College of Management and Social Sciences Outstanding Scholar Award. He received the same award in his present faculty in 2014, 2016, and 2018. In 2020, Professor Amusan received North-West University Award as an outstanding researcher. He supervised many PhD and Masters theses. Prof. Amusan is an external examiner for many universities in Africa. He is an assessor for professorship for Osun State University and the University of Lagos. He is an editorial board member of many internationally accredited journals. He has published over 120 journal articles and chapters in books and edited two books on Africa's development challenges. He specialised in the politics of development and underdevelopment in developing areas.

Prof. Alfred H. Makura: *Central University of Technology, South Africa*

Alfred Henry Makura (PhD; PGDHET; M.Ed.; CFL; B.A.Ed.; Dip. Agric. Ed.) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Postgraduate Studies (Education) at the Central University of Technology, Free State in South Africa. His speciality and interest areas are in education, particularly education leadership and management, curriculum development, gender, and professional development in higher education. Prof. Makura worked as an academic development practitioner at the University of Fort Hare and extensively as a principal lecturer at Morgenster Teachers' College, an Associate College of the University of Zimbabwe, and the Zimbabwe Open University. He has published three books, book chapters, numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and presented numerous papers at local and international conferences. Prof Makura is passionate about issues of female school leadership, teacher education and economic development in general. Over the years, he has graduated several masters and doctoral candidates and numerous others at the honours level. He has acted as (and is) an external examiner of Master and Doctoral candidates for several South African universities in the Africa sub-region. Alfred is a reviewer of articles for several renowned international academic journals. He is a TAU fellow (*Teaching Advancement at University*), a member of some prominent international professional organisations and associations, and a recipient of several research grants and accolades.

Dr Adeola A. Oso: *Associate Professor, Ekiti State University, Nigeria.*

Adeola Abiola Oso is an Associate Professor at the Department of Crop, Horticulture and Landscape Design, Ekiti State University, Nigeria. She holds a PhD in Pest Management from the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. She was a postdoctoral fellow of the University of the Free State, South Africa. She has a passion for teaching, research and community development. She has mentored undergraduate and graduate students at Ekiti State University and served at various university committees. She is a member of the Nigerian Society for Plant Protection, Organisation of Women in Science for the Developing World and National Association of Women in Academics. She has published

articles in local and international peer-reviewed journals and international conference annals. Her research interest is in developing products regarding plant protection and pests attack management on economic crops to achieve food sustainability and security. This goal is targeted at improving the standard of living among the resource-poor farmers and empowering the developing world's teeming youths.

Dr Bunmi Isaiah Omodan: *Lecturer/Researcher, University of the Free State, South Africa.*

Bunmi Isaiah Omodan is a lecturer and researcher at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He was the first prize winner of a research award at the University of the Free State in 2020 and subsequently named one of the top ten researchers in the Faculty of Education of the same year. He also won the first prize in a competition titled: Decoloniality in the 21st Century Classroom in 2019. He is a certified human resource manager with a PhD in Education Management and Leadership, a Masters degree in Educational Management and B. A. Ed in English Language. He is the Managing Editor of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research and Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies and reviews for other journals. He has supervised and is still supervising postgraduate students. He is currently a member of the British Education Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS), Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP) and Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM). He has published articles in various local and international accredited journals, chapters-in-book, and local and international conference proceedings. His research focus includes but not limited to qualitative and quantitative research approach, community-based participatory action research, decoloniality, Ubuntu, social transformation, social pedagogy, social crisis management and university transformation.

Dr Oluwaseyi Michael Oderinde: *RefleXion Medical, Inc, United States of America.*

Oluwaseyi M. Oderinde (PhD) is a senior researcher at RefleXion Medical, Inc, United States of America. He was a Research Fellow in the Department of Radiation Medicine and Applied Sciences, University of California San Diego and an Honorary Researcher/Adjunct Faculty in the School of Physics, University of Witwatersrand. He is a recipient of several academic merit awards. He has spent the past six years as a teacher and medical/radiation physics researcher. Dr Oderinde has reviewed several articles for scientific journals and has published his work in reputable journals. His research interests are not limited to radiation science, physical science, and physics education.

Dr Cias T. Tsotetsi, *Assistant Dean, University of the Free State, South Africa.*

Cias T. Tsotetsi is a senior lecturer with more than twenty-four years of experience in the academic environment. Dr Tsotetsi's research has been on critical emancipatory research, participatory action research and rural emancipation, as well as adaptive leadership. In 2013 and 2014, he was part of a partnership between the University of the Free State and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in a National Research Foundation project. He has published his works both nationally and internationally. He is a member of the Sustainable Rural Learning Ecologies/Sustainable Learning Environments colloquia for the past years. He has also served in the organisation of other conferences. He has been instrumental in coordinating postgraduate activities and research at the University of the Free State. He led a sub-project on "contextually and culturally responsive education" under the Afromontane project's umbrella.

