

**GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL
ECOLOGIES: A BOURDIEUIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE ANALYSIS**

by

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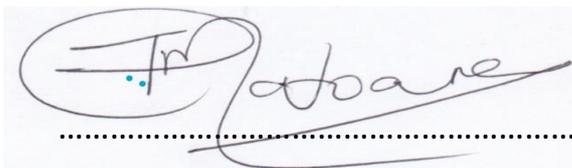
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to African rural girl children in rural South Africa and the entire continent. May they rise above their adversity and claim their agency. I urge you to pursue education against all odds. For indeed “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (N. R. Mandela).

This doctorate is also dedicated to the memory of my late father, Makgati Matoane, for setting me on the academic journey of life. I am forever indebted to you. Your loving memory lives on Moloto.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOP:	Action and Observation Phase
BPFA:	Beijing Platform for Action
CBOs:	Community-Based Organisations
CDA:	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against
CIE:	Catholic Institute of Education
CSI:	Corporate Social Responsibility
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DHE:	Department of Higher Education
DRDTA:	Department of Rural Development and Traditional Affairs
DOE:	Department of Education
DOL:	Department of Labour
EC:	European Commission
EFA:	Education for All
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
FCM:	Feminist Communitarian Model
FGDs:	Focus Group Discussions
FPAR:	Feminists' Participatory Action Research
GBV:	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE:	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HOD:	Head of Department
LO:	Life Orientation
LGBTI:	Lesbians, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Issues/Individuals

LRCs:	Learner Representative Councils
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MRM:	Moral Regeneration Movement
MP:	Mpumalanga Province
NDM:	Nkangala District Municipality
NDP:	National Development Plan
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAR:	Participatory Action Research
PP:	Planning Phase
SASSA:	South African Social Security Agency
SADC:	Southern Africa Developing Countries
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SMT:	School Management Team
TAs:	Traditional Authorities
THLM:	Thembisile Hani Local Municipality
UCC:	Unrecognised Cultural Capital

ABSTRACT

Premised on assertions that despite all the efforts directed at ensuring equal access to education for girls and boys, there are persistent gender disparities and gaps as well as a range of hindrances with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) study with feminists' orientations, seeks to propose a framework on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Conducted in the Nkangala District of the Mpumalanga Province, the study begins with a situational analysis that identifies and interrogates issues that continue to confront rural girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The feminists' orientations serve to emphasise issues of gender inclusion and equity in and through education for a gender transformative education agenda. This study unpacks Bourdieu's theoretical constructs of the field, the habitus and the capital. It then explores how these can be used to potentially enhance initiatives and interventions that focus on access to sustainable learning for rural girl children in a way that shapes and informs educational practice and policy.

With the understanding derived from Bourdieuan theory of practice, the study situates rural girl children the rural homes, schools and the broader communities as their main social fields of play. It thus interrogates the power struggles, contestations and manifestations associated with girl children and educational settings. Whilst acknowledging that the rural homes and communities are important sites for sustainable learning, rural schools (ing) are in this study considered as an integral playing field. This policy and practice analysis study concludes with a proposed framework that is premised firstly on the utmost consideration towards developing rural girl children's agency, their full capabilities and potential. Secondly, conscientisation should be propelled towards gendered re-socialisation, which is gendering the habitus in rural households. Thirdly, gender-mainstreaming initiatives should facilitate more gender sensitive and responsive educational policies and practices in rural schools. Lastly, continued community-based advocacy and mobilisation must be implemented to enhance gendered socio-cultural capitals that promote gender equality and equity with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Keywords: access, Bourdieu, girl children, sustainable learning, rural ecologies

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study is to propose a framework for enhancing girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan perspective. Acknowledging the socio-economic development realities broadly, a particular focus on rural ecologies reveals, "...the effects of rural development [as] being uneven, and [that] differences between the well-to-do and marginal rural areas have been increasing" (Bock, 2015a:552). It is therefore imperative to investigate rural education, specifically as it relates to rural girl children, as one aspect of education that needs serious attention (Bock, 2015a:552). In South Africa, there are those severely marginalised rural areas while others can be considered relatively well to do. However, for this study, marginalised rural ecologies are those considered to be characterised by dire socio-economic conditions and neglect from the relevant authorities including government. Thus, rurality for this study is contextualised to refer to disenfranchised communities, often geographically located in isolated, far-flung and under-developed ecologies. These ecologies are characterised by dire lack of access to basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation, roads and transport infrastructure. That also includes lack of access to health and other facilities considered essential for development broadly. As the primary researcher in this study, I thus contend that these issues has direct negative consequences on girl children's access to sustainable learning in these ecologies. The situation is further compounded by the ongoing challenge of the volatility and complexity of rural development and restructuring which is "doomed by the rampant urban-rural transformation" that most times hinders the progress of communities in rural areas who experience destabilisation (Long & Liu, 2016:387). Urbanisation (and migration) has "widened the gap between rural and urban areas making it more pronounced" (Kumar, Kumar & Vivekadhish, 2016:2). Thus, it makes it difficult for the government to effect a balanced focus on both the rural and the urban development priorities.

Cognisant of the fact that education is key to any development, the study thus situates issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies at the centre of discussions and debates. I therefore concur with Schafft (2016:137) that "rethinking the purposes of education, particularly within rural contexts, may help not only to more clearly articulate a sensible rural education policy, but, in the process, more clearly articulate broader rural development policy". From an ecological perspective, this study views issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning with a comprehensive lens that encompasses the rural families, the schools and communities as (Allen, Wright, Cranston, Watson, Beswick & Hay, 2018:409) advice. However, whilst I use the study to deliberate on the rural families and communities, I pay considerable attention to rural schools. Especially so because several "aspects of rural schools' settings, such as the distance from urban areas and the commuting between the schools and the students' and teachers' homes, exacerbate the challenges that rural schools face" (Rosenberg, Christianson & Angus, 2015:194). These challenges are further complicated not only by issues of defining 'rural', but also by the often-dramatic ways that rural schools differ from each other especially when one is mindful of the global developmental move towards inclusive education (IE). Thus, "inclusion [as encompassing] education that provides for all students beyond the perspective of any form of marginalisation [including rural marginalisation]" (Carrington, Tangen & Beutel, 2018:109-110). This research study considers the context of the "global sustainability agenda [that] challenges traditional pedagogies and calls for a school education that fosters awareness of the complexities and uncertainties of the surrounding world" (Mogren, Gericke & Scherp, 2018:1).

These challenges, complications and complexities exacerbate the inherent gender inequalities and inequities that are because of the deeply entrenched patriarchal values and practices that further marginalises rural girl children. These are culturally and traditionally accepted and promoted in most communities, even more so in rural communities. It is practised under the guise of discriminatory cultural and traditional values and practices that girl children are expected to be burdened with; that of gender inequalities and inequities. Amongst others, these include generally accepted gendered household chores, early and abusive marriages and marital practices, as well as sexual violence. These practices further subject girl children to abuses and discriminatory practices that disempower them, and at times denies them access and

active participation in the various spheres of life. I therefore concur with the view that “[l]ittle is done to address the systemic features of gender inequality and to realise inclusive developments that address the needs of all social groups” (Bock, 2015b:731).

It is against this backdrop that the study begins with articulating girl children’s triple oppression centred on their productive, reproductive and community work (Moser, 1989:1799-1800). This triple oppression is contextualised as it relates to girl children in rural ecologies and thus it entails gender discrimination, social exclusion and marginalisation; the effects of which are so intense for girl children especially in their early years of schooling and consequently contribute to the hostile environment for girl children’s schooling. The burden of gendered discrimination, inequalities and poverty hinders girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It is with taking into consideration the fact that the development agenda and pace “tends to bypass women and [girl children] and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged” (Kumar, Kumar & Vivekadhis, 2016:2). Hence, this study therefore pursues gender equality as a political endeavour seeing that the slow progress, especially in rural areas is a result of “the de-politicisation of rural gender issues” (Bock, 2015b:731).

The Bourdieuan analysis in this study is meant to unpack and interrogate for a deeper understanding of the disadvantages facing girl children with regard to access to sustainable learning. The study pays particular focus on schooling, families and the communities as essential components of sustainable learning, though limited to rural ecologies. The analysis of Bourdieu’s theory of practice depicts that it is centred on understanding the potential influence (positively and negatively) of the school system. Additionally, the critical analyses of the roles of important societal aspects such as culture, class, inequalities (amongst others) within the schooling system as sites for societal reproduction, are important in dissecting the challenges that girl children face in rural ecologies. All of these aspects relating to the Bourdieuan theory of practice are unpacked in the discussions that follow.

It is important to highlight at this stage that the study has two fundamental aspects. The first aspect of the study deliberates on issues of gender equality and equity with regard to access to sustainable learning with particular focus on girl children, thus

grounding the study to a feminist agenda of women and girl children's emancipation, and locating these within rural ecologies. The second aspect of the research study deliberates on educational policy initiatives and interventions; more specifically, it is an attempt at contributing towards gendering education policies, enhancing their responsiveness to gender equality, and equity in education. In essence, to "re-politicise gender in rural development and to tease out at the local level how changing gender relations and rural development coincide" (Bock, 2015b:731). However, with caution, so that it remains clear that the goal is not to reach equality and equity by sameness; rather, through diversity, acknowledging difference, and thus facilitating gendered transformation.

Lastly, the study is premised against the backdrop that there is a common acknowledgement that education cuts across three intrinsically linked environments. Those are, the school, the family and the community, with one directly or indirectly affecting the other. This inter-connectedness is fundamental and will be discussed in detail later in the study.

1.2 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The study is premised on relevant national and international policy frameworks and legislative prescripts for which South Africa is a signatory country. The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000a) states that its vision is in "eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality". Articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2000b) for sustainable development set for 2000-2015 (MDGs, 2000-2015) are goals that focus on increasing access to primary school (Goal 2) and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling (Goal 3). Other conventions on the rights of the child include the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UNESCO, 1990), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1979 & 1999) as adopted by the then OAU (1979) that later became known as the African Union (AU), Education for All Global Monitoring Reports (EFA, 2010-2016; UNESCO, 1995), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA, 1995), amongst others.

Most recent in the international sphere is (amongst others) the African Union (AU) Gender Strategy (2018-2027) which builds on the MDGs (2000-2015). Other newly set international instruments include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2016). Whilst all the sustainable development goals (SDGs) outlined are important for this study, of particular relevance to this research study are SDG 4 and 5. **SDG 4 states: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.** Further set amongst its targets is ensuring that by 2030 all girls and boys will have access to completely free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. **SDG 5 points to; Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.** We parallel these two SDGs with South Africa's National Development Plan (SA NDP, 2012 & 2030) specifically **Chapter 9** that points to **improving education, training and innovation.** Of particular importance and relevance to the study is that the SA NDP 2030 further states "Education, training and innovation are central to South Africa's long-term development. They are core elements in eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, and the foundation of an equal society" (SA NDP, 2030:261). To that regard, Leicht and Heiss (2018:7) talks of education for sustainable development. McGrath (2018:1-3) further refers to "...education as an investment into the future". I therefore against this backdrop, that I argue that education is amongst the core drivers in the broad spectrum of South Africa's development agenda. However, it must be noted that the continued "failure to reach the marginalised" (Rose, 2015b:289) with reference to access to education and the realities of lagging gender transformation especially in education, continues to be a sore point for the development agenda and thus needs critical attention.

Further, as alluded to in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG, 2015:11), "it is important to recognise the link between sustainable development and other relevant ongoing processes in the economic, social and environmental fields". Thus, we see the pairing of the two SDGs (4 and 5) as attempts to link education, and for this study particularly rural education, to broaden the ongoing socio-economic outlook. It also extends the link to the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2016: iv). The

Declaration states inclusion and equity through education as the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda that is supported with a commitment to addressing all forms of exclusion, marginalisation, disparities, and inequalities in terms of access, participation and learning opportunities, specific to supporting gender-equality issues (UNESCO, 2016: iv).

For this study, I therefore draw on two central themes emanating from the above-mentioned legislative and policy prescripts; firstly, the need to address issues of access to education. Secondly, eliminating gender disparities in all rural learning ecologies. Adding to this discussion would be the dimension brought forth by McGrath (2010:237) who points to the fact that “education cannot be marginalised in mainstream development thinking”. I thus also maintain that education is at the core of social inclusion initiatives and interventions. Using the social inclusion element, I emphasise the inclusion of rural girl children into the mainstream education system in general, owing to the inherited educational and gender inequalities.

It is opportune at this point to state that, as the primary researcher, I come from a sound gender-activism background, grounded on advocacy for equality and equity between girl and boy children. Therefore, it is with the context that this study will lean more towards gendered and to some extent, feminist viewpoints. That is so because central to the feminists’ influence, is the need to address patriarchy in its entirety and advocate for the empowerment of girl children and women. Thus, central to the advancement of girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies is, among others, ensuring the progress towards a more inclusive education, especially for rural girl children, as inclusive education inter-links with “cultural, historical, economic, geographical, and political contexts to accelerate greater equity in education” (Carrington, Tangen, & Beutel, 2019,1). A view also profoundly espoused by Taylor (2009:1) is that “whatever the social background, every child must be afforded an opportunity for excellent education in a good school combined with equity in provision”. I therefore use the study to challenge what I perceive as gender disenfranchisement. I use the term “disenfranchisement”, borrowed from (Fisher & Green, 2004: 66) “...as a term that has been developed to respect the limitations of social actors when they try to engage with international regimes for sustainable development”. I thus contextualised the term in this study to refer to the gendered

disenfranchisement of rural girl children as social actors with regard to access to sustainable learning.

1.3 RESEARCH FOCUS

With the research study, I focus on highlighting issues facing girl children in rural ecologies with regard to issues of access to sustainable learning. Chisamya, De Jaeghere, Kendall and Khan (2012:755) posits that, “for future research and policymaking to increase equity, consideration should be placed on how schools could play transformative roles”. The said transformative role for this study is gender transformation, as it is pertains to access to sustainable learning for girl children in rural ecologies. Chisamya et al. (2012:755) further state that we should consider “countering newly emergent forms of injustice, by setting new institutional expectations and practices to directly address the interactions between in- and out-of-school forces that shape the models of gender relations in schools” (Chisamya, et al., 2012:754-55).

With the study, I further seek to inform and shape future education policies by incorporating the often-neglected views of girl children themselves with regard to their schooling. An aspect best summarised in Sommer (2010:521) that “girls have pragmatic and realistic recommendations for how to improve school environments, ideas that should be incorporated as effective methods for improving girls’ academic experiences and their healthy transition”. I also contend that all other stakeholders in rural ecologies could potentially contribute to creating sustainable learning for girl children. Due consideration on issues facing girl children with regard to challenges in accessing sustainable learning in rural ecologies must be aligned to international policy instruments that seek gender equity and equality in education, particularly for girl children.

At this point of the study, a Bourdieuan analysis with feminist orientations is largely focused upon, as it is influenced and informed by the different feminist theories and concepts, acknowledging that “there is no definitive and/or correct feminism, as there’s always contestation on the different types of feminisms” (Bonthuys & Albertyn, 2007:21). However, all feminist theories are, unified by their commitment to eradicating the inequalities, inequities and overall subordination of women and girl children, which is one of the aims of this study. These feminist views and influences are, articulated in relation to understanding Bourdieu’s stance on reproduction. Feminist views and

influences are thus, used to argue for redress concerning the evils perpetrated by systems of patriarchy, thus advocating for the advancement and empowerment of women and girl children. Therefore, in this study, I use and understand feminism understood as "... a collective term for systems of belief and theories that pay special attention to women's rights and women's position in culture and society" (Alabi & Alabi, 2014a:007-8). More so against the backdrop that "[f]eminists are united by the idea that women's position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured insuch a way as to benefit men to the political, social, and economic detriment of women"(Alabi &Alabi, 2014a:007-8). It is for that reason that education is first a social tool that is imperative for the continued survival and growth of the human society. Hence, education whether formal or informal, assumes a heavy social context (Alabi & Alabi, 2014a:007-8).

A particular focus in this study is on dominant patriarchal practices in education, especially within the context of rural ecologies (discussed in Chapter 3). The review of related literature will highlight girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Creswell and Poth (2018:7) state that, "...theoretical frameworks are a unique way of abstractly thinking about or looking at the world". Further, these are used in qualitative research (such as this study) to connect the parts and provide a lens through which to view the study. Indeed, the lens or theoretical perspective helps with building an understanding of certain aspects of the phenomenon under study, though appreciating that in some instances, might conceal others. Therefore, choosing a theoretical framework is necessary to locate the "researcher's prior knowledge of the literature in the field, as well as the location of extensive literature reviews that help to summarise specific theoretical formulations" (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:1). Therefore, "theoretical frameworks essentially clarify the research problem and helps to determine the questions necessary for the study" (Ekinci, 2015:15). Pursuant to social justice endeavours, the theoretical framework chosen for this study is both advocacy and transformation-orientated, and is also influenced by and premised on the quest to advance the needs of the marginalised groups, hence the study adopted the Bourdieuan theory of practice (Creswell, 2015:8).

The Bourdieuan theoretical framework, henceforth referred to as Bourdieu's theory of practice, is in this study, grounded on the feminist approach and perspectives. That which I have opted to refer to as feminising the Bourdieuan theory of practice. Especially because the study is mainly focused on rural girl children. Bourdieu's theory of practice comprises of three main elements: field, capital and habitus (Walther, 2014:116). The study deliberated on all three theoretical concepts as it progresses. Accordingly, Walther (2014:8) states that it is almost impossible to explain one element of Bourdieu's theory without referring to the others. Feminising Bourdieu's theory of practice derives its motivation by the fact that "feminism offers critical perspectives and implications for acknowledging the other without attempting to appropriate their experience and understanding of the world back into the dominant discourse" (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:216). Therefore, for this study, as the primary researcher, I entered the rural ecologies with this feminised critical perspectives. Acknowledging that the rural girl children and ecologies experiences and understanding are as presented. That they should not be appropriated to nor validated, I add, by the dominant discourse. They are appropriate and valid in the way that they are presented.

I also deem it necessary to borrow, albeit limitedly, some of Freire's theoretical constructs in consolidating the Bourdieuan theoretical framework. The Bourdieuan theory of practice, as detailed in Mills and Gale (2010:14) significantly "harbours a concern that schooling reproduces society and provides explanation of how this system of reproduction of advantage and disadvantage in education works." At which point, some elements of Freire's theory of "critical consciousness" – referred to as "*conscientizacao*" as outlined in Brooks (2012:23) becomes relevant. In particular the fact that it leans on "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality". With this theory, Freire "advocates that education for poor children should be about human and community development, about understanding who the children are, personally, culturally and socially" (Brooks, 2012:23). The study adopts the feminised Bourdieuan theory of practice as outlined in the paragraph above. However, I limitedly allude to Freire's theory in order to cement an understanding of critical consciousness. I contend that it is critical consciousness that "digging beneath the surface" emerges, as is the case of the Bourdieuan theory of practice. Further that the role and responsibility for redress and transformation driven by this consciousness, emerges. Thus, the feminised

Bourdeuiian theory of practice helps, on one hand, with gaining a deeper understanding into the social dilemma under study, and on the other hand, driving the intention of arriving at some possible and useful strategies for redress and transformation. In this study, this complementary nature is used on one hand, to gain a deeper understanding into issues that confront girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. On another, to begin to generate possible strategies for intervention ursuant to advancing gender transformation in education. It is however important to highlight the fact that despite borrowing from other theoretical orientations, those are used limited in so far as enhancing and enriching other aspects of the study. Thus, the thrust and overarching theory for this study is feminised Bourdeiu's theory of practice.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is for this study informed by the critical theory perspectives "that has a twofold undertaking; that of striving to be educative by guiding its advocates to explore conditions of possibility; and striving to be emancipatory by providing potentially transformative outcomes for these advocates" (Hawkins, 2015:466). These critical theoretical foundations harbour "interests in uncovering social inequalities, and by implication, how these may be transformed" (Mills & Gale, 2010:15). In this case, it pertains to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

It is important to highlight that the aim and objectives of the study are, premised on the need for continued socio-political advocacy for educational policies and practices that are more sensitive and responsive to the issues of equality and equity with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In this regard, Ainscow (2016:159) maintains, "that both equity and equality are dependent not only on the educational practices of teachers in rural schools, or even rural schools themselves for example. Instead, that equity and equality depends on a whole range of interacting processes that reach into the school from outside". These interacting processes, I add, emanate from dominant structures within the rural ecologies, such as the rural families and communities, which largely inform and shape the ways of life in these ecologies.

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan policy and practice perspective. The main aim being to critically analyse and explore various ways with which the Bourdieuan theory of practice could serve to provide insight into practice and policy issues with respect to girl children's access to sustainable rural learning ecologies. The test in this study was to uncover, with the girl children themselves, the perceived gendered challenges, complexities and experiences in so far as access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies is concerned, without removing them from their lived realities, "their relational, interactional and structured rural world of their rural ecology" (Arnot & Naveed, 2014:506). In this regard, as highlighted in (1) above, the study pays particular consideration on access to formal education as only one aspect of sustainable learning in rural ecologies in order to begin to develop a more "complex and nuanced Bourdieuan analysis" (Green & Roberts, 2013:16).

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The study's aim, outlined in (1.5.1) above, thus translates into the following objectives:

- To conduct a situational analysis of the rural learning ecologies to build a comprehensive understanding into issues pertaining to rural girl children's access to sustainable learning ecologies.
- To provide practical evidence of opportunities in rural learning ecologies resulting from the infusion of a Bourdieuan analysis to enhance rural girl children's access to sustainable learning ecologies.
- To determine possible ways to actively involve girl children in rural ecologies in seeking alternative interventions to improve their access to sustainable learning.
- To understand contexts and circumstances under which identified role-players in rural learning ecologies could actively and positively shape and inform issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning.

- To develop and build-in lessons learnt from the Bourdieuan analysis to contextualise and enhance rural strategies and policy-relevant initiatives focusing on girl children's access to sustainable learning.
- To propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan perspective.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research study is policy developed and management orientated. The orientation therefore shapes and informs the main research question which probes the state of rural policies and legislative provisions juxtaposed with the real lived educational experiences of rural girl children in their respective ecologies. That is, an in-depth analysis is required through probing (*"How can we enhance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan policy and practice perspective"?*) the main research question.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: PAR PREMISED ON FEMINIST ORIENTATIONS

The research study adopted participatory action research (PAR) as its design and methodology. However, with the study's focus specifically focusing on girl children in rural ecologies; I opted to draw into the research design and methodology, using feminist orientations. Singh, Richmond and Burnes (2013:94-96) allude to the importance of "having a research design that utilises a sound theoretical framework that centres on issues of power and privilege". I therefore chose PAR considering Bain's and Payne's (2016:339) assertion that the "convincing value of PAR is in its ability to disrupt social hierarchies". Hierarchies are in their nature prone with contestations for power and privilege. This combination is an important aspect of this study, especially in so far as disrupting the gendered hierarchies as they relate to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Noting that the study is a Bourdieuan analysis it is important that the research design and methodology, aligned to the Bourdieuan theory of practice. I hold the view that PAR is compatible with the Bourdieuan analysis especially with respect to advancing change for social justice. In addition, PAR's pursuance on social justice makes it more inclusive of the marginalised groups in societies (Cockley & Awad, 2013:30).

Therefore, PAR is a critical research paradigm with the primary goal of empowering communities towards social change (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013:75). Thus, “this shared collective empowerment can often have a relational [and/or] collective well-being as both the goal and key process variable help instil Bourdieuan agency” (Singh, Richmond & Burnes, 2013:94-96).

Glassman and Erdem (2014:206) add, “PAR can be seen as emerging through historical and ongoing struggles of the oppressed to break free”. The said “dominance, relative strength, oppression and unequal allocation of resources have vivid and strong linkages with issues of gender inequalities that directly tie up with feminist theories on the emancipation of girls and women” (Enria, 2016:320). Therefore, feminist theories strengthen PAR’s attention to the specific societal forces and identities that shape their lives, including gendered identities. It is therefore against this backdrop that using a research design and methodology that combines PAR and feminism (FPAR) provides a platform with which “issues of gender bias, sexism, power, privilege, liberation, and creating space for often unheard voices, become the central focus of the research process”. Consequently, “PAR provides for a shared process of discovery that continues to grow through new initiatives such as [those that infuse] feminist [viewpoints]” (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:207).

Therefore, in sum, the motivation of grounding PAR in feminism provides an additional level of attention to the power differential that often exists within the gendered lives of girl children as the focus group for this study. It therefore cements our contention that as articulated in Fassinger and Morrow (2013:70), FPAR would “provide an opportunity to see the possibilities for social justice research on a continuum ranging from investigations that build knowledge and raise awareness, to research that engages both researchers and co-researchers in social action projects whose goal is changing oppressive systems and structures”. In the case of this study, it is contributing to strengthening educational policy initiatives and interventions that would foster girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

1.8 DATA GENERATION

Data generation techniques employed in the study include participant observation, engagements and interactions through school and community-based workshops, and focus group discussions using semi-structured guides. Fassinger and Morrow

(2013:80) maintain that “focus groups and group interviews are useful in empowering participants, engaging members of a community in collective meaning-making, building community support, and maintaining congruence with communal values held whilst neutralising the power of the researcher, and normalising participants’ experiences”. The focus groups were conducted in the context of a school-community engagement and partnership model adapted from Yull, Blitz, Thompson and Murray (2014:10-12) emphasising a relationship-centred organisational system for building effective partnerships. To this end, O’Donnell, Kirkner and Meyer-Adams (2008:147) warn that successful engagement and involvement of parents and communities requires diverse outreach strategies. Within the focus groups, I embarked on discussions and deliberations with various groups ranging from educators, parents, and other community members (and structures) to ensure diverse outreach and involvement.

In view of the fact that this is a PAR study, the data generation processes are shaped and informed by PAR’s three main foci for investigation: the practices of the co-researchers, their ecological practices and circumstances, and the deepening of the co-participants’ understanding about these practices and circumstances (Langlois, Goudreau & Lalonde, 2014:226). Further noting PAR’s cyclical process, the study’s data generation technique has aligned the different cycle phases to the study’s objectives (1.5). Additionally, PAR’s cyclical process comprises of a planning phase [PP], an action-and-observation phase [AOP], and a reflection phase [RP] (Langlois, Goudreau & Lalonde, 2014:226). An additional phase referred to as the preliminary planning phase (PPP) is incorporated into this study.

For Objective 1, the PPP, the primary researcher employed participant observation, note-taking techniques and preliminary interviews (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013) in an effort to establish initial contacts. For Objectives 2 & 3, applicable to the PP, the data generation process will entail focus group discussions, individual and group dialogues, and conversations with the purpose of using effective techniques in empowering co-researchers (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). For Objective 4, at the RP, photo-voice, information sessions and workshops emphasising relationship-building (Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014) will be used in line with PAR’s emphasis on encouraging and opening communicative space between those involved. For Objective 5, the AP, “wherein the intention is to reach inter-subjective agreement, and shared

understanding of a situation” (Hawkins, 2015:468), the traditional sharing circles (SC) which were adapted are applicable as they [circles] “involve reflection, discussions, decisions and action” (Datta, Khyang, Khyang, Kheyang, Khyang & Chapola, 2015:587-588).

Further, Datta et al. (2015:588) highlight “photography as a data generation technique that offers a direct way of seeing the world and [that it] provides a valuable and visual complement” in a PAR methodology. I therefore took and used photos and pictures, and got some from co-researchers and shared stories of these as a cross-cutting data generation technique. Importantly, through the advice provided by Hilton (2017:21-34) that it is important to include in our planning for data collection, a pretesting data collection process. In addition, Cross and Warwick-Booth-(2016:8) state that it is with pretesting that we are able “to generate richer data and promote more meaningful participation and also identify in the beginning possible mechanisms and strategies for maximising data and ultimately its use for new knowledge generation”. This was done in this study through a collaborative process of commitment to participation by co-researchers to primarily buy-in and build into the research study by voicing their concerns, and affording consideration of these voices to concretise their participation for enhanced data generation. In this regard, we collectively developed and agreed on our participation constitution as outlined and included as (Appendix F) of this study.

1.9 SELECTION OF RESEARCH SITES AND CO-RESEARCHERS

It is worth noting that schools are essential organisations in the communities, and that in return, communities directly and indirectly influence schools. The study’s research sites are located within these ecologies; namely, the schools and communities they operate in. The schooling environments originate from communities, thus making schools and communities they are located and operate in, as being inseparable (Ruechakul, Prawit, & Manoon, 2015:65). Considering that this is a PAR study, the selection of co-researchers happens naturally in the field. For that reason, I opted for purposive snowball sampling (Waller, Farquharson, & Dempsey, 2016:97) which is a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, motivated by the fact that purposive sampling is able to provide guidance concerning particular criteria that will enable the primary researcher to identify research focus areas and co-researchers. For this study, rural girl children were the identified as having particular attributes with respect to the

research study's focus. Snowball sampling was used because of its concentration on people who share a similar social network (Waller, Farquharson, & Dempsey, 2016:97) while affording the co-researchers an opportunity to add more co-researchers when the need arises. However, because of sharing the same or adjacent network, snowball sampling might be limited.

Against this background, through the study I identified two rural primary schools and two rural high schools in the Nkangala Rural District (as defined by the municipal and DoE demarcations), of Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, as research sites. The choice of research sites is informed as Janes' (2016:72) cites, by the emphasis on respecting "PAR's commitment to democratising knowledge creation and production with people and communities mostly affected by the issue of inquiry". It is with this assertion in mind that henceforth, I refer to the researcher and co-researchers. The researcher refer to myself as the primary researcher. The co-researchers refers to the various groups of participants that shared their experiences, knowledge and insights in the process of the study. Thus the researcher and the co-researchers together forms the research team.

At this point, it is important to highlight that the initial research sites were one primary and one high school. However, from the initial, preliminary phases outlined in 1.8, co-researchers effected some changes to the composition of research sites. The changes are the inclusion of the other two schools to capture the two most dominant cultures in the Nkangala District Municipality, which are the isiNdebele and the SePedi. That would also serve to cover the two predominantly rural communities, as suggested by both the municipalities and education officials' perspectives. It is for that reason that largely, the changes served to build rapport, trust and confidence amongst the research team members. That is, all input and feedback that enhanced the research study are considered.

The said changes signalled and entrenched the beginning of collaboration and teamwork with this research study. Co-researchers are afforded opportunity for maximum participation in all aspects of the study. This gives effect to the contention by Ruechakul, Prawit and Manoon (2015:65) that "a team is a group that share or exchange ideas with each other, participate and work with each other towards a

shared and participated goal”. With this understanding, the primary researcher, together with co-researchers allocated roles, responsibilities and tasks to each team member. Further, in consideration of the “complexities and challenges brought about by issues of power, identity and influence in collaborative research” (Hawkins, 2015:464), the research team grouped itself as follows:

1st group (Departmental Practitioners): Department of Education (DOE) was represented by two officials in each of the Directorates on Rural Education and Gender respectively, two officials from the Nkangala District Office, and school principals at each of the four schools, one HOD and one teacher both in Life Orientation.

2nd group (Learners and Community Stakeholders): Girl children were selected in various grades in selected schools. This group is specifically important for this study, as they represent the main co-researchers, and their participation was to ensure the inclusion of the often-silenced voices, thus situating “girl children’s agency”, a Bourdieuan perspective. As mentioned above, the primary researcher opted for snowball sampling as being one of the most productive methods fostering data gathering in marginalised populations (Cokley & Awad, 2013:32; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey, 2016:59-61). Moreover, snowball sampling “creates a platform for community members to assist in identifying key networks that can enhance and facilitate the data generation process” (Cokley& Awad, 2013:32). Added to this team would be parents, two members of the SGB and one staff representative, a gender activist from a NGO or CBO who engages or interacts with girl children in the selected schools and communities. Lastly, two representatives from the Traditional Authorities (TAs) made up the rest of the team.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND REPORTING

Fletcher, MacPhee and Dickson (2015:1) maintain, “...data analysis methods have the power to shape participant inclusion or exclusion, involvement or attrition, and mobilisation of knowledge”. Against this backdrop, the primary researcher applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) recommended by Machin (2016:322-3) who stated that the “data analysis process seeks to reveal buried ideologies in texts”. Becher and Orland-Barak (2016:499) highlight that central to PAR’s principle of social justice is the respect for co-researchers. Becher and Orland-Barak (2016:499) further allude to CDA’s “ability in examining individual language use patterns, in order to identify the social and political stances and ideologies that play out in discourse and to ensure the

preservation of the rich data descriptions gathered in the investigation". Lamb (2013:335) cautions that in the course of data collection "marginalising and resistant discourses can be found at all levels, across texts, genres and fields of action".

Parallel to the CDA process, the primary researcher compiled tentative interpretations and conclusions. Then collectively reflected on responses with co-researchers to ensure incorporation of their perspectives in the data presentation. This demonstrates continued respect for co-researchers as Fassinger and Morrow (2013:81) advice on respecting co-researchers in the final analysis and dissemination of the research outcomes. Such respect will in turn contribute to the quality and trustworthiness of the analysis and thus promote empowerment through fostering ownership. In addition, it is argued by Ponterotto, Mathew and Raughley (2013:50-51) that the inclusion of co-researchers' voices is an empowering and powerful means of authenticating and supporting analytic conclusions and future social change efforts.

1.11 VALUE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

With the study, the primary researcher anticipated that applying the Bourdieuan analysis firstly at an educational practice level enhanced existing knowledge and understanding of the issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, in addition to unravelling alternative interventions and proposals. Secondly, the analysis inform and shape rural education policy and legislative prescripts in ways that best respond to the issues raised. "There is a need for adding depth to the understanding of rural schools and an improvement in the approach to transforming these schools through the development of context-specific, relevant and sustainable strategies" that could potentially address these monumental challenges in rural schools as the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE, 2015:2) contends.

Lastly, the in-depth understanding might inform a programme of action with clear direction and guidelines on critical areas of advocacy and resource-mobilisation. This would ideally entail the development and/or improvement of some provisions in rural education policy and related legislative prescripts. This must consider the pursuit of addressing gender disparities between rural schools and urban schools, as well as within rural schools, with specific reference to girl children as the focus of the study. The study could be broadened requiring future research to focus on discussions on

boy children in rural ecologies and thus contribute to broadly transforming sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Importantly, the value of such an analysis is that of contributing to the realisation of SDGs (4 & 5) as these are core to the study with the possibility of tangible gender equality and equity improvements with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the primary researcher in the study, I applied for and granted ethical clearance (UFS-HSD2018/0064) from the University of the Free State Ethics Committee (Appendix B). Therefore, the researcher is bound to abide by the standard ethical procedures relating to confidentiality, respect, trust, and anonymity as determined by the university's ethical code of conducting research.

As raised by Oliver (2003:26-28), ethics is of paramount importance to do initial preparatory work before the actual unfolding of the research process, especially finding the co-researchers and related aspects such as gaining entry through acquiring permission, and getting co-researchers' informed consent. For this research study, I embarked on initial consultations and brainstorming sessions with the different stakeholders which not only served to abide by ethical compliance but also enriched the study's direction and relevance as highlighted in 1.8. Among those consulted, were the relevant officials in the National and Provincial Departments of Basic Education (DBE), Higher Education (DHE), CoOperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), relevant officials in respective Districts, educators in the identified schools, and members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The permission letter, attached as Appendix A. Information gathered has enriched the approach in the study, especially because the focus is on rural girl children, most of whom are under age, and thus called for parental consent (Appendix C) including some from parents who doubled as co-researchers.

Bearing in mind that this is a PAR study with feminist-orientations, Ackerley and True (2012:2) warn that the "the quest to understand power as a social phenomenon and its effect in a range of social relations and social settings and institutions" may be complicated. As this is a PAR study, it depends on the variables that will vary according

to time, location and context (Singh, Richmond & Burnes, 2013:95). I have thus explored more specifically, gender power relations in the context of the rural family, school and communities as the main social settings and institutions for this study. On the methodological commitment, I have also reflected on the power of epistemology, boundaries, relationships, and the multiple dimensions of the researcher's location throughout the research process; and concerning commitment, I reflected on transforming the social order to promote gender justice (Ramazaglu & Holland, 2002:16).

Important ethical considerations on the part of the primary researcher is to be self-reflective, and recognise personal biases that could otherwise influence the research objectives. To this end, Fetterman (2010:1) maintains, "it is acceptable for the researcher to begin with biases and preconceived notions" of the phenomena that is under study. The author cautions that though ethical importance should be adhered to, the researcher should guard against the potential influence of these biases and pre-conceived notions. I therefore briefly sketch my gender-activism background to obviate possible biases and preconceived notions, if any.

I am a black, middle-aged gender-activist, with both passion and interest in gender issues, but more specifically on issues pertaining to girl children. This does not exclude interest in gender issues concerning boy children, which I hope will be somewhat mentioned in this study, but would consequently necessitate future research focusing on boy children. This is also an area I would like to expand into as far as gender debates and discussions are concerned. An important part of my historical background is that of growing up in apartheid South Africa, living in those areas formerly referred to as "black townships" but attending school, especially high school in rural areas. During those apartheid years of my schooling, rural schools were considered "safe havens" for learners. Many parents migrated to townships and urban areas for employment opportunities but opted to take their children to rural schools as they were highly regarded, especially with respect to instilling a strict code of conduct, high cultural and moral values, and respect for authority.

Thus, it is important to state at the outset that there are no biases whatsoever that I, as the main researcher brought to the study. However, drawing from my personal experiences of rural education, there is keen interest in revisiting these rural learning

ecologies, Especially so in a democratic era, the interest is to inquisitively have direct first-hand experience and encounters of how the broader development agenda impacts on these ecologies. However, acknowledging that the situation and contexts in these ecologies are different in many ways, and that the effects of apartheid would take a long time to dissipate. At the same time acknowledging that, the broader development agenda bears different benefits and gains in these ecologies.

It is also important to acknowledge that in social research such as this one, “the researcher and the co-researchers have inter-relationships amongst each other though these relationships are often imbalanced” (Ramazaglu & Holland, 2002:106). In this study, these inter-relationships amongst the primary researcher and the co-researchers are somewhat imbalanced. For instance, as mentioned above, I am a Black, middle-aged, relatively modern female with a post-graduate level of education. The co-researchers are of mixed abilities as per the two groups mentioned in 1.9. Some of the practitioners in the 1st group might share characteristics whereas others might differ on the grounds of gender, age, and so forth. From the 2nd group, the differences are the levels of education and daily lived experiences. Whilst the primary researcher (myself) lived and completed high school in a rural ecology, much has changed over the years. Thus, I cannot bring pre-conceived ideas or claims based on the rapid changes that characterise present day South Africa as compared to the then apartheid era. Those rapid changes derive from the socio-economic and political landscape that has since drastically changed, making the rural settings largely, almost new for the primary researcher.

Lastly, on ethical consideration, according to Fetterman (2010:1), as ethnographers we “should adopt a cultural lens to interpret observed behaviour and place those in culturally relevant and meaningful contexts”. That is particularly important given the fact that traditional authorities are amongst the various groups of co-researchers and for these institutions, culture is an important determinant in their engagements and interactions. In addition, because the rural research sites were predominantly of SePedi and IsiNdebele culture, it was thus important that I familiarise myself with these cultures and traditions to optimise acceptance, observations, participation and interpretations. Lastly, I was guided by the continuous effort of the community in protecting the co-researchers’ world and lived experiences.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview and research focus of the study, which is girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It reflects on the interaction between rural schools, families and schools as key components of the rural learning ecologies aligned to the Bourdieuan analysis in order to explore the gendered inequalities and inequities in policy and practice as it relates to rural learning ecologies. The Bourdieuan theoretical lens fundamentally grounds and shapes the study in following a two-pronged approach: on one level, it delves deeper into the understanding of the gendered reproduction of advantage and disadvantage, which in the researcher's view is the thrust of sustainable learning. On the other level, the study seeks to unravel the broader gendered nature of these on sustainable learning. The chapter further provides an introduction and comprehensive accounts of the Bourdieuan theory of practice and PAR, both of which are detailed in the next chapter. The Bourdieuan theory of practice adopted to lay the foundation for understanding the aim and objectives, rationale, and the research questions as conceptualised using the Bourdieuan perspective. The PAR paradigm chosen as the research design and methodology is introduced to provide a basic understanding of the study's principles and processes.

1.14 LAY-OUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One: Background, Context and Overview of the Study

Chapter Two: Overview of Theoretical Frameworks

Chapter Three: Review of Related Literature

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter Five: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Implications

Chapter Seven: Proposed framework for enhancing girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan policy and practice perspective.

1.15 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Access (to sustainable learning) is viewed from a gender-equality perspective, which means creating a functioning and positive school environment in which girls can learn (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005:67). This entails enrolment in and consistent (regular) attendance at school, progression at the appropriate age, and overall access to physical and human resources in schools. This includes a safe environment that is non-tolerant of harmful behaviours (bullying, sexual abuse etc.) in schools (Strassburg, Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2010:8).

Bourdieuian policy and practice analysis in this study generally means “a process of multidisciplinary inquiry designed to create, critically assess, and communicate information that is useful in understanding and improving policies” (Dunn, 2004: 1–2). As such, it is “a comprehensive view of public decisions as informed by social values and consequences that would ultimately propose action to a likely result” (Weimer & Vining, 2017:30). The Bourdieuan perspective is a “multi-layered theoretical framework conceptualising individuals as producers of social practices in social spaces while following specific logics of practice” (Chudzikowski & Mayrhofer, 2010:4). Therefore, throughout the study, Bourdieuan analysis is centred on three central concepts: field, capital, and habitus (Grusendorf, 2016:1).

Girl children: Although the term “girl child” or simply girl can be used by and for females of different ages, in this study it is used to describe female children of formal school-going age, in the South African schooling context who are in primary and high school.

Rural ecologies are understood to be rural places (areas) that include but not limited to under-developed, remote geographic locations, sparse demographic profiles, slow to stagnant socio-cultural, political and economic activities, characteristics, institutions, and interactions with and among the people that inhabit these places (Hlalele, 2014:462-3; MCRE, 2005:3), thus making them not just spaces mapped for descriptive convenience (Roberts & Green, 2013:770).

Sustainable learning: Sustainability requires us to “continually and collectively preserve, maintain, and create healthy ecological systems that support a diversity of life (both human and non-human) promoting just social and economic systems that

foster equitable, respectful, caring, and peaceful relationships” (Anderson, Datta, Dyck, Kayira, & McVittie, 2016:4). Therefore, sustainable learning in rural ecologies for this study should be viewed as encapsulating these aspects and efforts that seek to bridge the gap between “environmental sustainability and educational, social, physical or relational sustainability” (De Castell, et al., 2010:3; & Mapasela, Hlalele & Alexander, 2012:92) in so far as girl children’s present and future are concerned.

This chapter served to provide an overview of the study. It will perhaps also stimulate new conversations especially through the Bourdieuan analysis to propose a framework for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The following chapter (2) thus grounds the study through an elaborate account of the adopted theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the Bourdieuan theory of practice as it relates to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It deliberates on one of the study's objectives, namely to develop and build-in lessons learnt from the Bourdieuan analysis to contextualise and enhance rural strategies and policy-relevant initiatives focusing on girl children's access to sustainable learning as mentioned in 1.5 of this study. Henceforth, in this chapter, I shall refer to the theoretical framework discussed herein as Bourdieu's theory of practice as is known and commonly referred to. It is important to emphasise that the study has a policy and practice analysis orientation as reflected in the previous chapter. Therefore, this chapter sets out to provide an overview of the Bourdieuan theory of practice, and to critically analyse it in relation to both educational policy and practice perspectives. In this regard, the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the core theoretical components and their respective interplay and interdependence. The chapter also outlines how the theory of practice is intentionally infused with feminist orientations to ground issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Further, as we deliberate on the Bourdieu's theory of practice, it is important to understand it as a theoretical framework that focuses on exploring reproduction and inequalities in educational systems. Issues of inequality and reproduction are pertinent to this study, especially as they relate to educational policy and practice with respect to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Hence, in this chapter, the Bourdieuan theory of practice is aligned to articulating, in particular, issues of gender inequality. It is also important to note at this point that schooling and learning, whilst different, are used interchangeably in this study for varying purposes of clarity and emphasis.

2.2 BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: AN OVERVIEW

It is fundamentally important to begin the chapter by reflecting on the study's adopted theoretical framework. As mentioned in 1.4, the study adopts Bourdieu's theory of

practice, as it is broadly understood for its intention to reconcile the opposing conceptions of science, namely objectivism and subjectivism. It does that through transforming them into a dialectical relationship between structure and agency (Harker, Mahar, Wilkes, 1990:1). Thus, Bourdieu's primary concern is to overcome dichotomies in social theory, which makes for an in-depth understanding of the practical logic of everyday life and its associated relations of power. It is through this understanding that Bourdieu develops agentic reflexive amongst his important theoretical constructions (Power, 1999:48). Therefore, it is true as Grenfell and James (2004:507) assert, that Bourdieu's social theory offers a way of understanding some of the most important features of the field of educational research. At the same time, it also provides educational researchers (such as myself) with rich conceptual apparatus for practice. Especially with regard to relative positioning and the potential possibilities in formation of 'avant-garde, new ideas and experiments throughout the research process.

Hence, Yang (2014:1522-3) is of the view that the Bourdieuan theory of practice "provides researchers with a springboard from which to open up new vistas, yet it also provokes many theoretical debates". Adding to the discussion, Grusenhof (2016:1) refers to the Bourdieuan theory of practice as a "highly sophisticated theoretical scheme that seeks to explain how power is developed, kept, and transferred within society using the three central theoretical concepts of field, capital, and habitus". It is against this backdrop that Bourdieu is "regarded as one of the most influential sociologists in the social science realm, for having offered an extremely powerful framework for understanding the social reproduction of domination" (Lo, 2015:130).

In many of his literary works, Bourdieu (1984) maintains that "capital, habitus, and field, all work together to generate practice, or social action". Further, that "capital does not exist or function except in relation to a field, and that one's habitus develops in relation to how much cultural capital one has" (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Echoed in Walther (2014:8) and Husu (2013:265) is that these main theoretical elements should never be considered detached from each other. Thus, it makes almost impossible to explain one element of Bourdieu's theory of practice without referring to the others. Hence the "sum equation of [(habitus) (capital) + field] = practice, that illustrates the said interconnection" (Walther, 2014:8).

Therefore, “practice is the result of the relationship between an individual's habitus, different forms of capital, and the field of action (Power, 1999:48).

The interconnection of Bourdieu's theoretical constructs suggests that for example, whilst schools reproduce culture, but not necessarily the culture they are geographically located in, it is at the level of culture that change is formed and habituated. Further that “change cannot take place without acknowledging the settings, identities, constraints, and histories in which we as individuals and collectives are situated [but dynamic]” (Anderson, Datta, Dyck, Kayira, & McVittie, 2016:15). This means that agents (individuals) are largely rooted in their socio-cultural interactions (capitals) within their respective communities but they are also influenced by global culture. Thus, they are “operating within hybrid spaces of local and global culture” (Anderson et al., 2016:15). Against this backdrop, the study in its theoretical application, also adhered to not separating these three fundamental constructs. Instead, chose to deliberate on each of these constructs together as they relate to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Thus, in this study, the engagements, experiences and interactions with rural girl children took cognisance of the field, capital and habitus interplay.

2.3 THE BOURDIEUIAN THEORY OF PRACTICE, EDUCATIONAL POLICY, AND TRANSFORMATION

Bourdieu (1974:32) maintains that "education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural capital". Overall, Bourdieu claims, "...social inequalities are legitimated by the educational credentials held by those in dominant positions. Meaning, success and failure in the education system are seen as being due to individual gifts or the lack thereof" (Bourdieu, 1974:32). Therefore, for Bourdieu, “educational credentials help to reproduce and legitimate social inequalities, as higher-class individuals are seen to deserve their place in the social structure” (Sullivan, 2002:144). It therefore means that the education system, through its practice and policy plays a key role in maintaining the inequality status quo (Sullivan, 2002:144-5). It is for this reason that the study considers issues of access and equity and the education of girls as critical issues in educational policy and thus forms an integral part of policy and transformation debates and discussions.

Importantly though, Mills (2008:79) states that there is transformative potential in Bourdieu's theory of practice. The Bourdieuan-influenced transformation for this study is largely aimed at "transforming policy and practice to promote equitable processes in education in response to the need for equality" (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006:1). According to Tovey (2008:739), Bourdieu's conceptual framework offers fertile ground for education policy research, emphasising that "it certainly helps amplify the policy cycle, globalise it and take account of agency through the concepts of changing policy habitus and practices of policy agents" (Tovey, 2008:739). Hence, for Tovey, "Bourdieu's concepts offer thinking tools for researching and understanding education policy. Simply put, the idea of a policy field with specific logics of practice allows another conceptualisation of the policy production and policy implementation gap" (Tovey, 2008:739).

Noting that there is a deliberate focus on girl children in rural ecologies, Bourdieu's theory of practice is therefore, analysed and commented on from a gendered perspective, hence the blending with feminist praxis. As Aikman and Unterhalter (2006:1) point out that "the significance of gender equality in education and [that] the ways in which it relates to other sources of discrimination, division and marginalisation are fundamentally important" (Aikman, 2006:1). In this regard, the need for "democratization of the policy process" through the application of the concept of appropriation is considered (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009:767). Thus, with this study, I posit that gender equality and equity is key to educational transformation. Further, that gender equality and equity should thus be central and appropriated to, policy development debates on girl children's access to sustainable education in rural ecologies.

2.4 A CASE FOR BLENDING BOURDIEUAN THEORY OF PRACTICE WITH FEMINIST PRAXIS

The study is centred on the Bourdieuan theory of practice blended with feminist praxis as it has a particular focus on girl children who by implication make discussions and reference to feminist assertions and theories relevant. Glassman and Erdem (2014:212) outline the fact that "the use of the term 'praxis' and [more specifically feminist praxis for this study] implies a critical reflection, an awareness of the process and its aims so far as the struggles against women and girl children's inequalities,

discrimination and oppression are concerned". Mindful of the fact that "praxis is considered able to open doors for the oppressed masses to criticise, problematise, and claim their condition, which will eventually enable them to overcome it" (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:212-3). The need to open doors for the oppressed girl children in rural ecologies as far as access to sustainable learning is concerned, is the crux of this research study. Considering that as Hlalele (2014:101) laments, "access to education [in the form of sustainable learning for this study], suffers the same dire fate as access to other services in rural areas".

Further, as mentioned earlier in (chapter 1) of this study (1.3 & 1.4), the Bourdieuan theory of practice is blended with feminist praxis for two primary purposes. Firstly, it is in line with the assertion in the previous chapter (1.4) of this study, that Bourdieu's theory of practice is considered as a critical social theory interested in unravelling social inequalities, of which gender inequalities inevitably falls within this fold. Gender issues are inherently sexual given the myriad of sexual properties that are often attached to gender engagements, interactions and so forth. The same could be said with gender and class - that debates and discussions on gender inextricably include those of class. A view also espoused in Bourdieu (1984:107) that "sexual properties are as inseparable from [gender and] class properties as the yellowness a lemon is from its acidity".

Grounded on the understanding that the struggle against gender inequality is the main agenda for feminists (discussed in detail below), Bourdieu's theory of practice is most relevant. That is so because it is inclined towards how inequalities could possibly be transformed, which is the crux of the feminist struggle, especially focusing on gender inequalities, and thus theoretical compatibility. Importantly though, is to acknowledge as Adler-Nissen (2013:25) highlights, that Bourdieu "has always had a difficult relationship with feminists stemming from feminist researchers who have argued that despite his attempt to address gendered social practices, Bourdieu still reproduces sexist dichotomies".

The primary researcher contends that gender transformation is about addressing gender inequalities, which are characterised by gendered power and power relations and thus remains a challenge concerning access to sustainable learning in rural areas. A sentiment also echoed by Mapesela, Hlalele and Alexander (2012:91) who argue

that despite continued efforts in eradicating inequalities, gender inequalities continue to exist in different parts of the world, including South Africa.

In their theoretical proposition, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: xv) assert the fact that “every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations”. It is with this understanding that issues of inequalities, such as those brought about by rurality and gender for example, that constitute unequal gendered power relations, are an issue of fundamental importance for this study. Considering that this is a gendered study, building an understanding of gender as a lived social phenomenon is vital (McNay, 2004:175). Therefore, the combination brought about by girl children as a gendered species, rurality and access, are central to social justice and transformation. This combination informs and shapes the study’s focus, that is, girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

As noted in this study, reference of what could be considered as outdated literature (i.e. 1970, 1974, 1987, 1990 and so forth) is used in instances where there is an attempt to give as much detailed account of Bourdieu’s theory of practice as possible, best articulated in his own original literature. The same applies in cases wherein the researcher sought most of the original literature from those authors who took interest in unpacking and (or) critiquing Bourdieu’s theory of practice, most of whom were writing in the same era of what could be considered outdated texts, yet considered valuable for this study in that it provides first-hand encounters.

2.4.1 Feminising the Bourdieuan theory of practice

As mentioned above, the study adopted a Bourdieuan theoretical analysis with feminist praxis. It is therefore important that the study at this stage locate the feminist praxis within the Bourdieuan analysis. Cornwall and Sardenberg (2014:73) assert that Bourdieu and feminists have “shared epistemological and ethical concerns” that contribute to these broader points of connection linked in the main by the commonalities of both. Those are according to the authors’ “...deep concern with social change, a desire to democratise the production of knowledge, and close attention to the location of power in the research process” (Cornwall & Sardenberg, 2014:73). Accordingly, Glassman and Erdem (2014:216) assert, “feminism offers

critical perspectives and implications for acknowledging the other without attempting to appropriate their experience and understanding of the world back into the dominant discourse". Not appropriating girls and boys lived social [political, economic and other] experiences paves way for "destabilis[ing] the assumption that the same input or outcome has the same, positive effect on different groups" (Glassman & Erdem, 2015:216). Such an approach "captures the critical feminist concern that girls and boys should be understood in relation to the complex social, political, and economic systems of which they are a part of" (Chisamy, et al., 2012:2).

Therefore, as Houh and Kalsem (2015:270) assert, that the "foundational tenet of both of these theoretical frameworks, [Bourdieu and feminist], is that theory must be put into action, with feminists further arguing that it is with deconstructing "problematic gendered histories, power structures, and inequalities" that more and just gendered reconstruction could follow, informing a more gender-sensitive and responsive society. The authors however acknowledge that "bridging the theory and practice gap is extraordinarily difficult" (Houh & Kalsem, 2015:270). It is with understanding the said difficulty that we use the foregoing discussions to delve deeper into issues confronting feminism as it relates to the struggle for gender inequality in the context of the Bourdieuan theory of practice.

2.4.2 The Bourdieuan theory of practice, feminism and the gender (in) equality debate

The thrust of the feminist agenda is that of the struggle against gender inequality. Therefore, feminising Bourdieu's theory of practice largely entails, interpreting and integrating its core gender equality and equity principles. It is premised on acknowledging, as Kabeer (2015:202-3) maintains, "...gender inequality is more pervasive across societies than any other form of inequality, though it may take different forms in different societies". Lorber (2000:79) posits, "...it is the ubiquitous division of people [women and men] into two unequally valued categories that undergirds the continually reappearing instances of gender inequality". Consequently, by understanding the causes of gender inequality that we might begin to seek strategies for redress. "Gender inequality cannot be simply one more horizontal inequality to be added to the others", rather "it intersects with other inequalities in ways that intensify the disadvantages associated with other forms of inequality" (Kabeer, 2015:203).

In 2.5 below, I will deliberate more comprehensively on Bourdieu's ontology and epistemological stances. However, it is important to highlight at this point that agency and structure is amongst the important interconnections within the Bourdieuian theory of practice. Hence, understanding the way in which gender divisions structure women's daily lives and interactions in ways that are generally considered natural, is precipitated (Lorber, 2000:101). It is within this backdrop that we understand that "gender inequality is structured into the organisation of social relations (such as schools) in society, as fundamentally as class is in capitalist societies, as race was in apartheid South Africa, and as caste is in India" (Kabeer, 2015:203). The natural acceptance of the gendered agency and structure is because of the taken-for-granted, "...that which goes without saying because it comes without saying" which is Bourdieu's doxa (Bourdieu, 1977:167). Thus, "women's location at the intersection of [Bourdieu's] production and reproduction makes the organisation of gender relations central to the nexus between socio-economic, cultural and political growth (capitals), and human development, and hence central to the broader development agenda" (Kabeer 2015:202-3). Therefore, for this study, the interlinkage between Bourdieu's theory of practice and feminism is thus, centred on the debates and discussions on the production and reproduction of gender inequalities in societies.

2.4.3 Feminised Bourdieuian theory of practice, girl power and girl effect

Blending Bourdieu's analysis with feminist theories owes more to the fact that this is a gendered study, focusing on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In line with Bourdieu's relational epistemology discussions mentioned in 2.1.4, Bent and Switzer (2016:122) postulate that "countering the normative construction of global girlhoods as mutually exclusive forms of personhood and historical experience, consequently authorises a new understanding of girlhoods as mutually constituted and relationally contingent". It is from within this relational framework that we join in the quest to propose new directions for thinking about girlhoods transnationally. Bent and Switzer (2016:122) further state, "despite the positive and potentially powerful positioning of girls as active participants in their own lives and in public life, particularly for girls marginalised by poverty and other forms of exclusion across the world, feminist responses to the girl effect and interrelated discourses call attention to the troubling character of girls' visibility through this frame". More so because the "global girl power discourses reduce the intersectional

complexity of girls' lives into opposing representations" (Bent & Switzer, 2016:125-144). The authors thus point at the importance of "conceptualising girls' experiential vulnerabilities 'as a mode of relationality as a framework for analysing girls' lived experiences as differentially embodied, varied and disparate" (Bent & Switzer, 2016, 122).

In summary, "relationality as an analysis and praxis, resists subsuming global girlhoods under a singular narrative of experiential sameness and positionality". However, it poses a challenge to consider how social location, rural ecologies in this case, and structural violence, as well as "historical processes and inequalities are integral to girls' daily lives and thus brings about a deeper, more complex global understanding of how girls lives matter" (Bent & Switzer, 2016:125-144). Important also is that Bourdieu's theory of practice is largely considered relational (2.1.5) and thus aligned to the aforementioned assertions on girlhood. This study therefore takes particular interest in Bent & Switzer (2016) assertions that positioning girl children as active participants in their own lives has proven to be more rhetoric than reality. Decisions, and for this study policy and practice decisions that directly affect rural girl children's access to sustainable learning, have rendered girl children invisible, such that they have disregarded rural girl children concerns and lived experiences. For this reason, I suggest that in the absence of an institutional focus on gender transformation, the solidarity group model to could serve to advocate for gender transformation. Secondly, positionality or rather other differential aspects such as geographic location, time and context, are key as highlighted above in 1.1 and 1.7 and should instead serve to guide and diversify the girl effect and girlhood narratives, initiatives and interventions in general. Hence, the study has opted for PAR to ensure maximum participation of rural girl children in informing and shaping future rural education policy and practice initiatives and interventions.

2.5 THE ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY OF BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE

According to Strega cited in Brown and Strega (2005:200), "the ontologies and epistemologies of different research traditions are the foundations of how knowledge about social phenomena can and should be acquired". Thus the authors define ontology as "a theory about what the world is like, what the world consists of, and why".

Because the study is a Bourdieuan analysis, it thus becomes necessary to understand Bourdieu's ontological and epistemological stance. Van den Berghe (1999:32) postulates, "Bourdieu's epistemological assumptions are reflected in his primary theoretical constructs of habitus and field" (Van den Berghe, 1999:32). Advancing his epistemological vigilance, Bourdieu articulates his relational logic on the habitus, concretises the fact that "structure relates fields to actions and serves to mediate between both (Van den Berghe, 1999:34). Hence for Bourdieu (1982a:42) "[it] is the structure of relations which constitute the space of the field, which commands the form which visible relations of interaction and the content itself which agents have of it take on".

Understanding the Bourdieuan theory of practice thus means both a way of understanding how the social world works according to Bourdieu, through applying a particular set of his conceptual tools, ontological orientations, as well as a way of knowing and doing research from a Bourdieuan theoretical perspective, that is, his reflexive epistemological orientations (McGuire, 2016:325; Adler-Nissen, 2013:26). Indeed, "while most science and educational policy studies use Bourdieu's concepts ontologically, as thinking tools to theorise power", this study opted to use Bourdieu's concepts more as they relate to relational epistemology. That is, as Wacquant puts it, "empirically linking objective positions of power which translates to Bourdieu's capital, with position-takings in the field which is in turn rooted in his habitus" (Wacquant, 2013:274). Echoed also by Adler-Nissen is that Bourdieu's "relational ontology offers a conceptual solution to the structure-agent problem through Bourdieu's ontological synthesis which employs a particularly rich theoretical device, with the notions of habitus and field constituting the pillars upon which this theoretical platform rests" (Adler-Nissen, 2013:26-29). These notions are discussed in detail in the analysis below. In this study, these ontological and epistemological orientations are, aligned towards building an understanding of issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The relational epistemology approach is valuable for a feminist-orientated analysis of gendered experiences as is the case with this study. It "provides a way of placing experience at the centre of social analysis without attributing to it some kind of apodictic or essential status" (McNay, 2004:184). In that way, "the essence of social being is not encompassed in experience itself but it does only begin to reveal itself

through experience which must then be situated in a broader context” (McNay, 2004:184). This includes locating these experiences with the various social structures and interrogating the “invisible power dynamics made present within immediate everyday experience” (McNay, 2004:187). Accordingly, McGuire (2016:329) asserts, “taking a relational view of power provides a platform for power not to be assumed or theorised, but that it becomes an object of empirical investigation”. Further adding that with this relational view, “the acquisition and distribution of power is assumed to shape and be shaped by the action of individual agents” (McGuire, 2016:329) - girl children in rural ecologies in the case of this study.

Therefore, conceptualising Bourdieu’s theory as relational epistemology makes it possible, as Lo (2015:126) suggests, “explor[ing] the forms and weight, the currency of capital that girl and boy children, families and communities possess into the symbolic struggles over the legitimacy of schooling”. Such an exploration becomes fundamentally important in building a comprehensive analysis and understanding of pertinent issues in girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.6 BOURDIEUIAN THEORY OF PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL ECOLOGIES, SUSTAINABLE LEARNING AND GIRL CHILDREN

Analysing issues pertaining to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan theoretical perspective is in essence, as Hlalele (2014b:462) asserts, “taking into consideration that the vast incongruities and/or inequalities between better resourced urban communities and neglected rural areas impinge on the provision of and access to education”. The author concedes, “...the difference is an inherent, inevitable and indispensable feature of social existence and education”, hence the “need to embrace difference, shape demands and model social benefits in accordance with the realities of a particular rural setting” (Hlalele, 2014b:462).

It is therefore important to build theoretical foundations for this study through, amongst others, building an understanding of the context and the dynamics of rural ecologies. Du Plessis (2014:1109) states that in the “post democratic era, rural schooling has shown little improvement”, and that the “complexity, interconnectedness and intractability of the challenges that face rural schools and education in South Africa remain”. Against this background, we note, “rural places, and indeed all places, are

inhabited by people and are not just spaces mapped for descriptive convenience” (Roberts & Green, 2013:765-6). Hence the importance of social justice approaches that are able to consider the particularities of rural places (Roberts & Green, 2013:765; Hlalele, 2014b:462).

This study is situated within rural ecologies, making the school and schooling, important aspects of focus. Theron (2016:87) maintains that “schools, in particular, are integral to the multiple social systems that children as learners are embedded in”, adding that “school ecologies need to facilitate and adopt an activist stance that animates social change” – this implies the crucial need for transformation which is an essential component of this study.

However, Unterhalter (2014:120) argues that “getting girls into school is promoted as a silver bullet for development problems, which obstruct discussions of what is taught, to whom, the socio-economic relations of schooling, work and livelihoods, the messy and difficult relationships associated with learning and teaching about sexuality and violence, and the politics of who presents what to whom”. These complex relations and social contexts are at the very core of Bourdieu’s theorems of field, capital and the habitus, which I will deliberate upon in detail in the discussions that follow.

In order to address these concerns, it is important to understand the “particularities” of specific cultural and resource contexts as derived from rural ecologies specific to girl children. This “intersection will serve to elucidate the gendered nature of rural context that extends to girl children’s few successful futures at the intersection of (middle-class) femininity and rurality and a socio-historical context dominated by neoliberal discourses of self-invention and post-feminist possibility that invite girls into upwardly (and outwardly) mobile futures” (Cairns, 2014:477). This approach is an attempt at ensuring that the study contributes to the “fields of rural education and gender studies by foregrounding the significance of place within the gendered formation of learners’ subjectivities and future aspirations” (Cairns, 2014: 477- 486).

We should, however, acknowledge the fact that the “value of studying rural places is in fact within the difficulty in defining the rural, namely, that the multiplicity of rural places and perceptions of the rural remind us of the forces that have become otherwise invisible, and that inevitably place matters” (Roberts & Green, 2013:770). However, put more positively, there are great opportunities in studying rurality which Hlalele

(2014b:462) alludes to as “community capital” in rural communities. The community capital that Hlalele highlights falls within the spectrum of Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs and will thus be interesting to explore within this study. Behrens (2014:180) posits, “...there are some social goods associated with cultural identity in these rural ecologies that are worth nurturing”. More especially against the background of “how the dignity of Africans was threatened by attacks on their culture in the past” thus making it important that “local cultures are affirmed and respected now, so that the formerly oppressed are able to reclaim some of their pride and self-esteem” (Monyane, 2013:80). This implies pursuing at all times social justice for the previously disadvantaged communities as “a humanising process” which is “a response to human diversity in terms of ability, socio-economic circumstances, choice and rights” (Hlalele, 2014b:462).

2.6.1 Bourdieuan theory of practice and sustainable learning

Sustainability, and consequently sustainable learning “should be understood to comprise actions, thinking, and values that ensure both present and future generations are able to meet their needs and maintain a high quality of life” (Anderson, Datta, Dyck, Kayira, & McVittie, 2016:4). Sustainability “requires us to continually and collectively preserve, maintain, and create healthy ecological systems that support a diversity of life (both human and non-human); and just social and economic systems that foster equitable, respectful, caring, and peaceful relationships” (Anderson et al., 2016:4). Therefore, sustainable learning in rural ecologies for this study should encapsulate these aspects as far as rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning is concerned. Therefore, “preparing of learners to be ready for what will be required of them in the future goes along with changing the trajectory of lives and communities in the present” (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:214).

Put in context, “sustainable learning is framed on actions that engender a sense of regard for local places and community. Sustainable learning, is therefore, constituted within the immediate materiality of school grounds, and extends to connect to local places. It is a collaborative and community-based practice that employs creative processes...” (Green & Somerville, 2013:841). Thus, sustainable learning practices “across all of the schools should ideally be grounded in the locality, region, and landscape or place where learning occurs, and involves direct engagement with the

world beyond the school through practical activities” (Mahlomaholo, 2012:101). Thus, “...in essence, these practices should be “customised to the needs and conditions in the rural settings towards the creation of sustainable learning environments” (Mahlomaholo, 2012:101). Therefore, in sum, “sustainable learning involves reaching out to the wider community to create connections, networks and partnerships within schools and between other schools, teachers, parents, local community-based organisations and stakeholders (Green & Somerville, 2013:841).

2.6.2 Bourdieuan theory of practice and girl children in rural ecologies

The challenges that face all young people, particularly young rural people, more specifically rural girl children from low socio-economic backgrounds, are amongst others, can be attributed to the rapidly changing socio-cultural, political and economic world. Cognisant that the study focuses on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, schooling becomes an important component. Thus the challenges are compounded by the reality that “schooling is not a level playing field; it is potted with advantage and disadvantage” (Mills & Gale, 2010:8). Moreover, in this regard, “rethinking a different kind of relationship with the rules of schooling is fundamentally important. For instance, key participants in the schooling process (the learners) are encouraged not to simply rile against the rules, but to engage with them in critical ways that they might change the rules themselves” (Mills & Gale, 2010:8-9). Therefore, in my view, the learners’ critical engagement with the rules presents an opportunity that Bourdieu maintains might lead to a situation wherein “the dominated may be moved to challenge the status quo, thereby bringing the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation” (Bourdieu, 1977:168).

In this regard, I provide a diagrammatic presentation that seeks to locate girl children within the chosen theoretical framework. For Bourdieu, girl children in rural ecologies constitute the *agents*. This is then the term I will constantly use throughout the study in an attempt to ensure a fair Bourdieuan analysis. The diagrammatic representation below depicts adolescent girls. I wish to highlight that the term “adolescent girls” as reflected in the diagram, should not be used as a descriptive term aiming at describing the target agents of this study. Instead, the study focuses on girl children to include those outside the “adolescent stages” appreciating though that there are others that might fall within the adolescent category. The emphasis should be instead on how the

diagram best articulates the location of girl children within the micro and macro spheres as illustrated.

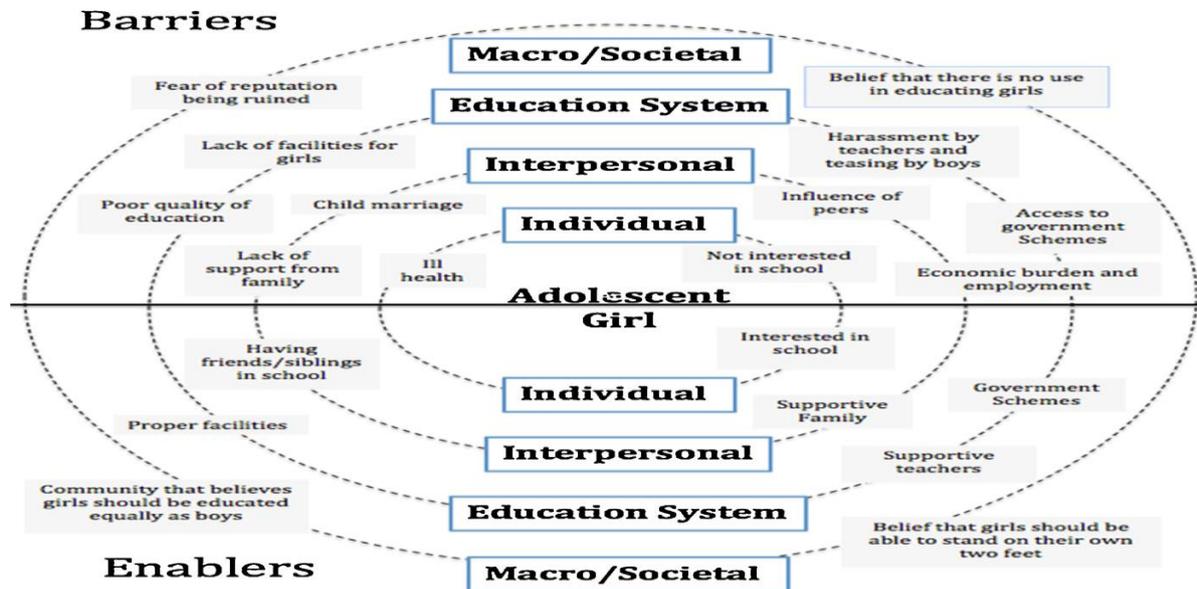


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of the barriers and enablers of education for SC/ST adolescent girls at the individual, interpersonal, educational system and macro/societal levels (Adopted from Bhagavatheeswaran, Nair, Stone, Isaac, Hiremath ... Beattie, 2016:265).

The diagrammatic representation thus serves as a reference point that will inform various aspects of the study especially those in the literature review (chapter 3). Noting that Bourdieu’s theory of practice is centred on an agenda for social justice, the theory inherently seeks to delve deeper into understanding all forms of barriers that often leads to a myriad of inequalities and inequities. For this purpose, the diagram locates the barriers confronting girl children, which will therefore be contextualised in this study to refer to and be limited to girl children in rural ecologies. The above figure (2.1) highlights the important ecologies in the lives of girl children as the focus of the study. It also points out at areas of inequalities and inequities in these ecologies such as child marriages, access to facilities, and lack of support, to name a few. On enablers, the diagram also points at the possible areas for applying some of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts in line with the transformation agenda for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.7 BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: THE FIELD (SOCIAL) IN PERSPECTIVE

The field is regarded as a “central pillar of Bourdieu’s theory of practice because with the field, Bourdieu “conceptualises the social world, demonstrates the interactions between different types of resources (the different forms capitals), and connects the action of the habitus to the stratifying structures of power” (Yang, 2014:1526). Using Bourdieuan analysis for this study, the field is therefore constituted of rural ecologies and all those aspects considered essential for sustainable learning in the rural ecologies. This is especially against the background that agents “occupy positions within social fields that are determined both by the distribution of resources within a given field and also by the structural relations between that field and others” (McNay, 2004:184). Further, “in this field of social play, Bourdieu is concerned with understanding the inherent power struggle, position, possession and dominance” (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:305). I therefore sort to explore Bourdieu’s discussion on inherent power struggles and related aspects as it shapes and informs girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

According to Bourdieu, the field is “an objectively defined position defined by its objective relationship with other positions” (1996:231). Bourdieu (1977:72) defines field as “a network, or configuration of objective relations between positions”. These positions are objectively defined in their existence and in the determinations; they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions. Accordingly, the field refers to the “formal and informal norms within a particular sphere of social activity [e.g. art, family, religion, education, politics, and economy]” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97). Bourdieu’s analogy of the field is that of a social field which in my understanding of every social situation where issues of power and position interplay. In the case of this study, it will thus be constituted of girl children as agents and the various social structures, relations and environments would represent the social field in rural ecologies.

For Bourdieu, fields are “historically constituted areas of activity with their specific institutions and their laws of functioning” (1990a:87). Purdue and Howe (2012:5) describe the field as “the social battleground where consensual and conflicting alliances form to produce, negotiate and compete for multiple streams of capital, in accordance with individuals’ habitus”. In other words, the field is conceptualised as

social spaces in which interactions, transactions and events occur (Thomson, 2014:77). Bourdieu explains fields as being characterised by their own particular regulative principles, referred to as the “rules of the game” and are subject to power struggles amongst different interests seeking to control the capital (and the rules) in that field (Bourdieu, 1996:231). Thus, social fields could be viewed as a “universe or microcosm in which the agents [girl children for this study] and institutions [rural schools, families and communities] are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules (règles), which is why the field represents the more structural part of Bourdieu’s theory” (Walther, 2014:8-15). An “individual’s practice or actions, that are their behavioural repertoire in a particular field are dependent on their stock of cultural capital that are the individual’s competences or resources, and their habitus, which is their orientation toward using that capital” (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:305). As Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs are interlinked (2.1), the field and habitus form an integral part of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, especially because the field and the habitus form the basis of Bourdieu’s epistemological stance. The diagrammatic presentation further illustrates the complex and important interaction between the field and the habitus as the key components in the field of play. These two are central in understanding social practice (Nolan, 2011:204). It also depicts the rules of the game and the agent’s position in navigating the field.

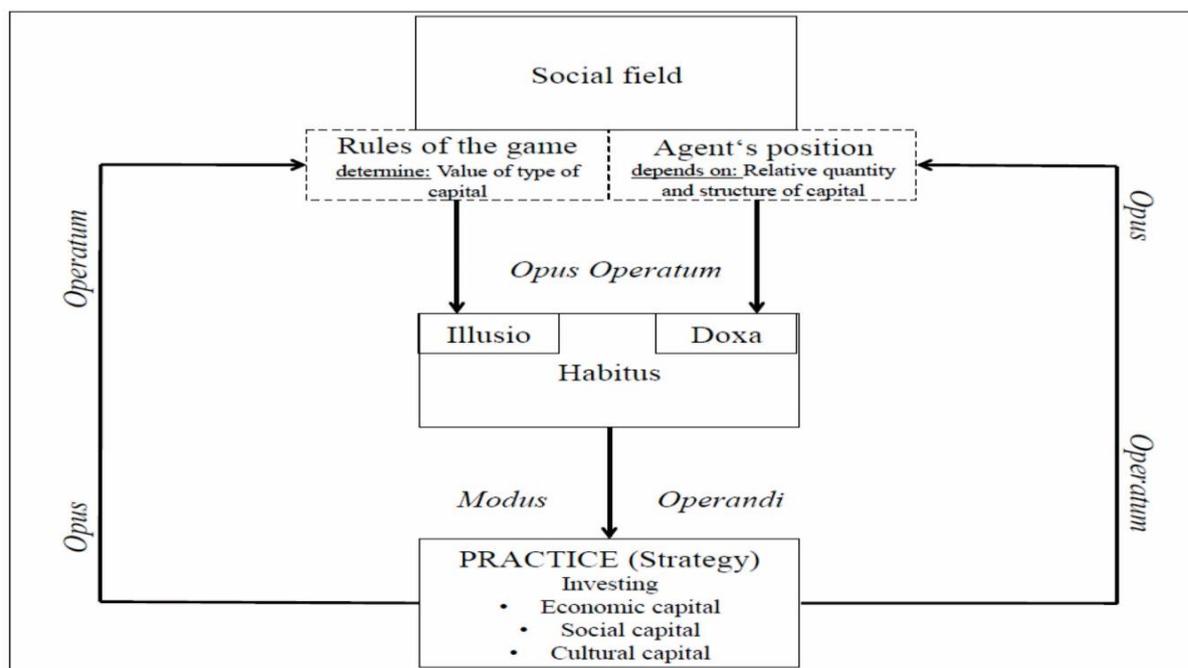


Figure 2:2: The interplay of field, capital and habitus (adopted from Walther, 2014)

Considering the objectives of this study, it is imperative to continuously seek to align and interrogate these constructs with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.7.1. Gendered social fields: Bourdieuan perspectives

Having mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (2) that for this study, the Bourdieuan theory of practice is blended with feminist theories, the focus of feminists is on experiences of oppression and privilege, by using a gendered lens (Wood & Eagly, 2015:487). I therefore seek to maintain this approach as I deliberate on Bourdieu's key theoretical constructs. In 2.4 above, I have indicated that with Bourdieu's construct, (namely the field) the focus is understanding the power struggles, including domination. Drawing from figure 2.2 above, schools as social fields are "spaces of social positions and relations" (Nolan, 2011:204), therefore, practice inside and outside of the field "cannot be accounted for without considering the structure of the power relations among the members" (Bourdieu, 1998:70). This is especially so because these social fields are "quite peculiar social worlds where the universal is engendered" (Bourdieu, 1998:71). Following from this assertion, Skeggs (2004:22) posits that Bourdieu's analysis of schooling suggests that the "process of gender attribution to learners and academic disciplines is similarly dialectical and universal". Further, owing to the centrality of the field and the habitus in Bourdieu's theory of practice, the author states that the "transference of femininity from the learners to the school subjects and back again to the learners, exemplifies the dialectic of objectification and embodiment, formed via an 'elective affinity' shaping the habitus". I therefore affirm that indeed at the core of this engendered peculiarity in social spaces lies gendered power relations that disadvantages girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.7.2 Bourdieu's gendered social fields: girl children and schooling from a rural ecology perspective

According to Mickelson (2003:274), "enduring gender disparities in academic achievement, as well as significant gender segregation in the labour market, point to the reality that men's and women's social actions take place in differently gendered fields". Tovey (2008:732) states that in order to study a social field, Bourdieu seeks to provide an account of the relations between agents (girl children) within the field

(schooling in rural ecologies) through studies of their practices. Thus, researching the field involves the identification of practices including gendered practices such as identifying dominant and dominated agents, in this case rural girl children within the field, and measuring different forms of capital possessed by these agents. This involves studying institutions (rural schools) to provide a coherent account of the practices specific to the field, the functioning of that particular field, the kinds of groups, and forms of capital located within it (Tovey, 2008:732).

Pursuant to feminising the Bourdieu's theory of practice, the "task for feminist theories is not only to unravel the pervasiveness of gender domination across fields of interaction but to provide an understanding of the ways in which structures of domination are contested" (Adler-Nissen, 2013:156). Therefore, schools and schooling, as part of the education system, constitute according to Bourdieu, sites of perpetuating dominance (2.7.1). Mindful of the fact that Bourdieu's theory of practice is centred on the domination and reproduction roles played by the education system, it is therefore important to highlight that domination is at the crux of inequalities. It is with the recognition of how inequalities are "simultaneously gendered, racialised, and marked by other dimensions of social disadvantage" that dominance could be understood (Perrons, 2015:208).

Dominance goes hand-in-hand with power. Kabeer (2005:13) attests that "one way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make choices", which for this study, translates to empowering girl children with the abilities and the opportunities to make their own informed choices. Kabeer adds that the concept of empowerment can be explored through three closely interrelated dimensions: "agency, resources, and achievements" (2005:13). Therefore, drawing on agency as one of Bourdieu's fundamental theoretical concepts, represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect. I therefore argue that there is an intimate link between the concepts of agency and empowerment. Drawing from the discussion in 2.7.1 above, the agency is gendered drawing from the field and habitus interplay. Hence, Skeggs maintains, "the normalcy of gendered reproduction works very differently for boys and girls" (2004:22). For boys, it offers masculine power, institutionalised in the school as a form of symbolic capital that (as with the family) represents accumulated privilege in the social fields. The failure to draw attention to how normalcy works differently through gender as a form of capital in the struggle for asserting agency and resources

(Skeggs, 2004:22) is a challenge. In my view, it falls short of illustrating how rural girl children's capitals could be better understood as being constrained and/or enabled within their respective gendered social contexts.

2.7.3 Bourdieu's gendered social fields, boys and schooling: a rural ecology perspective

Because gender debates are constituted of both girls and boys, in this sub-section attempt to deal with gender from the boy children's perspective. More specifically, as it relates to their agency and the social fields they in which they interact. Here, broad patterns of inequalities, in this case gender inequalities, are deeply set in the structure of society, especially in rural areas often under the guise of culture and tradition and are constantly enacted and reinforced in daily social relations (Rothman, 2016:22-23). Hence, boy children including those in rural schooling ecologies become valuable players.

According to Adler-Nissen (2013:150), "Bourdieu seeks to reveal the mechanisms through which gender operates as a socially constituted category, how it comes to be 'naturalised' in the order of things, and how it comes to be reproduced in both cognitive and social structures". Thus "Bourdieu's conception of the 'masculine order', is a 'relationship of domination between men and women', mostly benefitting men" (Adler-Nissen, 2013:155). This relational perspective suggests that domination is as Bourdieu affirms, "structured in lived experiences, and manifested in the whole set of social spaces and subspaces" (2001:102).

Against this background, Sprung, Froschl and Gropper (2010:3) insist on changing perceptions commonly held by teachers that boy children are "problems" in learning ecologies. These perceptions create hostile social fields, and portray boy children as "problems agents". Such connotations foster in boy children, dominance and "power" creating the opportunity for boy children to override the agency of others. Unfortunately, the main target becomes girl children in learning environments through, for example, "the exercise of authority or the use of violence and other forms of coercion" (Kabeer, 2005:14). Borrowing from feminist orientations, "a common, untrue yet powerful and influential dictum such as 'boys will be boys' evokes boys' power, and in the social fields, places pressure on boys to position and be positioned by such gendered constructs, because these constructs are vested in agentic powers. Thus,

'boys will be boys' engenders meanings that lead to violence, aggression and competition as the domain of the male, thus entrenching the pattern of gender inequality (Irby & Brown, 2011:97). This explains, "...power and masculinity are often seen as relational constructions of male dominance and gender hierarchy of superiority and subordination" (Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2005:18).

From a Bourdieuan analysis, it becomes fundamentally important to address the social fields from the position of the dominant and the dominated focusing on boy's cultural capital, augmented by the social capital as it relates to families and communities; and transforming the boy children's habitus as it relates to learning environments in rural ecologies. Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005:3) highlight that the gendering of men (and boy children), as with that of women (and girl children), exists in the intersections with other social divisions and differences within rural communities.

2.8 BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: THE CAPITAL(S) IN PERSPECTIVE

According to Bourdieu, capital is "accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its incorporated, embodied form), which when appropriated on a private, exclusive, basis by the agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour" (Bourdieu, 1986:46). Further, Bourdieu (1986:242) states that it is in fact "impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms". Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical construct of capital is based on the distinction of three forms: social, economic and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986:46-47). Flemmen, Toft, Andersen, Hansen and Ljunggren, (2017:1277) maintain that we should "build on Bourdieu's recognition that these forms of capital might not add up one-dimensionally"; because these three forms of capitals are interrelated and inextricably linked. A major thrust of Bourdieu's theory is the elaborate account of the interaction between these three forms of capital in everyday life and the ways in which this interaction process contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities and power distribution in society (Bourdieu, 1984: Mottier, 2002:349).

Capital, according to Bourdieu (1986:47), "...can present itself in three fundamental guises. Those are; as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money, as cultural capital, which may be institutionalised in the form of educational

qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations (“connections”), and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility” (Bourdieu, 1986:47). Capital is therefore according to Bourdieu, “a resource that provides its holders with power and advantageous positioning in the social space, the social field” (Greenspan, 2014:101). The relational nature of capital is therefore central because “a capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:101). The social space is organised into various fields such as economic, political, and organisational fields. Within each field, there is a social struggle. These fields possess their own regulative principles and constitute a space in which struggles over different types of capital – economic, social, cultural and symbolic - take place (Bourdieu, 1990b:66). Bourdieu commonly refers to the contestation in the fields metaphorically as a game of play in which players must have the ‘feel of the game’ (1990b:66) and employ requisite strategies in order to gain advantageous positions. Considering the fact that these fields are competitive in their nature, the dominant in these fields seek to manipulate the boundaries (Corsun, 2001:18). It is therefore prudent to discuss each of these capitals in order to gain more understanding of each and its functioning, as well the inter-relationship that exists between these.

2.8.1 Bourdieu’s cultural capital

Bourdieu (1990a:138) refers to cultural capital as “credit [that] power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition”. In essence, “cultural capital includes all the things that help people gain access to, and position themselves strategically within fields” (Nolan, 2011:204). Hence, cultural capital is understood as “the primary cause for status and relative positions within a social field” (Walther, 2014:10). Lo (2015:125-126) states, “Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is important in understanding the processes and mechanisms of domination”. It is vitally important to emphasise that “domination or exclusion, though an extremely important aspect of field dynamics, is not the only social relationship that shapes and sustains the field, nor is it the only function that cultural resources can serve” (Lo, 2015:125-126).

It is thus my understanding that according to Bourdieu, a learning environment constitute the social field. Therefore, learners from advantaged and privileged families could be endowed with a rich cultural capital. The rich cultural capital could potentially

advantage them to at times, dominate the learning environment. Mindful of the fact that the learning environment and the interactions therein are one space wherein this cultural capital has opportunity for exposure. With obvious negative consequences for the learners from disadvantaged and less privileged families.

If families are the primary agents of cultural transmission, schools play an important role in legitimising and strengthening it. According to Bourdieu, “the school system tends to support and acknowledge the dominant culture, thus reinforcing the mechanisms of reproduction of social inequality” (Saraceno, 2014:2-3). Further, for Bourdieu, cultural capital exists in three forms, best illustrated by the diagram below.

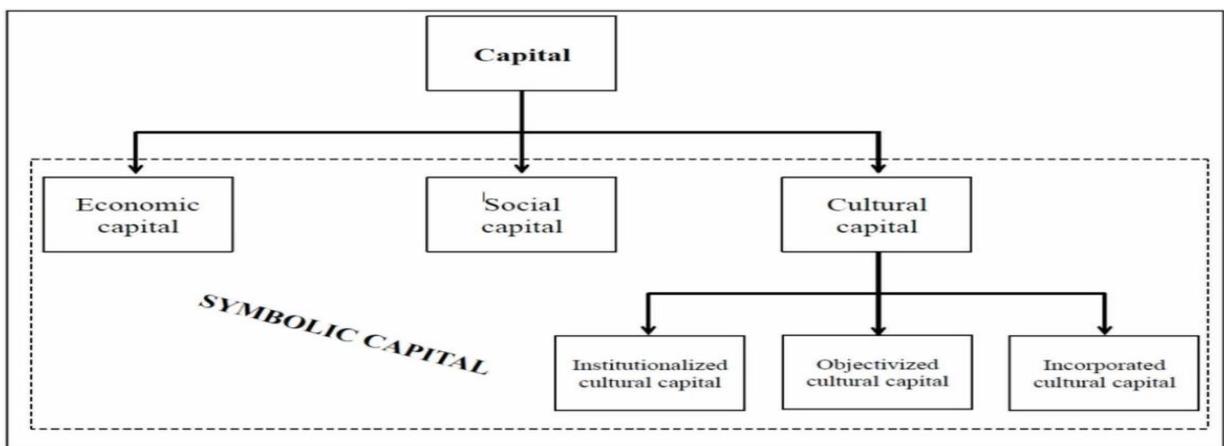


Figure 2.3: Bourdieu’s types of capital (adopted by Walther, 2014).

The common trend in Bourdieu’s theory is the interconnectedness of his theoretical constructs. Lareau (2001:77) cautions “the tendency to take only one small piece of Bourdieu’s model [could potentially create] fragmentation”. For instance, the capitals are convertible and might thus render it impossible to isolate them from each other. For example, it possible in certain conditions, to convert the cultural capital into both economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986:47). As presented in figure 2.3, the linkage between the various forms of capital, depicted in figure 2.3 above, is solid.

2.8.1.1 Bourdieu’s cultural capital and gender inequalities

According to Bourdieu, the educational system, along with the family, the church, and the State, are the primary means for reproducing inequality (Bourdieu, 2001:116). Positions of privilege emanate from the family and domestic life, which directs and determines individual development and associated social positions (Silva, 2005:83).

Hence, Flemmen, Toft, Andersen, Hansen and Ljunggren (2017:1277) argue, “cultural capital makes schooling and education easier, helping to improve grades and the feeling of being ‘at home’ in the school system” for the more privileged in society. For this study, focus is on the privileged position of boy and girl children, with boys found to be more privileged position owing to historical “patterns of masculine domination and feminine submission” (Silva, 2005:83) in rural communities. This study recognises that women in families in the context of their roles and responsibilities as mothers and homemakers is crucial in this process.

It is against this backdrop that “cultural capital is used to investigate [and interrogate the gender dominion, hierarchies], transformations and contestations” (Erel, 2010:642). Therefore, Bourdieu’s perspectives on the reproductive role of education becomes apparent in that “education contributes to the reproduction and legitimation of a cultural system that reinforces masculine privilege and shapes the gendered identities and perceptions of citizens accordingly” (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:307). Bourdieu points out the structural constancy underlying gender relations and gender divisions in society. The emphasis is on the fact that while “there may be some degree of change apparent on the surface, deeper, more inveterate features of traditional gender alignments retain their insidious influence in the public sphere”, consequently, one of the primary structural features that Bourdieu draws attention to is the “gendered division of labour” (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:307).

With regard to girl children and gendered division of labour, Bourdieu (1984:40-41) notes that cultural capital is important for [girl children] for two reasons. Firstly, the traditional division of labour between the sexes assigns 'humane' or 'humanitarian' tasks and feelings to [girls]. Secondly, the more completely they are subject to the traditional model of the sexual division of labour, the weaker their cultural capital and the lower their position in the social hierarchy. These different uses of cultural capital imply that social actions take place in different fields for men and women, with different forms of capital serving as currency. Therefore, this assertion suggests, “gender operates as a hidden form of cultural capital, but also as a disposition, an asymmetric form of capital” (Bourdieu, 1992b:192). The gendered dispositions are hidden behind the nominal construction of categories, enabling the misrecognition of gender (Skeggs, 2004:4). Hence, women’s femininity is misrecognised as a natural, essential personality disposition.

Against this backdrop, with the study, I concur with Dumais (2002:45) that “although one may argue that boys and girls receive the same cultural training, and consequently acquire cultural capital if they are in the same social class, their habitus, [dispositions] may be quite different...[particularly], on the basis of their socialisation and the views they form of the opportunity structure available to them” (Dumais, 2002:45). I am however careful not fall into the trap of “narrowly conceived debates that boys’ disadvantage and (or) success is pitted against girls’ disadvantage (and/or) success” (Ringrose, 2007:471). I, however, concur with (Erel, 2010:642) that focusing on rural girl children in this study, requires being mindful of the reality that both rural girl and boy children can potentially find “new ways of producing and re-producing (mobilising, enacting, validating) cultural capital that builds on, rather than simply mirrors, power relations”. Ross-Smith and Huppertz (2010:547) contend that gendering cultural capital is an important resource through which girl children and women can develop and sustain their active involvement and participation in the development arena.

2.8.1.2 Bourdieu’s theory of practice and the unrecognised cultural capital (UCC)

Lo (2015:125-6) points out at Bourdieu’s theoretical gap as far as the cultural capital is concerned. The gap, Lo argues, “is by way of an explicit exclusion of those cultural resources with low value and, more fundamentally, how to conceptualise the roles of such cultural resources in shaping field dynamics” (2015:126). These cultural resources of low value are perhaps more succinctly described by Pitzalis and Porcu (2017:956) as being a “different endowment of the intangible asset”, a view also espoused by Jaeger and Karlson (2018: 777) that “cultural capital may operate differently” and thus counter, not fit-in, with commonly-held predictions. The misfit, I argue, happens when one taps into the UCC.

Accordingly, the discussion on the intra-class stratification becomes relevant. Hence, the Lo states that such a discussion enriches and supplements, rather than contradicts Bourdieu’s theory of practice. More so, because it is a topic that Bourdieu acknowledged as relevant though not pursued in depth in his own research. One key question, which Lo (2015:125) asks is whether and how non-dominant cultural skills may be converted into useful resources for change, and at times resistance. Roksa and Robinson (2017:1230) maintain that in some contexts, students [learners who are rural girl and boy children in this study], from less advantaged family backgrounds

benefit more from cultural capital, than their more advantaged counterparts. That means, they tap more from the specific context to bolster their UCC and thus are able to challenge and counter the commonly held predictions.

According to Lo (2015:127-8) UCC “seeks to highlight how the dominated use cultural resources with little symbolic value in the field to covertly challenge the dominant codes of cultural styles and to pluralise the exchange rates between cultural and other currencies”. Especially when considering that “activities defined as culturally dominant and valuable change over time, especially among adolescents” (Lehman & Dumais, 2017:26). In this context, UCC “certainly does not represent a tool of domination, nor does it enable total transformation of the structure of domination. Bourdieu reckons that the dominated are faced with two equally bad choices and these are co-optation or resistance that could result in further exclusion” (Lo, 2015:128). Further, Lo (2015:127-8) adds that the cultural resources allow the dominated to explore options outside of these two equally bad choices. However, “UCC affords resources for pushing back the forces of domination to some extent and energises everyday practices of resistance, thereby assisting the dominated in their struggles against complete exclusion from the field” (Lo, 2015:128).

Therefore, a helpful contribution to Bourdieu’s cultural capital theorem is that which Lo (2015:133) puts forth. That most fields need at least three types of culture, one for domination, one for integration, and one for covert forms of resistance. Asserting this position, Lo (2015:133) furthermore states, “...the dominated often possess both the desire and the opportunity to import agendas, skills, and other cultural resources covertly from outside the official game. Lo (2015:133 -4), maintains “the dominated use UCC to level the playing field, to some limited extent, without having to confront power holders openly and risk further marginalisation. Hence for Lo, UCC “is unrecognised in a dual sense: its legitimacy is unrecognised in the field and its usage escapes the gatekeepers’ surveillance. I add, that borrowing various coping techniques and strategies from the dominated in the field, constitutes another set of relevant cultural competencies. Thus, I concur with Laberge (1995:132) “the adaptation of Bourdieu’s model is a potentially enriching approach”.

2.8.2 Bourdieu's Economic Capital

Bourdieu (2005:194) refers to “economic capital [as] money, wealth or ‘the indirect mastery ... of financial resources’”. According to Bourdieu, “economic capital is related to a person’s fortune and revenues or the lack thereof in the form of money and material assets (income, property, financial stocks), and is a decisive factor in social advantage and disadvantage” (Walther, 2014:9). Flemmen, Toft, Andersen, Hansen and Ljunggren (2017:1277) assert that “economic capital can be directly inherited, it can pay for a house in catchment areas of ‘better’ schools, it can pay for a particularly exclusive higher education, or it can more indirectly function as a ‘cushion’ or ‘insurance’ against the risks involved in ambitious career choices”. Thus serving as an advantage for “those born into wealthy families who are more likely than others to have access to family wealth helping them start up a business, as well as knowledge about investments strategies” (Flemmen, et al., 2017:1277). By implication, these give them further advantages over others with less family wealth, such as rural families. However, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:99) state that “two individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ, in their position as well as in their stances (‘position-takings’), in that one holds a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital while the other has little economic capital and large cultural assets”. This assertion suggests that there is an interface between and amongst Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs as mentioned in 2.2 and illustrated through figure 2.3.