Dr Fumane Portia Khanare: *University of the Free State, South Africa.*

Fumane Portia Khanare is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, South Africa. Her research focuses on health-promoting schools, psychosocial well-being of learners in rural schools, learner support, and HIV and AIDS education. She combines asset-based approaches and arts-based research methods as pathways to advance young people's voices and agency for systematically enabling learning environments. She has been a MAC AIDS Fund Leadership Initiative Fellow at Columbia University, the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), and the Human Sciences

Research Council (HSRC). In 2017, she was honoured to be one of the Child and Youth Institute Laureates under the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). She is currently the co-convener of WERA-IRN (World Education Research Association International Research Network (2019-2021)).

Dr Wilson Mugizi: *Kyambogo University, Uganda.*

Wilson Mugizi holds a PhD and Masters degree both in Educational Management from Makerere University. Currently, he is a lecturer at Kyambogo University. He is the Research Coordinator for the Department of Education Planning and Management, Faculty of Education, Kyambogo University, and is the outgoing Deputy Director of Postgraduate Studies and Research Directorate – Research and Innovations at Kampala International University-Western Campus (KIU-WC). He is an editor for the Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research and Direct Research Journal of Education and Vocational Studies. He has also reviewed several journals. He has authored articles in the education arena focussing on antecedents of employee work attitudes and students' behaviour. His research focus includes but not limited to human behaviour and its antecedents in educational institutions, pedagogy and the role of higher education in national development.

Dr Efosa Adagbasa: *University of the Free State, South Africa*

Efosa G. Adagbasa is a lecturer/researcher, a very serious-minded and diligent scholar with broad interest in physical geography and biogeography, focusing on ecological modelling, advanced remote sensing, GIS, and computer programming, extensive data analysis, and cloud computing applications in environmental studies. He is a graduate of Geography and Regional Planning from Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. Holds a Masters degree in Geographical Information Systems from the University of Ibadan and another Masters degree in Geography from the same university. He holds a PhD in Environmental Geography from the University of the Free State, South Africa. He also has a certificate in climate change impacts from the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA. He trained as a Project Manager for the International Charter, Space, and Major Disasters, using RADAR data for disaster response and rapid mapping. He has published articles locally and internationally.

Dr Yajnya Dutta Nayak: *Khallikote Autonomous College, (Berhampur University), India.*

Yajnya Dutta Nayak (M. Com., M.Phil., PGDMM, PhD) is currently working as the Assistant Professor in the Postgraduate Department of Commerce, Khallikote Auto College, Berhampur, Odisha. Dr Nayak has ten books, eleven book chapters and more than forty research papers published in leading research journals and periodicals. He is a member of various national and international associations and an editorial board member and reviewer of various national & international journals. He has completed several government-sponsored research projects and assignments, including but not limited to COVID-19, NIRD, Water Technology, ICT, CRC, NRGES, etc. His areas of research interest include Marketing, Business Management, Financial Information Technology and CSR, Organisational Behaviour, Management, Rural Development, Urban Development, Research Methodology, among others.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the above editorial statements, it is not out of place to conclude that whatever knowledge production is coming from the archives of IJRCS is authentic, productive and will definitely assume national and international standard without giving loopholes for contestation. This conclusion is deduced from the Journal's focus, the conceptualisation of issues, the editorial process, and the quality of its editorial members. The editorial process that includes a critical, honest and transparent review process also constitutes the fact that our Journal remains one of the best globally and could be trusted for knowledge production. This and many more indicate that ERRCDF is a democratic and academic forum that values originality in its production prowess. This also serves as a confirmation

and re-confirmation to the authors, readers, and other researchers that our Journal and its publication process are second to none, with an uncompromised quality knowledge production. Therefore, IJRCS is consistently calling authors to submit their intellectual outputs with an assurance that relentless effort will be made to ensure that your research is communicated, accessible and readable all over the world.

Based on this, the following recommendations were made: integrity of our review process is sacrosanct; therefore, concerted efforts should be made by would-be authors to remove any indications of identity from their manuscript to ensure a blinded relationship between the author(s) and the reviewer(s). This step, among others, will be 100 per cent considered before initiating the review process. These should:

- Prepare two different documents; the first document named "main manuscript" must only contain the manuscript's title, the abstract and the entire article. The second document, which must be named and uploaded as a "supplementary file" must contain the title, author(s) information, and the email address of all the authors.
- In the case of the author(s) citing their previous works, the name(s) must be replaced with "author and year" in the text and also replicated in the reference session instead of authors' name, article title, etc.
- By naming your documents, author(s) identification should also be removed from the properties of the files; instead, name your main article with "main manuscript" and information file as "supplementary file".

In the same vein, manuscripts must be prepared on MS Word, using 1.15 spacing and 12-point size in Times New Roman. You are advised to employ italics rather than underlining. Please note that figures, tables and other graphics must be placed at the appropriate place within the text according to the author(s) interest. The recommended length for manuscripts is between 4000 and 7000 words, including references, an abstract of 250 words or less, and any appendixes. Each heading must be numbered, e.g., 1., 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, etc. In the case of multiple authors, the manuscript must indicate one author as the corresponding author. Before submission, author(s) must check our presently published articles to ensure that your article is currently formatted. Article not formatted according to our format will be rejected unprocessed.

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