It is thus important, to continuously reflect on the inter-relation and complexity of habitus, capital and field in the generation of practice. In order to understand Bourdieu’s economic capital, it should be located within the understanding that it “explores class-based discourse to understand how the interrelated concepts of habitus, field, and capital can enhance or inhibit behaviour in cultural settings” (Cooper, Caddick, Godier, Cooper, Fossey, & Engward, 2017:56).

With this understanding, we therefore find capital-specific barriers to mobility (Flemmen, et al, 2017:1277). Accordingly, O’Brien and O’Fathaigh (2005:69) argue that “economic capitals’ potency in the educational field, for example, is manifested in the capacity of some individuals to purchase different types of educational services (e.g. private education, additional grinds/tuitions, distance learning courses) and associated resources (e.g. childcare, transport, books, ICT equipment, etc.)”.

Therefore “economic capital on its own is not sufficient to buy status or position; it relies on the interaction with other forms of capital” (O’Brien & O’Fathaigh, 2005:69).

Despite this account of economic capital, Desan (2013:318) maintains that because economic capital has embedded power, “the dynamics of power are not limited to the economic sphere but pervade the cultural and symbolic spheres as well. Especially when considering that “Bourdieu develops his notion of the different forms of capital as an attempt to break from the common-sense experience of capital as economic and demonstrate instead how the power dynamics designated by the term capital are also operative in non-economic spheres of social life, albeit in misrecognised forms” (Desan, 2013:322). The other forms of non-economic capitals that are operational in most settings are those such as the social capital.

2.8.3 Bourdieu’s Social Capital

In Bourdieu’s terms, “social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986:248). Central to this notion is that “social networks, social relationships, and/or institutionalised relationships generate resources and power for their members” (Bourdieu, 1986:249). Bourdieu’s definition of social capital is more accurate and not committed to political interests and prevailing ideologies (Coradini, 2010:564). We note that Bourdieu speaks of durable networks of social relationships in his conceptualisations of social capital stating that “social capital is not independent from other forms of capital such as economic, physical, and cultural (as well as educational) capital” (Bourdieu, 1986:248-249), which is the most relevant and appropriate for the study. Traditionally though, “attaining social capital had a ‘high entry threshold’, requiring time for cultivation, as well as the other forms of capitals” (Ozdemir, Kılıc, Yıldırım, Vayena, Dove, Kivanc, Gcungcor, Lerena & Sardas, 2015:65).

O’Brien and O’Fathaigh (2005:71) affirm that social capital is a complex phenomenon, because whilst “social relationships are understood to be a natural part of one’s life, the crucial role these relationships can play for individuals and communities has only been appreciated”. However, this study follows Tzanakis’ view (2013:2) that social capital works best at an individual-level. I thus trace the social capital theory to the works of three main authors: Coleman, Putnam and Bourdieu, especially because “of

the three theorists, Bourdieu's theory which is the study's theory, offers an invaluable conceptual lens through which social inclusion in education may be investigated and advanced alongside learning partnerships" (O'Brien & O'Fathaigh, 2005:71). These learning partnerships accelerate access to sustainable learning for rural girl children.

2.8.3.1 Bourdieu's social capital from a gendered perspective

Arising out of the discussions in 2.8.3 above, "social capital is generally recognised as the positive outcome of sociability and social connection and, more specifically, as the capacity to realise economic benefits through social connections" (Warr, 2006:497). As mentioned earlier, this is a gendered study albeit with biasness towards rural girl children. It is thus becomes imperative to reflect on Bourdieu's social capital from a gendered perspective. Molyneux (2002:162) states that "women are often central to the forms of social capital [as they are considered] keen to mobilise [based on] gendered assumptions that govern efforts to build social capital". Thieme and Siegmann (2010:715) note that Bourdieu's theory highlights the social construction of gendered vulnerability but considers the reality that social capital lies at the intersection of socio-economic disadvantage. For this study, gender vulnerability, which is often characteristic of male dominance and female oppression, is amongst the main socio-economic disadvantage. However, Bourdieu (1984:382-383) attests that "the whole set of socially constituted differences between the sexes tends to weaken as one moves up the social hierarchy"

Therefore, in the context of this study, I concur with Carmona, Ezzamel & Mogotocoro (2018:357) that gender relations in a broader sense is context- dependent. I further assert that these gender relations in rural contexts are even more unequal and oppressive for women and girl children than men and boy children. Here, Huppatz and Goodwin (2013:291) allude to "how male, masculine and feminine embodiments can operate as capitals which may be accumulated and transacted, perpetuating horizontal gender segregation". Hence, the need for contextualising and reworking Bourdieu's approach so that gender, as well as class, may be understood as a central form of stratification in the social order (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013:291). In the context of gendered social capital, Thieme and Siegmann "suggest a shift from the investigation of women's exclusion from and gender inequality within social networks, to an analysis of masculine domination, [because] it appears to be directly associated

with the degree of vulnerability that women experience” (2010:715). Such a shift will importantly from a gender perspective, refocus the understanding of “the ways in which social network assets are conditional on socioeconomic and gender circumstances” (Thieme & Siegmann, 2010:715).

At the individual level, Levien (2015:80) summarises the Bourdieuan model of individual social capital by stating, “...individuals within any social unit are endowed with social networks of unequal quality and quantity, which are rooted in class inequalities (economic and cultural capital)”. These networks, the author states, “are not necessarily coterminous with any social unit, and have no necessary relationship with the norms or levels of trust within it” (Levien, 2015:80). In fact, “individuals more often than not use their networks for individual gain (converting it into other forms of capital) rather than collective good. This use and conversion of social capital can often conflict with norms and undermine trust, creating conflict and symbolic struggle rather than collective action. This is particularly likely to occur in rapidly changing economic contexts where new forms of economic activity clash with pre-existing norms” (Levien, 2015:80). In the context of rural ecologies therefore, how can the girl children’s social capital be converted in a way that enhances their access to sustainable learning? Could it be the change that is needed in response to Mottier’s observation that “Bourdieu’s analysis of the production and reproduction of social life lacks a convincing account of social change”? (Mottier, 2002:343).

Perhaps suggested here is that girl children in rural ecologies should be assisted, through various practice and policy initiatives and interventions, to cultivate their social capital, to activate various forms of social networks and connections. Levien (2015:80) advises that we convert these into other forms of capital for individual gain. This conversion would at an individual level, creating a better chance of transforming various forms of capital, from social capital to educational capital, then into economic capital, and thus make appropriate life investments.

2.8.3.2 Bourdieu’s symbolic capital, power and violence from a gendered perspective

Building on Bourdieu’s approach of exploring resources, as forms of capital that are deployed strategically by actors within social fields (Vincent, 2016:1163), symbolic capital is important to discussions about social capital. Embedded in this social capital,

is the symbolic capital. Bourdieu explains symbolic capital “as credit, but in the broadest sense, a kind of advance, a credence, that only the group’s belief can grant” (Bourdieu, 1990:120). The notion of “symbolic capital is related to honour and recognition. It is not an independent type of capital within itself” (Walther, 2014:10). Thus, “in the social field, the economic, social and cultural capital is converted to symbolic capital that is worthy of being pursued and preserved” (Bourdieu, 1977:182). Therefore, “the process of recognition of symbolic capital reflects the system’s assumption about the usefulness of capital, thus depending on the rules of the field”. Thus according to Husu (2013:274), “the advantage of Bourdieu’s work, that is absent in earlier approaches, is that economic and cultural capital function as symbolic power, and the social capital as symbolic capital in symbolic struggles, and are regarded as legitimate competence and authority”.

Power is the central organising principle of all social life, from culture to education to stratification and taste. For Bourdieu, symbolic power - the power to dominate is solely symbolic – it helps create and maintain social hierarchies, which forms the bedrock of political life (Swartz, 2013:1). This is especially so because in Bourdieu’s view, differences of status, often attributed to the networks and connections one has amongst others, may be seen as manifestations of social class differences (Weininger, 2002:121). Its close relationship with symbolic power provides an understanding of how power relations, particularly how diverse forms of domination persist within and across individuals, families, institutions and communities (Topper, 2001:43).

Symbolic capital thus arises from the inherent social networks and connections associated with the social capital. That is the “prestige associated with amongst others [gender], race, ethnicity and moral demeanour” (Stoebenau, 2009:2045). Like other capitals, social capital gives access to certain social positions through social class differences as mentioned above. “Symbolic capital is the form that economic, cultural and social capital take when these elements are perceived as legitimate” (Mottier, 2002:349). I draw on the three gendered social positions mentioned by Stoebenau (2009:2045): ambony (high), antony (middle) and ambany (low). These are differentiated by economic capital and symbolic capital. Importantly, to demonstrate the importance of social position, the high social position (‘ambony’) which is associated with the greatest volumes of symbolic capital is identified as dominant (Stoebenau, 2009:2045).

Flowing from the discussion concerning relations between social capital and socio-economic disadvantage, women are mostly targets of gender inequality and consequently symbolic violence (Udasmoro, 2013:155). Udasmoro (2013:155) defines symbolic violence “as the ideas and values of a ruling cultural class (e.g. men) who purposefully impose them (often through subconscious means) onto a dominated social group such as women”. The author maintains, “...symbolic violence is repeated from time to time through education in the family, formal schooling or informal learning”. In the case of this study, I argue that it continues to be a general practice in rural families, schools and communities. Considering the fact that “symbolic violence is gentle, invisible and unrecognised”, it is “misrecognised” and underrated as a form of abuse. (Topper, 2001:36-37). Thus, symbolic capital serves as a vehicle for the dominant to exert dominion over the vulnerable. Indeed, I concur that in rural families, schools and communities, “gender [discrimination and inequality] is performed as both symbolic capital and violence...that gender order is still preserved, despite beliefs to the contrary that equality exists (Yamak, Ergur, Özbilgin & Alakavuklar, 2015:125).

2.9 A juxtaposition: Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam on social capital

Tzakanis (2013:2) states, “...the theoretical formulations on social capital of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have greatly contributed to the currency of the concept... [and thus] enjoys an expanding popularity in interdisciplinary research”. The author alludes to the fact that there might be similarities in Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam’s treatment of the social capital though acknowledging their difference with their underlying ideologies. Especially because according to Tzakanis, power is the central organising principle of all social life, from culture to education to stratification and taste (Tzakanis, 2013:2-3).

In section 2.3.3, the researcher has alluded to the three theorists, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam with regard to their different views on social capital. It is therefore important to briefly, juxtapose these theorists, in order to locate their similarities and differences with Bourdieu whose theory is the adopted one for the study. Starting with Bourdieu, “social capital is located at the inter-individual level” (Walther, 2014:10). As such, “it refers to material and non-material resources which can be mobilised by virtue of many different kinds of social relationships. Social capital, is thus understood as, “[the] aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of

a durable network of mutual acquaintance and recognition and (or) to membership in a group, which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986:248-249). Essentially, "Bourdieu's social capital represents a person's entirety of social relations" (Walther, 2014:10).

Followed by Coleman's views on social capital that are in two-pronged. The first is a functionalist view of social action, which is conditioned by the social structure. The second is the rational theory, which suggests that actors' goals are determined by a utility-maximising pursuit of his/her self-interest (Coleman, 2013:95; Tzakanis, 2013:4). Also outlined in O'Brien & O'Fathaigh (2005:68), is Coleman has input that "social capital exists in the structure of relations between individuals and is thus largely intangible". Hence, Coleman (2013:95) identifies four important forms of social capital. Namely; obligations and expectations (e.g. doing favours for and receiving favours from other people), informational potential (e.g. sharing useful information that may inform some future action), norms and effective sanctions (e.g. the establishment of community values and shared standards of behaviour), and authority relations (e.g. skilful leadership that informs others' actions). Rogošić & Baranović are of the view that Coleman's approach "has its roots in structural functionalism" which is contrasted with Bourdieu's approach "that contains elements of conflict theory" (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016:81). This study supports the notion that "social capital is, in fact, a powerful weapon that encourages social mobility" (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016:81), which is another important aspect especially in the context of the study's focus on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Regarding Putnam's take on social capital, O'Brien and O' Fathaigh (2005:65-6) state that "Putnam's theory of social capital has functionalist roots also; especially its focus on social integration, but that it is furthermore influenced by notions of pluralism and communitarianism". The authors further states that social capital according to Putnam has three components which are moral obligations and norms, social values (particularly trust), and social networks (especially the membership of voluntary associations). Putnam's concept of social capital is problematic in that it over-emphasises bridging, linking and bonding, and neglects material, economic and political factors (Morrow, 2001:37); hence, Bourdieu's theory is more useful for this study.

Comparing the three theorists, O'Brien and O'Fathaigh (2005:68) maintain, "Bourdieu's social capital has strong socio-cultural roots which locate the educational experiences of individuals dialectically through their social and material history". Therefore, unlike the structuralist approaches of Coleman and Putnam, the authors O'Brien and O'Fathaigh (2005:68) hold the view that "Bourdieu challenges deficit thinking about underachievement and differentiates resources from their distribution within the social structure". These features, according to the authors, render the Bourdieuan perspective on social capital the "most scrupulous and constructive approach in the study of disadvantaged learners" (O'Brien & O'Fathaigh, 2005:68) such as girl children in rural areas. Bourdieu offers socio-cultural explanations for why under-represented groups such as the target of this study (girl children) remain unchallenged or even excluded from educational processes. That, can be achieved through expanding upon an analysis of cultural barriers, which are pertinent in rural learning ecologies (O'Brien & O'Fathaigh, 2005:68).

2.10 BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: PERSPECTIVES ON HABITUS

As mentioned in 2.5 above, the habitus is a key theoretical construct that lies at the heart of Bourdieu's theory of practice (Reay, 2004:431). As alluded to by Asimaki and Kousrourakis (2014: 122), the habitus is indeed Bourdieu's most central and enigmatic theoretical construct that gives meaning to and unifies the Bourdieuan theory of practice, specifically because of its close interconnection with the field (figure 2.2). In one of his earliest writings, Bourdieu defines the habitus as a "system of lasting, transposable dispositions, which integrates past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems" (Bourdieu, 1990:53). I considered a more encapsulating habitus aligned to promoting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Importantly, for Bourdieu, habitus functions below the level of consciousness. Accordingly, "habitus provides the connection between agents and practices through 'systems of dispositions', which are bodily incorporations of social history" (Tovey, 2008:731). Hence, "habitus is not action, but guides action much like a compass, giving one a sense of a coherent self" (Bourdieu, 1990a:73). Furthermore, "the

Bourdieuian habitus helps with explaining why customs, habits or routines are so slow to change” (Jokinen, 2016:90-91) which by implication means issues confronting girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies might experience (ing) the same slow pace of change. The slow pace might be because at the core of Bourdieu’s habitus “lies the tendency to always act the same way in similar situations” (Walther, 2014:13).

As Nash (2002:31) notes, an important aspect of the “habitus in the field of education concerns attitudes toward schooling. In a stratified society, individuals from different social classes do not share the same ‘objective probability’ of educational success”. Nash (2002:31) terms this a “positive orientation to school the ‘educated habitus’ more than just an instrumental view of education; it includes the desire to be educated and to identify and be identified as such. Therefore, “the process of education, of developing an educated habitus, entails acquiring the operative schemes and categories of the school” (Nash, 2002:31).

Considering Bourdieuian theory, this study would like to tap into the rural girl children’s habitus. Especially because we align ourselves with the understanding that the habitus as defined and described by Bourdieu is acquired at a more personal level. We thus argue that the habitus is the only theoretical aspect in the Bourdieuian theory of practice that presents itself with the ability to adjust and change, in the knowledge that the change is likely to be at a very slow pace as mentioned above. In this context, the study aims to motivate rural girl children’s by providing opportunities for unlearning some of the generally accepted discriminatory cultural and traditional properties and practices, especially those that have dire impact on rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The research team aligns to the notion that girl children will be able to challenge the rural field of play, and assume meaningful and strategic positions that will steadily change the rules of the game. It is with this consideration that this FPAR study seeks to locate the rural girl children’s voice and lived experiences. This facilitates what we refer to as girl children’s robust interaction with their habitus. We also acknowledge that this being a gender study, it requires some reasonable focus at boy children’s habitus; however, this is limited in this study as the focus is on rural girl children.

2.10.1 Bourdieu's theory of practice: the gendered habitus

Reay (2004:434) perceives Bourdieu's explanation of the habitus as a multi-layered concept; that is, it operates at the level of the individual by way of history drawn from family and class, and at the level of the society through what is commonly accepted, including the culture and traditional beliefs, values and practices. Gonzales (2014:198) laments that the habitus could be, as well as understood to mean personal history or biography. With the understanding that the habitus is made up of dispositions as defined in 2.10 above, I therefore argue that at both these levels the habitus is potentially gendered. Drawn from McClelland (1990:105), dispositions that make up the habitus, are influenced by gender, race and class. Further, Reay (2004:436) states that the habitus "can be used to focus on the ways in which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus in daily interactions". Thus, it is my view that the pervasive gender discriminatory beliefs, values and practices, which favour male domination and superiority as well as women's inferiority status in families and societies' emanates from the gendered habitus.

It is important to constantly, remember that this is a gendered study with a particular interest in girl children's access to sustainable learning. Bourdieu's theory of practice helps us build our understanding of gender inequality in education. Hence, our daily interactions and understanding of gender and gender divisions, as well as attention to the role education plays in the societal process of symbolic domination, are enhanced. Often, masculine privilege which is the central concern of an education feminist-orientated study such as this one, is dissected to understand female (or girl children) oppression. Therefore, a pertinent question by Mickelson (2003:374) with regard to the gendered habitus is "to what degree does education function as a cultural system which deploys symbolic and historically inherited forms of masculine domination and privilege and thus continues to shape the social conditions and opportunities for boys and girls in school?" Evident therefore is that "just as class location can influence one's perceptions of which pathways are more or less realistic, so too can gender" (Mickelson, 2003:374).

We need to understand that the gender roles are unfortunately, shaped and influenced by social systems, structures, values, and norms. Therefore, without having in-depth

understanding of these, any theoretical analysis will not be complete and thus become biased. Accordingly, Bourdieu advises that theoretical analysis should always consider the role of social, psychological, cultural and political environments (Kumar, 2016:106).

Akram (2012:62) notes “understanding gender through the prism of the habitus, which includes aspects of the unconscious and habit, enables a much broader spectrum to understand the subtle ways in which structure interacts with agency and how agency helps to reproduce structure”. Therefore, habitus should be understood as a part to play, a life to live, a role to be filled (Grusendorf, 2016:10). For the reason that habitus is so inextricably connected with society, and the fact that by its very nature society is gendered, Bourdieu was compelled to begin to address the gendered nature of habitus and did so in his later writings, most explicitly in *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001; Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:307).

Although gender equality has improved in recent decades, marked gender disparities in educational outcomes persist. Bourdieu and others also suggest that gendered patterns of socialisation translate into gender differences in cultural capital, habitus, and practice, and that understanding the effects of gender socialisation on cultural capital, habitus, and practice may increase our understanding of important mechanisms underlying gender disparities in educational outcomes (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:303-5). With this in mind, it is thus useful to seek to explore the habitus and field relation in order to build an understanding on how their interaction relate to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.10.2 The gendered habitus-field relations

According to Bourdieu, habitus takes shape within a particular field. It is therefore important to consider the fact that the Bourdieuan concept of field helps the researcher “situate individuals in the milieu of social and objective relations” (Gonzales, 2014:198). Reay (2004:432) states, “according to Bourdieu it is through the workings of the habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure)”. That is why because of the habitus, “agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances” (Bourdieu, 1990b:77). From a gender perspective, Thorpe (2009:500) states that ‘Bourdieu was concerned with how gendered norms and particularly gender inequality, becomes embodied. Thus from a

gender perspective, those would be the feminine and masculine behaviours (Thorpe, 2009:500).

Having discussed the interplay between the habitus and the fields above in 2.10, it is clear that “social fields are characterised by struggles over power and positions, whilst capital constitutes the objects that are struggled over as well as the means that enable actors to exercise power and influence” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2006:128). I therefore concur with Thorpe (2009:492) that more syntheses of Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs of the habitus and field from feminist perspectives should be done as it adds value, especially to this study, as it offers new ways to productively reconceptualise the relationship between gender, structure and agency (Thorpe, 2009:492). Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs are interdependent and interconnected with one another; thus, in this regard, the complex yet intrinsic habitus-field relationship. Demonstrated through a circular relationship illustrated by the diagrammatic presentation (figure 2.4) below.

Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

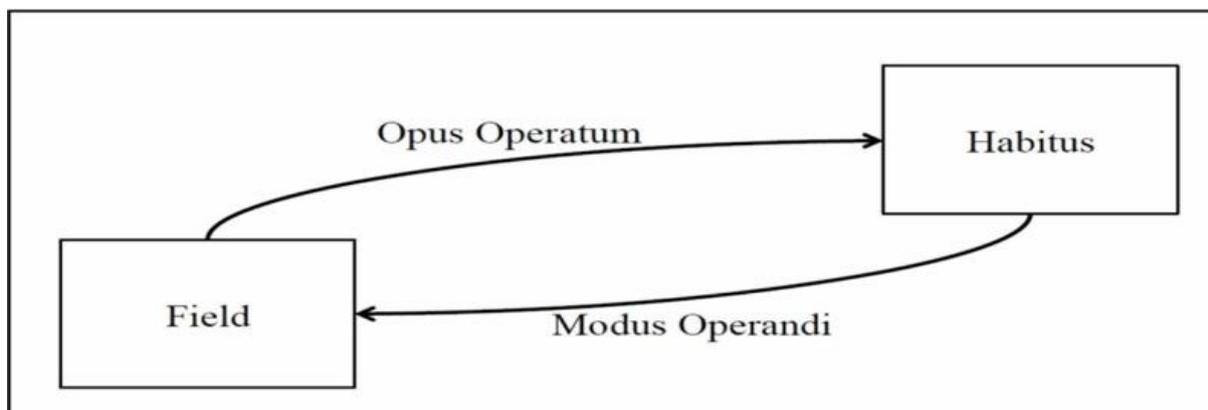


Figure 2.4: The circular relationship between field and habitus (Walther, 2014)

There is undoubtedly much more that needs to be revealed in relation to gendered habitus-field interaction. It is against this backdrop that Reay (2015:9) maintains that “when we extend notions of habitus to include affective dispositions, it becomes a useful tool for understanding the affective dimensions of both privilege and disadvantage”, and for this study, it explores gendered privileges and disadvantages with regard to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

2.11 BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: AGENCY, STRUCTURE AND GENDER ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

According to Akram and Hogan (2015:605), “the concept of agency has been used to bridge the gap between micro- and macro-level analyses in social and feminist studies. Agency has therefore served as an important concept informing questions of concern in everyday life, for example, subjects living their lives through institutions; being supported by or suffering due to the power of structures, ‘talking back’ or refusing to interrelate. What then remains “untheorised” are the ‘ordinaries’ of daily life, often performed by women, the working class, children, people of colour, disabled people and queers (Jokinen, 2016:85-6).

When examining agency and actions, Akram (2012:57) warns, “we must not ignore the reasons people state for why they act, or undermine the value of their reflexive deliberations or of external constraints in society”. However, “we must also consider the role of the unconscious, habit and habitus in order to better understand how structure affects agency, and how agents are complicit in this” (Akram, 2012:57). The unconscious and habit are important aspects of agency, which restore autonomy to both agency and social structure in a dialectical approach to structure and agency”. (Akram, 2012:57).

Overall, with the “structure-disposition-practice” model facilitates girl children to internalise their educational and occupational prospects and thus use these to influence their orientation toward school, in terms of their level of aspiration, their disposition toward schooling, and their performance of practices necessary to succeed academically. Thus, to a degree, boy and girl children are internalising differing messages about their prospects suggesting that there may be gender differences in terms of aspirations and dispositions toward schooling, particularly academic practices and academic achievement. It is for this reason that the authors contend that there is still a gendered “hidden curriculum” in schools channelling and reinforcing traditional gender roles (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013:308).

These gendered agency and dispositions clearly entrenches the patriarchal practices and cements it as an institution. Patriarchy as an institution plays a hindering role in the oppression of women and girl children through exploitation and barriers towards their empowerment and rights. Kumar points out that “one way of challenging and

dismantling patriarchy is through ensuring equal distribution of resources and empowering women and girl children across all spheres including access to sustainable learning” (2016:99). This strategy is especially significant for girl children in rural ecologies noting that the hidden curriculum and patriarchal practices act as structures and rules that have a direct impact on girl children as gendered agents. In an attempt to build a much more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the Bourdieuan analysis, as far as agency and structure are concerned, the researcher juxtaposes Bourdieu with other theorists who have viewpoints on the same concepts, in particular, Giddens and Archer.

2.11.1 Bourdieu’s perspectives on agency and structure

Bourdieu interchangeably referred to agency as “practice,” “action,” or even “struggle.” (Gonzales, 2014:198). As indicated earlier in the study, Bourdieu’s theory of practice is, blended with feminist praxis thus engendering gender debates. For instance, “women actively creating their own ways of challenging patriarchy and sexism through consciousness-raising cuts across action and (or) struggle that seeks to assert women’s agency” (David, 2015:931).

Walther (2014:7) highlights that “structures act as rules that determine and conditions individuals’ thoughts and behaviors”. Further the “structuralist perspective would imply that agents ‘behave’ as robots that are programmed to act in accordance with the structured patterns, a perspective that appears obviously too rigid. On the other hand, the voluntarism or agency perspective rather suggests that individuals are completely free in their choices and always have an array of alternatives” (Walther, 2014:7).

Bourdieu describes the process of interaction between structures and agents by using an analogy that sees the social world as “the game” and the agent as the “game player”. He presents habitus as the “feel for the game”, suggesting that the “good player does at every moment what the game requires” (Bourdieu, 1990:63). This position acknowledges that social situations are often varied and that a “good player” must often be creative and be able to adapt to change. Through the analogy of the game and the game player, we see that Bourdieu “is able to remove (theoretical) concepts, such as rules and intentional action, from the process by which agents and structures interact and thus the process in many ways becomes seamless, mundane and ordinary” (Akram, 2012:57).

It follows then that “the idea of agency is a key mediating category through which the inter-connections between cultural and economic forces, identity formations and social structures can be examined” (McNay, 2004:177). In reality, it is therefore important to note, “...social structural forces are believed to be creating and sustaining inequalities” (McNay, 2004:177). An aspect that Bourdieu recognises is because “agents actively produce social reality through their mundane activities of sense-making”, but he stresses, “they do so based on the positions they occupy in an objective space” (Wacquant, 2013:277). Hence Gonzales, (2014:198) highlights that “the assumptions about the ability and potential for humans to act as agents within and against the context of cultural and structural pressures”, is sustained.

Therefore, from a feminist perspective, agency is related in many ways to power, either to act or make a decision, which makes it important to understand agency in the context of the fair distribution between of responsibilities, resources and power, between girl and boy children, and between women and men in general. Such an approach recognises that girl and boy children, women and men, typically have different needs, responsibilities, access to resources and decision-making powers.

However, Kumar (2016:100) mentions that we are yet to design a framework or approach that will provide a larger picture of gender dynamics and build collective power for deeper change. That which will look at both the agency and the structure comprehensively. This includes a framework that will empower agents to “work through and negotiate structure rather than being determined by it” (Gonzales, 2014:198). Thus, agency is therefore, considered as concrete actions or practices that girl children would employ in order to earn or maintain a space of legitimacy within the schooling environment and more broadly within the education system. Such space provides the basis for girl children to engage with issues confronting schooling including sustainable learning, the entirety of their location, rural ecologies and all other aspects that shape and influence these ecologies. This is in line with Bourdieu’s (1983, 1998) work that was committed to exploring the convergence of agents with structure.

2.11.1.1 Agency and rural families: a Bourdieuan analysis

For Bourdieu, the family is amongst the core and critical social structures wherein the various forms of capitals, are accumulated and transmitted between generations

(Bourdieu, 1996:21). Notwithstanding reflexivity as amongst one of Bourdeiu's concepts, aspects that relate to the "appreciation that the family is still a 'key source of belonging' compound the struggle for agency. Therefore, families remain highly significant by being "structured, structuring structure" (Lee & McDonald, 2009:371) in the Bourdieuan social fields. Thus, the rural families and communities are from the Bourdieuan theory of practice, positioned within the rural social fields, and are the main components of the rural social structure. It is therefore taking into consideration that the "structure bears powerful reproductive elements but, it is also able to adapt to change in the outside world, even if slowly or not radically" (Bourdieu, 1993:88) - this particular focus should be paid to rural families.

In contextualising Bourdeiu's agency and rural families with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. I juxtapose agency according to Bourdeiu as outlined in 2.11.1, as well as agency, from an empowerment perspective as articulated by Kabeer (1999:438). Understanding girl children's agency in the context of rural families is vital in order to situate it within this important social field. Thus understanding agency from a Bourdieuan action and practice perspective means that agents, the rural girl children in this case, should in their actions and practice navigate and negotiate through these structured structures (2.10 & 2.11.1) of rural families; especially so because there are culturally and traditionally set rules that define and determine what is acceptable in this particular social field. From an empowerment perspective, agency is thus, understood as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. According to Kabeer, agency is, operationalised as decision-making, the level and extent of the agents' motivation, meaning, and purpose to own life choices (Kabeer, 1999:438). Merging the two perspectives, agency is therefore an empowered self, able to take action towards set goals. Whilst the field-habitus is important, I draw at this point on the earlier discussions in 2.9 on the capitals. It is my view that the levels and forms of capitals in the rural families influence an individual's sense and amount of agency.

2.11.1.2 Agency, rural schools and schooling: a Bourdieuan analysis

For this study, I align rural girl children as agents, within the rural schools and schooling. This "alignment reflects both structure (being positioned) and agency (self-positioning). Its corollary, habitus, offers a similar integration, expressing a

combination of socially structured dispositions and socially structured predispositions” (Colley & Guéry, 2015:117).

Arnot et al. (2012:16) suggest that schooling and/or education promotes autonomous thought and behaviour, adding that it is important to consider the fact that “education can disturb, reshape and even reinvent an individual and the individual’s agency”. For example, “schooling, particularly for women has been credited in most research as contributing to delayed marriage and the reconstruction of adulthood for younger women” (Arnot et al., 2012:16). It is against this backdrop, therefore, that Kabeer (2005:16) emphasises that we should be interested in the “...transformative forms of agency that do not simply address immediate inequalities but are used to initiate longer-term processes of change in the structures of patriarchy”. In this regard, Kabeer points at the need for institutional transformation - transformation of the rural schools and families as Bourdieu’s social fields. Also echoed by Hajdu et al. (2015:155-6), are “aspects that exposes girl children to vulnerabilities which should be used to build an understanding of how these children are both helped and constrained by individual, structural and global-level factors, which, in complex ways, interact to create more successful or more vulnerable outcomes”.

We have seen the promulgation of policies and legislation nationally in South Africa, and internationally. For example, on the international front, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA, 1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women and Children (CEDAW, 2000), amongst others. These were policy statements that prioritised the protection of children from domestic violence and the education of girl children of the world in view of their previous disadvantage and vulnerabilities. Nationally, these international instruments translated to, for example the national policy framework for women’s empowerment and gender equality (2000). This policy instrument, gave emphasis on education and empowerment of girl children. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Bill of (2013) that is yet to be promulgated into law, the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Plan Initiative (ASIDI, 2010-2014) that targeted improving infrastructure with intensified focus on rural schools. Other individual characteristics such as access to education, skills and capital, are more readily addressed through policy. However, acknowledging though that these policies and legislative prescripts at times fail to address the more significant

underlying structural problems that produce vulnerability and/or shape livelihood opportunities (Hajdu et al., 2015:159-160).

2.11.1.3 Agency and rural girl children: a Bourdieuan analysis

From the Bourdieuan analysis perspective as is this study, issues of rural girl children's agency, are discussed and understood, in the gendered context of masculine domination. According to Bourdieu, "male dominance typifies what he means by symbolic violence, in that it is not merely physical violence but the ways in which certain gendered norms, values and dominant discourses come to be accepted as 'natural', 'normal' or the 'way things are'" (Powell, 2008:173). Symbolic violence, Bourdieu argued, "...occurs at the pre-conscious levels" such that while, for example, a rural girl child may say 'no', to any form of advance, the general understanding from the boy child might be that she says "yes". That extends to social relations including sexual advancements. As Powell maintains, in "coerced or even forced sexual encounter, 'I consented' does not translate to negotiated and agreed on the part of the girl child" against the what Powell (2008:173) considers to be "gendered rules of the game or structure of the field of heterosexual encounters, which actually precludes assertive sexual refusal in many instances". Hence, Bourdieu (1990) refers to "*amor fati*" or 'love of one's fate', whereby social agents make a virtue out of a necessity; refusing something that is already denied to them or choosing the inevitable (in this example, for instance, 'consenting' to unwanted sex)" (Powell, 2008:173).

I concur with Powell (2008:170) that "rather than a situation in which young women can simply be encouraged to 'just say no', the negotiation of sexual consent should involve a complex interplay of individual agency and embodied gendered practice". That is, referring to the "ways in which gendered norms and discourses are enacted through the body in everyday practice; in thoughts, feelings, desires and responses, in a way that is not always subject to individual recognition and change" (Powell, 2008:170).

Bourdieu's theory of practice is transformation-orientated (2.3). Bourdieu's agency is rooted in how people see themselves, in this instance, how girl children in rural ecologies view themselves, and their sense of self-worth. This in turn, is critically, bound up with how they are viewed by those around them and by their families and communities. Such a relation therefore implies that girl children would not only actively

exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge existing power relations. Because of the significance of beliefs and values in legitimating inequality in rural ecologies in particular, a process of empowerment should begin from within the girl children themselves, their families and communities. As Kabeer mentions, agency as it relates to “empowerment should encompass not only the decision making and other forms of observable action but also the meaning, motivation, and purpose that individuals (girl children in rural ecologies pose) bring to their actions; that is, their overall sense of agency” (Kabeer, 2005:13-4).

Another important component that is closely linked to agency is that of resources. Kabeer argues that “resources are the medium through which agency is exercised” (2005:15). The researcher would therefore at this point argue that reclaiming agency, and the associated resources, which will be discussed in detail in later chapters of this study, is fundamental for girl children in rural ecologies.

2.12 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW ON REFLEXIVITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, RESISTANCE AND CHANGE

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:36), the “single feature that makes Bourdieu stand out in the landscape of contemporary social theory is his signature obsession with reflexivity”. Bourdieu’s focus on reflexivity is in the main characterised by “turning of the sociological gaze back upon sociology itself, which is to mirror sociology by sociology itself”, that which is captured as “the sociology of sociology” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:68). Elder-Vass (2007:334) explains that Bourdieu’s work on reflexivity makes it clear that he does accept that “conscious deliberation has a role in determining our practices, but it is a role that is always presented as secondary to the practical logic of the habitus”. Bourdieu consistently articulates his theoretical stance that in our early childhood, we acquire a primary habitus, but as we subsequently enter into new social fields, we develop a habitus that is specific to this field, so we change to conform or change the field we are entering. Therefore, with respect to resistance, “Bourdieu’s notion of the field can be used as a framework for assessing the resisters’ orientations towards the game, whether and how they act on such orientations, and their effects on the field” (Lo, 2015:126). I thus concur with Lo that “adopting such a multi-dimensional framework allows for an analytical articulation of the different mixtures of ambiguities” (2015:136).

Roberts and Green (2013:620) maintain, "...reflexivity can occur to various degrees, but that it functions in relation to the more enduring features of habitus, such as habits, the taken-for-granted and so on...that [it] spans a conscious and pre-conscious space and thus has various intended and unintended effects". Therefore, it is against this functioning, that "structures have the capacity to affect agents at both reflexive and pre-reflexive, conscious and unconscious levels" (Akram, 2012:52). As such, an inclusive approach is necessary as it "enables a much more realistic conception of agency and reflexivity, crucially, enabling a much wider spectrum through which social structure can influence behaviour thereby producing a structure and agency dialectic" (Akram, 2012:47).

2.12.1 Viewpoints on habitual reflexivity and agency

Bourdieu's work on habitual reflexivity is of value as it demonstrates the difficulty of change (Chambers, 2005:333). However, Sweetman (2003:541) maintains that, "change in the context of habitual reflexivity is possible because today's society is characterised by increased movement between and across social fields and as such reflexivity can result from the rapid, pervasive and ongoing changes to social fields themselves" (Sweetman, 2003:541). Importantly, habitual reflexivity alone may not result in changing practices. According to Bourdieu, social agents' practices in a given field, are structured by their habitus and enabled by available resources, their capitals. Accordingly, for a reflexive habitus to produce changed practices, effective resources must be available (Lo, 2015:132).

However, contrary to Bourdieu's perspectives, Mouzelis (2007:1) provides a critical assessment of Bourdieu's habitual reflexivity. Mouzelis argues that "reflexivity is also enhanced by intra-habitus tensions, by more general incongruences between dispositions, positions, interactive and figurational structures, as well as by situations unrelated to them" (2007:1). Using Bourdieu's analogy of the "game", Mouzelis (2007:1-3) contends, "...each situated player, as the carrier of dispositions (acquired via various socialisations) has to pay attention not only to the game's rules that apply to her/his position and the position of the other players". Instead, the player must also pay attention "...to the actual interactive relations between players as these unfold syntagmatically in time and space" (Mouzelis, 2007:1-3). That means, a specific habitus carrier has to take into account both the game's institutional structure (i.e. the

relationships between roles/positions), and figural structures (i.e. the relationships between actual players). Mouzelis maintains that “figural structures are not reducible to institutional structures, since there is often a discrepancy between what is demanded by a role's normative requirements and what actually happens in the context of the game's concrete interactive processes” (2007:1-3). Therefore, for Mouzelis, the field and the game entails three rather than Bourdieu's two social structures. Those are; internalised dispositional structures (the habitus) based on what Bourdieu calls a practical logic; institutional structures (the system of positions) operating based on a normative logic; and figural structures (systems of patterned relationships between real actors) operating because of an interactive and strategising logic (2007:3).

Additionally, Akram and Hogan (2015:605) thus postulate that it is therefore vital to “negate the tendency to define agency exclusively in terms of reflexivity position that neglects the impact of more enduring aspects of agency, such as the routinisation of social life and the role of the taken-for-granted, the doxa”. These concepts, Akram and Hogan insist, are pivotal to Bourdieu and Giddens' theorisation of everyday life and action; however, “whilst accepting that reflexivity is a core aspect of agency, the reality is that it operates as a backdrop of the routinisation of social life and operates from within and not outside of habitus” (Akram & Hogan,2015:605). Further, the authors warn us about the role of the breach in reflexivity, because that would suggest opening up a critical window for agents to initiate change. The suggestion is therefore to be cautious in over-ascribing reflexivity to agency. Achieving reflexivity and change are difficult and often accompanied by resistance (Akram & Hogan, 2015:605). Hence, it is perhaps important to explore change through precarious everyday agency articulated in the discussion that follows (2.12.2).

2.12.2 Reconciling reflexivity, resistance and change through precarious everyday agency

As highlighted in 2.9, agency is an important concept in discussions about Bourdieu's theory of practice, more so when aligned to discussions on reflexivity and resistance in line with the Bourdieuan notion of ‘feel for the game’ that the habitus engenders. In theory, precarious everyday agency is about being flexible and free. Glassman and Erdem hold that “change processes engender inevitable tensions between resistance to changes based on internalised strategies for survival and a developing desire for

greater control over one's own life trajectory". Further that "when new possibilities are introduced into the local ecology, they're likely to present challenges created by a mixture of their internalised survival strategies, [which is] their acquired new roles in the system" (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:213). As such, Abel and Frohlich (2012:239) contend that the "Bourdieuian theory of practice does not fully account for explanations of change, it fundamentally provides options to add theoretical components that might help identify and understand forms of agency for change".

Therefore, an important theoretical concept becomes the agent's "precarisation, the 'feel for the situation', which may need several modulations during a single game" (Jokinen, 2016:85). The 'feel for the situation' confirms that the "logic of habit is complex and thus the habit of habit-breaking can be identified as a crucial aspect of precarious everyday agency" (Jokinen, 2016:85). So in essence, according to Jokinen, "what happened yesterday, or last year, or during half of an individual's life, might not be relevant today". Which means, experiences do not necessarily accumulate into one's habitus. So in essence, the relevance of precarious everyday agency is that "it may open up more freedom, innovation, autonomy and rebellion" (Jokinen, 2016:85). The study explores these aspects with regard to rural girl children. There are potential opportunities that the precarious everyday agency might "dissolve the old hierarchies and orders of gender, age, class, capabilities and sexualities, though it does not happen without political interventions and struggles" (Jokinen, 2016:85). The fundamental question therefore becomes "whether people have the resources to make use of the new options, and whether they feel and are able to attach themselves to novel formations of precarious agency" (Jokinen, 2016:95-6). Hence, for Jokinen, precarisation manifests itself differently in different geographic localities (Jokinen, 2015:89).

I therefore advocate for precarious everyday agency in the case of girl children in rural ecologies especially against the backdrop that the rural area has been "socially constructed as backward, both of the past and valuing old ways, difficult, and in need of rescuing" (Roberts & Green, 2013:766). It is with this precarious everyday agency that girl children, in my view, will be empowered to challenge and navigate their way through actively and innovatively engaging with the old, backward as it is. Thus, seek freedom to access to sustainable learning. By that, girl children will be as Jokinen (2016:85) contends, dissolving old gendered hierarchies and orders and thus

exploring the new options as presented by the new educational and broader development agenda, such as the one detailed in the Incheon Declaration and the Agenda 2030, for example.

2.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a broad overview of the Bourdieuan theory of practice, in particular the three central theoretical constructs of field capital, and habitus. It concretised the understanding of the circular interrelationship and interdependence of these constructs. The chapter also contextualised the Bourdieuan theory of practice as it relates to the focus of the study, girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, and all other critical stakeholders such as parents, families, schools and communities in these ecologies. The inter-connectedness and interdependence of Bourdieu's theoretical constructs, for example the habitus and field make it important to understand and explain the action of players in the field of play. This study has thus contextualised the field of play to rural environments and in particular, rural families, schools, and communities. Further, rural players are in the main, rural girl and boy children, and broadly other role-players and stakeholders such as (amongst others) rural parents, teachers, activists, civic and traditional leaders.

This chapter explains the importance of dominance and manipulation that characterises the field of play. The rural field of play is no exception concerning the inherent struggles for power and positions. We therefore need to understand that according to Bourdieu, the players' dispositions, inculcated in their respective habitus, play a central role. Hence, girl children's habitus, in view of its potential adaptability and adjustability, should be the focal point of initiatives and interventions. Especially as it is the habitus that they bring to the field of play, as skills and competencies largely influence the power-positional-play in the field. It is therefore on this basis that we keenly explore within the study girl children's habitus as it greatly influences their agency and the sense of self. More so in the context of rapid changes across all spheres: socio-cultural, economic, and political. The rapid changes challenge adaptability and adjustability simultaneously and players need to come up with strategies of trading with one's capital. Hence, the chapter's deliberation on the important yet less explored UCC, as put forth by Lo. Given the diversities and

dynamics of rural ecologies, cultivating UCC amongst rural girl children, presents an empowerment opportunity.

We also focus on the interplay of Bourdieu's capital and habitus as it relates to rural girl children. The negotiation on the trade-offs of the rural girl children's agency, through reflexivity or nurturing reflexivity are important elements of the study. This is especially so because any attitude, attribute, and behaviour that seeks to change the status quo is usually met with resistance in rural ecologies where culture and tradition are 'conveniently' used to entrench disadvantage, discrimination and inequality. The main researcher deliberately paid particular focus on the agent and agency aspects throughout the chapter, and aligned them to the field, capital and the habitus. Also considered were feminist orientations of the study, which centre debates and discussions on women's empowerment and gender equality. Thus, ownership of the change possibilities and processes lie with girl children themselves. In essence, rural girl children themselves have to change the rules of the game, to challenge the taken-for-granted, the doxa. Despite the study's focus on girl children, a brief discussion on boy children was done as it is also within their power to change the rules of the game, such that in the struggle for position and position-taking in the field of play, the contestations are shaped and informed by potential, not gender. It is thus with this mind-set and practice that changes concerning girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies will receive consideration on the broader development agenda, debates and discussions.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails an extensive literature review on a Bourdieuan analysis of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It is aligned to the study's objectives as outlined in Chapter one (1.5.2). This chapter is contextualised against the backdrop of chapter one which introduced and provided an overview of the study. Chapter one (1.12) provided the researcher's brief background to unravel some of the assertions and reflections that might emanate as the study progresses. In Chapter two, the primary researcher outlined the study's theoretical framework - the Bourdieuan theory of practice. Therefore, the literature review in this chapter sort to align, consolidate, and contextualise the study's focus on Bourdieu's theory of practice perspective; that is, the theoretical constructs of field, capital and habitus at the level of rural girl children's daily lived experiences and interactions.

The rural ecologies, inclusive of the rural households, schools and communities constitute the main social 'fields' for this study. Therefore, this literature review seeks to unpack these social fields in order to explain and demonstrate the complexities of these ecologies, as well as the different struggles for positions by the various players within these. Drawing from the Bourdieuan theory of practice in the previous chapter, the literature review attempts to illuminate how the various forms of Bourdieu's capitals are invested in these ecologies. In addition, for girl children specifically, the literature review will also explore the symbolic capital against the context of the assertions made in chapter one on their social position and vulnerabilities that are often disguised as culture and tradition. Thus, the literature review will broadly delve deeper into the rural institutions such as families, schools, traditional authorities and others to provide insight and situational analysis of issues and complexities confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

3.2 A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

To arrive at a comprehensive understanding on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, I propose that we briefly delineate the three key aspects of

the study: issues relating to girl children themselves, issues pertaining to rural ecologies, and issues pertaining to access to sustainable learning. The delineation is simplified from an individualistic perspective. Then combined and analysed in terms of the interconnections, to arrive at a more comprehensive perspective.

Alabi, Bahah, and Alabi (2014:393) contend that “[t]he issues of discrimination against girl-children remain an unresolved issue in the society and a major concern in academic discourse”. I concur with the authors that indeed “the girl-child’s problem around the world has many dimensions” (Alabi, Bahah & Alabi, 2014:393). Further, I agree with the authors that “...at the root of all kinds of discriminations and bias against the girl child lies in the customs, traditions and typical mindset of the society which considers the girl child[ren]... as inferior beings” (Alabi, Bahah, & Alabi, 2014:393). I therefore argue that against the backdrop of the stated gender discrimination and bias faced by girl children, their access to sustainable learning is equally marred with gender disparities. Thus, with regard to girl children’s access to sustainable learning, Delprato, Akyeampong, Sabates, and Hernandez-Fernandez (2015:42) maintain, “several factors have been put forward to explain gender disparities in education among which poverty and socio-cultural norms are crucial”. For example, on the socio-cultural norms, early or child marriage is considered as a critical factor, amongst others. In that regard, Delprato, Akyeampong, and Dunne (2017:173) concur, “early marriage [as a result of some of these gendered socio-cultural beliefs] is still a barrier for children’s access and completion [schooling]”. Thus, “[e]arly marriage contributes to widen the education gender gap (Delprato, Akyeampong, & Dunne, 2017:173). In a Nigerian study, Okafor, Balogun, Abdulaziz, Oniye, and Iyekolo (2017:79) “revealed that parents’ beliefs that girls in non-educational fields excelled more than those in schools were major hindrances to girls’ access and completion of education”. Indeed, these and other issues of equal opportunities for girl and boy children in education have taken centre stage in global discussions among key stakeholders (Okafor et. al., 2017:79).

Thus, I attempted to connect the issues of girl children with those of access to sustainable learning to rural ecologies, as is the focus of this study. In that respect, I heeded Hlalele (2014:101) caution that “it is no longer desirable, appropriate or useful to define urban in terms of rural or the other way round”, because “[to] do so is to

create a competitive relationship between them, to the disadvantage of rural areas". Roberts and Green (2013:765) highlight the fact that "generally, across countries of the world, the rural contexts have been socially constructed as backward, born of the past and valuing old ways, difficult, and in need of rescuing" and that "most of the rural ecologies are faced with poverty" (Mapesela, Hlalele & Alexandra, 2012:91). Gutura and Manomano (2018:81) agree, "[w]omen and children are the most vulnerable populations to poverty which has led to the coining of the term *feminisation of poverty*". (Gutura & Manomano, 2018:81).

Bell, Lloyd and Vatovec (2010:205) postulate that "the status of the rural, empirically and conceptually, remains an issue", because "rural remains an active feature of our lives, continually confronting us and our lives, politically, culturally, and socio-economically in ways that are material, symbolic and relational". For instance, the authors allude to the number of rural crises afflicting life in most of the rural places, pointing out at rural hospitals, schools, and related examples of social organisations that are affected mainly due to the shrinking population size in rural places. Especially because more and more people move to urban areas for a variety of livelihood pursuits. Most of these rural crises feature in the South African rural settings as well. They include for example, "the rural healthcare crisis as a result of the closing of rural hospitals and clinics. The rural commercial crisis due to the closure of rural economic hubs due to lack of information, communication and technological infrastructure (ICT) which makes for vibrant economies. Rural education crisis as rural schools continue to be under-resourced with respect to infrastructure, teacher supply and such related aspects" all of which are critical for sustainable learning environments in rural areas (Bell, Lloyd & Vatovec, 2010:205-8).

In the South African context though, the primary researcher would like to make two rural distinctions. There are those rural areas, which are struggling, and affected and perhaps characterised by the rural crises as mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Then, there are those affluent rural areas that are experiencing an upsurge in development, especially those in and around rural areas where mining, agriculture, tourism and industrial activities are intensifying. Despite the rurality, some of these areas are, considered amongst the fastest growing economies. For example, the two rural ecologies of the Nkangala District Municipality that are under study, namely,

Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka are nodal development hubs in the NDM. They are both developmentally diverse with one more advanced than the other despite the fact that they are both considered rural ecologies. Olivia (2010:278) pointed out "...rural areas are facing new challenges as a result of their different combinations of mobilities and local fixities". The author further states, "[the] immediate effects of these processes seem to go against some of the traditional assumptions about the rural world". In addition, that "these mobilities are consolidating processes that just a few decades ago seemed unthinkable, such as the economic revitalisation of rural areas that previously were in a process of decline, the consolidation of the population and increasing reflection about local resources and intensified efforts and energies towards building local economies" (Olivia, 2010:278).

Therefore, it is indeed true that "rural transformation is taking place in ways rarely envisaged a decade before. As a result, the rural challenges and crises mentioned above, have also taken different shape and dynamics. All of which bears direct consequences for education, which includes all rural stakeholders and role-players especially with regard to how to engage with and respond to these changes effectively (Robinson-Pant, 2015:1-2). The fact, however, remains that "there is a need for redirecting and refocusing efforts, shaped and informed by these changing rural dynamics, towards building diverse and efficient rural economies without depleting the current, yet must be capable of generating resources that will increase the quality of life in these areas" (Burja & Burja, 2014:1861). From a Bourdieuan analytical perspective, these rural dynamics take place within the rural the social fields with direct relation to the associated cultural, economic and social capitals as well as the habitus, more specifically for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Hence, the need to delve deeper into these aspects through the Bourdieuan analysis process.

3.2.1 Mpumalanga Province situational analysis: girl children and gendered education issues in context

The situational analysis of the Mpumalanga Province is vital. It served to contextualise the literature review in relation to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies as the study has opted to focus on the Nkangala District Municipality of the Province. Mpumalanga Province lies in the eastern part of South Africa, situated at the

borders of Swaziland and Mozambique. Depicted in the map below (figure 3.1), the province shares borders with the following South African provinces; Limpopo to the north, Gauteng to the west, the Free State to the south-west, and KwaZulu-Natal to the south. The map below (figure 3.1) further illustrates the Mpumalanga Municipal Districts. Mpumalanga Province consists of three District municipalities and 18 Local Municipalities. These are; Ehlanzeni District with Bushbuckridge, Mbombela, Nkomazi, Thaba Chweu, and Umjindi as its local municipalities. Then Gert Sibande District consisting of Albert Luthuli, Dipaleseng, Govan Mbeki, Lekwa, Mkhondo, Msukaligwa and Pixley Ka Seme Local Municipalities. Lastly, Nkangala District, which is the study's research district, is comprised of Victor Khanye, Dr J. S Moroka, Emalahleni, Emakhazeni, Steve Tshwete, and Thembisile Local Municipalities. Furthermore, the District under study is remotely located between two major metropolitan cities of the Gauteng Province; namely, Johannesburg and Tshwane. Thus, the map below is important as far as providing a pictorial representation of the geographical location of both the Province and the District under study.



Figure 3.1: Mpumalanga Municipalities (source: www.mapsoftheworld.com, 2019)

The map above also serves as a port of reference in the discussions that follow. Importantly, as depicted above, the close proximity of the Mpumalanga Province to the country borders of Swaziland and Mozambique.

3.2.1.1 Mpumalanga Province: Districts' demographical information overview

According to the demographical information outlined in the in the National Census of 2011 and the community survey of 2016, the composition of the province with respect to the total population is at 4 335 964 with 2 139 188 (49.3%) males and 2 196 776 (50.7%) females. The youth profile which constitute individuals in the age group of 15-34 is 1 664 658) in total. The gendered breakdown in relation to the youth is 842 684 (50.6%) young men, and 821 974 (49.4%) young women. Interestingly, 40.1% of the households are female-headed (Statistics South Africa, 2011 & 2016).

The gender demographical information is of particular importance for this gendered study, albeit biased towards young girl children. Clearly, the demographics depicts the fact that females constitute the majority of the overall province's population. For Nkangala District which is the research site, males are slightly more in number than females. As highlighted in the Statistics South Africa (2016), the same difference is also applicable in the youth category. Further, the Statistics South Africa (2016) reveals that there is a rather high percentage of female-headed households in the province. The high percentage of female-headed households begins, the researcher argues, to paint a grim picture on issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Against the background, that Mpumalanga Province is generally, regarded as predominantly rural. It is however useful for the study to ponder upon the causes and reasons for the high percentage of female-headed households as statistically revealed above. By correlation, if males are more than females then there should logically be a slightly higher number of male-headed households. Therefore, where does the higher number of female-headed households emanate from? Could it be because of some of the introductory reflections raised in chapter 1 of this study: for instance, early pregnancies, increased school dropout rates and the broader triple oppression faced by rural girl children? In the Nkangala District, the male population is one percent (1%) higher than that of females. From a Bourdieuan analysis perspective, how does this difference translate to power and positions in the rural fields (in terms of families, schools and communities)? These reflections are foundational to understanding issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, and in this case as it pertains to Nkangala District.

3.2.1.2 Mpumalanga Province: the economy and education status overview

Perhaps it is also important to provide an analysis of the Province's economy as a base for understanding and situating other development issues that arise from this analysis; this will form part of the study's discussions that follow. The QLFS (Q1:2017) estimates that in 2014 Mpumalanga contributed R286.3 billion, approximately 7.5% to the GDP of South Africa. In terms of the provincial economic contribution, mining is the main contributing sector with 25.9% followed by community services 16.1%, trade 14.7%, manufacturing 13.5%, finance 12%, transport 6%, utilities 5.1%, and construction 3.3%. However, the official unemployment rate for Mpumalanga Province for 2017 is 31.5% (QLFS, Q1:2017). Further, that in 2015, the female unemployment rate in the Province was higher at 46.6% as compared to that of males at 33.2%. The employment data sheds light on the structure of the Mpumalanga economy, that it is skewed towards males. The 2017 Poverty Trend Report (Statistics South Africa, 2017) indicates that Mpumalanga has been the only province to experience a constant decline with a poverty headcount of 75, 0% in 2006, 72, 8% in 2009, 63, 8% in 2011 and most recently, 59, 3% in 2015, constituting a decrease of 15, 7% over the period under review. As observed with the poverty headcount, Mpumalanga had a poverty rate that consistently increased between 2006 and 2015. From this provincial economic outlook, women continue to withstand the worst of poverty and unemployment if the 2015 trend is used as a benchmark.

With regard to education, the Vulnerable Groups Indicator Report (Statistics South Africa, 2016) indicates that, in terms of percentage distribution of the highest level of education obtained by persons aged 25 years and above, 58.5% of females have less than matric, 25.9% have matric, 9.7% other tertiary qualifications while 4.9% are graduates. With regard to basic education, in 2016 there were 1 074 352 learners in 1 847 schools in Mpumalanga Province of which females were 530 695 (49.4%) and males were 543 657 (50.6%). In view of the fact that this study focuses on girl children's issues of access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, these statistical information presents yet another cause for concern with regard to education. The high percentage of females who do not possess matric, for instance, is an issue. What then, continues to contribute to early-drop-outs amongst females? We consider the fact that the statistical information is recent. Drawing from National Statistics, the researcher

questions therefore that could it be indeed true that post-democratic era girl children are still experiencing the brunt of multiple vulnerabilities? The percentage difference between the male and female learners in schools, minimal as it is, remains a sore point for gender in education debates and discussions such as this study. In addition, of the overall 58.5% of females without matric, an important question would be what is the percentage of those specifically located in rural ecologies? Worse still, the number decreases even more as the educational levels increase, hence only 4.9% are female graduates. This situational analysis thus reveals startling facts regarding girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

3.2.1.3 Mpumalanga Province: learners' pregnancy rates and HIV/AIDS prevalence overview

Of vital importance are the issues of learner pregnancy, which directly affects girl children's sustained stay, and ultimate completion of schooling. Figures show that the learners' pregnancy rate have reached what I refer to as endemic proportions with girl learners from as low grades such grade 3 falling pregnant. Generally, whilst the numbers are disturbing, it is noted that the escalation takes place between grades 8 and 11, which are mid-schooling years. It therefore highlights the risk years with regard to girl children's sustained stay in schools. Importantly though these mid-years high pregnancy rates account and correlate with the 58.5%, females without matric as reflected in 3.2.1.2 above. The question would once again be, how many of these learners' pregnancies are in rural schools? What are the main reasons and causes of such high numbers? Could it be (forced) early marriages and such other related gender discriminatory cultural and traditional practices that we alluded to in chapter 1 and 3.2 of this study?

Further, as expected, sexuality concerns and discussions on learner pregnancy unavoidably includes concerns and discussions on STIs and HIV/AIDS. In particular, they relate to girl children's early marriages, teenage pregnancies and susceptibility to HIV/AIDS. According to the DOH (2013), detailed in the National Antenatal Sentinel HIV Prevalence Survey of 2013, Mpumalanga has the second highest HIV prevalence of HIV/AIDS at 37,5%, with the highest being KZN, at 40,1%. Thus making Mpumalanga amongst the four provinces that have recorded HIV prevalence that is above the national norm.

It is also necessary to explore this prevalence in the Province's Districts, especially the research district. Mpumalanga Province is comprised of three Districts outlined in 3.2.1. According to the 2013 HIV Prevalence Survey, Gert Sibande recorded a 40.8% HIV prevalence from 38.2% in 2009, thus a 2.6% increase in prevalence in a period of five years (DOH, 2013). The Gert Sibande District of Mpumalanga borders Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal in close proximity to Piet Retief (Pixley Ka Seme Local Municipality) and Newcastle, and serves as a gateway to both towns. Ehlanzeni District HIV prevalence stood at 33.8% in 2009 as compared to 37.6% in 2013, an increase of 3.8%. Lastly, Nkangala District, which is the research district for this study recorded an increase of 1.8% in the 2013 HIV Prevalence Survey from 32.6% in 2009 to 34.4% in 2013 (DOH, 2013). In terms of the HIV prevalence rates per District, Gert Sibande District has the highest HIV rate in the province. It is also important to note that Ehlanzeni District recorded the highest percentage change/ increase (3.8%) as reflected above. Interestingly, the study's research district remains the lowest in both prevalence and change from the previous years. The primary researcher would like to indicate at this point that, these statistics were released after 5 years and that in 2017/18 at the time of this study there was no "recent" information. By implication, therefore, the study relied on the currently available information.

To tie-up this discussion, as indicated earlier, learners' pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and early marriages go together. The findings (Statistics South Africa, Community Survey, 2016) indicate that about 10 221 persons aged 12-17 years had lived with someone as husband/wife/partner before. Important to highlight is that the ages 12–17 according to South African Legislation is considered under-age. Further, 57% or 5 824 of them are female, of which 1 507 were legally married and 1 737 were living with partners (Statistics South Africa, 2016). These figures indicate the persistent scourge of child marriages in the province.

Acknowledging that these social challenges in the respective districts differ, the outlook consists in the main of the following issues related to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies: poverty related to unemployment, lack of education and skills, teenage pregnancies, early child marriages (12-17 years old), and HIV/AIDS. Whilst these social challenges are discussed in depth below, it is important to provide a basis through a synopsis of the legislation and policy analysis

pertaining to education, children and gender. Using the Bourdieuan analysis, the study will in chapters that follow further interrogate these challenges as they have direct impact and consequences for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It also perhaps is useful to premise these discussions on national and international legislative and policy prescripts that guide and govern children's, gender equality and education rights, especially in a democratic dispensation like RSA.

3.2.2 Education, children and gender: a legislation and policy overview

The legislation and policy analysis will reflect on both national and international legislation and policy prescripts including the country's treaties, declarations and commitments. These will be limited to those that relates to children, education and gender equality with regard to the development agendas. South Africa as a country has done considerably well in the promulgation of policies and legislation that recognise the rights of children to education and overall attainment of gender equality. There is, however, a visible disjuncture between the intended and the actual implementation, which is one of the interests of this Bourdieuan analysis. The Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (2012) developed the Cabinet endorsed National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2012–2017 is one policy prescript that attempts to reconcile this disjuncture. It "aims to bring together existing international and national priorities for the survival, protection, development and participation of children in South Africa into one coherent framework" (NPAC, 2012:13). That is the "South African Human Rights Framework, [that gives] a children's rights impetus to national planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national priorities" (NPAC, 2012:13).

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act No. 108 of 1996), is the foundation, the building block upon which of all other policies and laws are grounded on. More specifically, Section 29 (1) (a) and Section 28 of *Constitution* (South Africa, 1996a) under the Bill of Rights which promote and protect children's right to education.

Broadly, and of more relevantly to education as being the focus of the study are legislation that protect children's rights: the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998), Norms and Standards for School Funding, amongst others. Other policies that are aimed at ensuring children's

sustained stay in school and that they are provided with the necessary support and a conducive learning environment. Those are; the Draft National Policy for the Provision and Management of Learning and Teaching Support Material [LTSM] (DBE, 2014); the No-Fee School Policy (DBE, 2006), the National School Safety Framework [NSSF] (DBE, 2015), Integrated School Health Policy (DBE, 2012), to name but a few. These legislative prescripts as well as other provincial education policies, frameworks and strategies provide a solid legislative and policy foundation that enforces the right to education as enshrined in the *Constitution* and regulates conducive and supportive environments for teaching and learning across all levels of education (Marishane, 2017:1-2; Abrahams & Matthews, 2011:20).

With regard to children's rights, the Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, Act No. 38 of 2005, as amended) provides the legislative framework for a holistic child protection strategy. Then the Child Justice Act (Act No. 75 of 2008) provides for the regulation of children's rights who are in conflict with the law. The Social Assistance Amendment Act (No. 5 of 2010), Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (No 32 of 2007). The National Health Act (Department of Health, Act No. 61 of 2003) which regulates children's health. The National Youth Development Agency Act (Act No. 54 of 2008) requires the participation of all youth between the ages of 14 and 35 years in democratic decision-making processes, and the adopted South African Children's Rights Charter (Office on the Rights of the Child). These legislative prescripts entail more specifically the protection, respect and promotion of children's rights, which is where the rights of girl children as the focus of the study, are located.

The gender equality and women's empowerment that looks at the gender component of the study is enshrined in the National Policy Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (Office on the Status of Women, 2000). A worrying factor however, on gender legislation is the Gender Equality Bill of 2013, which lapsed in May 2015. The Bill would have been an important legislative foundation for the women's empowerment and gender equality sector. Hence, the researcher holds the view that the Bill should be revisited with more intensified zeal to have it passed into law as it will indeed serve to legislate women empowerment and continue to profile women and girl children's access to education, as well as eliminating discrimination and such harmful practices as gender-based violence.

Globally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child UNESCO (1990), and continentally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AU, 1979) are the key legislative international instruments. They enforce, amongst others, “free and compulsory primary education for all children” and govern the rights of children to form the basis upon which nations’ legislations and policies should align to. However, Abrahams and Matthews (2011:20) state, “it is important to note that the extent to which international instruments and laws are able to improve the lives of children across the world is dependent on the extent to which the individual State parties implement them and adopt domestic (national) measures to comply with the relevant international obligations”.

With regard to education and gender, are the two SDGs; namely, SDG 4 & 5 which state that we should “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” and “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” respectively (UNESCO, 2017). These SDGs as detailed in 1.2 of this study, and thus serves as a yardstick and international standard and norm for educational policy and practice, programmes, initiatives and interventions. Building upon the SDGs, for purposes of sector-alignment, target-setting, and overall sector planning on the international level, several other important education and gender policies adopted and serve as guiding documents: the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), Incheon Declaration (2015), and the annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports. On the international Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) front, the following instruments are applicable: (UNESCO, 1995) with the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA, 1995), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women and Children (CEDAW, 1979), SADC Gender Protocol (SADC, 1997), AU Gender Strategy (2018 - 2027), amongst others.

Aligned to the SDGs, the Dakar Framework for Action for example, identified a series of factors that contributes to what the researcher understands to be factors for sustainable learning; these include conditions of school facilities such as classrooms, ablution facilities and participation by various stakeholders and role-players in the school management. These aspects are discussed later in the chapter, though limited in their impact on girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

The situational analysis therefore provides a platform upon which ensuing debates and discussions as well as future initiatives and interventions should be premised. The analysis further articulates the inherited educational inequalities and inequities specifically in the rural context. The analysis furthermore suggests areas that South African rural education should focus on beginning with intensifying policy and practice changes expeditiously. The Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (MRRE, 2005) through its published report entitled “A New Vision for Rural Schooling” gave prominence and made significant inroads towards policy and legislative issues in the South African rural schooling environment. The report (MRRE, 2005) highlighted the urgent need for redress in rural schooling, and suggested 82 specific recommendations to combat these challenges. Thus, the study’s Bourdieuan analysis aims to in-depthly explore those areas highlighted by this situational analysis in developing a framework for change using Nkangala District Municipality of Mpumalanga Province as a starting point.

3.3 EVIDENCE OF OPPORTUNITIES IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES RESULTING FROM THE INFUSION OF A BOURDIEUIAN ANALYSIS

This is a gender and education policy study. On the aspect of gender however, the study deliberately focuses on girl children and in particular, those in rural areas in terms of access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It is however, important to start by acknowledging the significant progress made because of various interventions and initiatives directed at enhancing gender equality and equity in education. In the main, policy and legislation through to programmatic intervention and initiatives have led to notably positive gains for the broader gendered transformative education agenda. Amongst those gains are “the high rates of enrolments and physical presence of more girls in schools” that visually supports the success of programmes such as EFA, and other national and local measures to get girls into schools (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015:836; UNESCO, 2015b).

The study is policy-orientated and therefore particularly keen on policy issues. Kabeer (2015:90) asserts, “...it is critical to devise policy that is founded on recognition of how inequalities are simultaneously gendered, racialised, and marked by other dimensions of social disadvantage if more equitable and economically and socially sustainable development is to be achieved”. Kabeer further sheds light on the inequalities

discussed in (3.2. & 3.3) of this study. Here, the author arrives at two categories of inequalities; namely, "the vertical inequalities that rank individuals and households by their place in the income and wealth hierarchy, that is the class hierarchy, and the horizontal inequalities that refer to inequalities between socially defined groups". According to Kabeer, the vertical inequalities draw attention to class-based inequalities. That is, as Robertson (2013:368-9) posits, "...inequalities in life chances and material standards are organised along class lines". In this regard, Wacquant (2013:281) maintains that Bourdieu grants a central place to class as a modality of inequality, identity, and action throughout his work.

Thus, horizontal inequalities for Kabeer address discrimination based on marginalised social identities, such as gender, race, and caste. Hence the assertion that "gender inequality is structured into the organisation of social relations in society, as fundamentally as class is in capitalist societies, as race was in apartheid South Africa, and as caste is in India" (Kabeer, 2015:190). For this reason, the researcher concurs with Kabeer that "any truly transformative post-2015 development agenda must take into account how such inequalities impact the development pathways of women and girls across their entire life course, limiting their rights and empowerment opportunities" (Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015:329).

With the study being a Bourdieuan analysis, it is important to locate the situational analysis with regard to rural girl children, through continuously seeking to establish the interconnection among some of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. Thus, "a better understanding of the ways in which the socio-cultural shapes everyday experiences of rural poverty through the workings of moral discourse and value systems, symbolic boundary making, and the influence of social and cultural forms of capital", should consider Bourdieu's capital which includes the symbolic capital (Milbourne, 2014:568). Hence, I concur with Bruckmeier and Tovey (2008:313) that as we seek opportunities for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, the "knowledge forms and ideas for entering rural development practices, should model sustainable rural development that is less hierarchical and hegemonic than those in policy programmes and [should] come more from the target groups, beneficiaries and local populations than the actors in the policy process". Perhaps then, with this understanding, we sort to infuse Bourdieuan analysis in an attempt to identify

opportunities in the rural ecologies that could potentially contribute to girl children's access to sustainable learning.

3.3.1 Infusing Bourdieuan analysis to identify opportunities in rural learning ecologies through understanding rurality, rural communities and cultures

It is in the context of building an understanding of rurality that Powell, et al., (2015:678) suggests "...there should be an increase in the inclusion of perspectives of children living in rural areas so as to provide a deeper understanding of rural childhood and challenges". This is emphasised in this study, both from a PAR perspective and from a Bourdieuan perspective. Pini and Mills (2015:589) further highlight the fact that "over recent years, there has been increasing international interest in rural childhoods, particularly research exploring the lives and experiences of rural children" (as is the case with this study).

Perhaps of value, I borrow from Halfacree's three-fold architecture of rurality (Halfacree, 2007:127). The architecture, according to the author this triad relationship consists of space, people and representations, which he terms as "radical rural spatiality". This in essence is a relation of perceived localities, conceived formal representations and partially lived everyday lives with opportunities and challenges (Halfacree, 2007:127). Hence, rural communities can, therefore be viewed as spaces and people, as social fields in Bourdieuan terms, where choices are made in advance, collectively. Corbett argues that "they represent solidarities and non-contingent commitments based on established norms, habits, and authority" interpreted for this study as Bourdieu's capitals and habitus; thus naturally and relationally, communities assume interdependence" (Corbett, 2014:607). This highlights "the socio-cultural dimensions by which rurality is constructed whilst also providing ways of challenging this situation by illuminating how rural space is relationally constituted" (Pini & Mills, 2015:589).

Further, the researcher understands Halfacree's representations when he refers to the rural communities' cultures. Accordingly, Bourdieu would argue that community culture is defined and determined by the culture of the dominant class. Further, that it is in turn, transmitted and rewarded by the educational system (Dumais, 2002:44). However, the reality across all settings, rural and urban alike is that we live in a hybrid

world, and anyone can put together an identity they choose. It is against this backdrop that “we can each make, unmake and remake cultural boundaries and connections” (Bell, Lloyd & Vatovec, 2010:208). That suggests that the rural architecture in Halfacree’s terms of spaces, people and representations are constantly changing.

Accordingly, Shucksmith (2012:385) highlights the fact that “it is now generally acknowledged that place is socially constructed, and indeed co-produced and contested” and it “exists in a world of meaning and represents a distinctive, bounded and embodied type of space that is defined by, and constructed in terms of the lived experiences of people”. Shucksmith further uses the concept of social exclusion while retaining its focus on “multi-dimensional dynamic processes, rooted in localities, in order to explore how power is gained and exercised by privileged groups in creating and maintaining inequality, as well as documenting the experience of marginalised groups” (2012:385). The primary researcher aligns to the fact that “only by understanding the dynamic and varied power of class, and the nature of the social hierarchies it produces, can you properly understand place and fully appreciate what it means” (Robertson, 2013:369). It is therefore important that discussions on rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning are contextualised within the various interactions of rural spaces and representations. Noting that these interactions are a rural source of power, they activate the rural communities in a number of ways. Importantly, discussions of power should draw on Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power that “rests on the observation that all the distinctions and rules that comprise social fields are fundamentally arbitrary” (Samuels, 2013:401). Therefore, as Samuels maintains, “naturally, social fields are not historically arbitrary because they are the products of historical struggles over positions within space and the rules by which positions are taken...” However mindful that “they are morally arbitrary in so far as what counts as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate in a given field that reflects the historical construction of that object or practice in space rather than an inherent attribute of an object or practice” (Samuels, 2013:401).

Bell et al. (2010:221) state that “the forces of rural power and the power of the rural manifest the two dimensions, referred to as the power-from and over” and that “both power from and over in the rural, are sources which activate the rural through both mobilisation and stabilisation”. Importantly though, the authors caution that “power-

from does not necessarily translate into power-over, nor does power-over necessarily imply power-from". Thus suggesting that the duty of scholars should be "the need to articulate the active voice of the rural in order to understand its constant articulation and re-articulation through mobilisation and stabilisation, however progressive or deplorable these articulations and re-articulation may be" (Bell et al., 2010:221). This is a notion also affirmed by Azano (2014:61-62) "that we need to disrupt ill-conceived, historical stereotypes about rurality and instead collectively work to amend the marginality of rural areas". Therefore, as mentioned earlier, in this study, the engagements, experiences and interactions with rural girl children took cognisance of the field, capital and habitus interplay. Thus addressing the issues raised with regard to Halfacree's rural architecture above.

3.3.2 Infusing Bourdieuan analysis to identify opportunities in rural learning ecologies through understanding rural poverty, marginalisation and inequalities

Milbourne (2014:568) argues that the "material, social, and cultural understandings of rural poverty are not always straightforward". Hillyard and Bagley (2015:748) mention the fact that the "rural sphere is shaped by historical and geographical circumstances" some of which greatly affect and contribute to rural poverty. Hence for Milbourne, "rural poverty is complicated by sets of socio-cultural processes that are being played out in rural places" adding that "rural poverty is associated with a complex mix of material and sociocultural disconnections, intersections of identities, and different experiences" (Milbourne, 2014:568). These include as Williams and Doyle (2016:1) maintain, the fragility of some rural economies, such as poor transport and access to employment opportunities and public services, low paying jobs that characterises most rural areas, mostly as a result of the low skills-base in rural economies which acts as a barrier to economic growth and limited employment opportunities (Williams & Doyle, 2016:1). Therefore, Milbourne emphasises that "key to making sense of the life worlds of poor people lies in appreciating the ways in which the material, social, and the cultural come together or remain separate in different spatial and temporal contexts" (Milbourne, 2014:568). Indeed, we should focus on understanding the complex local realities, the different contexts that makes a complex rural poverty bricolage (Scoones, 2009:171-2), especially against the backdrop that "poverty has still overwhelmingly a rural face" (Kay, 2009:103).

The World Bank Report (2001: xi) highlights that poverty exacerbates gender inequalities, especially “those inequalities between girls and boys in access to schooling are more acute amongst the poor than amongst those with higher incomes”. Whilst there are various other inequalities, I will deliberately emphasise gender inequalities for purposes of this study as “gender inequalities come at great cost to overall sustainable development so far as efforts towards reducing poverty are concerned” and that the hardest hit are rural areas (World Bank Report, 2001: ix). Krishna (2018:174) cited in Antonelli and Rehbein (2018) echoes that “poverty levels are much lower in cities than in rural areas”.

Arnot and Naveed (2014:505) allude to the intersections of education, gender, poverty and rurality. Focusing on the educational dispositions, aspirations and outcomes of schooling of the rural poor in Pakistan, they deliberate on the possibilities and obstacles that young women and men from families who are living in poverty encounter when trying to use education as a means of social mobility, either within the rural social structure or as a means of leaving it. The study affirms that the relationship between rurality, gender and education is complex. The findings challenge the stereotyping and assumed homogeneity of rural families whose gender cultures and positive educational dispositions are diverse and complex. At the same time, they reveal that the “gendered histories of parental education, their aspirations, and their social status in the rural field intersect with the changing gender relations that result from schooling, and the increasing differentiation between educated and uneducated rural families” (Arnot & Naveed, 2014:505). For example, in relation to rural girl children as the focus of this study, these intersections “have especially important implications for girls, on whom the principal onus lies to help adult women carry the heavy burden of water, firewood, and agricultural products required for household use. Such work can impact significantly on their educational attendance and performance in school and thus has potential knock-on impacts for livelihoods” (Porter, Hampshire, Abane, Tanle, Esia-Donkoh, Amoako-Sakyi, Agblorti & Owusu, 2011:395).

According to UNESCO (2014), the EFA Global Monitoring Report for (2013/4:3), in its gender summary states “...poverty is perhaps the foremost constraint on education access”. Indeed, poverty is the main social ill that leads to many children around the world being out of school. In fact, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2013/4:3) affirm,

“in developing regions, children from the poorest households are four times more likely to be out of school than those of the rich households”. Acknowledging these variations, Sawhill, Winship and Grannis (2012:2) argue that in “children who are successful at each life stage from early childhood to young adulthood are much more likely to achieve whilst children from less advantaged families tend to fall behind at every stage”. Hence, the researcher concurs with Bhopal (2014:492) that there is a correlation between poverty and access to girl children’s access to sustainable learning environments. For that reason, it is why it is important to examine the different types of inequalities, which exist for women and girl children and specifically for this study, gendered inequalities with regard to access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Drawing from research by Powell, Taylor and Smith (2013:122) whose findings confirm that the gendered nature of the above-mentioned intersection is indeed real. The findings articulate issues of girls’ exclusion within multiple rural domains such as agriculture, social and recreation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that there are fundamental questions that might provide more insight into the intersection mentioned above; for instance, what informs girl children’s exclusion from the multiple rural domains that are inherently beneficial, and what gives boy children freedom and social advantage? Could it perhaps be that, as Hillyard and Bagley (2015:757) put it, “the persistence of the cultural and social capital” that is inculcated at elementary socialisation phases such as early childhood development, and what is the state of ECD in South Africa?

3.3.3 Early Childhood Development (ECD): an appropriate phase for Bourdieu’s socialisation

Lin-Zhao and Xinyun-Hu (2008:197) observe, “...the development of ECD in [rural ecologies] has been facing tremendous difficulties and challenges”. Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker, and Limb (2000:141) further state that “what particularly distinguishes a rural upbringing, however, is the sharp disjunction...and the realities and experiences of growing-up in small, remote, poorly-serviced and fractured communities” and South African rural ecologies are no exception. In a recent report entitled “*Save the Children South Africa (2015): An Analysis of the Children’s Sector in South Africa*”, improving access to and quality of education is identified as the

children's education programme's priority objective. That is derived from, and aligned to, the SDGs and South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP). The outcomes of this objective emphasises teaching and learning, the learning environment, ECD and a particular focus on marginalised children (Pam Martin Report, 2015:11-12). The report further outlines key issues that continue to plague children's access to sustainable learning. Amongst these are the continued exclusion of especially vulnerable children from early and primary education, and the low enrolment rates of vulnerable children living in poverty and in under-serviced areas. A study on ECD in rural China (Renfu, Linxiu, Chengfang, Qiran; Yaojiang, Scott, & Brian, 2012:55) revealed that the educational readiness of rural children (in general) is much less than that of their urban counterparts. Thus, "more than one half of the rural children are not ready to continue on to the next level of formal education, possibly owing to the poor quality of early childhood education and low participation rates in early childhood education" (Renfu, et.al., 2012:55) in rural ecologies.

The Pan Martin Report (2015:16-18) also notes that the underlying reasons for the inequalities and inequities with regard to ECD access is that there are a number of policy and legislative gaps. Notably with regard to the inclusion of vulnerable children for example, that there is no national ECD policy which articulates and drives the public provision of ECD (although appreciating that one is in its development stage), and the policy gaps and disjuncture in the current school-fee exemption policy. These policy and implementation gaps signal the fact that whilst a lot has been achieved with regard to access to ECD in South Africa, a lot still needs to be done at both these levels. I have mentioned some of the vulnerabilities girl children are faced with in rural ecologies (3.2). I add that the cultural and traditional beliefs and practices that discriminate and disadvantage girl children's advancement in education begins at the ECD phases; and that we should towards eradicating those. Baily & Holmarsdottir (2015:831) exposes the fact that "there is a tendency to overwhelmingly divert focus from other critical education aspects" such as access to [ECDs] for girl children as elementary socialisation institutions, "to issues of gender parity in education". This makes gender equality synonymous with gender parity, which I observe, is a misconception that does a disservice to gender in education and broader transformative education initiatives in South Africa and elsewhere (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015:831). To this end, Loots and Walker, (2015:362) call attention to

such misconceptions, arguing that South African institutions including those of ECDs, are still confronted with gendered inequalities, irrespective of the existing transformative national policies. Thus against this backdrop, there is a need for taking stock on gender in education and for more concerted initiatives and interventions, hence the discussions on girl children's access to ECDs is necessary, especially considering Bourdieu's focus on socialisation. Hence, Baily and Holmarsdottir (2015:836) point at "the need for a different conversation" with regard to broader issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The study therefore partially heeds the call for action that "encourage scholars to let go of a preoccupation with the numerical representation of girls and women in education" and instead explore other issues confronting access to sustainable learning (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015:840). Also echoed in Milligan (2014:465) is that rural ecologies offer a highly complex environment for girls and thus it is important to take into account the interacting out- of-school challenges. Amongst these are the deep-rooted cultural and traditional practices that encourage less investment in girl children's education.

3.3.3.1 The dearth of ECD opportunities in rural ecologies.

Whilst there is a consensus that there is an increase in ECD services, and that South Africa heralded as having made much progress, the challenges remain. Lo, Das and Horton (2017:9) state that only a "few countries have institutionalised mechanisms to implement policies [focusing on ECD], [whilst] services remain fragmented and of variable quality". For example, whilst the country provides one year of pre-primary education at primary schools, the progress in access has been uneven, with considerable difference between urban and rural areas, rich and poor families and communities (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:59). The Report further states that where access depends on paying fees, many of the poorest are left behind. Drawing from international examples, in China for example, urban children take advantage of relatively well-equipped government centres staffed with trained teachers, while many rural communities rely on private kindergartens staffed by untrained local women (Rao et al., 2012b in UNESCO, 2016; EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:67). We see that the scenario bears resemblance to the South African urban and rural ECD centres.

Noting that governments across the world, including South Africa, have committed to expanding pre-primary education, the rollout is at a relatively slow pace. It is

documented that “by 2014, forty (40) countries had instituted compulsory pre-primary education and that private providers still account for more than 31% of all enrolled children in half of the countries with data worldwide” (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:46). Therefore, we argue that the highest economic returns to investment in education should be the early childhood stage in terms of equitable distribution of resources, as according to Bourdieu this is where it matters most; a level, which governments should invest heavily in.

Hence, the Dakar Framework for Action has called for ECD national and multi-sector policies to be supported by adequate resources. It is an important elementary entry point into the education, and that whilst it is valuable for both girl and boy children, it is even more so for girls considering girls’ exceptional vulnerabilities (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). The foundations of all learning laid during the early ECD years (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:47) which I maintain, include the gendered building blocks for the future. I therefore echo the suggestion of Walker, Wachs, Grantham-McGregor, Black, Nelson, Huffman, Baker-Henningham, Chang, Hamadani, Lozoff, Gardner, Powell, Rahman and Richter (2011:1325) that we should pursue the goal of “providing information to help the setting of priorities for ECD programmes and policies to benefit the world's poorest children and reduce persistent inequalities”. Inevitably, such an approach would benefit girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

3.3.4 Interrogating schools as social institutions of domination, discriminatory practices and inequalities.

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) defines discriminatory social institutions as formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict or exclude women and girl children and thus consequently curtail their access to rights, justice, resources and empowerment opportunities (SIGI Synthesis Report, 2014:5). The Report further states that the underlying drivers of gender inequalities, and discriminatory social institutions perpetuate gender gaps in development areas, such as education, employment and health, and hinder progress towards rights-based social transformation that benefits both women and men, boy and girl children (SIGI, 2009; 2014). These institutions according to the OECD, set the parameters of what decisions, choices or behaviours are deemed acceptable or unacceptable in a society

and therefore play a key role in defining and influencing gender roles and relations, especially in the civil liberties tier (OECD, 2006:9-15).

Ferrant and Nowacka (2015:321) point out at the vital role and responsibility of social institutions, such as schools for example, in shaping social relations of the individual, family and community. The interest in this study is girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Therefore, social institutions become fundamental, based on the assumption that entrenched discriminatory social norms and attitudes in these institutions contribute to widening the gender inequality gap. A significant factor in the relationships between school and communities is the increased overlap of families, schools and communities as social institutions of influence. It is for this reason I concur with Hlalele (2014:101) that it is important that schools and communities should be brought closer together. For example, the prominent interface between the school, educators and management as well as the community can create tensions as all these role-players and stakeholders negotiate a delicate balance between their personal, professional and communal lives (Jervis-Tracey, Chenoweth, McAuliffe, O'Connor & Stehlik, & 2012:99). Anderson (2016:689) adds that "the challenge facing principals and teachers is trying to maintain traditional values (looking back) while also being progressive (looking forward)".

These traditional values are those Skeggs (2004:22) refers to as normalcy that the researcher understands to mean 'what is generally regarded as normal', often disguised as tradition in societies; articulating that "...for girls, it can only offer a limited form of capital if they conform to gender normalcy. For boys it offers masculine power, institutionalised in the school as a form of symbolic capital that (as with the family) represents accumulated privilege in other fields". So according to this analysis, schooling reinforces gender inequality and inequity. Schools and schooling experiences in form and nature, grants boy children more privilege than girl children' which is in essence, a continuation of the family setting. Thus, Hillyard and Bagley (2015:748-751) are of the opinion that "the multiple and inter-related factors that explain the different roles played by the schools in each community are embedded in notions of rurality, community and social class..." However, maintaining that "the enduring significance of not only class, but also gender, [are of value when we] consider how these are instrumental in shaping discourses of value and moral worth".

In addition, Arnot and Naveed (2014:506) reckon that the "...different sets of social relations within and across rural social structures and the different modes of transmission of such relations" are fundamental to issues of domination, discriminatory practices and inequalities. Gender relations within schools are part of these social relations and structures.

It is therefore important that schools, as vital and core components of rural learning ecologies, are comprehended and understood not merely as institutions that provide equal access. Instead, that they are also considered as elementary institutions for striving to achieve equality. In particular, gender equality in order to address systemic obstacles stemming from broader inequalities and structural oppression (Simmonds 2014; Loots & Walker 2015). Therefore, that schools must move beyond parity to substantial gender equality, especially so because "when parity is equated with equal numbers, it leads to the neglect of issues such as transformation, social justice and broader understandings of gender equality". Thus, along with issues of access, pursuing gender equality in schools should also involve tackling multiple oppressions such as the intersection between poverty, social class, and power, all of which create further disadvantages for girl children (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010; Baily, 2011; Holmarsdottir, Ekne & Augestad, 2011; Holmarsdottir, 2013). Therefore, social institutions such as rural schools play a key role in defining and influencing gender roles, power, relations and overall social justice and transformation.

3.3.5 Infusing Bourdieuan analysis to identify opportunities in rural learning ecologies: reflections on critical barriers

While acknowledging the significant progress made in providing quality basic education for an ever-increasing number of girl children, gender disparities persist; hence, the world will not achieve the set MDGs, especially those with regard to education (UNESCO, 2017:10). This study's thrust is girl children's access to sustainable learning and thus it is important to reflect on the critical barriers. The World Bank (2018:2) laments that "to realise education's promise, we need to prioritise learning, not just schooling". The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2013/4:4) states that Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the largest number of countries having severe gender disparities concerning access to primary education. The report further states that even where there has been progress in gender parity, it has not necessarily meant

getting more children into school, let alone improving equality in completion or learning achievement. The gender disparities mentioned are thus a clear demonstration that there are still barriers with regard to access to sustainable learning and I argue that rural girls are in the majority affected.

Alloway et al. (2004:58) posit that gender is an important influence in the formation of young people's aspirations and expectations. The authors are of the view that for many young men and women in rural communities, it is difficult to construct aspirations that move beyond the gendered stereotypes and conservative values of the communities within which they live, that which UNESCO (2017:10) refers to as the "limited pathways". It is therefore vital to continuously reflect and emphasise that this is a gendered study with interest on equality and equity issues as pertains to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Biased towards rural girl children, this study particular focuses on access and participation for gender transformation. As the EFA Global Monitoring Report above states, gender parity does not necessarily translate to transformation. From a Bourdieuan analysis as the study detailed in (chapter 2), the learning ecologies constitute the social fields within which girl children have to struggle for positions of influence. Thus to transform these social playing fields, girl children need more than numbers, instead they need agency and reflexivity in so far as their capitals and habitus interplay is concerned, to assert their positions in the field. We therefore support EFA's insistence on moving beyond numbers to interrogating critical barriers concerning girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Amongst these are issues regarding policy and practice that focus on inclusion of the marginalised groups within society with sensitivity to sustainability in these ecologies, whilst advancing gender equality and social justice (Boxx, 2014:164). This is especially so because for youth in rural areas, there is a whole range of issues such as poverty, lack of access to information and basic services that bars them from access to sustainable learning. Hlalele (2013:564) notes the Government's efforts at improving rural schools have yielded meagre changes to date. Hence, the need to reflect on issues such as the costs of schooling as the next aspect (below).

3.3.5.1 Schooling costs and other educational support resources.

According to the DOE (2013:18), South Africa has made significant progress by ensuring that children of school-going age do attend school regardless of their social

or economic status. The achievement is primarily because of the existence of strong legislative framework and policies such as the no-fee school policy and school fee exemptions that are designed to encourage participation in primary and secondary education. These policies apply to all eligible children, which thus means also girl children in rural ecologies.

The OECD (2012:3) states, "...educational failure...imposes high costs on society". That is so because, schooling is rarely free despite legislative and policy commitments to fee abolition, because there are many other costs to families associated with children's schooling. Thus, in the event that families, especially rural families cannot afford the required costs, children are forced to dropout and not complete schooling. There is a myriad of consequences associated with lack of completion of education and these are increased poverty, employability, and overall non-contribution to the socio-economic viability and sustainability in families and communities. It is for this reason that "governments have increasingly emphasised social protection policies that can help vulnerable households overcome financial constraints of sending their children to school (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:24). Those policies have resulted in interventions such as the social grants and the school feeding schemes, amongst others. However, the rural realities in South Africa include distances to and from school, and girl children's safety given the uneven allocation of school transport, the required stationery (consistent shortages), school uniforms, and all related cost-incurring necessities.

Banerjee, Glewwe, Powers, and Wasserman (2013:6) affirm that the demand for education at different levels (primary, secondary and post-secondary) depends on the costs. That includes direct fees (irrespective of how minimal the fees might be), the opportunity cost of the child's time (including travel time to the nearest school which the researcher argues is more complex in rural schools), as well as "optional" costs such as transportation and purchase of educational materials. Also, it "depends on the perceived benefits, which include higher incomes, better health outcomes, social prestige, and a direct desire to be educated" (Banerjee et. al., 2013:6). Therefore, the cost of schooling in its various forms affects access to sustainable learning and could be compounded by issues of rurality as discussed above.

3.3.5.2 Inadequate rural schools' and communities' infrastructure for girl children's conducive and safe learning environments

Emphasis on the construction and renovations of schools is an urgent priority. Especially so because the availability of safe and good school buildings is considered the first step towards ensuring that children are able to attend school. Followed by resourcing school with facilities and essential services such as water and electricity. In addition, infrastructural provision should extend to the communities where these schools are located. At the community level, availability of water infrastructure for example, adds to the reduction in time for collecting water (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:92).

Basic infrastructural provisions such as proper ablution facilities in schools is significant for girl children's access to sustainable learning. Scott, Montgomery, Steinfield, Dolan, and Dopson (2013:2) posit, "...many girls simply choose to stay at home during their periods". In India, for instance, after a school latrine construction project in the early 2000s, girl enrolment increased more than that of boys in all schools with latrines, signalling that ablution facilities, in particular toilets, are access-contributors to sustainable learning environments for both girls and boys. On a daily practical living basis in the schooling environment, functional and safe toilets are essential for girls given their physical make-up. Hence, the recommendation by the EFA Global Monitoring Report, Gender Summary (2013/4:4) that improving schools' facilities should include separate latrines for girls and boys.

Indeed, "safe spaces are fundamental to transforming education into functional and productive capabilities" (Hallman, Kenworthy, Diers, Swan & Devnarain, 2014:279). Girls' school enrolment and attendance are particularly dependent on the distance to their school. Persistent social norms such as gender-based violence and other forms of harassment make girl children more susceptible to dangers. Thus to travel far from home to school becomes an obstacle (Kremer, Conner & Glennerster, 2013:297). The high prevalence of gender-based violence, characterised by rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and HIV infections, with girl children as the major victims has serious consequences for access to sustainable learning. The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2013: iii) indicates that for South Africa, in the education sector, gender-based violence in schools is a serious problem. The distances to and from school not

only affect learners but teachers also. Due to the general lack of various amenities in rural ecologies, teachers take prolonged periods of absence due to long distances to travel to access amenities such as hospitals. It is important to acknowledge, however, that over the years, ease of access to schools has improved significantly, particularly in some rural, under-serviced areas (UNESCO, 2016) in its EFA Global Monitoring Report (2015:92, 205). For instance, in some parts of South Africa's rural areas, there is government-subsidised scholar transport that has registered an immense contribution to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Many countries have made significant efforts to improve roads, electricity and water infrastructure. At the community level, these factors positively assist in access to schooling. Easily accessible schools and infrastructure improvements can be particularly important in increasing access for girls who have time-intensive daily chores. Building schools in under-serviced communities could also help overcome barriers to girls' education related to distance. We have continental lessons to draw from, for example, in Egypt, investment in new schools helped raise girls' primary enrolment (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:171). Schools' infrastructure looms large on list of barriers for girl children's access to sustainable learning, especially in rural ecologies where infrastructure was generally neglected. In South Africa, the establishment of the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) intensified the building and renovating of schools (among other projects) in rural and economically depressed areas (DOE, 2011).

3.3.5.3 Unequal gendered division of household labour and child labour: implications for girl children.

South Africa has ratified various conventions and protocols that seek to eradicate child labour. For example, South Africa is a signatory country on the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age, the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography amongst others. At the level of National Government, important legislation is the Children's Act (2005) and Criminal Law Amendment Act 32 (26, 28), in particular (Article 141) that prohibits child trafficking, using children in illicit activities, and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

In its report entitled “2015 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour”, the South African Department of Labour (DOL) reported that the country has made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. These efforts came as a result of Government’s legislative and policy prescripts such as regulations to enforce the 2013 Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act, a multi-disciplinary approach such as the roll-out and expansion of the child support grant programme by reaching additional beneficiaries and increasing the amount of funding for caregivers, amongst others (DOL, 2015:1). These interventions contributed immensely to the fight against child labour and child trafficking.

The reality, however remains that despite the legislative backing and progress, children in South Africa are still engaged in child labour, especially as the report states that girls are more likely than boys to engage in child labour. Further, girls are the main targets of human trafficking, which is the worst form of child labour as it includes commercial sexual exploitation. The situation suggests therefore that the Government’s social programmes to address child labour do not cover the expansive scope of the problem, exacerbated by the ever-present barriers to access to education (DOL, 2015:2-3).

On the issue of household division of labour, especially in most rural areas where subsistence farming is still prevalent, unequal gendered division of household labour persists. As expected, girls are more involved in housework and boys more in family business work (Webbink, Smits & De Jong, 2010:1). Also mentioned in the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2013: iii) is the fact that with the gendered division of household labour girls tend to assume the cumbersome responsibility of caring for sick family members. Therefore, they are the main targets for either not going to school for pro-longed periods depending on the condition of the sick they are caring for, or to completely dropout and assume the caring duties on a full-time basis. Such gendered discriminatory practices, norms and beliefs are barriers to girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

3.3.5.4 Child marriages, gender-based violence and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

According to (UNICEF, 2014:2), across the world close to 250 million girls have been subjected to early marriage before the age of 15. Despite existing legislative, globally

39,000 girls marry every day with one in three marrying before the age of 19, and one in nine before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2014:9). In the South African context, these forced marriages are camouflaged as a traditional practice such as for example '*ukuthwala*'. Monyane (2013:84) maintains that this practice perpetuates gender inequality and that though '*ukuthwala*' occurs in different forms; it is still equivalent to forced marriage.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2015:169) cites early entry into marriage and subsequent pregnancy as limiting factors for adolescent girls' access to and continuation in education. Child marriage is a fundamental human rights violation and affects all aspects of a girl's life. Even if child marriages affect girls in far greater numbers than boys (156 million men aged 18 years and older were married or in union before turning 18, against 720 million women), it should be acknowledged that early marriage also diminishes boys' education and future income-earning prospects (UNICEF, 2014:2). Further, these marriages deny girl children of their childhood, disrupt their education, limit opportunities, increase the risk of violence and abuse, and jeopardise health. Child marriages, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls; however, girls are disproportionately the most affected (Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Christiansen & Mbizvo, 2012:1). Furthermore, early marriage is closely linked to early motherhood because 90 per cent of the 16 million adolescents who give birth each year across the globe are already married (UNICEF, 2013: 4). What these statistics demonstrates is much more than the numbers but rather a deeper gendered social crisis. For example, girl children's early pregnancy and subsequent marriage is an indication of a social systemic disabling environment for girl children that stifles taking advantage of available empowerment opportunities including access to sustainable learning.

Also emphasised in the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2015:24) is that the prevalence of early marriage and domestic violence are amongst the worst manifestations of gender discrimination that seriously undermines attempts to achieve gender equality in education. The statistics mentioned below depicts a disturbing high percentage of girl children's pregnancy. By implication, drawing from this, girl children's pregnancy is amongst the main barriers and threats for girl children's sustained stay in education.

Drawing from the DBE (2015) Annual School Survey data, Mpumalanga was the third highest province with high rates of learners' pregnancies after Gauteng and Western Cape. The total numbers of these pregnancies stood at Gauteng (5 246), Western Cape (2 891) and Mpumalanga (2 770) respectively (DBE, 2015). That is so despite the fact that as (Hall, 2018) notes that "teenage pregnancy rates are difficult to calculate directly because it is hard to determine how many pregnancies end in miscarriage, stillbirth or abortion". Also substantiated by the (SSA, 2017) Recorded Live Births 2017 Report is the fact that 3261 girl children aged between 10 and 14 were registered as mothers in South Africa last year. The report further states that 119 645 young women aged between 15 - 19, registered births in 2017. Of the 119 645 births, more than 97 000 births were from 2017, while 22 000 were registered late (SSA, 2017). These are worrying statistics given the fact that these are the study's ages of focus.

It is in view of such issues as early child marriages and teenage pregnancies among others that Hallman, Kenworthy, Diers, Swan & Devnarain (2014:279) contend, "...that girl children's daily activities are overshadowed by social, economic and physical risks that limit their access to the public sphere and the opportunities available in this sphere". In addition, learners' pregnancies are one of those risks that cuts across socio-economic and physical risks to limit girl children's access to sustainable learning. These risks emanate from both the vertical and horizontal inequalities that Kabeer (2015:90) raises above in 3.3.

This study deliberates on the need to explore practical evidence of opportunities in the rural ecologies in order to facilitate girl children's access to sustainable learning. Important aspects raised herein are those inextricably linked to both vertical and horizontal inequalities. For example, the poverty that comes with the marginalisation of rural areas in general. Evidenced through lack of infrastructure including basics such as decent toilets. Also, exacerbated by the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups such as girl children in this case due to inherent gender discriminatory and oppressive practices. These ill practices contributes to subject girl children to early (forced) marriages. All of these issues when combined have multiple repercussions such as early pregnancy and school-drop-out.

Therefore, primarily, efforts, both at policy and practice levels, must be urgently and expeditiously be directed at decreasing and eliminating these gender discriminatory practices in the rural ecologies. This is critical for protecting girls' rights and enabling girl children to take advantage of empowerment opportunities (UNICEF, 2014:2).

3.4 POSSIBILITIES TO INVOLVE GIRL CHILDREN TO SEEK ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS

The country report titled "Education for All (EFA): 2014 Country Progress Report", of (DOE, 2013:10) outlines South Africa's educational high points. Importantly, the report mentions the fact that education received the biggest slice of the country's R1.06 trillion 2013 National Budget. Amongst the Department's expenditure, priorities were improving numeracy and literacy, expanding enrolment in Grade R and reducing the school infrastructure backlog as pointed out in 3.2.3.2 and 3.2.3.3 above. South Africa spent more than R23 billion on upgrading school infrastructure, through ASIDI, as well as increasing the number of no-fee schools. One billion rand was allocated to the country's nine provinces to increase the number of teachers, and about R700 million was channelled to the technical secondary school's recapitalisation grant. This grant is used to finance the construction and refurbishment of workshops to train technology teachers (SAnews.gov.za, 2013). These are laudable intentions because supporting implementation through resource-allocation significantly enhances progress.

However, despite the fact that there is widespread consensus that education is a development priority. In addition, that equitable and quality education is core to the sustainable development agenda; there are concerns with regard to progress. Burnett and Felsman (2012:2) particularly note that there has been relatively little progress on the EFA goals of early childhood care and education. Hence, we concur with Rose (2015a:193-4), that some of the international goals and priorities such as those encapsulated in the EFA, MDGs and most recently SDGs, should be intensely targeted towards the disadvantaged groups within society. For this study, these disadvantaged groups are girl children in rural communities. Thus, highlighting the importance of adopting a 'stepping-stones' approach to ensure that no one is left behind by 2030, with interim targets that assess progress for the most disadvantaged (Rose, 2015a:289). The previous chapter (2) highlighted the importance of not applying a one-size-fits-all approach, instead that we should be guided in our attempts

to adequately allocate resource, by the most needed, which will inadvertently lead us to the disadvantaged groups benefiting in some way. We thus agree with Stuart and Woodroffe (2016:69-70) in their brief assessment of what the MDGs have delivered for women and girls, and how to ensure that we build on those benefits to ensure that the SDGs translate rhetoric into practice through national plans and policy changes, amongst others. Rose (2015a:193-4) caution "...as with all post-2015 targets, the one target on universal learning, which includes access to learning, should be tracked towards disadvantaged groups".

Rose (2015a:193-4) further states that "it will be important to identify whether progress for these groups is being made such that they are on track to be achieved by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030". In addition, that in doing so, "will also show whether attempts and efforts at closing the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are being fast-tracked and given adequate priority". This assertion propels all educational role-players and stakeholders across educational policy and practice to re-direct their efforts towards identifying educational gaps for the disadvantaged groups, such as rural girl children. I therefore consistently assert in this study, that it can only be achieved through the active participation and involvement of girl children themselves. , that they actively participate in informing and shaping these efforts.

3.4.1 Situating rural girl children's voices in exploring the socio-economic challenges in rural learning ecologies from a Bourdieuan perspective

Aincow (2016:148) insists on probing the underlying socio-economic factors in order to get to the root cause of the phenomena in focus. The approach fits in well with Bourdieu's theory of practice which entails the sociological task of uncovering the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe (Robertson, 2013:171), as well as the "mechanisms which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation" (Bourdieu, 1989:7). As McLeod (2005:15) explains, "Bourdieu sought to understand the organising, underlying and relatively systematic relations and structures that govern particular lives; to understand, in other words, the complexities of these interactions between the social spaces which is the field, using the variety of capitals and the habitus" (McLeod, 2005:15).

Understanding the social field, capitals and habitus relations “offer a productive framework for interpreting the differential impact of institutional and social processes on (girl children) and young women’s decisions about and orientations to school and work, and their sense of themselves in the past and the future” (McLeod, 2005:25). That is of paramount importance with regard to what the study focuses on, specifically exploring how “encounters with multiple social fields dislocate or unsettle sediment or reconfigure their gender habitus in old and new ways” (McLeod, 2005:25). On the national and international level, the recently adopted SDGs (UNESCO, 2017) provides a framework for exploring the socio-economic challenges and suggests programmatic implementation based on the set targets. Rose (2015b:289-291) holds the view that future global goals (the SDGs), in particular SDG 4 and 5, should serve to correct one of the major failures of the existing goals by putting equity as the central pillar. By doing so, Rose maintains, these goals can be used to hold governments to account for not reaching those who often do not have a voice.

Borrowing from Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West (2012:197), the primary researcher advances that in exploring socio-economic challenges facing girl children with regard to access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, “it is important to recognise the complexities of interactions between the different elements in this ecology and their implications for achieving more equitable school systems”. In addition, the study contends that this should be done through directly involving girl children themselves, located and linked within learners’ experiences on a whole range of interacting processes that reach into the school from outside. That should include “the demographics of the areas served by schools, the histories and cultures of the populations who send (or fail to send) their children to school, and the economic realities faced by those populations” (Ainscow, 2016:148). Moreover, according to the authors, such an approach would potentially “reveal the underlying socio-economic factors, as well as the complexities of interactions amongst the different elements in this ecology, and their implications for achieving more equitable education systems” (Ainscow, et al., 2012:197).

3.4.2 Rural girl children reclaiming their agency: exploring potential opportunities in the rural (social) field

The field, the setting in which practices take place is "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:97). Accordingly, "fields are spaces in which dominant and subordinate groups struggle for control over resources; each field is related to one or more types of capital" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97). Indeed, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue, the capital does not exist or function except in relation to a field. Fields are structured contexts which shape and produce these processes and practices; they are "...a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities and that which counts as valuable capital" (Webb et al., 2002:21–22). Therefore, rural social fields, which constitute of the rural schools, families and communities as well as their associated cultural rituals, practices, conventions and so forth, are an important ecology for exploring opportunities that could support girl children's access to sustainable learning. It is with the understanding that these rural social fields are gendered with the high likelihood of entrenching gendered biases and stereotypes. To that regard, Mutekwe, Modiba and Maphosa (2011:133) assert that there is "a strong need of significant others especially parents and teachers, to help girls and females by deconstructing the gender roles, stereotypes, or [and] perceptions [that] society considers appropriate for girls or boys". Thus confirming (Mapasela, Hlalele & Alexander, 2012:93) assertion that "learning can no longer be left for individual [learners]".

Noting that the main objective of the study is to propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we use this literature review to generate proposals that emerge from our on-going lessons of the Bourdieuan analysis. We then situate girl children at the centre of all initiatives and interventions. We hold the view that policies shape and inform the playing fields, the 'place'. Therefore, the SA Draft Rural Education Policy (2018) is a positive step towards entrenching girl children's agency, especially because one of the policy's three interrelated dimensions places emphasis on the self-esteem component of self-development. The component particularly focuses on children's and teachers' valuing

of themselves, their identity and sense of pride in the place where they live, learn and work (SA Draft Rural Education Policy, 2018).

However, from a Bourdieuan perspective we further propose an addition, that of gender equality as a critical self-esteem aspect. One of this study's proposals is that all role-players should explicitly, and intentionally, include reflections on gender especially because the 'self' is always gendered. Thus, a gendered reflection would highlight the differentiated gendered challenges and requisite interventions. Such a reflection will also identify the role of the significant others as raised by Mutekwe, Modiba and Maphosa (2011:133) and Mapasela, Hlalele and Alexander (2012:93).

Bourdieu emphasises the productive and dynamic relation between social and institutional practices in the social fields as well as the accompanying processes for self-formation. The concept of self-formation is when the agents (girl children) reclaim their agency, asserting their own analysis of the social and institutional practices and thus making personal choices and decisions about the self, hence self-formation. These ordinarily flexible spaces for improvisation could be utilised for improving policy and practice with respect to issues that affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies as informed by girl children themselves.

3.4.3 Rural girl children's symbolic capital: exploring the potential hysteresis

Gender can be a form of cultural capital but only if it is symbolically legitimated (Skeggs, 2004:24). Husu (2013:274) mentions that "the advantage of Bourdieu's work that is absent in other earlier approaches is that economic and cultural capital function as symbolic power and symbolic capital in symbolic struggles, and are thus regarded as legitimate competence and authority". Symbolic capital is the credit, the belief or the recognition of the value of a person or an object (Bourdieu, 1992b:192). However, Husu further maintains that for agents to take advantage of the possibilities that exist in fields, agents need not only to be qualified and able to carry out certain types of position taking, but also to have legitimacy based on the possession of the capital and habitus that indicates their class position in the society. It is therefore fundamentally important that girl children assert their positions in the symbolic struggles, that they effectively and efficiently invest the credit they possess, including the symbolic capital, and thus optimise their self-formation as mentioned in 3.4.2 above.

For girl children, the processes for investing the symbolic capital are associated with gender. Gender will help, for example, to determine the logic of the reconversion of inherited capital. In the case of schooling, that might entail choices by girl children to reconvert the symbolic capital into educational capital and thus take advantage of what the investment in educational capital could potentially yield as benefits (Dumanis, 2002:45). Thus, the interaction of the different capitals at schools, particularly rural schools in this instance, provides for the reconversion, which then presents an opportunity worthy of being fully explored. For girl children, as they pursue the conversion of their respective capitals, there are possibilities of what Bourdieu terms the 'hysteresis', the changes that would result in some form of reconfiguration of their gendered identities. Hysteresis occurs "when a habitus, which was once adjusted to its field, lingers on into a field with a new logic and structure" (Decoteau, 2016:306). With the hysteresis, Bourdieu highlights the 'structural gap', which occurs particularly when a field undergoes any change. Therefore, it is clear that the 'hysteresis effect' explains the uncertainty, confusion and frustration that arise when social agents experience a change in a given field, which in essence triggers the transformative potential of habitus (Yang, 2014:1531 -3).

These changes might be in the way they, as agents, relate to their positions, and their renewed conceptualisation of the social spaces, resources and cultural competence as presented by the rural schools and rural ecologies. The said re-conceptualisation, is in line with Bourdieu's self-formation (3.4.2). It is against this backdrop that we are then, able to consider opportunities that result as gendered identities interact with movements, arising from capital pursuance. This accounts for the interrelatedness of the capital, identity (gender) and accompanying strategic movements (Husu, 2013:274-5).

3.4.4 Rural girl children's habitus: strategy-generation for navigating the rural ecologies

It remains imperative to maintain the understanding that the capital, habitus and field, all work together to generate practice, or social action throughout. So in essence, exploring the opportunities as they relate to girl children's capital flowing from (3.4.3) above, inevitably suggests that we should explore opportunities as they relate to the rural girl children's habitus and the rural field.

Bourdieu's habitus, or one's view of the world and one's place in it, is an important consideration in trying to understand how learners navigate their way through the educational system. The "habitus as a 'strategy-generating' principle enables agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu, 1977:72). It is therefore necessary to consider both one's resources (the different capitals) as outlined (3.4.3) above and the orientation one has toward using those resources (the habitus) to implement the model of practice in the educational field in the way that Bourdieu intended.

The habitus according to Bourdieu is not a product of 'theoretical calculation', but a 'kind of 'feel' for the game' (Bourdieu, 1985) but a set of acquired patterns of meaning, beliefs, behaviours and tastes, "creative and inventive, though operating within the limits of its structures". Therefore, when a "...homology is established between subjective and objective structures, the result is doxa, the embodied common sense" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:19). It is with "the recognition that actors are always positioned at the intersection of multiple, overlapping fields, which vary across different conjunctures" (Decoteau, 2016:318). Hence, we note the importance of empowering rural girl children with the ability to generate alternative strategies determined by the circumstances they find themselves in. Therefore, it is this strategy-generation principle that "may help determine when and why people [girl children will] engage in decisive, intentional action that shifts either the course of history or at least their own trajectories" (Decoteau, 2016:318).

3.4.5 Girl children's active participation and being agentic in their futures

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC,) places an obligation on states to ensure that children actively participate in governance. That is, to ensure that children are not merely passively governed. The UNCRC places specific emphasis on those children whose age reasonably allows for their participation. Emanating from the Convention, South Africa also enacted legislation that demand that all role-players and stakeholders should actively engage children on matters affecting them. The children's right to participate in decisions affecting their lives is highlighted by the Children's Act, 2005 as amended, which provides an imperative for Government to engage actively with children in the formulation, implementation and

monitoring of policies and laws to ensure that these contribute to children's best interests (Nomdo & Roberts, 2012:49).

To build girl children's agency, Bourdieu maintains that agents, girl children in rural ecologies for this study, should be able to "actively produce social reality through their mundane activities of sense-making, based on the positions they occupy in an objective space of constraints and facilitations and with cognitive tools issued from that very space" (Wacquant, 2013:277). In the context of access to sustainable learning, Alabi et al. (2014:365) contend, "education prepares a person, especially a girl child, to fit properly into the web of social interaction and equally enhance better performance in the social roles in the society". Therefore, this "interaction helps to overcome the tension between constraint and creativity, between structure and agency, by highlighting the space in which marginalised people make meaningful choices without losing sight of the causal structure of marginalisation" (Sakdapolrak, 2014:22).

Drawing from the above assertions implies that girl children can be agentic in their futures, by exploiting their own abilities and rights, and working through and negotiating structure rather than being determined by it. Agency is thus considered the concrete actions or practices that girl children can employ in order to earn or maintain spaces of legitimacy within rural ecologies. Such spaces provide the basis for girl children to engage in the work of creating sustainable learning ecologies for themselves through their influence in teaching, learning, creating and sharing knowledge, interaction with boys, with families, and so forth (Gonzales, 2014:198-9).

It is important to consistently reflect on the fact that this is a gendered Bourdieuan analysis study. It is against this background that as Akram (2012:61) posits that we should "consider the precise mechanisms through which gender impacts on agency and the enduring nature of gender as a social structure". Building upon the understanding of gendered agency and practice, Bourdieu maintains that it is through practice that actors structure the world by producing meaning. According to Bourdieu, the "structuring is only possible because of embodied schemas that are constituted throughout history and are acquired by the individual through socialisation". Thus "individuals then (re)create these schemas through their practical actions because

they are imposed and inscribed on the body, and have never passed through their consciousness” (Akram, 2012:61).

The objective therefore is to explore gendered rural transformation opportunities to facilitate girl children’s access to sustainable learning in these ecologies. It draws from Chapter 2 of this study, connected to Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which engages with agents and agency as they relate to structure. The researcher notes that Bourdieu interchangeably refers to agency as “practice,” “action,” or even “struggle.” (Gonzales, 2014:210), thus it is appropriate to continuously engage with the possibilities of influencing and shaping future policy and practice, interventions and initiatives, done through creating facilitative and supportive platforms for girl children in rural ecologies to reclaim their agency. In particular, in ways that facilitates their access to sustainable learning through allowing their voices to actively inform and shape educational policy and practice.

3.5 UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH IDENTIFIED ROLE-PLAYERS IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES.

Mutanana and Mutara, (2015:39) state that teenage girls in the rural communities of Zimbabwe have been known to be still practising traditional roles like going to fetch water, going to the river to wash clothes, and cooking for all family members, amongst other duties. Some girls may mistake this as the community’s recognition of their maturity, and as such may be encouraged to engage in unprotected sex at teenage level.

The report titled *“The right to learn: Community participation in improving learning”* (2013:11) authored by *Save the Children* group, emphasise the key roles that parents and communities play in holding schools accountable for sustainable learning in the acknowledgement that there are challenges confronting rural education. The CIE (2015:4) notes that whilst some of the challenges of rural education are the same as those found in education in general, the location of the rural schools exacerbates these challenges. Indeed, like in other countries, rural education in South Africa “has not yet adequately addressed problems of globalisation, tending instead to operate within the space of what might be called traditional rural imaginaries” (Corbett, 2015:9).

It is against this background that the study identifies role-players such as the rural families and communities to actively seek to create an enabling environment for girl children's access to sustainable learning in these ecologies. Added to this is "the dire socio-economic status of many of the rural areas, and the [the fact that] challenges of rural education far outstrip those of their urban counterparts" (CIE, 2015:4). It is therefore difficult to ignore the plight of rural education (schooling) taking into consideration that the rural sector in general comprises a crucial area of historical marginalisation in South Africa (*Background Paper on Rural Transformation*, 2014:19).

As mentioned earlier, South Africa has broadly made significant progress with regard to transformation. For instance, the *Background Paper on Rural Transformation* (2014), titled the "Twenty Year Review, South Africa, 1994 -2014", reveals the fact that the proportion of people with no schooling has halved in commercial farming and former homeland areas, from 34 percent in 2001 to 17 percent in 2011. Clearly, indications and possibilities are that if the same trend is maintained, then these "no schooling percentages" might have even decreased much lower in the most recent years. In the case of this study, it is envisaged that the role-players and stakeholders who are, in the main, rural families, communities and the schools, will actively drive and strive towards ensuring girl children's access to sustainable learning in these ecologies.

3.5.1 Rural ecologies: redressing issues of gender identities and inequalities for girl children

Muhammad, Wallerstein, Sussman, Avila, Belone, and Duran, (2015:1047) opines, "...identity is a complex, multi-layered, and dynamic phenomenon that is both fluid and situational, yet retaining its core characteristics". The authors further indicating that "each of us has multiple identities, influenced by our ascribed characteristics (e.g. our race or ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, ability, and gender); and our achieved characteristics (e.g. education, job, social position, and for some, gender shifts)" (Muhammad, et.al, 2015:1047). It is a generally accepted principle amongst communities, especially rural communities that girl children's identities are often built around 'being' girl children. That then inherently determines how they should behave, what they should do and so forth, to meet communities' expectations of them.

Therefore, Stormiest (2013:29) asserts that gender is a “system of tangible as well as subtle oppression” and points of redress for social justice and transformation. Stormiest contend, “...building on social constructions of femininity and masculinity permeates institutional practices and individual beliefs in ways that render the asymmetrical distribution of freedom and power a natural and uncontested reality” (2013:29). The researcher agrees that rural communities need not only an in-depth analysis of the discriminatory practices, but also ways and means of challenging and contesting these so-called uncontested realities.

It is indeed worrying that these multiple identities and the hierarchy of marginalisation that confronts rural girl children leaves most of them fighting for asserting their identities, striving for equity and equality, more than just their gendered rights (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015:837-8). Their daily living experiences are marred with battles that are characterised by a myriad of issues such as their geography, ability, ethnicity, caste, language, and religion, amongst others. These multiple forms of oppression have a direct impact on girl children’s access to participation in and completion of education (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015:838). The roles and responsibilities for communities are thus important in this regard. Communities should thus take the lead in building an enabling environment for girl children, and in particular, their access to sustainable learning, through redressing the skewed gender identities and inequalities.

3.5.2 Bourdieu’s structure-agency dualism: deconstructing patriarchy and undoing gender in rural communities

Holter (2005) cited in Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005:19) rightfully acknowledge that patriarchy has weakened and is dissolving over time, but that its effects are still visible. Whilst it is true that patriarchy is being replaced by prominent debates and discourse on gender equality and inequality, the patriarchal effects are even more visible in the rural ecologies. Additionally, “systematic gender-related discrimination persists in many areas; for example, gender-based violence and rape rates remain higher than expected, which is alarming especially in a society that is aware and conscious of gender equality and that is worryingly, a sign of the effects of persisting patriarchal tendencies” (Holter, 2005). An application of a Bourdieuan analysis would thus fit in with Holter’s concerns that whilst the term patriarchy is a structure of power,

it better analysed when referred to as structural gender inequalities in line with the agency-structure dualism reconciled by the habitus (Holter, 2005).

In support, Adams and Coltrane (2005:233), I argue that there should be considerable and deliberate focus and thinking on patriarchal attitudes, behaviours and practices specifically targeted at rural ecologies. Especially considering the fact that patriarchy is not only bad news for women. Whilst they suffer its consequences more directly, it is important to note that there are men that also suffer at the hands of other men. Moreover, that through cultural stereotypes and practices, there are those that compels boys to transcend into manhood against their readiness and will. In sum, the reality is that patriarchy creates risks and problems for women, girls, boys and men, and hence the advocacy for its redirection and re-orientation (Hearn, in Shefer, et al., 2007:17).

The redirection is therefore, by implication, a new direction of undoing gender, which refers to social interactions that reduce gender difference (Kumar, 2016:107). However, Kumar adds, "it would be wrong to assume that patriarchy is an oppressive, static institution that continues to oppress women and will oppress women in the future too". It is with this understanding that this study argues for deconstructing patriarchy, which is undoing gender, which is largely guided by individualism and independence. The deconstruction would thus suggest that we view and see women and girl children in rural ecologies as complete individuals. "Gender roles are shaped by a society in which men and women both play (different) but equal roles" (Kumar, 2016:101-102). With the understanding that "gender is as much as structure of relations within institutions such as families and communities as it a property of individual identity", thus suggesting that patriarchy should rethink its role in subjugating girl children in particular (Hearn, cited in Shefer, et al., 2007:14).

3.5.3 Deconstructing masculinity, domination, and gendered power relations in rural families and communities

Masculinity is often associated with discussions of gendered domination and power. It must be understood in the context of gendered constructions, the way in individuals, families, communities and society ascribe to what it means to be either female or male. These constructions are then revealed in the behaviours, beliefs, and perceptions of

both female and male engagements; in the associated discourses, they use (Lindegger & Maxwell, in Shefer, et al., 2007:100).

Therefore, taking into account Bourdieu's relational view of power would ensure that power is not assumed or theorised, but becomes an object of empirical investigation. In this relational view, the acquisition and distribution of power is assumed to shape and be shaped by the action of individual agents (McGuire, 2016:329). Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005:7) posit that it is important to explore the construction of masculinities from the perspectives of social organisations, institutional reproductions and articulations (rural schools, families and communities in the case of this study). This includes the way in which individual boys and men understand and express their gendered identities, and the ways in which interactions with other men and with women express, challenge and reproduce gender inequalities (for example, how boy children in rural ecologies can resist the culture of violence, that is any form of violence). This implies that boy children can advance non-violent masculinities, but can still be viewed as masculine (Ratele et al., in Shefer, et al., 2007:144). This study agrees with Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2015:1580) who assert that engagement of all boys and men in actions that seek to challenge and change social norms to eradicate and prevent all forms of gender discrimination inequities including gender-based violence, is pivotal. These engagements become a strategy that would constitute some form of gendered social resistance and transformation that will potentially lead to sustainable gendered social change. As Connell (2005:1801) contends, it is important to initiate change amongst the gatekeepers who are boys and men through challenging patriarchal masculinities that oppress girl children in rural ecologies. It is with such explorations that the study will locate the agentic spaces and places for rural girl children to actively contest and if possible reject these masculinities in these settings.

Lindegger and Maxwell (2007:98) posit, "...masculinity is not a property of individual men, but a socially constructed phenomenon, an everyday system of beliefs and experiences that regulate gendered relations in various cultures and contexts". Hence, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2010:9) recommends challenging masculinities in order to transform the pervasive gender inequalities and inequities that characterise

many societies globally by intensifying efforts in changing men's gendered attitudes and behaviours.

Hegemonic masculinities are "the dominant form of masculinity in society and pertains to the relations of cultural domination of men" (Ampofo & Boateng, in Shefer et al., 2007:54). Given that the study has a bias in that it focuses more on girl children in rural ecologies, a discussion on hegemonic masculinities is relevant, especially with the understanding that hegemonic masculinities claim supremacy and legitimacy over others, which is of specific relevance to the study, because of its oppressive nature towards girls and women (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007:54). Further, it silences other masculinities and according to Bourdieuan perspectives, places the least legitimacy on all other masculinities (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007:54). It is hegemonic masculinities that define how boys and men should behave, often ridiculing and shaming boys and men that do not conform. It is for this reason that policy processes and mechanisms are key and necessary elements in de-legitimising gender inequalities and inequities (WHO, 2010:9). Furthermore, it is with this understanding that educational policy and practice initiatives and interventions should seek to actively engage girl children's voices in breaking the intergenerational oppressive cycle brought about by hegemonic masculinities; that is, we must concertededly contest and deconstruct these systems to ensure that they are not reinvented.

3.5.4 Rural families and girl children's choices and educational aspirations

According to Hart (2013,182), it is important to understand Bourdieu's 'feel for the game. That is, the explicit and implicit rules in the field of rural schooling and education in general, could be used to explore the structural opportunities and burdens that the girl children in rural learning ecologies are faced with in pursuit of their aspirations. Ofcourse considering the pervasive cultural anxieties that often hinder girls' and women's participation across all spheres including in deciding about their futures (Marrow, 2013:347). Ames (2013:167) states that the "high educational aspirations of girls and their families have been not only related to the desire to overcome poverty and marginalisation, but also to eradicate oppressive gender relations. The widening of female roles available to young rural women is impacting on their identities and life projects". This confirms the need for mechanisms to support girls being agentic.

It is with Bourdieu's 'feel for the game' that we are able to delve deeper into for instance the strong influence of family background. The positive and negative effects of institutional discriminatory practices on learners' educational choices. As well as benefits learners from marginalised backgrounds can make from the "symbiotic relationships between their individual habitus and the institutional widening participation habitus and thus critically revisit some of the policy assumptions" (Hart, 2013:182).

To this end, Hart (2013:182) focuses on the aspect of social justice as a process, as opposed to a finite goal and calls for "a shift from raising aspirations to nurturing aspirations and from widening participation to widening capability" which is at the thrust of this study. Concerning the nurturing aspect, the researcher concurs with Marrow (2013:347) whose assertion entails articulating and negotiating the issue of agency for girl children, including a determination of girl children's capacity for agency and the most appropriate form of agency to take. Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Heyfod, and Noronha (2012:3) allude to new challenges confronting existing family customs, cultural practices and forms of authority as a result of young women's (girl children) exposure to schooling. In their study, the authors demonstrate that rural settings in low-income countries where "formal schooling spreads more widely into rural cultures and communities, with current pathways cutting into traditionally-held gender roles and responsibilities" (Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Heyfod, & Noronha, 2012:3).

Consequently, they explore through a 'myriad choices' other ways to change these traditionally held gender roles and responsibilities. As such, these choices affect societies' futures often unknowingly, and in ways unconnected to political struggles or social movements. These "myriad of choices" are based upon aspirations, and thoughts about the kind of futures these girl children desire with all the complexities encountered in rural ecologies" (Hart, 2013:182).

Further, Yang (2014:1531) highlights the fact that "contrary to the traditional mode of implicit pedagogy, which implies an unconscious inculcation, the condition for change [Bourdieu's hysteresis] is to fully recognise the power of the non-traditional mode in forming a habitus [which is the explicit pedagogy]". Explicit pedagogy according to Yang is equally important and is frequently used in real-life contexts in acquiring new sets of skills, knowledge and even a new form of habitus. The role of explicit pedagogy

in habitus formation, particularly in the formation of the secondary habitus, must be fully and rightly addressed because “explicit pedagogy doesn’t entail the simple scholastic inculcation, but also the strategic planning of what needs to be inculcated, the sequence and the pace in the process of acquiring a certain habitus” (Yang, 2014:1531-3). Such decisions and strategy initially require an individual to be fully aware of the available resources and be reflexive all the way through until a secondary (or ‘acquired’ in contrast to the ‘inherited’) habitus is constructed.

Explicit pedagogy also embraces the idea that an individual need to be able to utilise different modes of inculcation, mixing the scholastic inculcation with the less intensive and everyday familiarisation. To be able to recognise the crucial point at which to stop the theoretical learning and actually go out to gain practical, experience is key; otherwise, it would result in the secondary habitus being too scholastic (Yang, 2014:1531-3). In sum, with the understanding of the hysteresis, the change in the rural field goes hand-in-hand with the reality of defining the rural capital and rules. Additionally, arising from the same field change might be radical and as a result, those who used to be inherently disadvantaged, such as rural girl children in the rural field, may be able to enter it and succeed (Yang, 2014:1533).

This objective to change should be the stance of all identified role-players and stakeholders in rural ecologies. Those identified as key players are in the rural families, in the main parents and/or caregivers in instances where parents are not available, and the principal and teachers in rural school settings, including influential authorities such as the traditional and religious leaders, activists, and other civic practitioners and leaders. However, we acknowledge the fact that some of them are agents in inculcating, facilitating, and maintaining the gender status quo, that they are the custodians of both implicit and explicit pedagogy (Yang, 2014:1533). Be it implicit or explicit pedagogy of discriminatory practices of the patriarchy (for example), but I theholds the opinion that these key players are at the same time, potential rural transformation players. For this reason, the study therefore seeks to actively involve and engage them as it presents a platform for collaborative and collective shaping and informing of the proposed framework in ways that will be innovative, meaningful and sustainable.

3.6 PROPOSING A FRAMEWORK FOR GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS FROM A BOURDIEUIAN PERSPECTIVE

The proposed framework should take issues of gender equality and equity beyond statistics to consider other critical tangible educational aspects that could contribute to the broader social justice and transformative agenda. Simmonds (2014:637) agrees, "...gender equality needs to go beyond what statistics and quantitative measurements are able to show and to rather explore gender equality in relation to global and national concerns such as poverty, violence, globalisation and participation". Thus, the study deliberated on how infusing a gendered Bourdieuan perspective would consider these critical aspects to ensure girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. According to Bourdieu, society's class structure is viewed as a "multidimensional space, which objectifies the system of relationships between different positions". Therefore, "the basic structure of this space is shaped by the distributions of diverse forms of capitals (economic, cultural and social). As well as the relations of strength that prevail between them", maintaining that for Bourdieu, "this space of social differences and inequalities, and the objectively given distributions of capitals, form the possible basis for the formation of classes as social collectives" (Flemmen, 2013:328).

Against this backdrop, Robertson (2013:377) postulates that Bourdieu's analysis could potentially help us to better understand how place acquires its class-based identity, and this would thus shape and inform the proposed framework, as it taps into why "people [girl children] are [perceived to be or are] trapped within the limits set by a social system of categorisation". The proposed framework should be influenced by Bourdieu's perspective that girl children have "the ability to make use of the rules and distinctions of social space that are to [their] advantage" (Samuels, 2013:402). The discussions that follow locate girl children at the centre, taking position in the field of play.

3.6.1 Girl children and position taking in rural playing fields.

The study has thus far emphasised the interconnection between Bourdieu's three key theoretical concepts. I now discuss girl children's position taking in the field based on Husu's (2013:267) affirmation of the fact that the field and habitus cannot be understood separately. Therefore, Bourdieu's field is understood as "a space of

possibles linked to chances of access, aspirations and expectations, which are perceived and appreciated by the habitus” (Husu, 2013:267). This means the sense of social direction, which orientates agents towards a specific strategy (Bourdieu, 1993:64). It is this sense of social direction and orientation of the agents towards a specific strategy, that the study would like deliberate on, particularly as it relates to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The schools in rural ecologies would, in this instance provide the field. The said field should not, be understood in its rigid and static nature, rather as evolving given its interplay with the external socio-economic, cultural, political and related environments.

At the same time, girl children as agents need to understand the nature of the everyday world as being arbitrary and open to change (Husu, 2013:273). It is in this field that the girl children should be able to take positions. That is, the possible choices that are open to them as social agents (Bourdieu, 1993:177). Further, it is with understanding that the field always entails a set of agents and institutions that produce effects upon one another (Bourdieu, 1996a:132). It therefore means that agents must be linked by objective relations such that the structure of these (material and symbolic) relations has effects within each of them (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:100). In these fields, the girl children are largely assisted and influenced by their respective habitus. That is, they should possess certain dispositions and skills that affect their ability to negotiate and exercise position-taking emanating from their socialisation and social background (Husu, 2013:267). Bourdieu maintains that fields are arenas of ongoing struggle in which each agent aims to either improve or conserve his or her own position (Bourdieu, 2000:187). In addition, that the ‘illusion’ that one enters the game, that is, the field of play with an understanding of the rules that govern the game (Bourdieu,1986:399), thus constituting the illusion of competence referring to specific knowledge and required skills (Bourdieu,1992b:176).

Consequently, questions such as who, what and how is it that girl children as agents are expected to improve and/or conserve in their quest for position-taking in the field.

3.6.2 Girl children's voices: challenging gender stereotypes and reclaiming agency.

The most succinct explanation of agency is captured by Taylor (1985) cited in McNay (2004:177) who refers to "agency as the individual's capacity for self-reflection and self-evaluation, where the idea of agency is a key mediating category through which the inter-connections between cultural and economic forces, identity formations and social structures can be understood". Therefore, reclaiming agency for girl children in rural areas would thus entail mediating as the stated interconnections and developing their respective capacities to reflect and evaluate these interconnections in as far as they relate to their access to sustainable learning in their ecologies, while propelling actions for change amongst these girl children.

Girl children's voices are integral to informing and shaping their life paths. I have alluded to this aspect above. It is for this reason that I concur with Scott, Montgomery, Steinfield, Dolan, and Dopson, (2013:2) that "giving girls their agency" entails full disclosure about womanhood, all anticipated biological, physical and such related changes, family and community expectations and locating their own expectations of themselves within these spectra. Providing such information, might prove to be a means for empowerment, allowing them to take decisions and ownership of their life choices. The process of challenging and changing the existing gender status quo includes re-orientating gender relations and expectations.

Studies in northern Ghana and northern India detailed in Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Heyfod and Noronha (2012:3) demonstrated that in both rural contexts, schooling has started to play a part in reshaping gender relations. At the individual, parental and community levels, those young women who have attended schools are challenging decisions about young people's transitions to adulthood in small but significant ways. The research identified the social spaces within which young women start to consider new forms of gender relations, and occasions when they display apparent autonomous actions, in some senses outside the control of their elders. This relational agency is associated with action rather than passiveness. For girls, "even thoughts of independence or desires for egalitarian gender relationships may be important signals of potential social change", of reclaiming agency (Arnot, Jeffery, Casely-Heyfod, & Noronha, 2012:3). Hence, this study's emphasis is on nurturing the self-determined

capital, as it will enable rural girl children to choose preferred areas of investment. We also hope that girl children will choose education as being their primary investment arena. Thus with the capital investments, the promotion of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, eventually opens up.

3.6.3 Girl children and choices: tapping into the self-determined capital investment

As noted in Chapter 2 of this study, all forms of Bourdieu's capitals (cultural, economic, and social) are a pivotal. These, according to the researcher, are capital investments which rural girl children themselves should possess and use to drive processes of change. These investments, could be facilitated through "retaining girls in school through to the secondary levels" (Scott et.al, 2013:1). Such an intervention promises far-reaching benefits and positive effects on girl children's wellbeing and future prosperity, manifesting in "some of the benefits related to the first years of sexual maturity, for instance, fewer early pregnancies, lower HIV transmission, and reduced infant mortality" (Scott et al., 2013:1). Drawing from an extensive study conducted in China, Hu (2012:404-6), the realities of gendered discriminatory practices with regard to girl children's access to education still exists. The study revealed that in the main girl children in female-headed households seem to be less likely to sustain attending high school. Especially because at 17 years old it is common that they may have to assume the responsibility of taking care of the family (Hu, 2012:404-6). The same realities also exist in many South African rural families where parents have left households under the care of the girl children in pursuit of employment opportunities in far-away cities and towns.

Noting these realities, we maintain that tapping into self-determined capital investment entails a concerted effort at building rural girlhoods. With girlhoods here, we mean building empowerment circles through meaningful girl clubs. We take cues from Parkes and Heslop (2011:2-3) in their Action Aid girls' advocacy report titled "*Stop violence against girls in school: a cross country analysis of baseline research from Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique*". The report highlighted the importance of unifying girl children's collective experiences and voices through the establishment of girls' clubs. The project found that girls' clubs had positive effects on girls' knowledge, attitudes and practices in identifying violations and managing gender-based violence

(Parkes & Heslop, 2011:3). Crucially, these clubs worked with communities and schools to improve relationships amongst boys, girls, teachers, parents and other community members, and ensured that channels were in place to report incidences of discrimination and violence (Parkes & Heslop, 2011). In Tanzania for example, girls who had been members of clubs were more likely to report incidences of discrimination and violence than girls who had not participated in these (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2012: 9-11). The study will attempt to explore the possibilities of these girl clubs, if any, in the rural ecologies that will be studied, and how they could be tailored to suit rural learning ecologies and contribute towards rural girl children's access to sustainable learning. Cognisant of the fact that this is a policy and practice study, "policy will be improved if young people are given voice to express how education, social networks, and culturally-bound notions of responsibility are linked and how they perceive the opportunities and constraints on their 'life chances'" (Chant & Jones, 2005:185). These girlhoods would provide platforms to explore best practices as informed by girl children themselves, as well as to build onto the study's objective on lessons learnt from the analysis in the chapters that follow.

3.6.4 Girl and boy children: equality and equity at play

Shefer, Raele, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007:2) note that research on gender equality tends to focus on girls and women, inadvertently excluding boys and men. Aikman and Unterhalter (2005) also state that "the development needs of boys should not be neglected [but that they] should be addressed as part of a holistic approach to gender equality". Whilst our focus is on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we consider these assertions and thus briefly reflect on boys and men. As the WHO (2010:9) states, it is vital to up-scale efforts to transform boys and men in addressing the pervasive gender inequalities that characterise many societies globally. Further, WHO asserts that policy processes and mechanisms, such as this policy study, are key sources in any effort that seeks to engage boys and men in achieving gender equality (2010:9). However, Shefer et al., (2007:20) concur that girls' and women's research should be given priority as they generally are on the receiving end of inequalities and inequities, gender-based violence, and several other social ills. It is against this backdrop that the study's focus is on girl children and that is where the extensive focus is driven at, in the knowledge that power dynamics and the ways

in which girls and boys, women and men negotiate their often-gendered relationships, are complex (Shefer, et al., 2007:2).

Research shows that inequalities in children's circumstances strongly predict their opportunities to learn during the early years. For instance, (Woodhead, Dornan & Murray, 2013:13-26) cites that "high ability children from poorer families quickly fall behind compared to their more privileged peers". The reality is also that gender-based inequalities affect both boys and girls. These gender differences cuts across the different ages and in different ways according to intra-household dynamics, socio-cultural context, institutional structures and economic pressures". Thus, according to Woodhead, Dornan, and Murray (2013:13-26) "...gender is still very much a driving factor in so far as shaping the experiences of children, especially in terms of their opportunities, responsibilities, and social constraints..." Also "...owing to the gender-based choices of parents which are in turn often shaped by the external environment such as the perceived returns from investing in boys' education rather than girls'" (Woodhead, Dornan & Murray, 2013:13-26). In this regard, Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2015:1) guide "future interventions [such as this study] to emphasise working with men and boys as well as women and girls to change social norms on gender relations"

Whilst I have discussed in 3.3.1 poverty's impact on gender, of critical importance is that it especially reinforces differential expectations and practices towards girls and boys. For instance, the fact that girls are expected to take on significant domestic responsibilities, and that in situations of scarce resources, families choose to invest in boys' schooling instead. Further noting "gender differences are more marked in middle and later childhood and shaped by gendered understandings amongst both children and their caregivers of what constitutes successful transitions to adulthood (Woodhead, Dornan & Murray, 2013:32). Therefore, with these gender differences in mind, "some parents view completing school as the best way for girls to secure their future livelihoods; for others, extended schooling is viewed as a potential risk to girls' economic and reproductive futures" (Woodhead, Dornan & Murray, 2013:32). Such parental perceptions are influenced by the fact that more-educated girls might be less likely to be married. Unfortunately, the reality is that "children's experiences of inequality shapes their personal and social identities, their peer relationships, self-esteem and self-efficacy" (Woodhead, Dornan & Murray, 2013:32). Therefore, if such

perceptions are maintained in the rural ecologies, these gender differences will go a long way in shaping girl children's personal and social identities. They will grow accepting these inequalities with dire consequences for their futures. It is against this backdrop therefore that engendering Bourdieu's habitus, that is, the duality of agency and structure, becomes imperative at this point of children's lives, particularly girl children's lives. We therefore propose a framework that seeks to situate rural girl children in the rural fields with self-determined positions. This we hope to achieve through the active involvement and participation of rural girl children themselves. That is, through locating their voices in the centre of all debates, discussions, initiatives and interventions that affect them.

Further, with the framework, we hope to create some level of Bourdieu's hysteresis in the rural ecologies. Families, schools and communities change, so too do social gender differences ascribed to girl and boy children. Hence, for this reason, we prepare the playing field differently through engaging with boy children face-to-face in the course of the study. We contend that it cannot be that it is unchallenged that "girls remain less likely than boys to enter and [complete] school" (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:173). We are of the view that the proposed framework, with its consideration of all the issues will drive towards the need for "distinct and more gender equitable and responsive policies for girls and boys...to support the enrolment and completion of both" (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015:173).

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter, the literature review, served to align the Bourdieuan analysis with the study's objectives in order to contextualise issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Hence, the study attempted to develop an in-depth understanding of how girl children experience education (schooling), the interaction and interface with their gendered lives in families, communities, and their critical social networks from a Bourdieuan perspective. It further provides an overview of the challenges that continue to confront girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It does so through reflecting on the current situation with regard to availability and effectiveness of available national and international policies and legislative prescripts. Further, the literature review is also used to provide a broad situational analysis on issues that continue to confront girl children's access to

sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Whilst it paints a broader picture on these issues, it specifically reflects on Mpumalanga Province as the secondary research site and in particular Nkangala District Municipality as the primary research site.

Considering that the study is a Bourdieuan analysis as detailed in the previous chapter (2), this chapter begins to reflect on how Bourdieu's three central theorems could be situated. That is, how the field, the capital and the habitus relate to rural girl children. Clearly, from the situational analysis, issues such as poverty, learner pregnancies, HIV/AIDS prevalence, girl children's non-sustained stay and/or completion of schooling evidenced by high percentages of females without the minimum matric requirement for most employment opportunities, and more broadly gender discrimination, inequalities and marginalisation amongst others, we see that problems persist. Importantly, in accordance with the aim of this research study, the chapter identifies the critical barriers that make girl children's access to sustainable learning in the rural ecologies, difficult. The chapter reveals the fact that the rural playing field continues to be marred with gendered disadvantages and struggles that makes position taking for girl children in these ecologies almost impossible. Mindful of the persistent barriers, disadvantages and struggles for girl children, the chapter identifies possible areas for infusing the Bourdieu's theory of practice. To this end, the chapter begins to highlight opportunities in the rural ecologies for infusing the Bourdieuan theory of practice. Thus, against this background, chapter four unfolds the data generation processes that would serve to concretise the issues emanating from the literature review. The data generated would thus further serve to shape and inform the proposed framework on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA GENERATION: A BOURDIEUIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study is premised on the Bourdieuian theory of practice, with feminist orientations as detailed in 1.3 and 1.7. Owing to this study's focus on rural girl children, Participatory Action Research (PAR) underpins this research design and methodology with feminist orientations. Feminising PAR arises from the empowerment and emancipation perspectives of PAR that blends well with feminist praxis. Considering that this is a gendered study with an intentional focus on rural girl children, PAR with feminist influences is considered an ideal methodological approach. In addition, connected to this approach, the study seeks to locate the rural girl children's voices at the centre of all discussions and deliberations. With PAR's processes of knowledge development through action and reflection, this ideal can be realised. Thus central to the Bourdieuian analysis, the study anticipates building an understanding of the rural playing fields with its inherent complexities, crises and struggles as highlighted in 3.1 and 3.2 concerning girl children's agency.

Further, I am of the view that rural communities are amongst the indigenous communities with relatively different socio-cultural experiences. Importantly, in this chapter, issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in the rural learning ecologies are discussed using PAR to dissect experiences and socialisation processes. I do that in the spirit of embracing and celebrating rural difference, diversity and dignity as shall be reflected in the discussions that follow in 4.2 below. Important to highlight at this point that henceforth, I will start using "we" because at this point of the study, all groups of co-researchers are actively involved.

4.2 PAR: EMBRACING AND CELEBRATING RURAL DIFFERENCE, DIVERSITY AND DIGNITY

Accordingly, PAR's emphasis is on "everyday practical and participatory strategies that are self-consciously tied to a future vision driven by equality, equity, peaceful, inclusive, and socially just society" (Naples, 2013:657). Overall, these are the same

principles that foreground this study and are at the core of the Bill of Rights (*RSA Constitution*, 1996). Therefore, the adoption of PAR on a much broader scale is aligned with efforts that seek to contribute to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. These efforts acknowledge diversity and the imperative of promoting the well-being of all social actors (agents from a Bourdieuan perspective), and thus advance social justice (Naples, 2013:657). Borrowing from Hawkins (2015:466), “PAR highlights and celebrates [human] difference, diversity and dignity (the ‘Three Ds’)”; therefore, issues of gender inequality and inequity in education in so far as rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies are concerned, the ‘Three Ds’ agenda is central to the study.

Moreover, PAR “is a shared process of discovery that continues to grow, hence the emergence of blended approaches and initiatives such as FPAR” (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:207-8). Considering that the study is gendered, and that gender rests on power relations, PAR is viewed as having the ability to “draw attention to the relational workings of power” (Mason, 2015:497). In addition, PAR presents a platform and opportunity for blending feminist-orientations as is the case with this study. Ackerley and True (2012:6) state that “feminist-orientation in research methodology refers to a commitment to using a whole constellation of methods reflectively and critically for knowledge production that advances social justice”. Cresswell (2013:29) argues that “feminist research approaches are centred on and problematises women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations”, maintaining that qualitative research should have an action agenda for change which should “be experienced by the research participants, the institutions within which the participants are attached to, or the researcher’s life experiences” (Cresswell, 2013:29).

South Africa is commonly categorised as a developing country. Therefore, PAR in the context of the developing world has “the potential to democratise and decolonise knowledge production by engaging communities” (Janes, 2016:72). The study is based on community engagement, especially concerning rural girl children in rural learning ecologies. Those ecologies comprehensively include rural families, schools, communities and the broader rural social networks and structures. Importantly, PAR articulates social change as amongst its imperatives and thus does not preclude emancipatory action and agenda (Mason, 2015:497). The emancipatory component is at the core of feminist-orientation adopted in the study. Glassman and Erdem

(2014:207-8) note that PAR is also “emphatic on issues involving distribution of resources and power, as well as the struggles of those made invisible or subordinated by more powerful elements in their society to take control of their life trajectories, as well as their social and economic destinies”. Therefore, for this study, the distribution of all forms of educational resources and power, more particularly with regard to equal and equitable access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies is central. That is so because issues of educational resources and the authorities (power) are usually embedded in the educational system through policies and other related institutional aspects and are thus fundamental to the discussions about rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning ecologies.

Concurring with the above assertions, Jordan and Kapoor (2016:137) maintain that “PAR has drawn on a wide array of theoretical traditions within the social sciences”, for example, critical and feminist theories, mentioned in 1.4. Hence Whitman, Pain and Milledge (2015:622) asserts that “PAR offers an alternative mode of science”, especially taking into consideration that “the history of PAR is marked by relying on forms of knowledge, and experience and understanding generated within the everyday world that would usually be dismissed as common-sense by mainstream social sciences” (Jordan & Kapoor, 2016:137).

The study’s focus as mentioned throughout is on rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning ecologies. Therefore, Cornwall and Sardenberg (2014:78) state that PAR is appropriate for such a study in that it presents “a process that continuously seeks opportunities for women and girl children to find their voices and articulate their thoughts, desires and claims, and by creating spaces for demand-making and reflection, as well as for bringing about change” (Cornwall & Sardenberg 2014:78). Hence, the contention that PAR with feminist-orientation is considered particularly empowering for the girl children because of its ability to facilitate opportunities for girl children’s voices. In a PAR study “[researchers and co-researchers] are, therefore, equally involved in the process” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Deport, 2011:491). It is with these opportunities that a PAR study can succeed, albeit to an extent made possible by the girl children themselves. That they reasonably raise their consciousness, especially so because according to Cornwall and Sardenberg (2014:72) “PAR is foundational to the feminist practice of consciousness-raising”. That involves engaging and observing people (rural girl children and the other groups of co-

researchers such as rural families and communities, principals, teachers, SGB, etc.) “in critical reflections on the conditions of their everyday lives, prompting them to step outside those lives as lived experiences and to question the beliefs they take for granted about how society and the world are ordered”(Cornwal & Sardenberg, 2014:72).

Therefore, against this backdrop, PAR is “concerned with social relations [and experiences] that are related to certain goal-directed activities” (Bryman, Bell, Hirschson, Dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt & Wagner, 2014:245). In the case of this study, it is the social relations and experiences in rural ecologies that pertain to rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

4.2.1 An overview of PAR

Gustafson and Brunger (2014:999) view PAR as a qualitative approach to research with two distinct features; namely, that it is intended to be community-based and community-driven, and secondly that PAR’s purpose is to generate knowledge or understanding that brings about change. The authors further point out that the “methodological features of PAR are a good fit with the theoretical and practical concerns held by feminist researchers”, which is amongst the reasons for choosing PAR, which favours feminist orientations for this study. Also, PAR as a qualitative research methodology involves a cyclical process of research, reflection, and action presented in a cycle of steps which are observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:999; MacDonald, 2012:34, Kemmis, 2005, Corbett, Francis, Chapman, 2007:81-6). The authors also affirm that this “methodology embraces empowerment, self-determination and the facilitation of agreed change as central tenets that guide the research process” (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:999).

Zeller-Berkman, Muñoz-Proto, and Torre (2015:25) maintain, “...the cycles of action and reflection of PAR, undertaken in respectful partnerships between the researcher and the targeted co-researchers create ideal conditions for development”. Additionally, Glassman and Erdem (2014:212-4) are of the opinion that “the unique quality of PAR is better captured by presenting the words that we see as co-occurring concepts and processes”. These are participation (*vivencia*), action (*praxis*), and research (*conscientisation*). The authors argue that by taking *vivencia*, *praxis*, and *conscientisation* together, “PAR offers cycles of inquiries into the critical thinking,

reflect[ion], and actions of members of an oppressed community while it also includes those who entered the community in search of an intervention” (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:212-4). In this study, these cycles of inquiries are in relation to girl children and the various teams of co-researchers as outlined in 1.9 of this study. Thus, PAR is an exploration of participants in praxis investigating “...why they engage in their own actions and why they conduct themselves in the ways they do” (Houh & Kalsem, 2015:269-271).

However, it is important to highlight that PAR is not without its challenges, both at an individual level (the researcher’s and co-researchers’ level) as well as on the external (institutional) level. The institutional level includes all the different social institutions that the research is located in and interacts with where transformations have to take place. On an individual level, as PAR researchers, we grapple for example, with “...disorienting but necessary questions regarding our positionality and relationships within community” (Houh & Kalsem, 2015:269-271). Hence, the need for primary researcher, such as myself in this study, to assume the role of facilitator and the co-researcher should take the lead in conceptualising the change that is needed, because “how change is to take place, and who should be the key actors, needs to be argued when change is conceptualised” (Khan, Bawani & Aziz, 2013:165).

Datta, et al. (2015:582) contend, “PAR’s key responsibilities which include empowering, building trustful relationships, honouring relational and holistic knowledge, taking a political stand for the co-researchers”. In addition, the author states that PAR should center the often-silenced voice of the rural girl children. All of these should be done in a way that embraces the diverse ways of knowing and thus avoid the unconscious and uncritical imposition of Western norms (Datta, et al., 2015:582).

In sum, PAR recognises the value of dialogue and encourages as well recognises robust and intense dialogues including those informed by indigenous knowledge and experiences (L’Etang & Theron, 2011:7). It is within this context that the researcher has adopted PAR, blended with feminist orientations (FPAR), to analyse issues confronting girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, while acknowledging that the South African rural ecologies are unique. Consequently, the gendered cultural beliefs and practices require utmost sensitivity from the researcher

to ensure buy-in and participation in the study by all identified co-researchers. The great care and sensitivity also pertains to rural girl children which then makes PAR the most appropriate methodology in the exploration of such settings (L'Etang & Theron, 2011:7). This is especially so because "PAR in its nature and intentions, is a compassionate and communal-based inquiry attracting like-minded people who want a collaborative investigation that is more accurate, reliable, ethically right and employs suitable ways of exploring" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

4.2.2. PAR's emphasis on participation and process in relation to Bourdieu's field and agents' perspectives

Fletcher, McPhee, and Dickson (2015:1) note, "PAR's general philosophy or framework for research emphasises the connection of research with action in a real-world setting". This connection results in the co-generation of knowledge between researchers and participants in view of PAR being multidisciplinary and uses a variety of methods. This participation and process unfold in particular social settings (spaces) which constitutes Bourdieu's field, mentioned in 2.1.1 of this study. In this regard, participation and process unfolded at (four) schools in the Thembisile Hani and Dr J. S. Moroka Local Municipalities of the Nkangala District Municipality, Mpumalanga Province. Those are a Primary and a High school in Thembisile Hani, Kwaggafontein East Circuit, and another Primary and a Secondary school in the Nokaneng Circuit in the Nkangala District of the MDoE. The selection is informed by the initial engagement phase with co-researchers as outlined in (4.2.2.1), the pre-planning phase in (4.7.1) and diagrammatically presented in (figure 4.1) below.

Participation in a PAR study such as this one is largely dependent and directed by co-researchers. It is for this reason that it became necessary for the co-researchers themselves to identify the schools mentioned. That is to facilitate collective identification of the research aspects and identify main co-researchers upfront in the study. It is with emphasis on participation and process that we bring into the fold Bourdieu's players' (agents) engagement in the field of play, rural girl children and the other identified role-players. Thus, Colley and Guéry (2015:113) assert that Bourdieu's concept of illusion, which according to the authors is important, yet neglected. Illusion is the extent to which players invest commitment in the stakes of a field; players in this study are in the main rural girl children. Colley and Guéry further note that it is through the illusion that players bring their habitus (2.1.1) to the field and engage with the

practices that constitute it. The stakes that inspire this engagement are the objects of value in the field, including values and beliefs. Therefore, “illusion represents the more conscious counterpart of the tacit and unquestionable ‘doxa’, the taken for granted of a field” (Colley & Guéry, 2015:117).

In line with the principles of PAR, research is a partnership, although the levels of participation and control can vary (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:999). Lyons et al. (2013:14) suggest that “at the core of respectful social justice research should be the value of interpersonal relationships and serving the needs of the community in which the research is being conducted, that is, ensuring the opportunity for meaningful participation by the members of the community” under investigation. These authors explain that “socially-just researchers, therefore, would approach the conceptualisation of the project, including research question development and other design activities, as an opportunity to begin building a collaborative relationship with the community being investigated” (Lyons et. al., 2013:14). Here, the study sought to engage with co-researchers at inception stages, and thus introduced a pre-planning phase. This preliminary phase focused on collective conceptualisation, relationship building and ensuring that ownership of the research project is shared with the co-researchers. With the pre-planning phase, the primary researcher also sought to build mutual understanding of the research project’s intentions and thus obtain guidance and input on issues of relevance and interest from the co-researchers and other stakeholders and role-players.

Further, Van Wijnendaele (2014:266) maintains, “emotions and embodied knowledges are crucial elements in understanding participation, empowerment and social transformation”. Baine and Payne (2016:332) encourages us “to consider the views of critics of PAR who caution us against a disjuncture between theory and practice”; but the questions which arise are “how participation and collaboration are enacted and how power is embodied”. In consideration of these critics, we sought to embark on the initial pre-planning phase to ensure that we provide a platform for active engagement and interaction with the process. Hence, we opened the research process to interrogation and critiquing, and where advised, built in co-researchers’ concerns. Against this backdrop, it is believed that initial engagements with rural girl children (as stated in 2.4), the traditional authorities, teachers and parents, enhanced the study’s conceptualisation and direction.

4.2.2.1 The importance of initial engagement to sustain participation throughout the study

Accordingly, Gustafson and Brunger (2014:998-1001) confirm that with PAR, the initial engagement with the community to design research is, in itself, an essential component of the research project. Thus maintaining that the outcomes will demonstrate the extent and levels of participation - hence participation is an important component of the research process (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:998-1001). Drawing from Bourdieu's theoretical emphasis, the continued focus on the rules of social relations is important. Nevertheless, there should also be reasonable focus on the reality that agents (actors), are able to manipulate and play with the rules. Hence, it is vital to go beyond the social relations and explore through participation in the given fields, how agents manipulate and/or play with the rules (Anderson, 2016:689). In the case of this study, we observed that there is a thin line between exerting authority and manipulation, which we suggest that future studies should focus on; for example, the interactions between the traditional and the DoE District authorities. The traditional authorities had their preconceptions on the research particularly regarding which schools should be part of the research, and the District authorities had different views and motivations for their choices. However, after thorough engagements, two circuits were recommended and agreed upon by both authorities. It is for this reason that a set of schools; a primary and a secondary school in one circuit office and another set in another circuit were identified.

Jordan and Kapoor (2016:134-5), consider PAR to be a vehicle "for energising social networks that are anti-capitalist and anti-colonial, challenging neoliberal and colonial ideological modes of thought in educational and social research". Further, Lyons et al. (2013:14-15) assert that "PAR is dialogic and dialectic, leads to growth and transformation, and is empowering and social justice-driven" hence significant to the social sciences. That is, in essence, "the mutual meaning-making process that characterises [PAR] and can greatly contribute to the empowerment of the co-researchers" (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:1001).

Furthermore, Johnson and Guzmán (2013:415) conceive the PAR process and its achievements simultaneously, as action and meaning, and by implication "that in considering the action-research reflexive loop, it is not easy to differentiate knowledge production from social action". The advice therefore is that professional researchers'

roles within PAR is to “set their expertise alongside the lay knowledge, skills and experiences of people who are the focus of their investigations” (Johnson & Guzmán, 2013:415). In this way therefore, the “research process is conceptualised as an encounter, where equal partners meet, enter into dialogue and share different kinds of knowledge and expertise on how to address issues affecting a group or community” (Jordan & Kapoor, 2016:138-9) as was the case with this study. It is appreciated and advantageous to the validity of the project that the co-researchers are generally socio-culturally rooted in the respective research communities as outlined in 2.2. In this case, I posit that rural girl children are better equipped with lived experiences and knowledge with regard to issues that confront their access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

4.3 REFLECTIONS ON PAR AND GENDERED PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL GIRL CHILDREN

The central tenet of PAR is to focus on the development of knowledge through raising salient and relevant issues, and the creation of critical consciousness that leads to effective change informed and shaped, through robust participation by those directly affected (Corbett, Francis, & Chapman, 2007:81-6). The issue of the location of power differences, and for this study, gendered power differences in participation is crucial (2.4.2 & 2.4.3) in that it is associated with vulnerability, rural girl children’s vulnerability in this case. Gustafson and Brunger (2014:1000) mention, “...vulnerability can result from an actual or perceived power imbalance that might be historical, symbolic, or based on social discrimination”. Gustafson and Brunger further contend that “vulnerability, although socially constructed, is firmly attached to a physical, functional, or developmental difference, which then means that there are multiple challenges to the notion of vulnerability connected to the nature and role of power relations that shape vulnerability, and to the framing of vulnerability” (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014:1001).

Therefore, understanding gender and rurality as highlighted in 2.4 as being present amongst the vulnerabilities confronting rural girl children, is important in an FPAR study. Such an understanding will, according to Morgan, George, Ssali, Hawkins, Molyneux and Theobald (2016:1069), assist in the analysis of who has what in so far as access to resources are concerned. That is, who does what in so far as the division

of labour is concerned, how values are defined with regard to commonly-accepted social norms, and who, based on gender, influences rules and overall decision-making as these are at the core of Bourdieu's socialisation focus. Thus overall, gendered power relations influences how "people interact dynamically in complex, multi-faceted, and context-specific ways, reflecting varying interests, and values" (Morgan, et al., 2016:1069), which therefore explains the fundamental importance of understanding gendered power relations as it relates to gendered differences. Hence, Dworski-Riggs and Langhout (2010:216) conclude that "power differences should not be viewed as roadblocks to participation, but rather as opportunities for the researchers to shift and refine their methods and for the co-researchers and respective community to challenge existing power structures" including those that are hidden and invisible (2.5).

For a gendered study that deliberately focuses on rural girl children such as this one, shifting methods is interpreted as drawing on rural boy children's voices, views and experiences throughout the study. We therefore would like to take lessons from Roy & Das (2014:28) whose study aimed at reducing gender disparities at the family and community level. With the study, the authors also explored the power differences that are manifested in boys and men's masculinity in rural Maharashtra, India. By means of men engaging themselves in understanding gender inequality and participating in various programmes that aimed at changing their perceptions and behaviour towards girls and women, Roy and Das argues that "such interventions can lead to substantive improvements in women's status without compromising men's 'masculinities'" (Roy & Das, 2014:28-31). The study thus demonstrates the importance of using PAR, and its collaborative value in analysing gendered power differences. Hence, it became important for the study that focuses on rural girl children, that the researcher also uses PAR (Jacobs, 2016:53) in exploring the issues of gendered power differences and relations by drawing on rural boy children's voices. In addition, the researcher took into consideration the assertions in 2.4.1 that emphasise the inclusion of boys to build a comprehensive understanding of the gendered differences.

Corbett, Francis, and Chapman (2007:81-6) contend, "PAR highlights the centrality of power in the social construction of knowledge". However, feminist researchers to whom the primary researcher aligns herself with, has pointed out the centrality of male power (the gendered difference) as a factor in the construction of knowledge. Further, the authors contend that the meaning of being a woman differs depending on place,

situation and time; situating knowing and learning (Jacobs, 2016:53). Issues such as ethnicity, class and age has a great varying influence on the experience of being a woman (Corbett, Francis, & Chapman, 2007:81-6). Therefore, our understanding of the influence of feminist theory on the PAR model becomes clearer when considering the process of reflection, used in the early stages of the PAR sphere of planning, especially in the pre-planning phase of this study.

The approach of blending PAR with feminist praxis facilitates an understanding of the power relationships and imbalances in the various experiences of co-researchers and their immediate ecologies. As Betz and Fassinger (2011:x) point out, the central question asked by PAR researchers should be “how are systems of power and privilege manifested in the lived experiences of people, and how can the knowledge be gained and used to raise consciousness, emancipate, and empower the very same people?” Noting that PAR emerges completely from the needs of a community and has social change as the primary focus, it is an ideal approach to accomplish many social-justice goals, including consciousness-raising, community action, and change in the lives of participants, empowerment and liberation (Kidd & Kral, 2005:187-188).

In line with the fact that the study is feminist-orientated, Glassman and Erdem (2014:212-4) maintain, “...feminism can expand PAR in conceptualisation and interpretation of power relationships by focusing on the internal struggles of gendered difference”. Especially because feminist perspectives in PAR “offer abilities for more nuanced interpretations of oppression as dynamic relationships and perceptions occurring simultaneously across a number of ecological settings” (Glassman & Erden, 2014:212-4). The authors argue that for instance, an indigenous community (rural girl children) might be oppressed in the society [purely] because of their gender, but that other levels of gendered oppressive subsystems might exist within both the oppressive system and structure as well as within the oppressed communities themselves, also elaborated in 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. These sub-systems may be present in the contexts of family, neighbourhood, or village. Thus, feminist perspectives can thus stretch the praxis of PAR across multiple community levels (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:212-4).

4.3.1 Understanding PAR from a Bourdieuan perspective

Glassman and Erdem (2016:213) hold the view that “the goal of PAR is not to change individuals or even the collective’s action trajectories”, instead it is aimed “at giving the

oppressed members of a community or social group the capabilities of critiquing their own praxis". Therefore, in the context of PAR, "praxis opens doors for the oppressed masses to criticise, problematise, and claim their condition, which will eventually enable them to overcome it" (Glassman & Erdem, 2016:213). The primary researcher, demonstrated through the extensive literature review in chapter 3, rural girl children's oppression; thus, in line with Glassman and Erdem (2016:213), the active involvement and engagement of the oppressed masses, which are rural girl children for this study, inevitably entails a process of conscientisation. Followed closely is *vivencia*, which is the participation of the oppressed communities (rural girl children) as they become aware of their "lived experiences", its consequences, and the ways in which they can be challenged. The process is initiated by and culminates in praxis as the newly empowered target population moves on to new action from very different social and personal perspectives (Glassman & Erdem, 2016:213). Therefore, conscientisation is not an easy escape from an oppressive group or community. Rather it is largely dependent on Bourdieu's Illusion - the extent of the agent's investment in the field of play, therefore suggesting that conscientisation becomes the capital investment. Perhaps both cultural and social capital investment on the part of the rural girl children in the field of play, which is the rural learning ecologies in this instance. I therefore agree with Glassman and Erdem that conscientisation is actually about creating new community based problem-solving processes.

In the research realm, which is often a political realm (discussed in 4.1.3 above), a political vision cannot be enacted without an epistemological articulation that informs political practice (Naples, 2013:657). Naples (2013:657) outlines the fact that it is therefore important to align feminist praxis as it contains past activist engagements, which are incorporated into contemporary efforts to change political and cultural contexts. Naples further states that the feminist praxis is further deepened by incorporating epistemological insights from feminist theories of intersectionality to inform its political methodology (2013:657).

Naples (2013:661) illustrates the possibilities of intersectional feminist praxis for sustaining democratic practice using five different dimensions: strategies for inclusion, methods of empowerment, countering power imbalances, organising across differences, and processes of reflexivity. Therefore, from intersectional feminist praxis, knowledge develops directly from lived experiences rather than abstract theorising.

The dimension articulates the fundamental importance of the diverse gendered experiences and voices in enhancing understanding of the dynamics of oppression and inequality, including gender equality. I will discuss the other dimensions in the discussions that follow.

4.3.2 PAR as a political process and capital in Bourdieu's 'political' fields

Swartz (2013:1-2) highlights the fact that power and politics are central to understanding sociology because these two concepts stand at the core of Bourdieu's sociology; and by implication political and social activism is necessary, especially so because sociology is not just science but also a crucial form of political engagement. Hence, Wittmer and Birner, (2003:292-3) maintain that given the flexibility of Bourdieu's capitals, social capital can be converted to political capital for participation in what I term socio-political fields. Hence, PAR with its different phases allows for a better understanding of political processes that enables or disenables change, transformation in essence, at the individual and institutional levels (Kloot, 2009:469). It is with this understanding that according to Bourdieu, we can explore how political ideologies affect and influence political relations in ways that conserve or transform the structure of the field (Lave, 2012:1).

Apple and Ferrare (2015:54) maintain that there are also important political considerations to the PAR processes which include that "the primary purpose of field theory in sociology of education is identifying and interrupting patterns of inequity [and thus] providing a foundation to move toward more democratic forms of educational practice. Samuel (2013:404) notes that Bourdieu contrasts the dynamics of scientific fields with that of the political field, which has low entry barriers, because anyone with an opinion can participate at one level or another; however, in scientific fields, specific knowledge and competencies are required. Hence, Wood (2014:578) talks of participatory capital, which is the capital that allows for participation. Whilst at the same time taking into consideration as (Vincent, 2015:1166) postulates, "any field is a space of distinction, comprised of a unique constellation of forms of capital and in which a community of actors compete for legitimacy". The argument is therefore that domination within any field depends on possessing the right kinds of capitals so essential for 'getting ahead'. I have discussed, for example, the conscientisation of rural girl children as a form of both cultural and social capital (4.3.1) with the aim of

highlighting the field and its associated dynamics. In summary, drawing from the on-going assertions, PAR is political to the extent that it is central to the choices made by players in the various fields of play.

4.3.3 PAR, political fields and the gendered social inequalities and inequities

Considering discussions on power differences and struggles, there is the distinct realisation that disproportionate power relations between and within communities constitute the social. These social power relations are those we find in the different social arenas ('Bourdieu's fields'), such as the workplace, the family, institutions of education and within society, all of which "systematically generate inequalities and establish other hierarchies" (Jordan & Kapoor, 2016:138). There is a consensus in the development arena that these inequalities are considered endemic; hence, the strong political and ethical stance that research should focus on issues of social justice, a stance that characterises PAR. There is indeed a "need to bridge participatory epistemologies with methods that favour the transgressions of power relations" (Dentith, Measor, & O'Malley, 2009:163). Hence Strega (in Brown & Strega, 2005:208) persuades "critical social science researchers to ask questions, expose hypocrisy, and investigate social conditions that can potentially encourage grassroots action", because critical social science research is expected to be concerned with empowerment and/or emancipation of those who are generally considered marginalised. Strega contends that this is an "avowedly and clearly political in intention and in process" (Strega, in Brown & Strega, 2005:208). Arising from these political and ethical stances, Jordan and Kapoor (2016:138) concur that PAR is "equally committed to democratic engagements, transparency and openness, strong cooperative and communitarian ethos, inclusion and a clear conviction to issues concerned with development and sustainability".

I have mentioned in 4.1 above the reasons for my feminist-orientation inclusion in the analysis process, which therefore makes it necessary that I tie up PAR's political stance with that of feminism to ensure that the connection has been maintained throughout the study. As Houh and Kalsem, (2015:266) contends, PAR and feminism are "both informed by a deep understanding of the political nature of knowledge-production and the impact such production has on societies, as well as a commitment to addressing the socio-cultural and political inequality by challenging conventional

modes of research and action". Therefore, FPAR embraces the characterisation of being political, and overtly acknowledging an agenda of working for positive social change.

Further, Jordan and Kapoor (2016:138) mention that PAR is political because "unlike conventional forms of research methodology where authority is vested with the academic researcher, as PAR aims to shift responsibility of the research process onto individuals and groups who are directly affected by these inequalities", the rural girl children in the case of this study.

4.4 PAR IN A FEMINISED CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING FPAR

Ponic, Reid and Frisby (2010:324-325) state that "FPAR integrates feminist theories and PAR methods, often with the explicit intention of building communities and partnerships to create new forms of knowledge that could inform and advance the women's development agenda", contending that FPAR deliberately creates strategies for cultivating power-with partnerships and thus explores associated challenges with obvious theoretical implications. Accordingly, Gustafson and Brunger (2014:1000) state that "[by] critically reflecting on research practice is a common feature of the feminist research projects and central to feminist intensely advocated collaborative processes" and that what makes reflection critical is the intent to "expose and acknowledge hegemonic assumptions that shape research practices" Gustafson and Brunger (2014:1000). The ultimate goal is thus to explore the complexities of experience in attempting to better understand actions and its related aspects. In this instance, the complexities of experience relate to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The focus, according to Gustafson and Brunger (2014:1000), is employing a wide range of collaborative approaches to building an understanding and promoting social action between the primary researcher, co-researchers and all other relevant role-players and stakeholders in their respective ecologies. This is realised theoretically when "FPAR reveals the complexity of power relations in partnerships that fight against dominant and mutually-reinforcing ideologies and structural inequalities" such as patriarchy, class, and the other axes of power (Ponic, Reid & Frisby, 2010:325). According to Ponic, Reid and Frisby (2010), FPAR also questions the value systems that the established partnerships are based upon, thus destabilising long-standing,

systemic, gendered power relationships for this study. It therefore becomes evident when we see new knowledge construction, and the bridging of social and cultural differences, especially those that are gendered. It is therefore against this background that the researcher holds the opinion that feminised PAR (FPAR) is the most appropriate methodology in exploring issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

4.4.1 FPAR, Bourdieu's gendered fields and rural girl children's voices

In the preceding chapters, I have elaborated on Bourdieu's theoretical concepts including the field concept. Fields are social spaces that represent according to Bourdieu, social microcosms within the social macrocosm and thus providing a space for objective relations between positions (Bourdieu, 2000b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:94-115). They are, as Forchtner and Schneickert (2016:297) postulate, "autonomous power structures, with their own logic and rules, in an ongoing process of differentiation". The rules of a field are dynamic as they are objects of struggle in the field (Bourdieu, 1988:113), thus making the field a contested terrain largely depending on the individual player's capitals and the associated investment decisions as explained earlier in 2.1.1. Therefore, "the strategies employed in the field of play are about the more or less skilful positioning of an actor in a field" (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016:297).

In wanting to locate the discussion within gendered fields, it is perhaps important to firstly seek to understand gender. Escalante and Valdivia (2015:115) define gender "as a social and cultural construction that assigns roles, behaviours, identities, and responsibilities, and at the same time, limitations, to girls, women, boys, men respectively". For the authors, these gendered socio-cultural constructions play themselves out in Bourdieu's field constituted by, amongst others, social institutions such as the home, schools, and the communities, and in this case, those that are in rural areas. Important to note, however, that there is an acknowledgement that the field carries some degree of autonomy with regard to the external environment. As indicated in earlier discussions in 1.7 and 2.4, the direct inclusion of rural girl children as co-researchers is in line with FPAR's intention of ensuring that their voices are central to research, policy, and community organising which is a paradigm shift from doing research "on them" to doing research "with them" (Livingstone, Celemencki, &

Calixte, 2014:286). The process of “doing with” in research, through the active involvement and participation of those directly affected is at the core of PAR. Because in this study PAR is feminised and thus culminates into FPAR. For this study, FPAR is credited for its ability to create an enriching and safe social space, in Bourdieu’s terms, the field, wherein girl children can build relationships and exchange knowledge (Bain & Payne, 2016:331). Therefore, engaging the learners, role-players and stakeholders facilitates sharing engagement in their social context and acquisition of knowledge to initiate personal and social transformation (Cammarota, & Romero, 2011:488). In addition, alluded to by Hawkins (2015:468), PAR encourages and opens communicative spaces between those involved, and in this instance, rural girl children, and all other role-players and stakeholders in the rural learning ecologies. Because the process of PAR is one of “mutual and collaborative inquiry, intended to reach intersubjective agreement, shared understanding of a situation, and a non-coerced agreement about what to do.

Therefore, Houh and Kalsem (2015:263) suggest incorporating the qualitative research method of PAR into our ongoing feminist-orientated work, mindful of the fact that PAR is a research that concerns itself with action, making a difference, and moving toward solutions. This is what the study is driving at, to suggest policy and practice initiatives and interventions that would call for action that makes a difference in the lives of the rural girl children. Furthermore, the authors maintain that PAR is in harmony philosophically with feminism in so many respects. For instance, PAR puts high value on lived experiences as a source of knowledge, which is the thrust of the study, as it seek to incorporate rural girl children’s voices in shaping and informing policy and practice.

Gatenby and Humphries (2000:89) adds, “...both PAR and feminist research have been developed by researchers aiming for involvement, activism and social critique for the purpose of liberatory change”. Further, that “the ideals and methodology of PAR seem to fit well with the values, and theoretical and practical concerns, espoused within most feminist research, particularly those which emphasise emancipation, participation and collaboration, people’s (women’s) experiences and knowledge for the purpose of political action”(Gatenby & Humphries (2000:89). Therefore, the infusion of feminism into PAR in this study enhanced the methodology and catered for feminist concerns (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000:89).

4.4.2 FPAR, socio-cultural constructions and the rural social spaces

Kapure, Winschiers-Theophilus and Blake (2015:124) caution that “in order to comprehend the motivations, aspirations and gains of the co-researchers’ community [rural girl children], within a participatory project, we need to first understand their socio-cultural context in relation to their participation”. Fassinger and Morrow (2013:71) also emphasise the importance of understanding details such as “co-researchers’ cultural histories, relevant laws and policies, values, norms, customs, and traditions of co-researchers and their communities as well as the socio-political climate as viewed from co-researchers’ perspectives” (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013:71).

Adding to the discussion on socio-cultural constructions is the need to locate these constructions within the relevant setting and in this instance, the rural ecologies (spaces). Smith and Phillips (2001:457) affirm that rural is a “socio-cultural construct, tied to place and time, which is specific to individuals and social groups...shared living experiences...and membership of social spaces”. Such notions allow for an exploration of how place, space, and social justice interact with rural education. Bourdieu “uses ethnographic subjectivity through notions of field, habitus, and social and cultural capital that draws attention to the particularity of places (3.2) as well as the social construction of places and spaces” (Roberts & Green, 2013:772). That is so because “we cannot come to know the rural through traditional research methods within which the particularities of places are abstracted by focusing on methodological integrity rather than on the problem being investigated” (Roberts & Green, 2013:769). Hence, the need for a closer understanding of the connections between places and their meanings (Smith & Phillips, 2001:458) especially with regard to rural girl children. Mindful that the study focuses on young rural girl children, and boy children to a lesser extent, Panelli (2002:113) advises that there is a need for “more integrated and conceptual understandings of rural youth [to] identify generic dimensions and processes that shape their lives in rural cultures, economies, societies and spaces”. Therefore, those making decisions that affect rural lives (including researchers) should take cognisance of these dynamics. Rural educational research thus needs to focus on specific rural issues rather than the method of study, through taking into consideration issues raised in 1.1.

Stehlik (2001:41) states, "...meanings of place are very important to people, so that we don't fall in the trap of dismissing those meanings in a structural analysis which denies their own experiences and their own narratives". Such an orientation toward "researching rural social space places the focus on the problem being researched, as a key epistemological orientation to the methods and data analysis used (Stehlik, 2001:41; Roberts & Green, 2013:769). Thus, from an educational policy perspective, such an approach is able to put the rural at the centre and perhaps necessitate for example, "the decoupling of schools from urban areas with a greater focus and greater scope on the local interpretation and implementation of broad policy objectives". This would challenge policymakers to rethink the measures on which the rural is determined to be disadvantaged, as well as rethinking the standard policy responses (Roberts & Green, 2013:770) to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

4.5 PAR'S CHALLENGES AND COMPLEXITIES

MacDonald (2012:40) affirms that although PAR has a number of strengths, it also presents a number of challenges and complexities. Hence, Kidd and Kral (2005:187) assert that "[t]he complexity of the ideological and methodological nuances subsumed under [PAR] belies an approach to inquiry and action that on the surface seems natural, human and intrinsically sensible". To this regard, the author highlights understanding, mutual involvement, change, and a process that promotes personal growth as key elements in a PAR process. It is against this backdrop that Chevalier and Buckles (2013:5) posit, "PAR must take on the challenge of scaling up the inquiry process to address issues of complexity, especially those of 'another development'..." For this study, the complexities are those of studying the rural ecologies with its unique development. I have further alluded to the geographical locations of the study's research sites (1.9 & 3.2.1). Some of these challenges are not premeditated, but rather an outcome of the PAR process. For example, PAR's preliminary planning phase that I introduced in this study revealed that I should extend the initially targeted two schools in one area to extend to four schools in two areas. The change is a result of taking into consideration development in the rural area and noting that the rural is in itself different. Furthermore, I have pushed towards up-scaling the study's processes to accommodate and adequately address the demands.

Chavalier and Buckles also urge PAR practitioners such as myself to focus on the richness of co-researchers' knowledge and local views about the matters that are being studied (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013:5). In this study, the challenge is therefore to succinctly capture rural girl children's knowledge and views as it relates to the complexities of access to sustainable learning in these ecologies. It is against the backdrop that the target girl children are in the last two years of primary school whilst the others are in the last two years of high school. Guided by the co-researchers, we exercised utmost care in capturing similarities and differences in their shared knowledge and experiences in order to cater for the challenges and complexities that comes with age and levels of schooling maturity. The same is applicable for the boy children who were recommended to be co-researchers. The other groups of researchers are educators, TAs, and NGOs. I have to tread carefully and take cognisance of the culture and tradition in order to facilitate safe sharing spaces wherein they are able to share their knowledge and feel respected and valued. This is a clear call for change in the way of doing research. For that reason, Marshall, Coleman and Reason (2011:1) postulate that as PAR practitioners, we must be self-reflexive, that is, learn to think and act differently in order to face the current practices.

Hawkins (2015:470) asserts that, "...whilst PAR is applauded for its collaborative, transformatory and social justice orientations, considered a socially just mode of inquiry; it is not without challenges and complexities" and thus demanding. For instance, the fact that that it is expected of "PAR to push boundaries and move beyond binaries as (Hawkins, 2015:466-470) contends, is on its own challenging, complex and demanding a radical shift". Other challenges include the fact that PAR in its very nature, can according to (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013:70), "be used either to perpetuate or to disrupt the social status quo, to oppress or to empower marginalised groups, to provide an experience that blames people for their victimisation or seek to liberate them and transform their lives". For this study, the intention is clearly to challenge, and possibly disrupt the status quo and to possibly facilitate a radical shift as it pertains to girl children children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. To that regard, the study specifically centres girl children's voices, knowledge and experiences as active agents drawing from Bourdieu's agency as discussed in (2.11.1). Supported by the other identified rural role-players and stakeholders in changing and transforming girl children access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

4.5.1 The complexities of positionalities in PAR study

Baine and Payne (2016:332) allude to a “multiple situated positionalities, drawn from Wolf’s power perspectives” discussed in 4.3.1. These refer to the positionality of the researcher, the communities that are being researched and to their social setting such as the schools that were research sites. These gendered “positions embody meanings that learners and educators [for instance], actively, but differentially, read, interpret and act upon depending on their respective multicultural orientations” (Apple & Ferrare, 2015:44).

Considering that the study is a Bourdeuiian analysis, “the properties of field positions are relationally determined”. In essence, “they are not only defined by what they are, but also by what they are not, vis-à-vis other positions” (Apple & Ferrare, 2015:46). Thus, the authors note that the structure of the space of positions is thus determined by the state of relations between the positions at a given time. By implication, it means that any change in the state of relations between the positions, results in some form of change, a shift in the entire structure of the field – thus given it the complexity.

4.5.1.1 RESEARCHER’S POSITIONALITY BASED ON FPAR PRINCIPLES AND FPAR.

Fassinger and Morrow (2013:70) assert, “...researchers bring their own unique lenses to each research endeavour”. These unique lenses are in my view, my position as the primary researcher. Therefore, in this study, my positionality is based on, shaped and informed by feminist orientation alluded to in 1.7. Further, owing to the cultural diversities in the study’s research sites, my positionality is influenced by respect for multicultural experiences and social justice perspectives, hence the use of PAR for the study. However, “PAR is generally unambiguously positive both in its process and anticipated outcomes, [and that] the reality is that long-lasting structural changes might or (not) be attainable” (Klocker, 2015:37).

I have declared my position as a feminist researcher from the beginning (1.2). I therefore wish to expand on my positionality in order to situate the data presentation and analysis process that unfolds in the next chapter. Perrons (2015:212) notes that feminists recognise that there is a link between the value of the work that is done, and the social value attached to the individual who does it. Therefore, from feminist perspectives, there is no neutrality in the researcher’s positionality within the research

process and hence my view that the researcher's positionality is gendered. Vanner (2015:3) contends that "the researcher's opinions, values, beliefs, and social background [which are inherently gendered], influences and forms a great component and go together with the researcher through the research process, shaping each methodological and analytical decision that the researcher makes".

The study based on Bourdieuan analytics, uses reflexivity as one concept that is as important as it relates to positionality. Muhammad et al. (2015:1047) confirm that awareness and reflexivity of the researcher's identity (or identities), are amongst the salient constructs of positionality, and therefore able to provide guidance to researchers. When issues of power, in particular gendered power that comes with the gendered difference are ignored, existing inequalities, exclusions, or antagonisms are often perpetuated (Lennie, 1999:108). Therefore, the gendered power perspective to positionality ensures that the diversity of women, in particular young rural girl children, is recognised. This includes recognising the gendered differences amongst co-researchers such as class, race, ethnicity, culture, being (urban or rural), amongst others (Lennie, 1999:108).

I concur with Vanner (2015:2) that it is indeed the researcher's duty is to ensure that in he/she pays utmost attention to the strategies, tactics, and procedures that characterise important power dynamics in the research study. The utmost consideration should extend to important research aspects such as co-researchers' selection, privacy, disclosures, interviews, observation, analysis, and the (re)presentation of research participants and their communities. Especially because "even with methodologies that seek input from co-researchers and local stakeholders, the researcher is usually the primary decision-maker and thereby the dominant figure in the research process" (Vanner, 2015:2). Therefore, the concerns with power, gendered power and the gendered representation as outlined in Chapter 3 of this study are fundamental to feminist-orientated studies (such as this one), which is rooted in the exploration of the power relations that characterise social interpretations of gender (Vanner, 2015:3).

Therefore, for this study, the researcher's positionality is fundamentally important, especially because the researcher explicitly states his/her stance, acknowledging that indeed relationships develop during research studies where such relationships

demand of the primary researcher to choose the type and extent of such relationships. England (1994:243-4) explains that “the relationships may be reciprocal...potentially explosive...and the researcher can adopt a stance of intimidation...or supplication”. I therefore choose being a reciprocal co-researcher with the supplicant stance. The study’s Bourdieuan perspectives as well as PAR and feminists’ orientations inform the two: reciprocity because of the collaborative nature of all engagements and interactions in data generation, supplicant because of the insistence on centring the voice of the co-researchers, especially girl children. England (1994:243-4) contends that “most feminists usually favour the role of the supplicant, seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy, mutual respect...explicitly acknowledges his/her reliance on the [co-researchers] to provide insight into the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and shape [their] everyday life”. That the author argues, is “predicated upon an unequivocal acceptance that the knowledge of the [co-researcher] is greater than that of the [primary researcher]” (England, 1994:243-4).

Creswell (2015:8) postulates that, as researchers, we should importantly “acknowledge that our values and beliefs shape our orientation to research, how we gather data, [and] the biases we bring to the research” The core values and beliefs thus bears the researcher’s underlying philosophical assumptions and orientations (Cassell, 2015:10).

Further, I wish to reiterate that which could be potentially considered as the bias nature of the study, which is the specific focus on rural girl children. Whilst acknowledging that the bias draws from the researcher’s feminist orientations, it is also attributed to the fact that as a female researcher, I was once a girl child who experienced rural education; and I have interacted with various aspects of sustainable learning in rural ecologies in the line of my various work and community activism-related projects and programmes. However, as reflected in 1.1 of this study, such biasness is intentional given the myriad historical inequalities and inequities confronting girl children’s education in general, most of which are pertinent in South Africa just as they are internationally. I thus reflected and highlighted the need for future studies to juxtapose the focus on girl children with that of boy children. I am however mindful that such a reflection does not in any case suggest striking a balance. Rather, as I argue, in 1.2 and 1.3 of this study, that such studies will serve to illuminate and inform other aspects of gender equality and equity for future research.

4.5.2 Bourdieu's field positions and the habitus in the context of cultural diversity and social justice orientations: challenges and complexities in context

I have mentioned in 1.9 and 1.12 that the study's research sites are located in culturally diverse communities. It is within this context that the continuous challenge that comes with PAR ensuring the respect, dignity and recognition of multiculturalism is considered. As multicultural researchers, we should be sensitive to the importance of "framing research in ways that legitimise cultural knowledge, though consciously facilitating an environment for socio-cultural change. However, Bourdieu's theory of practice advises us "to understand the diverse cultural dimensions and to use this understanding towards social justice".

Accordingly, Fassinger and Morrow (2013:71) point to the importance of cultural competence and respect for the cultural values of co-researchers. I therefore take note that cultural competence, manifested in the ability to navigate a culture different from the researcher's own, is a foundational necessity for all researchers, whether they are members of dominant or marginalised groups or not. Researchers should possess cultural competence and demonstrate respect for co-researchers and their cultures, and this respect is manifested through "adopting a non-pathological stance in regard to cultural manifestations and actively working to dismantle cultural stereotypes", such as the gendered cultural stereotypes being a priority for this study (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013:71).

As Ponzoni (2016:558) contends, the most significant challenge for PAR researchers, concerns their actual ability to transcend the local level. It is therefore important that as the primary researcher, I continuously reflect on my feminist consciousness, questioning myself throughout the process of the study; questions such as those pinpointed (below) by Bhuyan, Genovese, Mehl, Osbourne and Pintin-Perez (2014:211) in Wahab, Anderson-Nathe and Gringeri (2014):

- How can I authentically reach out to the rural girl children who have a precarious status without increasing their vulnerability?
- What types of meaningful solidarity is possible in the current South African political climate characterised by poverty, and deepening class inequalities and inequities, especially between the rural and the urban?

This cautious approach and questioning would thus allow me to continuously reflect on the challenges and complexities that accompany FPAR, especially in rural spaces where issues of class and privilege play a significant role in the research process (Bhuyan, et al., 2014:211).

This brings to the fore the concept of 'intimate insiders'; that is, "to discuss the complex negotiation of doing research in the places where the co-researchers have created personal lives and sense of community" (Cuomo & Massaro, 2014:94). As is the case in the rural learning ecologies where rural girl children have created their lives and sense of belonging which researchers found difficult to define, especially the physical and emotional boundaries of 'the field' (Cuomo & Massaro, 2014:94). Accordingly, for FPAR that is rural-based and gendered, such as with this study, it means that one should also "be cautious of the intersecting and interlocking oppressions of the researched community", rural girl children in this instance.

With the challenges and complexities come the reality that PAR is an emotionally complex process with profound responsibilities, especially with its emphasis on the active participation and involvement of the co-researchers. That implies that the primary researcher should continuously be considerate of the appropriate levels of participation (Klocker, 2015:37). This is complicated when PAR is deliberately aligned with feminist praxis (FPAR) as is the case with this study, because feminism is in its very nature an emotive phenomenon (Klocker, 2015:37).

4.5.3 Gate-keeping, negotiated boundaries and access

Morgan, George, Ssali, Hawkins, Molyneux and Theobald (2016:1076) hold the view that power relations can inadvertently skew the research process. Thereby making it lean towards those co-researchers who are the most visible, thus disregarding the less visible gatekeepers or decision-makers who frame the contexts in which these co-researchers live. For example, members of the school management team and in particular the principal, the teachers and members of the school governing body (SGB) who are influential and key figures in the rural learning ecology (Morgan, et al., 2016:1076). It is with their inclusion that critical aspects of understanding gendered power relations would be made clear; and this includes examining who has what (access to resources), who does what (the division of labour and everyday practices), how values are defined (social norms), and who decides (rules and decision-making)

(Morgan, et al., 2016:1070). These gendered domains persist in the rural learning ecologies and more broadly in the educational system. However, (Morgan, et al., 2016:1071) notes that “they are not static, but are actively fostered, maintained or contested, in intended and unintended ways, as gender power relations” within the educational system negotiated by people and their environments (Morgan, et al., 2016:1071).

Accordingly, gendered power relations that the Bourdieuan theory of practice offers explains, “...conceptual apparatus to grasp contemporary conflicts in increasingly differentiated societies consisting of fields, with different positions and rules of the game” (Reay, 2015:21). It remains important to overcome the existence of structural gender inequalities and hence the researcher maintains that Bourdieu’s habitus enables a focus on the hidden, embodied and psychosocial injuries of social class that come with living in a deeply unequal society (Reay, 2015:21).

Further, Gustafson and Brunger (2014:997) assert that the individual and collective identities, as well as respective negotiated boundaries, access, and power relations in the process of research, are fundamentally important. Mindful often a research such as this one is interested in a community, or a collective. For this study, the rural girl children. Hence, the study is conceived in a particular manner, attributed with specific identities or traits (of vulnerability, precariousness, dependence, or disadvantage) that make this research project relevant and justifiable (Johnson & Guzmán, 2013:416).

4.6 DATA GENERATION: FPAR IN RESPECT OF GIRL CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES

Data generation in this study is premised on the attempt to understand the complexities and particularities as raised in 1.1 and 3.2 of this study with regard to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In addition, balancing that with the need to positively influence public policy(ies) and community practice (Westhues, Ochocka, Jacobson, Simich, Maiter, Janzen & Fleras, 2008:701). Rural ecologies are generally characterised and considered as ecologies within which indigenous knowledge is highly regarded. In the pre-planning phase of the study, co-researchers highlighted the need to respect and recognise “the unique needs, challenges, and experiences” (Kidd & Kral, 2005:187). It is therefore valuable to draw from the indigenous epistemology, (Brown & Strega, 2005:23) in our data generation

processes for the study. The epistemology highlights several key assertions that are useful for this research project and those are according to Brown & Strega (2005:23), that;

- (a) experience is a legitimate way of knowing;
- (b) indigenous methods, such as storytelling, are legitimate ways of sharing knowledge between the co-researchers and the researcher, and amongst the co-researchers themselves;
- (c) receptivity and relationship between researcher and co-researchers is a natural part of the research “methodology”; and
- (d) collectivity is a collaborative way of knowing that assumes reciprocity to the community.

It is against this background, that a number of the data collection methods employed in this study are aligned with PAR methodology, with a greater emphasis on engaging the relevant role-players and stakeholders pursuant to maximising community participation. This includes respecting local knowledge and increasing co-researchers’ benefits (Datta, et al., 2015:591). The associated issues of methodological norms and standards are addressed in this study, through first, the use of triangulation; that is the use of more than one method in data collection so as correlate, contrast, verify and validate data. Followed by contextualisation and a non-judgmental orientation that is based on Fetterman’s (2010) ‘open-mind’ “that allows the researcher to explore rich, untapped sources of data that are sometimes not initially mapped out in the research design”. This undertaking is thus challenging in that we have to take cognisance of the complexities and realities as mentioned above whilst at the same time attempting to ensure inclusion and participation of co-researchers. As such, we draw on the comprehensive literature review in (chapter 3), and varied PAR data generation methods such as dialogues, focus groups, observations, photo-voice, and traditional story-telling in our data generation.

4.6.1 The study’s data generation methods and knowledge ownership

Data collection methods foster an inclusive analysis and interpretation (Kramer, et al., 2011:263) when we arrive at that stage. The methods used in this research study include traditional sharing circles (SC), individual storytelling, commonplace books

and photo-voice, and these are undertaken so as to appreciate co-researchers' cultural and traditional experiences (Datta, et al., 2015:591). The key responsibilities with such "data collection methods include creating an empowering environment, building trusting relationships, honouring relational and holistic knowledge, taking a political stand for the co-researchers as well as centring the Indigenous voice" (Datta, et al., 2015:591). Such an exercise thus promotes knowledge ownership; that is, co-researchers takes ownership of the knowledge generated through their sharing. Essentially knowledge ownership is at the core of collaborative research process, and hence data collection methods are aligned as such (Datta, et al., 2015:592).

Hence, for Ponzoni (2016:564), the most important challenge faced by collaborative research is with finding a form of discussion to which all co-researchers could meaningfully contribute. Morgan et al. (2016:1076) highlight the fact that individuals can be excluded due to gender power relations, an aspect I have detailed above in 4.3.1. The issue of who participates as a co-researcher is also defined at the outset guided by what data is needed to answer the research questions. For this purpose, this research study engaged and triangulated data from all those who are considered key gatekeepers or decision-makers (school principals, members of the SGBs, and members of the local authority, for example), without necessarily disempowering the rural girl children (Morgan et al., 2016:1076).

4.6.1.1 The study's research permissions and access negotiations

Notwithstanding that the research predominantly takes place in the school set-up, and thus from a Bourdieuan perspective, it is vital to continuously remind ourselves that "schools as organisations are also sites of the field struggles and justice in which symbolic violence finds opportunity for enactment" (Chris, 2013:397). We therefore acknowledge that these fields (schools) could be used to create barriers rather than bridges, thereby hindering the possibilities of transformation and change, specifically in relation to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, as the focus of this study (Bathmaker, 2015:61). Cognisance must also be taken of the fact that the school world, in the context of the broader lived world "is not only a mere background or setting for social practice, but also a product of those social practices" (Mead, 2016:57).

This is a gendered study and its focus on rural girl children and rural ecologies makes it predominantly socio-cultural in nature. Thus, socio-cultural taboos and fears related to research regarding sexuality and gender identity presents complex issues for both the researcher and the co-researchers. We included all details for the authorities we engaged and interacted with in order to be granted permission to conduct the study at the identified institutions (two schools). Permission was also sought from the focus community of both the primary and secondary co-researchers as well as any of the decision-making authorities deemed valuable for the study (Chabot, Shoveller, Spencer & Johnson, 2012:20). For example, typical of PAR approaches is that they facilitate greater opportunities for those who are directly affected to provide input about what issues are important to study and how such studies should be conducted. Taking into consideration the fact that the differences in social positions between girl children and researchers, for instance, can also make it difficult to build trusting research relationships. These power differentials between young people and adults are generally considered as a sign of respect and regard for culture and tradition in communities. However, for a research study such as this one, the power differentials are particularly pronounced when the substantive research topic is deemed by the co-researchers (and community in general) to be controversial, for example, when the research study would in its course, at certain points relate to sexuality (Chabot, et al., 2012:22). The negotiation of access to a research field is the part of the research that entails initially gaining access to the identified research sites. Then securing buy-in on the topic to be researched, and recruiting, enrolling and obtaining commitment to participate from the co-researchers. As well as receiving feedback from the co-researchers on other areas of the research deemed necessary for inclusion or consideration (Sparrman, 2014:292).

4.6.1.2 The study's field: research location, setting, description and co-researchers' profiles

Whilst engaging in PAR in rural contexts has its own dynamics, rural areas situated within areas demarcated, as traditional council-led authorities (uBukhosi) are even more complex. Here, the study opted to compare and contrast issues confronting rural girl children's access to sustainable learning using four schools; two primary schools and two secondary schools, which have the same rural characteristics but differ according to location. The identified schools for this research are all located in the

Nkangala District Municipality of Mpumalanga Province and in the areas led by traditional authorities (councils). The first set of a primary school and a secondary school are under the traditional leadership of Ndabezitha Mabena of the Mgibe-Manala TA, of the Ndebele in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality of the Nkangala District. The second set, also of a primary school and a secondary school, are located under the traditional leadership of Ndabezitha Mahlangu of the Kwa-Litho TA in Dr J. S. Moroka Local Municipality of the Nkangala District Municipality. Thus, negotiating access to the schools begins with negotiating access to the traditional leadership. That means learning, respecting and abiding by all Ndebele and Bakgatla customary practices. We provide details the co-researchers' profiles in (Appendix A). In maintaining ethical considerations of confidentiality, we mention the gender, age, grade and not the names.

4.7 THE RESEARCH PHASES

This is a PAR study and thus adopted the PAR's cyclical phases, diagrammatically represented in Figure: 4.1 below. The PAR phases are fundamentally important in entrenching communities' active involvement and participation.

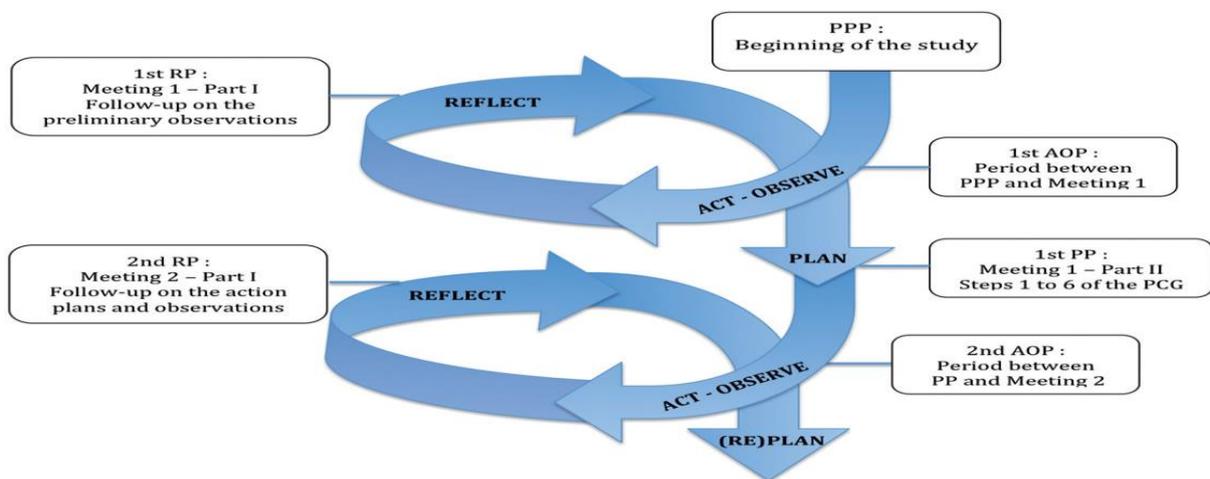


Figure 4.1: PAR'S cyclical process with girl children, role-players and stakeholders from five schools in the Nkangala District of Mpumalanga Province. (Adopted from Meyer, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Waterman et al., 2001, Langlois, 2014).

For this study, the cyclical process entailed a Preliminary Planning Phase (PPP). The phase comprised of literature review, visits to the targeted rural ecologies, which included firstly visits to the traditional authorities of the target rural schools.

Subsequently followed by visits to the identified rural schools and rural communities, then introduction sessions with the 1st and 2nd groups of co-researchers outlined in 1.9 in chapter one of the study. Finally the identification of all necessary logistical arrangements with both groups of co-researchers. The subsequent PP comprise of initial collaborative individual and group dialogues. The 1st Action and Observation Phase (AOP) entail preliminary observations regarding the manifestation of the studied phenomenon in the school and broader communities of co-researchers. The next stage of AOP entails journaling, photo-voice with both girl and boy children, whilst continuously observing interactions amongst groups. Then the 1st Reflection Phase (RP) comprises of discussions about the preliminary observations, photo-voice and story-telling sessions. Subsequent RP largely involves shared-discussions on potential changes and consequences with the different co-researchers' groups. Important to note is that whilst greater focus is paid to girl children themselves, there are a series of dialogues with the other group of co-researchers (parents, teachers, SGB, local NGO, local chief) as part of the cyclical process that essentially informs the study.

4.7.1 Pre-planning in the orientation phase: situating the researcher and the co-researchers in the field

To mitigate some of the challenges and complexities mentioned above (4.3), the researcher introduced the orientation phase to the research process to ensure pre-planning. This is informed by the intention to situate both the researcher and the co-researchers in the field, the research social space where the struggles for knowledge development, conscientisation and all related social action would take place. Apple and Ferrare (2015:48) point to the fact that “Bourdieu constructed his version of field theory in a dual sense in which social actors experience fields as both arenas of force and arenas of struggle”. Also the researcher was mindful that with PAR, the focus community remains central and indispensable to all aspects of the research process (Florczak, 2015:12) while considering that harmony and humanness are the primary values guiding community-based interactions (Kapuire, Winschiers-Theophilus & Blake, 2015:124). Hence, the introduction of the pre-planning phase to ensured adequate involvement of the target communities from the onset.

Hawkins (2015:470) notes that the pre-planning in the orientation phase is an invaluable phase in the overall research process. As an entry phase, it builds a strong,

collaborative, caring research environment among the primary researcher, co-researchers and all other interested parties (Hawkins, 2015:470). The orientation phase took place immediately after negotiating access and profiling the co-researchers, prior to data gathering. The pre-planning in the orientation phase promoted ownership amongst the research team. Especially because all co-researchers were given an opportunity to express views and concerns with regard to how the research process should unfold; that is, “the development of collaborative partnerships, reflection on values, norms and standards central to the community, and the identification of community concerns” (Arellano, Balcazar, Alvarado, & Suarez, 2015:1200).

During this phase, the co-researchers shared in the planning process including setting dates for the various activities, venues, and timelines (Chevalier & Buckles; 2013; Hawkins, 2015). This phase thus allows the research team to become acquainted and build a rapport with each other, and because it happens in their respective environment, it better prepares the research team for all inherent field dynamics (Hawkins, 2015:470).

For the study, the orientation process yielded valuable results. During this phase, it was collectively agreed on details of routine meetings, brainstorming on ideal meeting places and the plan of action for each co-researcher, and other processes that should unfold to ensure maximum collaboration throughout the research process.

4.7.2 Target communities’ active involvement in all the research phases

The active involvement and participation of co-researchers is important as it recognises that “research remains an inherently hierarchical process”, and thus demands that the researcher should continuously explore opportunities to work in collaboration with co-researchers (Vanner, 2015:3). It is indeed true that “the facilitator of PAR has not only a responsibility to produce rigorous research (as in traditional research methods) but also that accountability and responsibility to the co-researchers involved in the study” (Hawkins, 2015:466-470). Also, consideration must be given such that “the relational workings of power shapes the researchers’ responsibilities in so far as his/her responsibilities to the research project are concerned” keeping in mind associated socio-political strategy and engagements (Mason, 2015:497).

As a way of displaying accountability and responsibility, and considering power relations amongst the various groups of co-researchers, the primary researcher suggested that separate sessions to ensure equal participation. The suggestion was fuelled by girl children expressing their need for “girls talk”, perhaps claiming that which (Wood, 2014:578) referred to above in (4.3.2) as participation capital. Thus, rural girl children had separate research engagements and participation spaces from rural boy children, teachers and parents, snapshots attached as (Appendice K). Interestingly though, even with this isolation, there was always curiosity from each of the groups, wanting to know what the other co-researchers had to say. A collective data consolidation session wherein the primary researcher would give a synopsis of all parties’ inputs was suggested. That was done for the primary researcher to continuously maintain ownership, whilst at the same time enriching debates. The results of a session such as this one also potentially serves to reveal useful additional data.

4.7.3 Identifying and managing gendered power differentials in the research process

Bain and Payne (2016:339) state that “how power and privilege are entangled in knowledge production practices, fosters exclusions and divisions”. It is for this reason that gendered power differentials were given particular attention in this study, specifically because the gendered issues of ‘power’ differentials, identity and influence, raised in the literature review (chapter 3) of this study were visible in the pre-planning and orientation phase in varied ways.

We therefore opted to categorise the gendered power differentials in three forms. Those are; the gendered power dynamics between the primary researcher and the secondary co-researchers. That is between primary researcher and the different groups of co-researchers (teachers, school principals, members of the SGB, traditional council and the local NGO). Then amongst the primary researcher and the 2nd group of co-researchers, the rural girl children themselves; and lastly, interchangeably amongst the 1st and 2nd group of co-researchers themselves - for example, between teachers and girl children, between teachers and the school principal and between the school principal and the traditional leader.

Importantly sourcing collaboration and input from those who are directly affected at the beginning of the research study assists in ensuring that the research process is

able to respond to the research community's needs. It further contributes in a sustainable way towards enhancing opportunities for input, feedback and overall participation for all co-researchers as well as any other identified role-players or stakeholders, within and potentially outside the immediate scope of the research project (Vanner, 2015:3). Hence, Ponzoni (2016:559) also insists on involving co-researchers in the initial stages, especially if some changes are anticipated emanating directly from the processes of the PAR study, or when employing PAR to contribute to the production of knowledge relevant beyond the lives of co-researchers, both of which could happen in this study. For Ponzoni, that affords the researcher the 'window of understanding' the ecology and the dynamics throughout the stages of the study (2016:559).

4.8 ADOPTING THE FEMINIST COMMUNITARIAN MODEL IN PAR: ADDRESSING SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN FIELD DIALOGUES

Forchtner and Schneickert (2016:302) note that the exclusion of women and girl children (especially rural girl children) in dialogues is legitimised through reference to their 'being'. The authors contend that the "positioning of the speaker as an authoritative voice able to judge that which is considered logical thinking is often not projected as some form of quality women 'being' possess". Hence, the use of what is considered 'hard', 'robust' and 'strong' language, that which constitutes Bourdieu's symbolic violence is generally accepted and regarded as 'being' male and thus automatically distorting discourses by automatically rendering them masculine and granting them dominance as a disposition in the field (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016:302).

With an FPAR study such as this one, the emphasis is on ensuring a collaborative inquiry throughout the study's engagement and interactions. Therefore, in pursuing these collaborative inquiries, this study adopted the feminist communitarian model (FCM) in its inquiries, mostly because these are underpinned by principles of care, trust, collaboration, and non-oppressive relationships amongst co-researchers (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016:302). As outlined in 1.8 above, we collectively agreed on ensuring that every co-researcher has a right to free participation and that all concerns and considerations were valuable. Thus, through this model, based on PAR's principles, the researcher and the co-researchers jointly formulated the

“research constitution” (Hawkins, 2015:471) that guided the research process. Our FPAR collaborative inquiries, premised on the promotion of humanness and harmony throughout the research process is thus based on the recognition and respect of the principles as outlined in our adopted research constitution (Appendix B).

The constitution is meant to emancipate and empower both the primary and secondary co-researchers. That is, to ensure the “treatment of all co-researchers, individually and groups, with equal respect, fairness and equality” and to ensure appropriate inclusion, while acknowledging the research process’s “obligation to protect the welfare of individuals and groups” (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013:172). This minimises the influence of the researcher and his/her knowledge, but facilitates a subtler shift towards locating and entrenching the girl children’s voices into the research process. Lastly, the constitution seeks to manage the research process in that the process provides for individual and collective reflection spaces for deepening of social knowledge (Vanner, 2015:4).

4.8.1 Individual and group collaborative dialogues with rural girl children: Bourdieuan field and capital alignment perspective

We began the data collection process with individual and group collaborative dialogues. The dialogues were first conducted with the identified rural girl children alone, individually and in groups. That was purposefully done to ensure that all other dialogues are based on the girl children’s voices first, that they lead and give direction on issues pertinent for inclusion in the dialogues, as they are the main target group of co-researchers. Hence, Van Wijnendaele (2014:268-277) highlights the fact that gaining critical insight into the issues pertaining to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies for instance, should be considered to be the first and principal step in the process of cultivating new subjectivities. The researcher is mindful of the fact that these subjectivities, whilst formed through discourse, social and cultural processes, do become as if a second nature to those affected. This then implies that they become more than just discourse and knowledge repertoires; they become embedded in the research process (Van Wijnendaele, 2014:268-277). Therefore, the habitus which is according to Bourdieu, a deeply embodied set of dispositions, which “when confronted with objective conditions in the form of social spaces and the physical world, allows an agent to generate practices geared toward maintaining or improving their position in those spaces” (Samuels, 2013:399). Hence, the insistence

on critical reflection and critical discourse because they are the main “techniques of the self” for facilitating processes of personal and social change (Van Wijnendaele, 2014:268-277).

Facilitating processes of personal and social change through the “techniques of the self” as Van Wijnendaele (2015:268) suggests is a processes whereby the agents (rural girl children) are able to reclaim according to Forchtner and Schneickert, (2016:302), “the power of their respective field positions and preside over their ideal capital configuration”. Such processes are characteristic of self-consciousness through critical reflection and reflexivity because the players’ dispositions are then able to define the rules of the game. Also, being in charge, places them in an advantaged position and allows them to define for themselves which economic, social and cultural capital and other symbolic resources and strategies to invest in the field of play (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016:302). In this respect, Apple and Ferrare (2015:46) contend, “the state of the relations between positions is the result of agents striving, both intentionally and unintentionally for goods and resources (i.e. capital) that are specific to the field”.

It is therefore important to continuously remind ourselves of the earlier discussions in the study, Chapters 2 and 3 for example, that Bourdieu’s habitus is conceptualised as incorporated strategies resulting from the experiences of an individual or collective past, be it a group or class habitus (Forchtner & Schneickert, 2016:295). These traits interplay in Bourdieu’s field of play which in this instance, is the dialogue setting. As such it is thus a demonstration of the “relational character of synergistic relationships amongst and between Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts”, which have been emphasised throughout this study. For example, the important relationality between habitus and field alignment in the dialogues with rural girl children “sees the practices of agents as manifesting the ‘feel for the game’ and thus leads to an intimate understanding of the logics of practice of the field” (Samuels, 2013:399). Hence, for Bourdieu, individual preferences are the result of primary and secondary socialisation, and thus, habitus indicates the specific social position of an individual or group within the social space. This position is due to one’s ‘capital-configuration’ (Bourdieu, 1986), that is, the ‘amount’ and mixture of capitals one has acquired during socialisation. The concept assumes that individuals with similar social positions in the social structure share similar patterns of classification, preferences and lifestyle, patterns of which social

agents are, however, not fully conscious (Bourdieu, 1984:174). Thus, drawing from Bourdieu, the space of positions is relatively autonomous to the extent that it operates according to its own logic and is not completely determined by any outside force. However, the relative autonomy of fields does not mean that the struggles internal to fields are free from external arbitration (Apple & Ferrare, 2015:46).

Therefore, in this research project, rural girl children's positions are entirely voluntary depending on the extent to which they view their participation; whether they will benefit from participation or not. However, we note that their relative autonomy is free from the external influences that come from their mere belonging and subsequent identity with their respective rural ecologies. The research project thus assumes the field position, the autonomous social space wherein the rural girl children's participation is considered as the capital that they will entirely decide on; that is, which of their capitals (cultural, social, and economic) they wish to trade with and how and where they wish to invest. Therefore, a Bourdieuan analysis allows the researcher to incorporate the specific relationships between the researcher and the co-researchers, which are mediated by personal life experiences, motivations and connections (Muhammad, et al., 2015:1051).

4.8.2 Collaborative dialogues with the rural boy children: Bourdieu's symbolic capital, power and violence perspectives

Dialogues were also conducted with boy children, both individually and in groups. Whilst it is specifically mentioned in Chapter 1 that it is biased towards rural girl children, boy children's perspectives on the phenomenon under study are valuable, as reflected in Bourdieuan analysis issues of symbolic capital, power and violence that in the main serve to perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality between girl and boy children, women and men in general. Symbolic capital is, according to Bourdieu "a form of prestige and/or legitimacy that is attached to individuals or groups owing to the forms of capital they are perceived to possess". In this case, families and communities, generally give boy children, the superior status. This prestige or status, bestowed upon boy children can be converted into other forms, when needed (Vincent, 2015:1166). Bourdieu argues that forms of symbolic capital tend to "deny and suppress their instrumentalism and self-interest by presenting themselves as disinterested and of intrinsic worth" (Shucksmith, 2012:383).

It is with what is considered boy children's inherent symbolic capital that discussions on symbolic violence and power surface. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (1992:-167). Bourdieu further states that symbolic power does not usually imply physical violence but rather "refers to domination of subtler forms and 'misrecognition'". Symbolic violence is thus according to Bourdieu, the experience of feeling out of place, anxious, awkward, shamed, and stupid and so on. Because those who experience symbolic violence are both objectively unable to construct appropriate actions (because the resources necessary to do so are unavailable to them) and subjectively committed to, in the sense of recognising, the very rules of distinction by which they are excluded and dominated (Samuels, 2013:401). Thus, "agents are subjected to forms of violence (treated as inferior, denied resources, limited in their social mobility and aspirations), but they do not perceive it that way; rather their situation seems to them to be the natural order of things" (Lo, 2015:130). Thus, the experiences of girl children and the collaborative dialogues with boy children are essential to explore commonly held and accepted attitudes and behaviours entrenched in most communities.

4.8.3 Collaborative dialogues with the rural school management teams

The school management team is comprised of members of the community structures such as representatives of the local NGO and traditional authority as well as other co-researchers such as the members of the SGB, parents, teachers, school principals. Pursuant to the dialogues with rural girl and boy children (4.8.1 & 2), the dialogues with this group of co-researchers (school management team) is fundamental, because for Bourdieu, "symbolic violence results from macro, long-term processes of institutionalisation that are reinforced by micro, daily interactions". This group is located in various institutions ranging from the family to the broader community and its "legitimate" structures, which are an essential component of the rural girl children's daily lives.

The researcher thus postulates that these institutions are fundamentally influential. By virtue of being regarded "legitimate communal institutions", they possess power and thus potentially able to uphold communal attitudes, behaviours and practices wherein "the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural" (Bourdieu, 1998:35).

Hence, Samuels (2013:401) argues therefore that, "...symbolic power exists whenever the arbitrary nature of a field's structure and rules is forgotten, misrecognised as natural and therefore pre-consciously accepted as the unthought premises of social interaction". The author maintains that "in such conditions, the judgements of dominant agents are accepted, often in advance through anticipation, by dominated agents, even when those judgments are contrary to the agents' interest" (Samuels, 2013:401).

It is therefore important to adopt a mode of analysis, which fosters a subtle appreciation of the connections between social class, lived experience and identity (Flemmen, 2013:-326). In summation, I concur with Gale and Parker (2015:92) who state that for Bourdieu the influences of history and tradition are significant in the formation of learners' aspirations. In addition, that the real success comes when the alternative aspirations of marginalised groups, such as rural girl children find expression in the doxa and are accorded the same status and legitimacy as those of the dominant.

4.8.4 FPAR and participant-observations

Observation data presents for the researcher, first-hand encounters with the phenomenon of interest, thus giving him/her the opportunity to use respective knowledge and/or expertise to interpret, especially because they take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs and thus makes the outsider understand the context (Merriam, 2016:138).

Salkind (2014:289) contends, "...participant observation is a difficult method because it requires the researcher to be an active participant in the social network being studied whilst maintaining sufficient objectivity and detachment to be able to evaluate accurately the material being gathered". Whilst participant observation is a time-consuming exercise, it is a fundamentally crucial data generation method. Considering that it provides for both the primary and secondary researchers' personal perspectives and useful information that facilitates community acceptance and integration into its life (Salkind, 2014:289). Participant observation entails participating in activities and environments relevant to the phenomena under study to get insider perspective (Waller, Farquharson, & Dempsey, 2016:110- 111). Which then requires several visits to the research sites to a point that researchers are considered regulars and thus do

not trigger any different attitudes and behaviours from the co-researchers, such that that researcher's visits are considered naturally normal. Thus, the co-researchers can bond and develop relationships that in turn facilitates ease of access to the research sites and information required as well as opportunity for holistic field study for extensive field note taking (Waller, Farquharson, & Dempsey, 2016:110- 111).

For this study, participatory observations are also aligned with the Bourdieuan theory of practice in that they provide for three distinct levels (Mills & Gale, 2010:22):

- an analysis of the field vis-à-vis the field of power;
- mapping out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority of which the field is the site; and
- an analysis of the habitus of agents; the systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a determinate type of social and economic condition.

Our participatory observations satisfy these three distinct levels. Cognisant of the field and the fields of power, the structure of relations and the agents' habitus, the 1st and the 2nd groups of researchers are observed separately, and later together. We even went as far as separating the same group for a more nuanced observation. For example, we deliberately separated girl and boy children and brought them together again to observe the power dynamics play out. We observed learners in the presence of women educators and men educators separately, but also observe them when both women and men educators were present. Thus, these separations and combinations provided for comprehensive participant observations and thus enriched the data generated with this technique.

4.8.5 FPAR and focus groups discussions (FGD)

Focus group discussions are useful in empowering participants, engaging members of a community in collective meaning-making, building community support, and maintaining congruence with communal values held, whilst neutralising the power of the researcher, and normalising participants' experiences (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Importantly though, "the setting for focus groups should provide an environment for frank and open communication" (Salkind, 2014:289). It is for this reason that Salkind alludes to the fact that it is crucially important "to keep distinct groups separate"

as we have done in this study through separating girl children from boy children, as well as the both girl and boy children from educators and other stakeholders. We even separated the different stakeholders themselves as much as we possibly could. However, also important to mention was that there were times that these groups couldn't be separated at their own insistence in that they wanted to be together to 'open up to each other'. For example, the girl children would insist on having women educators present in their FGD as they were comfortable and had issues that they thought would benefit from the audience of the women educators. As suggested by Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey (2016:98), we allowed for the various intersections and a range of groups, each comprised of participants with different and similar attributes. These combinations were vital as they assisted us to "gather information, generate insight, and determine how group members reach decisions through active group interactions" (Salkind, 2014: 289-290). These separations and combinations of our co-researchers served to enhance and enrich our data pertaining to the topic under investigation.

Considering that females and males have different responsibilities in relation to work and family life, and as a result, may be available at different times of the day, our focus groups were scheduled to allow for the availability of rural girl children. We divided our focus groups into two; one was rural girl children only, and the other was composed of rural girl and boy children together. As Morgan et al. (2016:1076) warns, it is important to consider who is present in the room while collecting data during FGDs because of the gendered power relations referred to earlier in the study. If both males and females are present in the same FGD, the quality and accuracy of the data collected may change, as they may be reluctant to share information about their lives or their views in the presence of others (Morgan, et al., 2016:1076). Focus groups, specifically with rural girl and boy children, offered critical insights into important theoretical aspects such as the gendered cultural perspectives on gendered stigmatisation and barriers, inequalities (3.3.5 & 3.3.5.1), issues of power and powerlessness (2.4) amongst rural girl and boy children – all these had to be considered in order to be sensitive to all role-players' potential contributions. In line with this, separate and joint focus groups particularly revealed the gendered dynamics of gendered dominance, marginalisation vulnerabilities (2.7 & 3.3.2).

4.8.6 FPAR and Commonplace Book (participant's own journal-writing)

A commonplace book is described by Datta et al. (2015:588) as “a type of journal that is helpful for collecting personal experiences, feelings, ongoing interaction amongst the co-researchers, and any other information related to the co-researchers’ tradition and culture (e.g. poems, photographs, drawings etc.)”. The use of commonplace books proved to be an exciting and engaging method for both rural girl and boy children. It helped to build trusting relationships with this group of co-researchers as it granted them some form of individual and confidential account and reflection of their lives. Co-researchers, especially rural girl children, appreciated this process as it provided them with the first-time opportunities to write their own stories about themselves in their own words (Datta et al., 2015:588). However, there are associated limitations, for instance that the commonplace book can only be used by co-researchers who can read and write. However, these limitations did not affect this study as all co-researchers could read and write. Anticipating that language might be a limitation, all co-researchers were encouraged to write in their preferred language including the local indigenous languages of Ndebele and Pedi both of which the primary researcher has a full grasp. The commonplace books are customised to ensure uniformity in response (Appendix C).

4.8.7 FPAR and photo-voice

Photo-voice is a flexible qualitative research method, which is advisably “employed with culturally diverse groups to explore and address their respective needs” (Hergenrather, Rhodes & Bardhoshi, 2009:687). This method provides co-researchers an opportunity to take photographs. These visually present their salient concerns and present them in group discussions that empowers them to reflect on personal and community strengths, create critical dialogue, share knowledge about personal and community issues, and develop and host a forum for the presentation of their lived experiences and priorities through self-identified images, language, and context (Hergenrather, et al., 2009: 687-8). With technology such as cell phones and photo-voice (most phones have cameras), it became relatively easy to take photos and videos - in some instances the co-researchers captured their own moments which they they deemed valuable. However, not all learners possessed cell phones with cameras so I handed out cameras to those learners who did not have this device or application.

Photo-voice promotes and maintains the voice of the co-researcher (Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2016:1019). A view also noted in Baker and Wang (2006:1405-6) is that photo-voice allows both adults and youth to express different ideas to those derived from verbal or written interviews, as it situates their voices in the research. It also has the potential to enable co-researchers to depict people and places that are important to them in the context of their ecologies; their land, home, education and wider community in a way other than by using words (Adams et al., 2012; Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005). Co-researchers (rural girl children), took photos of what is in their ecology that they would like to share a story about. These pictures are, then used, for sharing their stories and for data analysis. Photo-voice is also used in SC and individual storytelling (Datta, et al., 2015:589). Drawing from this study, the researcher is of the view that photo-voice is a valuable technique to apply with rural girl children and the other identified groups of co-researchers in the study.

4.8.8 FPAR, interviews and the interviewing protocol.

Merriam (2016:137) states that interviews are a primary source of data in qualitative research, thus to the co-researchers they were fundamental. We, however, conducted interviews only with girl children, individually and in groups. These interviews revealed that it is important to remain conscious of how gendered power relations in the education system can be transformed progressively. It is also clear gauging from these interviews that stronger collaborations lead to better recommendations, more strategic interventions and programmes which we anticipate will inform more effective policies; the inclusion of gender analysis into the education system is at the core of effectively addressing gender inequalities and inequities in education (Morgan, et al., 2016:1070).

As mentioned above, we conducted both individual and group interviews with the different groups of co-researchers that included critical role-players and stakeholders in order to enable 'cycles of interpretation', as articulated in Ponzoni (2016:560). That is, "a series of alternating translations of statements or descriptions in which participants and researcher rephrase each other's knowledge to develop a more common understanding" (Ponzoni, 2016:560).

4.8.9 FPAR, traditional sharing circles (SC) and individual storytelling

Datta et al. (2015:587) advises that SC and individual storytelling processes should be conducted on a collective and individual basis, adding that traditional SC and individual stories comprise one of the most important research methods for conducting research with Indigenous communities. The traditional SC include reflecting upon stories as informal but purposeful conversational methods through a relational process. They are collaborative exercises that allow for reflexivity, an important Bourdieuan theoretical construct (Kovach, 2019:124-129). The SC and individual stories were used in this research in accordance with the rural community's cultural practices (Datta, et al., 2015:587). The individual story-sharing sessions were also conducted in the same way as traditional circles (i.e. drawing on sharing stories from a diverse set of co-researchers, but in dialogues between two individuals as opposed to group SC (Datta et. al., 2015:588).

Qwul'sih'yah'maht and Thomas (in Brown and Strega, 2005:237-242) explain that traditionally, storytelling played an essential role in nurturing and educating, and that the beauty of storytelling is that it allows storytellers to use their own voices and tell their own stories on their own terms. Notwithstanding that storytelling is often deemed illegitimate because it is subjective and thus biased, it however provides an opportunity for communities, as it did with the rural girl children and the other groups of co-researchers, to have their histories documented and included in the written records. In other words, storytelling revises history by naming and including the respective experiences. Because the process of telling the stories is in the hands of the storytellers, they have the opportunity to include in their stories that which they wish, that which they perceive as important, that which they want documented.

With PAR emphasising new knowledge production being within the co-researchers, storytelling is considered as a valuable, empowering data collection method, especially because storytellers hold the power in the research process, they are in control of the story, and the "researcher" becomes the listener or facilitator (Qwul'sih'yah'maht & Thomas, cited in Brown & Strega, 2005:244). Therefore, storytelling uncovers new ways of knowing and remains an important teaching tool. Stories that are told by the rural girl children in this research proved to be teaching tools because through sharing their experiences, the real issues confronting girl

children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies are captured. We also learnt that sharing stories validates the various experiences of the storytellers, the rural girl children, but also has the ability to give others present with similar stories the strength, encouragement, and support they need to tell their stories. As a result, storytelling is indeed considered as a tool of social resistance (Qwul'sih'yah'maht & Thomas, in Brown & Strega, 2005:242). Because it encourages expression and some form of solidarity. Deriving from the fact that if one co-researcher shares a story, the other is motivated to also share; and the more the similarities, the more the willingness to share, thus resisting the socially constructed cultural veils of withholding some information or not being able to freely express oneself (Qwul'sih'yah'maht & Thomas, in Brown & Strega, 2005:242).

The study employed these various methodologies considering the diversity of the co-researchers. For instance, traditional leaders preferred interviews more while girl children preferred photo-voice. In addition, the primary researcher brought magazines to accommodate others to tell their stories and they were allowed to cut and create own pictorial collages. These stories were shared from such collages. It thus made the research site exciting and full of activity and hype. The variety also assisted in validating some of the co-researchers' data; for example, a correlation of respective photo-voice with respective journaling to assess consistency or changes, if any. Lastly, the methodologies also served at convenient points in the research process for assembling all co-researchers to get them to share. For example, we used storytelling circles with parents and teachers to facilitate a collective interaction.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS IN A BOURDIEUIAN FEMINISED PAR ON GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES

Ackerly and True (2010:200) state that methods for data collection are inextricably linked to methods of data analysis. According to Kramer, Kramer, Garcí'a-Iriarte and Hammel (2015:264), data analysis in the PAR process should be about inclusion, that is, going beyond providing basic access and ensuring the authentic engagement of people, to make links between data collected and actions taken, and to ground the interpretation of data in lived experiences (Kramer et al., 2015:264).

Strega, cited in Brown and Strega (2005:208) notes, "the agenda of critical social science is to uncover myths, reveal hidden truths, and help people change the world

for themselves. It involves two steps: accurately describing reality, and then applying that accurate description to suggest or undertake action. In critical social science, this is called praxis; “explanations are valued when they help people to understand the world and take action to change it” (Strega, in Brown and Strega, 2005:208). Therefore, critical discourse analysis (CDA), with its potential to uncover and deconstruct meanings (Ackerly & True, 2010:200) is valuable. Critiquing existing social relations such as those that relate to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, is done so in order to facilitate transformation where necessary, thus making into cognisance the fact that from a critical perspective, research must be about empowering those considered marginalised and promoting action against inequities, gender inequalities as emphasised in this study.

Having discussed the challenges and complexities of PAR, and the need to adequately pay attention to the positionality of both the researcher and the groups of co-researchers, questions about the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers arise, such as whose voice(s) the research (re)presents (Strega, in Brown & Strega, 2005:208). Validating (Morgan et al., 2016:1076) that the researchers’ own underlying gender biases and assumptions may also affect data analysis and results.

Morgan et al. (2016:1071) suggests that researchers new to gender may find gender frameworks particularly useful in helping to focus their thinking on key aspects of gender power relations. Adding that any framework used may need further adaptation to be fully effective in understanding the complex power relations that characterise gender inequalities and inequities within the educational system. Ofcourse, bearing in mind that when choosing or adapting a framework it is important to understand its underlying principles or theoretical underpinnings, as each framework will differ in its assumption. A gender framework that appeals is the one that shares both a Bourdieuan theory of practice and feminist orientations.

4.9.1 Considering gender frameworks for analysing data in a feminised Bourdieuan PAR study

Throughout the study, I have consistently framed and grounded our reflections of girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from Bourdieu and feminist orientations (chapters 1 & 2). Further, in chapter 3, I have purposely premised these reflections to clearly articulate the study’s gender stance to mean a move from

“working with women and girls to theorising gender” (Maguire, in Reason & Bradbury, 2012: 61) and thus include men and boys. Against this backdrop, the consideration for gender frameworks from this gender perspective, seeks to deconstruct and analyse the discourse to allow for an understanding of the complexity of gendered power relations in the participation process (Lennie, 1999:101). It is thus important not to compromise our data analysis, by the often-inherent gendered and rural complexities, realities and particularities. Therefore, the gendered deconstruction and discourse analysis has the ability to illustrate the gaps, silences, ambiguities, and paradoxes in these discourses (Lennie, 1999:101).

Drawing from Payne (2014:958-9) and Bacchi (2009:2) we suggest the ‘*What is the Problem Represented*’ (WPR) as a relevant and potentially helpful part of the gender framework. The WPR approach to policy analysis would assist, in our opinion, to uncover the gendered normative assumptions embedded in representations of policy problems. Particularly valuable in an appraisal of policymaking and policy agendas where the problem itself seems obvious, and unproblematic (Payne, 2014:958-9) as is the case with this study. The WPR framework further allows us to interrogate the normalcy as stated in 2.7.1, and the Bourdieuan doxa, the taken-for-granted (2.8.1.1). These are often embedded in gender equality policies such as the meaning of gender equality, the goals of gender mainstreaming in an education context, and the interpretation of significant gender differences in education. Gender equality strategies and their implementation are examples of ‘knowledge’ transfer where implicit and embedded ‘knowledges’ are not questioned within policymaking, but are instead repeated and reiterated by the policies they produce. Bacchi (2009:2) outlines six questions concerning the representation of ‘problems’ within policymaking and policy proposals, which form the framework of the WPR approach to policy analysis:

- (1) What is the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
- (2) What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
- (3) How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
- (4) What is left unproblematic in this representation, that is, where are the silences?
- (5) What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

(6) How and where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended, and how could it be disrupted?

These questions, Bacchi (2009:44) maintains do more than simply identify the importance of the ways in which policies represent the problem they are aiming to address. The WPR framework takes the side of those who are harmed, or disadvantaged and marginalised (e.g. girl children in rural ecologies). Thus the WPR "also aims to elucidate implicit or unexplored assumptions, as well as what has been silenced by policy, while locating this exploration within the context of power relations and the discursive impact of policy's representation of the problem" (Bacchi, 2009:44). This study will therefore use some of these questions in our data analysis on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies in the following chapter (5).

4.9.2 Critical discourse analysis (CDA) centred on Bourdieuan and feminist empowerment agenda

In this study, CDA is meant to provide a critical social analysis to the myriad gendered issues with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Thus, CDA's strength in this study is mostly its ability to oscillate between structures of social practice and its focus on strategies of social agents that manifest between discourses (Fairclough, in Gee & Hanford, 2012:12). As such, CDA fits in well with the study's theoretical framework, Bourdieu's theory of practice, as CDA is "an effective means for interrogating social relations and power structures in educational contexts" (Brooks, 2015:1). Hjelm (2013:871) states that CDA equally emphasises empowerment as a central aspect in the collation and interpretation of the data emanating from the research project. The empowerment component is appropriate when related to PAR's central tenets and feminist orientations considering that this is a FPAR study. Thus, it is congruent to the Bourdieuan theory of practice and the feminist emancipation and empowerment agenda.

Appreciating the feminist-orientation of the study, we continuously reflect on it in the data generation and analysis process through constantly and consistently considering the rights and position of girl children in rural ecologies. Alabi and Alabi (2013:7) contend our data analysis shall, as feminism does, locate the "systems of belief and theories that pay special attention to women's [and girls] rights and women's [and girls' position] in culture and society". Thus for us, CDA allows us scrutiny of "issues of

[gendered] power and ideology” which are fundamentally important for a gendered study such as this one. Specifically so because CDA “documents the subtle but powerful ways in which political and class commitments are (re-)produced in the forms of thinking that are valued in schools and societies” (Rogers & Schaenen, 2014:5). Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the enquiry reflects in its data analysis, as Caxaj (2015:9-10) maintains “a community-informed and collaborative research process [that] ensure[s] more diverse, rigorous, and accountable findings and understandings.

4.9.3 CDA and the power of language with feminised Bourdieuan theory of practice considerations

We further contextualise CDA to include elements from the Bourdieuan theory of practice. Neuendorf (2017:11) suggests that the process of CDA “demands of the researcher to be a competent language user” because it “engages in characteristics of manifest language and word use...through consistency and connection of words to theme analysis of content and the establishment of central terms”. The researcher in this instance considers herself competent in the three predominant languages used in the communities that constitute the research sites; namely, isiNdebele, Sepedi and Setswana and the local dialect of sekgatla, which is a mixture of Sepedi and Setswana.

Mindful that this is a Bourdieuan analysis, agency and reflexivity are essential components to the data analysis process. Reflexivity is relevant as far as how my prior experiences and knowledge as the primary researcher inform and influence my interpretation of findings. To this end, I wish to reiterate that which I have mentioned in (1.12) of this study, that I am a gender activist with values, beliefs and consciousness centred on women’s empowerment and gender equality across all spheres of life. This is appropriate to what Foss (2018:23) alludes to when he states that applying activism in analysis requires, amongst others, reasonable inference and coherence. The agency aspect is essential because, as the author contends, CDA presents an opportunity in data analysis for researchers and practitioners “to serve as change agents and engage activism to transform society” (Foss, 2018:27). Therefore, ensuring that rural girl children’s agency is recognised through affirming their voices in informing and shaping their own transformation agenda remains fundamental throughout the study.

It is fundamentally important to reflect on language as one of the critically important social traits because Van Dijk (in Tennen, Hamilton & Schiffrin, 2015:356) attests that communication, often in the form of language, is an important symbolic resource which “most people only have active control over” which is a view that PAR and feminism share in common. Therefore, considering the study’s FPAR perspectives, language in CDA is used to “advance the rich and nuanced analysis of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse “[often used in] sustaining hierarchically gendered social orders” (Lazar, 2007:141). Bourdieu’s fundamental question on language is its legitimacy, that is, ‘whose language is legitimate’? (Grant & Wong, in Albright & Luke, 2008:163). I therefore argue that Bourdieu’s questioning is extended to, questioning the legitimacy of gendered language that often entrenches bias, discrimination, and overall inequality. Thus CDA in the feminised Bourdieuian perspectives seeks to “examine the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and power asymmetries get discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and contested in specific communities and discourse contexts” (Lazar, in Ehrlich, Meyerhoff & Holmes, 2014:182). In this study, language issues are important as it relates to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Noting the interconnection between language, gendered power and power relations, Bourdieu’s constructs of symbolic capital and power come to the fore. Bourdieu (2000a:83) claims, “...symbolic violence is the power [wherein] language is exercised through rational communication”. Thus for Bourdieu “to speak of ‘open and egalitarian structures of communication’ does not simply denote a certain structuring of, for example, the public sphere, but also a cognitive dimension able to facilitate (or not) the inclusion of perspectives, for example through metaphors and narrative schemes dominating certain groups” (2000a:83). It is thus using CDA with feminised Bourdieuian perspectives that we seek to ensure the inclusion of rural girl children’s voices, in order to “re-position girls and [facilitate] youth participation” (Mitchell, Stuart, Moletsane, & Nkanyana, 2006:267). Communication is vital because girls’ voices are seldom heard, exacerbated by poverty, disadvantages, and related social exclusion in their daily lives. It is thus my contention that CDA in this context has the ability to reveal the complex, multiple and diverse experiences (Beazley, 2015:306) and issues with regard to rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

4.10 DATA GENERATION PROCESSES: OVERVIEW ON SAMPLING OF RESEARCH SITES AND CO-RESEARCHERS

As detailed in chapter two of this study, this FPAR study seeks to delve deeper into the phenomenon of rural girl children's access to sustainable learning with the aim of proposing a framework for policy and practice. Therefore, it is important to state that the data presented in the next chapter (5) is generated through using FPAR data generation methods such as focus groups, individual and group dialogues, observations, traditional story-telling circles and photo-voice as outlined.

The two groups of co-researchers outlined in 1.9 of the study became part of the study through non-probability, purposive sampling with snowball effects. The snowball effect is largely because other co-researchers participated in the study after being pointed at by those who were already participating. Based on the primary researcher's judgement of what is considered typical units of study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:172), girl children in primary schools in grades 6 and 7, and in grades 11 and 12 at the target schools were identified as main co-researchers.

However, following a natural process that flows from the preliminary consultative phase wherein co-researchers are involved in informing and shaping the purpose of the study, boy children were identified and included as co-researchers. It is thus agreed that despite the study being rural girl children-focused, boy children's inclusion would contribute to understanding issues confronting girl children better as they share and interact with the same ecologies. In addition, the study had initially intended to focus on primary schools only. Thus, another snowball effect emanated from the preliminary (consultative) phase wherein high schools, and in particular grades 11 and 12 learners were also identified as co-researchers. We however acknowledge that with the chosen sampling method, inevitably, "there might be sampling errors due to chance factors [such as] to include or not including one element or another" (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:174). However, forthrightly, the researcher would like to indicate that "the sample size is also largely influenced and guided by the degree of variability and diversity in the target population and the possibilities of the different variables that might potentially emerge" (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:174). Importantly, this is a PAR study, the sample is meant to specifically capture and represent the "rural girl children's voices" (Cassell, 2015:33).

4.10.1 Contextualising the study's research sites and co-researchers

Noting, "...fieldwork is a delicate balance between the interesting, workable and acceptable ingredients in knowledge production" (Silverman, 2017:39), careful consideration is given to the selection of research sites as the basis for fieldwork for this study. The research sites were identified through a consultative meeting with the Nkangala District Office of the MDoE, and motivating that the DoE could benefit from the research.

At the Nkangala Regional Office of the MDoE, the consultative meeting with the Regional Director, the Head of Transformation, and the Head of Communications, identified and confirmed the two predominantly rural circuit offices; namely, Kwaggafontein East and Nokaneng, which are Thembisile Hani and Dr J. S. Moroka Local Municipality respectively. Thus throughout this study, the Region will be referred to as the MDOE (Nkangala Regional Office) as our primary point of interface with the MDoE. The Region's preliminary planning (consultative) phases also confirmed the need to focus on a primary and secondary school in each circuit. The motivations put forth were:

- Focusing on both levels of schooling fosters a comprehensive outlook and situational analysis on issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies both at primary and secondary school level;
- Because these are two different circuits in two different local municipalities (although they are both rural), their developmental challenges could be unique with different lessons to learn from both; and
- The two levels (if not both) need future policy and practice interventions.

It is however important to highlight that the communities chosen share several geographical characteristics and features that make for an interesting and informative study. The Dr J. S. Moroka research sites are located in the cross-border communities that are situated in between three provinces: Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The municipality services are provided by Bela-Bela Local Municipality in Gauteng, education is serviced by Mpumalanga in the MDoE Nkangala Regional Office, Nokaneng Circuit, for Social Development and Health the community is serviced by Limpopo Provincial Government, Waterburg District. On the side, Thembisile Hani

research sites are located at the border of Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces but is however serviced by Mpumalanga Provincial Government in all service delivery aspects. However, both these communities are secluded, with far-flung villages having vast distances between communities within the same municipality. The names of the schools that are research sites are withheld due to ethical considerations.

4.10.1.1 Grounding the study’s primary co-researchers

The study focuses on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Therefore, rural girl children and the identified role-players and stakeholders in rural ecologies are the study’s secondary co-researchers (1.9). I will thus throughout the study refer to myself as the primary researcher, and other participants as co-researchers. However, also for ease of reference, I allocate pseudonyms/codes, in addition to anonymity and confidentiality considerations. For the purpose of grounding this analysis, the following table presents an overview of the gendered enrolment numbers per school. The total number of research sites in this study is four, with two primary and two high schools with the overall presentation of co-researchers broken down as follows:

Table 4.1: Overall composition breakdown of 1st group of co-researchers

Name of School	Municipality and Circuit	Grade	Girls	Boys	Total
DMPS01	Dr J. S. Moroka, Nokaneng	6	21	19	30
		7	25	17	42
THPM01	Thembisile Hani, Kwaggafontein B	6	23	19	41
TOTAL		7	20	19	39
DMHS02	Dr J. S. Moroka, Nokaneng	11	23	17	40
		12	25	22	47
THHS02	Thembisile Hani,	11	22	13	35

	Kwaggafontein B				
TOTALS		12	17	11	28

Having mentioned in (1.9) that the co-researchers have been divided into two groups, the breakdown of the 2nd group of co-researchers is as follows:

Table 4.2: Overall composition breakdown of 2nd group of co-researchers

Institution/ organisation	Municipality and Circuit	Position	Female	Male	Total
DM01	Nokaneng	Principal LO Educator/HOD	x x		2
TH01	Kwagga East E	Principal LO Educator	x		2
DM02	Nokaneng	Principal LO Educator/HOD Two educators One educator	 x x x	x	5
TH02	Kwagga East E	Principal LO Educator/HOD Two Educator Two Educator	 x x x	x	6
DM03	Marapyane	Principal LO Educator/HOD Two Educators Two Educators	x x x		6
Traditional authority/uBukhos i	Thembisile Hani	Traditional Chiefs		x	15

SGB	Dr J. S. Moroka Thembisile			x	6
			x	x	2
NGO	Thembisile Hani	Director	x		1
DSD			x		2
National DOE	Pretoria	Deputy Director	x		1
Mpumalanga DoE (Provincial Office)	Nelspruit	Director		x	1
Nkangala DoE (Regional Office)	Kwamhlanga	Regional Director		x	1
		Manager: Transformation	x		1
		Manager: Communications	x		1
		s	x		1
		Circuit Manager Circuit Manager District	x		1

4.10.1.2 Gaining entry: the granting of permissions.

The preliminary planning and consultative processes mentioned above included the request and granting of permission by the Nkangala District MDoE (Appendix D). The permission facilitated access to the relevant officials (and sites) in Nokaneng and Kwaggafontein B. Those were the Directors and Circuit managers for the two circuits respectively facilitated access to the research sites mentioned above. The Heads of Communications and Transformation in the Nkangala District were thus key to introducing the primary researcher to the school management teams (SMTs) led by the school principals in all respective research sites. An important aspect with regard to gaining access is ensuring that all co-researchers sign the permission letters granting their voluntary permission.

With the permission MDoE granted, the next step comprised of the introductory sessions held with respective school principals. In these sessions, we thoroughly engaged in the logistics of the research project; and the school principals shaped and informed the research focus and the data generation process rollout. For instance, the school principals indicated the times and subject periods that would be ideal for the sessions with the members of their respective SMTs. They also undertook to first sign their permission form acknowledging and agreeing to be part of the research study (Appendix E).

This extended to accessing the teachers including the relevant head of departments and the parent members of the SGB who all agreed to be co-researchers and thus signed their consent forms (Appendix F). In all these meetings, the research project was presented for interaction. The SMTs in appreciating the intervention, suggested that boy children be included in the same identified grades and schools. As one Life Orientation Head of Department (LO HOD) argued: *“...we fully agree with the focus on girl children, we know they have big very big challenges they face those everyday but boy children and empowering those especially how they view and regard girls nje kubalulekile ... [It is important] and our suggestion...I think my colleagues will agree is to include them as they will help us understand if there is anything we must do in future...they are very lost”*

The same sentiments were echoed by several other educators who emphasised and suggested that boy children should be included, saying *“...it’s a smaller number than the girl children and even better should be those in the same grades as those of girl children you will be working with”*. The SMT member added *“...help us understand how young boys view young girls from an early age...that are we still having patriarchal thinking in this time and era and at this age...which I most certainly know we do...just to ascertain this”*. Thus, boy children were included as co-researchers. However, that the focus on them would not be as intense as that of girl children. The active involvement and participation of the SMTs facilitated buy-in, which helped to smoothen the processes. All records (and their safekeeping) as part of the control mechanisms were done to validate findings.

During consultation phases, another high school within close proximity with the other schools was identified. It is in the same Dr JS Moroka District and municipality, though

having different circuit offices - it falls under the Marapyane Circuit Office. The rationale to have the school included is the fact that it is amongst the schools in the District with high teenage pregnancies and the only high school with a female principal. Teenage pregnancies in this particular high school occur between the ages of 13-16. Therefore, according to the co-researchers, it will potentially enrich the study in understanding other issues with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Thus, the Region granted permission for the inclusion of the school, thus the necessary permissions and other administrative requirements were adhered to. Herewith are the co-researchers' breakdown.

Table 4.3: 1st group of co-researchers' composition breakdown (additional research site).

Institution/ organisation	Municipality and Circuit	Position	Female	Male	Total
DMHS03	Dr J. S. Moroka, Marapyane	Principal LO Educator/HO D	x x		
		SGB	6	0	6

Table 4.4: 2nd group of co-researchers (additional research site).

Name of School	Municipality and Circuit	Grade	Girls	Boys	Total
DMHS03	Dr J. S. Moroka, Marapyane	11	22	18	40
		12	20	19	39

4.10.1.3 Research permissions: traditional authorities, local NGO, local municipalities and DSD in the respective communities

Pursuant to the details given for the 1st group of co-researchers, another set of consent forms were given to officials of the local tribal authorities, municipalities, Department of Social Development, and the NGO in the focus communities. Translated versions were provided to accommodate all groups of linguistic ability and preference.

Therefore, in the initial meetings (besides language) we paid high attention to cultural beliefs and practices. That included respecting the sessions with traditional leaders by adhering to the traditional the dress code, which included covering my head with the headscarf, my shoulders with a blanket, and wearing long dress. This is worth mentioning especially in the context of respectful community engagements, which is an essential component of PAR. Thus, respecting each group with regard to their respective set of processes and rules is fundamental to gaining entry.

The Regional Office that was the research project's hosting district convened and facilitated a meeting to introduce the study's intentions, processes and the primary researcher to the local stakeholders. In that meeting, the respective representatives stated that they agree to be co-researchers at the request of the District. One stakeholder commented: ***"...thina sihlala eMakhayeni manjesi ukusebenzisana nayo yonke iminyango ka Gulumente kubekiwe...kanjalo siyakwazi ukuthola ulwazi, usizo nencxaso ezothuthukisa impilo zethu nabobonke abahlala emakhaya. Sizokujabulela ukuba yinxenye yalesifundo kuyenzeke ilethe ushintjo noma usizo ngomuso"*** ("We are a rural people and for us working together is important...working with various government departments is a given as it is through such that we can get information, assistance and support to improve our lives...the lives of all those living in rural areas so we really love to take part in the research project as it might bring change...it might bring help in the future").

Against this backdrop, the primary researcher was thus granted an opportunity to present the study's topic and aim/objectives, which was fully embraced and supported. In addition, the stakeholders suggested the following with regard to permission granting:

- That whilst they agree to give permission to be co-researchers, the primary researcher should, through the Regional Office set another meeting to directly present the research to the respective local community traditional leader (local chief/induna);
- That all stakeholders must give formal (institutional) permission on their letterheads as did the respective schools whilst also signing respective individual permission granting documents;

- That all interactions and engagements are done in the respective local languages (isiNdebele, Sepedi, isiZulu, Sepedi and Setswana) and in their respective settings;
- That the suggested data generation processes are scheduled and provide availability times so that they do not interfere with their daily duties and schedules; and
- Emphasis was placed on completion, and the primary researcher should convene the same meeting to present the results so that they can (where possible) influence change and/or implementation of recommendations.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter grounded the research study as a qualitative inquiry that adopted PAR as its methodological approach. The adoption of PAR is motivated in this study, by emphasising its fundamental principles of collaboration, reflection, democracy, equity, empowerment and emancipation. The chapter further provided a synthesis of PAR as premised on the Bourdieuan theory of practice with feminist orientations. It furthermore cemented the Bourdieuan theory of practice, especially its perspective of structure, practices, the rules of the game in the field of play to provide a nuanced understanding of the fact that gender and power are interrelated and inter-dependent. It is with this understanding that the chapter articulated in its methodologies a collective inquiry shaped and informed by the concerns, views and considerations of the all the groups of co-researchers. The primary researcher was persuaded to change the research plan to accommodate other co-researchers. It is also for that reason; the study employed the various forms of methodologies, from traditional story telling through to photo-voice to ensure that these social engagements, interactions and lived experiences are appropriately captured in ways best preferred by respective groups. Chapter 5 attempts to analyse the data generated from these collaborations and reflections. The analysis will thus provide an overview of the current issues confronting girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. At the same time, the data analysis would begin to inform policy and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

We have discussed in detail CDA from PAR perspectives in Chapter 4. Data generated in this chapter stimulate debates and dialogues that suggest ideas for transformation, specifically with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Further, the data presented, analysed and interpreted in this chapter draws from qualitative studies' multiple data generation methods and techniques as outlined in chapter 4 of this study. Importantly, all data generated, ranging from individual and group dialogues through to journals and photo-voice, were recorded with a combination of both audio and manuscript for purposes of thorough analysis and future record-keeping.

It is also important to state that the data generation in this study is a collaborative process between the primary researcher and both groups of co-researchers. Group dialogues with the first group of co-researchers were conducted in English as their preferred medium of communication, though the local Sepedi and Isindele languages were accommodated. Most points of emphasis were done in the respective indigenous languages for clarity and intensity. However, in the same group, the representatives of traditional authorities insisted on the use of their respective indigenous language as that for them it allowed for clear expression. Interestingly, that was the case with the second group of co-researchers, which is, comprised of both girl and boy learners. They preferred their respective indigenous languages for engagements and interactions, and only used English for additional clarity. It is for this reason that in this chapter, we try to preserve the originality of the data through presenting it in the indigenous language that it was presented in. We do that pursuant to our FPAR assertions raised throughout the study, which insists on participation and process (4.2.2). Also of importance is Bourdieu's thrust on agency, which thus centres the voices of the rural girl children. We will therefore throughout the chapter present data in Sepedi and Isindebele with translations attached as appendices. Guided by CDA as indicated in the previous chapter, I wish to re-emphasise my positionality and clarify my stance as we begin with data analysis.

Figure 5.1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY'S DATA GENERATION PROCESSES

Data generation method	Data generation tool/instrument	Rationale	Target co-researchers	Dates and Duration	Total
Observations conducted in the schools during classes & breaks, traditional authorities meetings, walkabouts in the community and visiting a few families with both girl and boy children.	Observation guide and field journal for note-taking	The observations cut across all other data generation methods – the primary would be able to observe the salient features in interactions & those considered routine such greetings, popular culture, gestures and the way of telling stories (Rhymes, 2016)	All groups of co-researchers	4 weeks between end July & end of September 2018.	8
Focus group and Individual dialogues	Focus group guide and dialogue sheets	These are considered as “personalised approval to building trust” (Silverman, 2017:39), to establishing rapport and connection with the co-researchers. These are meant to stimulate the sharing of experiences and knowledge through dialogues	Girl and boy learners co-researchers	08 weeks From end July to end September 2018	8
Traditional Story-telling Circles	Story-telling guide	To allow a platform for more personal stories through individual and peer sharing	Learners' co-researchers	4 weeks Between end July & end of September 2018	8

		and interaction so that individual stories are told and acknowledged.			
Photo-voice	Self-selected photos or magazine cut-outs collaged (and put) on posters to tell a story (only girl and boy children learners)	To allow personalised reflections	Learners' co-researchers	4 weeks between end of July & end September 2018	2 sessions, 1 with girls another with boys.
Month-long Journals/diaries	Diary sheets	More in-depth analysis of learners as diaries are sacred/intimate spaces of reflection	Learners co-researchers	4–5 weeks between end July & end of September 2018	1 each learner

We use a variety of data generation methods to maximise, enhance and ensure that adequate data is generated. Creswell (2015:135) advises researchers to reach, “a point in data [generation] when the researcher has gathered adequate data from various groups of co-researchers to a point that addition of new co-researchers does not substantially add to the codes or themes developed”. The researcher also employed the use of telephone interviews as a mechanism for “compensating distance and time pressures” (Cassell, 2015:27) for additional clarity required especially from the 2nd group of co-researchers, mainly because the research sites are all in far-flung rural areas with the nearest being 160 kilometres and the furthest being 440 kilometres (return) for the primary-researcher.

5.2.1 Collating the generated data on rural girl children: CDA for PAR study in context

Mindful that this is a PAR study, we maintain our intention to “develop meaningful partnerships toward shared findings and community deliverables” (Caxaj, 2015:6). We begin the analysis process through collating all data emanating from all our various data generation tools and methods. Thus, in analysing the generated data, we develop a coding scheme with units of analysis and descriptions that develop and assists in finding data patterns and emerging themes (Foss, 2018:27).

Carpendale, Hinrichs, Knudsen, Thudt and Tory (2017:2) advise that “coding, clustering and categorising are skills that can be learned and practised”. Thus, we collectively embarked on a learning exercise with both groups of co-researchers. All data collated is collectively categorised and given themes. Through practice and corrections, we glean through the pool of information that has been generated through all the data generation methods outlined in 5.2 above. We use that to arrive at information that we consider relevant, useful and can substantiate a qualitative claim (Johnstone, 2018:18-30). Our data presentation is however, guided by the study’s objectives outlined in 1.5 of this study which are:

- To conduct a situational analysis of the rural learning ecologies to build a comprehensive understanding into issues pertaining to rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning ecologies;
- To provide practical evidence of opportunities in rural learning ecologies resulting from the infusion of a Bourdieuan analysis to enhance rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning ecologies;
- To determine possible ways to actively involve girl children in rural ecologies in seeking alternative interventions to improve their access to sustainable learning;
- To understand contexts and circumstances under which identified role-players in rural learning ecologies could actively and positively shape and inform issues of girl children’s access to sustainable learning;
- To develop and build-in lessons learnt from the Bourdieuan analysis to contextualise and enhance rural strategies and policy-relevant initiatives focusing on girl children’s access to sustainable learning; and
- To propose a framework for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan perspective.

5.3 TO CONDUCT A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS IN ORDER TO BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING

Drawing from the stories shared in individual and group dialogues, girl children continue to shoulder the burden of domestic chores and responsibilities. Important to

separate domestic chores from domestic responsibilities. In this study, our interpretations of domestic chores entails girl children's active participation in fetching water, firewood, cleaning, cooking as well as general house-keeping; while domestic responsibilities entail girl children actively ensuring family sustenance including deciding on and fending for food or (meals) for the household on a daily basis. This is common to rural girl children, both in primary and high schools as there are similar trends and patterns regarding their occupation with domestic chores and responsibilities.

Many co-researchers cited that **“ga o le ngwanyana otshwanetse o tsebe mmereko wa mo ntlong kaofela...okgone go hlatswa dibjana, gokolomaka ntlo, go hlatswa diaparo, go-ironer, go apeya, le go hlokomela ka gae”**. When probed further what entails **“go hlokomela ka gae?”** The responses range from **“...nje ngami ngisala nabantwana basekhaya (odade nabafowethu), ngoba uMa usebenza ePitori...uhamba ekuseni ngePutco abuye entabama selishonile ilanga...kukimi ukuthi abantwana abangilamayo ngiyabalungisa ukuya esikolweni, ngibayenzele umdoko noma bebuya esikolweni kanjalo mele ngibayenzele ukudla...ngiqalise phantsi ngikhelele amanzi...ngilungisele ukuzopheka ebusuku.”** Whilst another indicates that **“...ke shala lenkoko fela...Mma obowa mafelong a kgwedi o berekela Pitori...Nkoko o nwa dipilisi bjanong pele ke eya sekolong ke tshwanela go mo apeyela motogo akgone gonwa ditlhare e be ke kolomaka gore ge ke bowa sekolong ke se ke ka ba le mmereko omontji ke kgone go dira di-homework, g eke fetja ke be ke kgelela metsi ke apeya...ka nako enngwe ke kgelela metsi g eke bowa pele ke dira di Homework...mara ke lapa ka pela that is why ke thoma ka tjona diHomework pele...”**

Overall, as expected of all family members, girl children are contributing members of family and communal life, evident in the data presented in the following sections.

5.3.1 Unequal gendered domestic chores and responsibilities between girl and boy children in rural families and communities

There are more domestic chores and responsibilities allocated to girl children in rural ecologies. The girl children perceive these allocations as both gendered and unequal. Deriving from their assertions that **“...mmereko wa rona banyana wa kgale le kgale wa setso and setswile fashion ke go kolomaka le go apeya, ba bangwe re kgelela**

metse ka gore metse ke problem ekgolo mo motseng wa rena...aphela a sego". Another adding with presenting a picture that **"ungaboni lamapompi enje, akaphumi amanzi... ungathatha izigubhu uhlale angazi iskhathi esingakanani kuphuma icqontsi nge cqontsi (drop by drop) if akhona or angaphumi (niks) santlobo...bona lesithombe...ngime 2hrs yonke ephuma nge contsi..."**



Picture 1: Communal water taps in one rural village under study.

She continued **"...manje thina matombazana sisebenza ngawo amanzi noma ungafuni asithi mhlambe uthi abafowenu bakulekelele ngokukha amanzi uyazibambezele ngoba umsebenzi wo kupheka nokucleaner ngowethu mantomabazana...bayadlala endleleni...abaphuthumi..."** That besides the sometimes dry taps and long wait at the communal taps because water comes out in drops, as girl children water is an important resource that they use to cook, clean as that's their home chores. And that even if one is to ask her brothers to help with water, it equals to wasting time as they play along the way and take time. Thereby delaying the home chores, cleaning and cooking as that is generally the girl children's chores.

Amongst the girl children themselves there are disagreements emanating from the dialogues. Others argue that **"...ga se mmereko wa banenyana fela go apeya le go kolomaka, ke sekgale seo and se a bhora ka gore dilo difetogile bjanong so le bona bashimane ba tshwanetje go rutwa go itirela le go thusha ka mmereko wa montlong ka gore le rena re tsena sekolo re nyaka go bala le go dira dihomework go tswana le bona...ba dira ka bomu (they are just spoilt)...le bona ban a le matsogo (they also have hands)"** asserts another co-researcher. At the end of the discussion the co-researchers feel that it is unfair that **"bashimane mmereko wa bona ke eng...go ja fela...ga ke dumele, ba apelwa, bahlatswetjwa ba a kolomakelwa...ke yona eo? Kaofela re tsena sekolo, kaofela re batho re a**

lapa...ntho e ya gore bashimane this banyana that ke ya kgale...it must change...e gatella rena banyana and mo magaeng ba e rata too much...ba re o tlabo mosadi wa popota...wa nnete...ke mang areng ke nyaka go ba mosadi...mosadi wa mang ka gore ke sa lengwanenyana...ebile ga ken a bothata". The co-researchers (rural girl children in this instance feels that it is an unfair gender expectations and too backwards that they are expected to shoulder all the domestic chores. In their view, boys have hands and must equally contribute to these chores. They further dispute the fact that excelling in domestic chores makes one a good woman. Interestingly asking a poignant question as to "who said they want to be women...suggesting they are comfortable with being girls."

In summary, with this part of the dialogues, rural girl children emphasised their preoccupation with domestic chores. These are, according to them time-consuming and cumbersome as they equally value and need time for their academic work. In their view, these chores are unequal and gendered. Unequal because boys are unfairly exonerated from these chores, hence "spoilt" as they mention. *Gendered* because these chores are dictated to by culture and tradition and not relevant in present day living. Rural girl children also assert the fact that there is nothing about being able to do domestic chores that makes them "good women" as they are not interested in being women as they are still girl children and are comfortable.

5.3.1.1 Rural girl children and the difficult balancing act: the home chores, responsibilities, regular school attendance and academic performance

Girl children mention that the domestic chores (5.3.1) not only takes up more of their time, but that they also indicate that it is difficult for them to balance their domestic chores and responsibilities with academic demands. The narratives shared thus demonstrates that girl childrens' attempt at balancing all these chores and responsibilities is indeed a challenging and difficult act. A daily juggle **between "go kga metse, go besa mollo, go thusa Nkoko go ya kliniki, go cleaner ha ke bowa sekolong [indeed makes for] ...ke a lofa ha ke felesetsa Mma [or] nkoko kliniki..."** is cumbersome. It is against this backdrop that the discussion is separated between domestic chores and responsibilities to clearly illuminate girl children's balancing act. In situations such as the one highlighted (5.3 & 5.3.1) above, most parents especially mothers, work distances away from home and are in stay-in employment. In some cases, the main caregiver is ailing, or has passed away. For

instance, an individual, one-on-one with one girl child co-researcher revealed that, **“Mme o tlhokafetje mengwaga e meraro efitileng. Ke setse le ntate-mogolo le bana ba ko gae...seemo sa bophelo sa ntate-mogolo ga se monate...wa fokola and ke nna ke tshwanelang go lofa ke mo ise kliniki...ge a se monate ga ke ye sekolong...class teacher wa ka wa se tseba seemo s aka...ga ke rate go lofa so ge a bona ke satle watseba gora gore ntate-mogolo otlhakatlhakane. Mo gare ga moo ke tshwanetse ke kolomake...ntlo ya ko gae ke mmu ea wa, ko kgella metse gore bana batlhape, ke nyake dikgong, ke apeye baje...ga re na electricity...di-social workers ga dithusi bjalo bjalo ka gore batseya nako ba sa tle...”** Whereas, in a focus group discussion with girl children, co-researchers added stating that **“ thina sithanda isikolo futhi kakhulu thina amantombazana and futhi sihlakaniphile kodwa isimo sasekhaya siyasisinda ngoba nasekhaya yithi asibhekane nokupheka, ukunakekela uGogo nabafowethu,ukucleaner, ukukha amnzi ngoba ahlala enyekho, izinkuni ngoba igezi iyadura ngapha mahomework, amatest naMaexams ngisamele ngifunde...kunuzima kakhulu angifuni ukukutjela amanga sisi...”**

Thus, girl children are not only expected to take over the domestic chores and responsibilities, but to also balance that with school attendance and satisfactory academic performance. That on its own creates for girl children, a difficulty in balancing the demanding household chores and the equally demanding schoolwork. However, they consider these domestic activities as an informal learning platform, and thus, according to girl children, important in moulding them for the future. However, they emphasise that the future does not necessarily refer to being wives, as they strongly believe that boys should also learn domestic chores for their future. For instance, **“...who will clean and wash for them at tertiary if they don't learn now...”** asked one co-researcher.

5.3.1.2 Rural girl children: caring for the elderly and the sick in rural households

From the data (5.3.1 & 5.3.1.1), girl children's caring for the elderly as well as the sickly is increasingly becoming a trend in rural ecologies. This is a worrying trend with direct negative impacts on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. As one co-researcher asserts **“mama go tlhokomela motho o a lwalang go boima...ke e bone ka mme waka...ke ne ke sa ye sekolong ha aya kliniki ke**

tshwanela go mo felesetsa...ka mo everyday ke tshwanetse ke bone hore ojele akgone ho nwa dipilisi ha ke bowa sekolong ke fetsa ho cleaner ke tshwanetse ke mo thuse ho tlhapa...ke robala ke lapile... Indeed, caring for the sick is challenging given all the strict adherence instructions that usually accompanies medicine administration. It is even more challenging, painful and emotionally draining as reflected by the narratives above especially when the sick is the parent. Hence, the prayers mentioned in the narrative above that ***“...bengithandaza ukuthi uMma aphole akgone ukusisebenzela...”*** translated to mean the girl child was praying for the recovery of her sick mother so that she can recover and work for them. Adding that ***“äkusimnandi ukugulelwa wumzali, kakhulu umakuwuye kuphela osebenzayo...be se nihlale nabomalume abanganandaba bahlala bephuza utjwala...be se bafuna ukudla abasizi ngalutho...be se ushonela ezandleni zakho umzali...usala nabantwana se kuwuwe uMama wabo...ama social workers ababikhona njalo la emakhaya...”***

The reversal of roles, that is girl children having to learn to be mothers (nurturers and carers) at early stages presents despair and desperation for the girl children who are directly faced with such situations including those affected. By ‘affected’ I mean that even if the girl child who is nursing a sick parent does not miss school to take their parent to clinics, they are however psychologically and emotionally distressed. On one hand, caring for the elderly demands its fair share of attention. Generally, most of the elderly are on various forms of medicine for various ailments. For that reason, they usually have strict adherence to medicine administration accompanied by strict dietary rules and the particularities on what and how they want their food. That, according to the narratives also adds up to the challenges of caring for the elderly and the sick. Add to these caring duties the fact that ***“uye engalali...ekhala ngezintlungu ebusuku...”*** All of which the girl children must learn to master. When the sick is the main caregiver, or breadwinner, the situation and its realities gets more complicated and more stressful for the girl children. More so, against the backdrop that ideally, parents are the ones that are supposed to provide for and take care of the children.

5.3.1.3 Rural girl children: caring for siblings in rural households

From the data, another prominent aspect is that girl children are expected to take care of their siblings. Interestingly for girl children, some of their siblings might even be older

than them. Older brothers are “perceived” as those who cannot (or should not) do household chores such as cleaning and cooking which is reserved for girl children. The siblings have their differentiated demands for caring; for the younger ones, it is even more complicated as it has elements of dependence and helplessness. Hence, **“O a tseba mos Mam ba ba nnyane ga ba tlhape skono so ke ba tshella metse ...ke ba tlhapse...keba tsholele motogo e be ke tsamaisana le bona go ya sekolong...”** Whereas for the slightly older siblings **“ ga ba kolomake skono bashimane, ga ba kgone le go apeya so ke mmereko waka o...mara Nkoko o re banthuse bagelle metse le dikgong ha nna ke sa kolomaka...ge ba fihla ke sets eke fetsa e be ke apeya...”** Another added that **“abafana ba yabhora ngoba uGogo uthi abapheki kahle manje bona umsebenzi wabo wukukha amanzi nokutheza izinkuni...kodwa kuya-robber lokho Ma ngoba phela ba yakwazi ukucwalisa izigubhu eziningi namaDromo be se bakha izinkoni eziningi be se iviki lonke abayenzi lutho...mina ngipheka everyday ngicleaner everyday kudla isikhathi sami sokufunda mos lokho everyday...”**

The “making sure that I pour water for them” entails the intricacies of ensuring that the water is not too hot, whilst the “walking together with” to school saliently implies providing safety under what is “perceived adult supervision”. Put in context a girl child is from an early age considered as the caregiver. In overall, linking it to the some of the statements in (5.3.1) above on girl children forced to grow into womanhood given the responsibilities they assume prematurely. Thus, the girl and boy children’s contribution to household livelihood is imbalanced. For girl children, it leans more towards the domestic chores and less on academics. For boy children, it leans more on the academics than in the domestic. It is important to also consider the premature growth imposed on girl children. The adverse consequences include that some girl children might equally regard themselves as women, and behave as such. Thus issues such as early pregnancies among girl children, school-drop-out, teenage motherhood and so forth combine as barriers for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.1.4 Rural boy children and the gendered socio-cultural stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours

The responses from both boy and girl children confirm that the stereotypic socio-cultural attitudes, behaviours and practices are predominant in rural ecologies. For

example, journal entries with regard to girl children, highlights their daily chores in the home such as fetching water, cleaning, and cooking (amongst others). With boy children, their journal entries are different. They feature a lot in doing schoolwork and playing. There are some days that boy children have no activity at all, which is a rare journal entry with regard to girl children. In fact, during the period of the study, there was one week that was mid-term school holidays. Strategically, when we resumed the data generation when the schools re-opened, we had a journal entry sharing session that was a reflection of what both girl and boy children were occupied with during the mid-term break. The session confirmed that for girl children, even during school break their roles and responsibilities do not lessen or change. Instead, bigger domestic projects that do not fit during school-going times are set aside for these breaks. Those include cleaning house windows and curtains, washing blankets and so forth. Only a few of the girl children's journal entries had academic focus. On the contrary, boy children's journal entries had play activities such as communal soccer that is also set aside for the breaks. So in essence, when there is spare (free) time, girls' domestic roles and responsibilities and boys' playtime increases.

Flowing from the journal entries sharing session, we had dialogue discussions that focussed on what came out from the entries. In the dialogues, which brought together both girl and boy children, there was a loud laughter when probed on why boy children cannot help in domestic chores of cleaning and cooking. The laugh when probed was that **".... eeee Mam ufuna sibe yizitabane..."** (...that you want us to be gay...In these ecologies, generally if a boy performs such tasks, he is viewed as being "not manly" and thus labelled as gay. I deliberate on the homosexuality aspect in 5.3.2.3 below and recommend it as an area for future studies in rural education.

These gender stereotypes amongst boy children extend to the school, hence from the observations, boy children arrive earlier at school and thus have time to play before school starts. It is for this reason that in the dialogues boy children could not mention more than one reason that could potentially lead to non-school attendance. Instead, it was mentioned that **"haaayi mina Mam angilovi eskolweni...ngilofa umangigula kuphela na khona Mam thina abafana asiguli kakhulu ukufana na mantombazana.... haaayi labo bahlezi begula Mam...bayalofa"** (boy children attend school regularly and when they do miss school, it is only if they are either sick or of their own making. When probed about the type of chores they do at home, most

replied that they help with **“ukuthutha izinkuni zokubasa...ngoba uGogo uthi igezi iyabiza...be se siyokhelela amanzi empopini uma ayaphuma ngoba uma a ngaphumi siyahlala silinda khona amaTruck ka maspala asithelela khona...emakhoneni we strata ngesikhathi sakhona...sikhelela amningi ukuthi ngingayi everyday...”** This confirms the earlier statements from girl children co-researchers (5.3.1.1) that the domestic chores and responsibilities between them and boy children are unequal and gendered. Also of importance is that for girl children, they are obliged to at times miss school as noted in 5.3.1.2 and 5.3.1.3 above, not of their own making but because of their domestic responsibilities of caring for the elderly and the sick. Important therefore is to highlight the link between regular school attendance and diligent schoolwork such as timeous homework submissions and having adequate time to study for tests, which inherently leads to outstanding academic performances.

Secondly, besides boy children’s regular school attendance, they have the time to solely focus on school performance. That is so because as they say **“...aowa Mam (laughing) nna ha ke dire selo Mam dilo tseo di dirwa ke banyana...ya bona ba Cleaner, ba apeya...mara ke tla tshegiwa ke batho...nagana setse ke ikemiseditse ke cleaner go na le banyana ko gae...aowa”**. Therefore, because boy children do not do any household chores, they have a lot of time and energy to do schoolwork. It is thus not surprising that boys dominate in aspects of academic excellence. Drawing from the boy children’s assertions above, it is implied that girl children regularly miss school. Boy children could not even link girl children’s absence from school to household caring and nurturing responsibilities. The reality is that with the absent parent phenomenon engulfing many rural families, girl children are continuously expected to shoulder the care-minding responsibilities in families. Unfortunately, the inherent gendered socio-cultural stereotypes in families allocate minimal domestic tasks to boy children. A relevant question to the earlier assertion in (5.3.1) above would thus be, “are boy children contributing members of family life?” What is even more perturbing is the fact that girl children are even expected to take care of the boy children, at times of the same age or even older; making sure they bathe, eat, and do their homework whilst they themselves, after these tiresome chores, also need to do their schoolwork with no supervision.

These gendered socio-cultural stereotypes are further entrenched by connotations that girl children are continuously being prepared to be wives from an early age “bazoba ngabafazi a ba rite mam” abazi umsebenzi we khaya”. Interestingly boy children are not taught through any domestic chores and responsibilities, to be good husbands. There is no preparation for husbandhood in playing soccer, for instance. It is a physical fitness exercise with benefits in that they are rejuvenated and mentally active to study for instance after soccer. The same cannot be said of girls because after cooking and cleaning, which are labour-intensive, they are tired instead. It is therefore of utmost importance that we explore this avenue of gendered social attitudes, behaviours and practices as an opportunity to infuse the Bourdieuan analysis to enhance girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. These gendered socio-cultural stereotypes unfortunately have a negative impact on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.2 Changing rural family patterns and issues for sustenance: working rural mothers and rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning

The narratives presented from the learners, educators, TAs, NGO and the SGB representatives, confirm that the rural family patterns have changed (and/or are rapidly changing). For example, as one TA co-researcher stated **“sesiyazibona lezinto be sizazi ziyenzeka emadorophini kuphela...loku kwa maDivorce uthole umuzi usele noMma kuphela...kwakungekho thina la emakhaya singakwazi...manje sekusifikele aboBaba bahambela safuthi...baphuma bethi bayothola umsebenzi ngoba thina laemakhaya awukho umsebenzi be se a basabuyi...sizwa ukuthi se uthethe omunye umfazi...”** This implies that the ‘normal’ traditional rural family life has changed. Most of what was considered urban family patterns are emerging in rural ecologies. Husbands (fathers) leave these ecologies under the guise of going to look for employment, and sometimes they do not return after finding another partner, and instead they divorce the rural wife and thus the household is left under the care of women. A rural educator co-researcher added that **“...it is even very sensitive to talk about parents now because you are never sure...once I said to a learner who was regularly not doing her homework that I am going to call your parents in...she simply said I do not have any...I am the parent and that means you will call me...I was shocked but regretted why I even said it...”** Another added that **“teaching in rural areas used to be strict because parents were always there...if**

the learner misbehaves they will come immediately unlike in urban where they tell you they are also working and all those stories...but now [sigh] things have really changed here". One learner co-researcher reflected that **"uMma noBaba be se be hlukene...washona uBaba kwa se kwashona uMma"**. This is contrary to the traditional "normal" family life when the rural families were considered rather stable. The narratives shared in this study reveal that there has been shifts in traditional rural family life. These shifts suggests a change in several aspects in the rural schooling environment. For instance, addressing the assumptions with respect to the changing patterns of rural families and the impact on rural educators for instance. These are some of the lessons learnt, the need for responsive innovations and interventions for inclusion in the proposed framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.2.1 Changing patterns in rural families: changing rural mothers' roles

As mentioned in 5.3.2 above, back in the days, it was common for rural families to be comprised of mostly rural mothers. They took care of the household whilst most rural fathers were away on employment undertakings. Thus, what was considered normal was that most rural mothers stayed home to oversee the bulk of the domestic chores. Rural fathers were the ones taking up long-distance-employment with regular month-end visits to the families. One educator stated **"akusafani nakudala...aboMama besazibesala ekhaya kuyibo abanakekela ikhaya...beyokha amanzi, izinkuni, bepheka nawo wonke umsebenzi wasendlini..."** But one co-researcher lamented **"impilo igucqukile manje aboMama yibo abaphumayo be yo funa imisebenzi..."** Further asserting that **"aboBaba bahambela safuthi ababuyi [laughs] so aboMama bamele baphume bayosebenza...bashiye bona labantwana besekubanzima ngempela kulabantwana kakhulu amantombazana...sebethwaliswa yonke imisebenzi ya Bomamabo"**.

These shifts in the structure of rural family life are two-fold. First, in the primary school learner's narrative above, the mother works away and stays there with month-end visits. That is a narrative told by increasingly many role-players and stakeholders in the rural ecologies. That means rural women are actively participating in the family's sustenance through seeking employment. Secondly, drawing from the high school learner narrative above, parental separations and divorces have since become a

common feature in the rural family patterns. Most of the separations are informal, with the father having gone to look for employment and never returning; some return sickly and dying or even dead. The salient yet powerful utterances by the girl children pertaining their forced transitions into womanhood is an important aspect. The implications of the changing traditional rural family patterns over the years has a significant bearing on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.2.2 Differential upbringing between rural and urban girl children: impact for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

Whilst not intentional, rural girl children co-researchers in their interaction individually and in groups repeatedly raised the comparison and the differences between themselves as rural girl children and those in urban ecologies. The comparison is not entirely negative. There are positive, self-affirmations that they are proud of. For instance, **“rena banenyana bamo magaeng re tseba mmereko waka montlong go feta dithaka tja rena tsa koMakeisheneng...ba kereya dilo easy so gabakgone niks...bana le dibabereki so ga a kgone go apeya le gotlhatswa...bjanong ke mosadi o mo bjang yena o...?”** Another interjected that **“mara bona baphasa too much as bona bana le nako ya gobala...ga ba kgelle metse, dikgong, ga ba apeye wabona?”** The dialogues were robust on this particular issue with emphasis on **“...mo magaeng ga re tshwane le banyana ba ko ditoropong...ga ba kgone le go itlhatswetsa...rena mmerekong wa mo magae o re lokisetsa gore re kgone go itirela...ga obone di domestic worker tse dintshi di tswa mo magaeng...”** Considering this statement, rural girl children take pride in their abilities in performing domestic chores better than their urban counterparts perform.

A number of other issues are debated, amongst these are **“...ko Makheisheng metse akamo dintlong, electricity ha bana mathatha...bjanong that is why banenyana ba gona ga batsebe gosokola... [laughing and clapping hands].** Moreover, **“bona bahlala nabazali noma mhlambe uBaba noma angekho kodwa uMama uhlezi ekhona...manje ke impilo kibo incono kakhulu akufani nathi...”** Another co-researcher interjected and concluded the dialogue by stating that **“...vele vele banyana baMakeisheneng le ba ko magaeng ga batshwane...bashimane bona ba tshwana ka gore kaofela ga ba diri mmereko wa ko ntlong...ba tlala strata go tshwana le bona ba ba mo magaeng bashimane”**.

5.3.3 Rural economies and poverty: the impact on girl children's access to sustainable learning.

Cascading from the gendered socio-cultural attitudes and behaviours mentioned in (5.3.1) above, rural girl children are more directly affected by poverty in households. Most of them, individually or in groups mentioned poverty as a debilitating factor and linked it to various factors. For instance, **“batswadi ba tshwanetse go yo bereka and mo magaeng ga gona mmereko...ge baka dula mo re tlo hwa ke tlala...”** Another stating that **“go a tshana ka gore le ge babereka ga ba rutega bjanong ba bereka mmereko ya diKhitshini or diGarden...mmereko osa pateleng...ba berekela dijo fela...”** Unfortunately, there are those who have lost parents and contributed to the discussion by mentioning that **“...le betere atleast gona le motswadi...rena re phela ka di-grants...le diFood parcel...ge barata ba a ditlisa ge barata ga b aba ditlisi...k era dissocial worker so yona tjelete enyane eo ya grant etshwanetse go fetsa kgwedi...”** And, **“...mina uMa nje uyagula aka sebenzi siphila ngomDende kaGogo kuphela...manje vele siyacenga...ngifuna ukucqeda isikolo ngiyofuna umsebenzi ngizo ncqeda ekhaya...kodwa na lowo msebenzi awukho so angazi...”**

We, however, acknowledge that poverty knows no gender, as it affects both girl and boy children, men and women, albeit at different levels and intensity. However, drawing from these realities presented in the data, rural economies continue to underperform especially with regard to employment opportunities. Consequently, that has a direct negative impact on rural households' income. Many other households in these areas depend on the economies of neighbouring towns and cities for employment, hence (5.3.1 & 5.3.1.1) most co-researchers alluded to the absence of parents, most of whom are in neighbouring towns and cities seeking employment opportunities. Unfortunately, even for those parents that are employed in the nearby towns and cities, they still have to travel long distances. Whilst they do come back home, the reality is they leave very early to be at work on time and come back late. Confirmed by a number of co-researchers including the one that said **“...go a tshwana Mma o tsoga ka 4 ya vroeg (4am) ka hore Bus ya bona...ba namela Putco...e tloha ka 5... bjanong mos ke ka matsha...e be a tlo bow aka 7 ya mantsibuya, sentse e le bosiu...ho ra ho reng?Ke nna ke tsohang ke dira**

mebereko and ka weekend oya mafung...disocieteng, dimeeting tsa community...o nna le dilo dilo..."

In addition, most of these parents are in semi-skilled types of employment with minimal income. Most of these menial jobs are referred to as "piece-jobs" in the rural ecologies. It is non-formal and part-time in nature. That is, they work on certain allocated days and paid per day, which help minimally, with necessities. Unfortunately, these menial jobs and meagre income is inadequate to sustain the affected rural household livelihoods. As co-researchers state, **"...go a tshwana batswadi ba bantji ga ba rutega...ga ba bereke mmereko ya go patella tjelete entji..."** another adding **"...aaaaaa... Mam ubuningi busebenza lama piece jobs" uyazi mos ngamalanga...uyaya a washe be be uyalroner...uthola leyomadlana (malinyana)...** whilst another comment that **"...litogo nje lokuthi umzali azame impuphu...ayihlanganisi nesishebo le yo mali...asisakhulumi nge school uniform nezinye izinto..."** The situation is exacerbated by those living with elderly family members or adopted children, as the social grants received from Government are just a means to fend off starvation. The following data extracts bear reference to some of these challenges. **"O gopole gore ba bangwe re dula le boKoko..re phela ka mmusho...ke ona re fang grant eo ennyane fela gore re se ka ra bolawa ke tlala...ga ifihli kae...kgwedi efela go se na selo..."**

5.3.3.1 Rural economies and poverty: rural girl children and the burden of food provision for household sustenance

Most rural girl children assume the burden of preparing food for the family. For instance, **"...ke apeya motogo pele ke eya sekolong...ke apeela bana...ngiphekela uGogo ukuthi akwazi ukuphuza amapilisi wakhe ngoba kuthiwe adle kuqala, na bafowethu ukuthi badle ngoba eskolweni siphiswa ukudla nge Break..."** Thus food preparation is an important daily chore and responsibility for girl children, especially considering that to prepare food means that there has to be food to prepare. However, given the poverty issues raised above in 5.3.3, food preparation is in itself a burden for rural girl children. It is therefore the responsibility of the girl children to source food to prepare. For example, soft porridge is amongst the staple food mentioned a number of times by girl children - so there must be mealie-meal to allow for soft porridge preparation. Hence **"ke tshwanetse ke leka gore atleast bupi bo be gona...so le Mma ke a mmotsa gore a romele tjelete**

ya bupi ...as atleast re ka sokola ka seshebo...re tla bona mara bupi bona aowa...okgona go dira motogo e be go jewa gagotshwane”. Others said “uyabona sisi that is why sithi noma amaSocial worker aletha amaFood parcel sicela iMealie Meal eningi ngoba akufani umdoko uyasthisa so ma unawo neshukela akufani ngoba isinkwa sona everyday aowa angeke sikwazi siyadura and imali ayihlali ikhona”. They must prepare sparingly to stretch available provisions to last up to month end when they get another supply with the grant/pension money. Hence “ke boberekisa hanyane hanyane gore bo fitlhelle month-end ge Mma a tla a tlo reka or ge a sa kgone aromela tjelete gore ke reke bobongwe”. At least as one co-researcher lamented “lamaPakistan ayasiza wona ngoba siyavula iaccount ukuthi umakuphele impuphu or ishukela be se siyayithatha be se uGogo uma eholo impeshini siyakhokha...manje isikoloto sokudla siphele ngoba sidla everyday (laughing)...” Also taking into consideration the burden of the sickly having to eat before taking medication, rests squarely on the girl child. It is for this reason that “ngiya zama ukuthi bangithengele amasweet ngithengise eskolweni ngizoba nayo imali yokuthi sithenge impuphu...ngama weekends ngizama ukuthengisa amatamati naMaOnions ukhuthi sithole imali yesinkwa nempuphu” as captured in the story above. It is also the reason why they against their will miss school to take their grandparents and other disabled family members to pension pay-out points. Not doing this would obviously directly affect the livelihood of the family for which they are directly responsible for. Therefore, girl children have to learn from very early in primary school, to navigate through the brunt of poverty in households, which is on its own an issue impeding access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.3.2 Rural economies and poverty: level of parents’ education and rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning

Most of the children affected by the underperforming rural economies and poverty are those with parents who are not educated. For some they are completely unemployable, whilst for others they are employed in low-paying jobs such as (domestic and garden work) as mentioned above. Parents’ level of education, especially mothers, is mentioned as amongst the factors that contributes to poverty in the households. Especially so because “...if my mother did not go to school how will she make a lot of money...because people that make money have some

education like teachers, nurses, people working in the banks...” Otherwise “...most of our parents work as domestic workers in the towns and cities because they did not go to school and you know...they get very little money...it does not even cover all our needs...”

However, from the stories shared, the parents articulate the importance of girl children’s education and that it will potentially take families out of poverty. That is highlighted in statements such as “...go bohlokwa gore banyana ba tsene sekolo...ba tla tswelela ba hwetja mmereko omobetere go o wa batswadi wa dikhishini le digarden...ba tlo kgona go thusha ka magaeng...” “...ka gore aowa hle go boima ka malapeng” There is also hope and faith on the girl children that when employed, they will be able to play an important role in providing for the families. However, it is difficult for them to comprehend the amount of time that needs to be dedicated towards that goal. That lack of comprehension of schoolwork is attributed to the low levels of education, because whilst they recognise the importance of girl children, they assert that “mosetsana ke mogwera wa mmage bjalo ge batswadi ba palelwa (kudu boMme ka gore le wena wa batseba boNtate ga ba kudu ka mererong ya ka gae...banyana batswanela go raloka tema ya boMma...” Further drawing from others that “...phela imizi eminingi la emakhaya sekusele abantwana...abazali abekho...” Most of the parents’ absence as mentioned earlier is due to the distant-employment factor that is associated with rural economies and poverty.

5.3.3.3 Rural economies and poverty: rural girl children, school nutrition and uniform, government grants and other social relief programmes

Importantly, the Government national nutrition programme that provides for what is commonly referred to as schools’ feeding scheme plays a critical role in alleviating what could potentially result in hunger for most rural areas. Most learners mention that “re ja motogo fela ko gae...re ja ko sekolong...e be re ja gape ko gae boshego”. Another stating that “uyazi Ma...lamakhishini waseskolweni ayasiza kakhulu...atleast umasidle umdoko ekhaya ekuseni ngebreak siyakuthola ukudla...kubancono kakhulu ngoba kudala besimele ngeBreak sibuye emakhaya sizodla ngoba ngeke wafaka umdoko eskaftinini...sekuncono ngempela”.

However, the challenge of lack of school uniform remains. Especially in the context of the underperforming rural economies and the associated poverty issues. Whilst school uniform is important for both girl and boy children, the reality is that girl children generally attach more significance to it. Because for girls **“...ijoooo Mam [laughing and clapping hands] ...school uniformsihle shame uma unaso futhi sikufanela...uyazizwa noma uhambaukuthiyintombi...sihle kodwa sona eqinisweni...”** Another adding that **“phela Mam otshwanetse ose Enjoye o ke feeler ga o se apere...o lebellege obonagale gore ongwanyana ose apare sona sesa apara wena...aowa [loud laugh]”**. Girl children have issues of self-confidence and esteem that are associated with looks. Thus being in a presentable school uniform is an important aspect of schooling, especially for girls.

The reality is that some parents in these ecologies, given the unemployment and poverty, are unable to afford decent schools uniform for their children. The situation is at times worse to a point that they cannot afford a pair of decent school shoes for their children. Rural teachers have come up with innovations in this regard. For the willing learner, he/she is allowed to come to school without uniform. That is done in order to ensure that uniform does not exclude learners. However, the reality is that some learners, and especially girl learners eventually drop out of school. One co-researcher lamented that **“ke sono...tlabe banyana babang bale smart...uniform epila mongwaneng...bjanong wa bona e tlabe o sa epapara khanthe le diaparo tha ko hae hasetsona...and waitsi bana ba a bua ba askennera ditlhako di bulegile nje ao enna sono so ebe a decider go sa thlole atla sekolong”**. Meaning, that it is pathetic not to have decent school uniform so that a learner looks like the others. When permitted to wear informal clothes they are also not as presentable, and learners talk and ridicule each other a lot, hence some eventually drop-out of school due to lack of school uniform. Thus uniform is indeed an essential aspect of girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The same is said about the various Government grants and other social relief programmes, hence most of the girl children are compelled to miss school during pay-out days. **“go isha nkoko ko pentjineng”**. They are an essential in most poverty-stricken families in the rural ecologies. The dominant ones are food parcels, the elderly pension pay-outs, child support grants and the foster-care grants as confirmed by the local social workers who are also co-researchers. There is a high number of rural

families that are grant-dependent. Thus rural girl children rely on government grants and other social relief programmes such as child-headed household support, indigent and foster-care grants, amongst others. In most of the dialogues with girl children, they consistently referred to poverty, absent parents and child-headed households as directly affecting their access to sustainable learning. Also mentioned by educators, NGOs, traditional authorities as well as the SGBs (co-researchers) is the absence of parents in rural ecologies as an escalating concern and challenge. It has given rise to many child-headed households in rural ecologies negative influencing girl children's access to sustainable learning.

5.3.3.4 Rural poverty, realities of the rural elite, and poverty cycle: issues for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

Important to highlight that whilst there is general poverty in the rural ecologies, there are those families in these ecologies that are considered the rural elite. That is, those from well-to-do families who enjoys the same standard and status of living. For these families, they can afford services of helpers and daily travel to town schools. Attested to by several co-researchers is that "...bao ba ikgon...bana ba bona ba ko diboarding schools or ba traveler ko dikolong tsa diModel C..." Those are, families whose children do not go to the rural schools. They can afford to have their children travel with or have special scholar transport, to "better" schools in the nearby towns and cities. These rural 'elite' are very few in number hence "... **siyabazi bonke labo abazimele...labo baphila kamnandi Kanti futhi baqashelwe naboNanny...**" These rural well-off families source the local poor families' labour to create employment by hiring domestic helpers from parents in the community. For some of these rural girl children, especially those in high school who are without parents (orphans), they also offer their services to these elite households in exchange of an allowance. For instance, "...**mina Mam ngama weekend ngiyakhona kulemizi ezimele kahle be se ngiya washer, or noma muphi umsebenzi abangipha wona...ba ne shop so sometimes they want to go somewhere be se bathi ngibambe khona kule Shop ngithengise...ukusalayo ngithola okuncane...mina ngisele nabodade kanti yimi omdala manje kwamele ngibe enplane yo kusiza le grant esiyitholayo ngoba ayifiki month-end izinto ziyadura Mam...**"

However, the reality is that the rural elites that provide some form of poverty relieve interventions are in few in number and thus do not make any significant change to the local unemployment rates. The high rates of unemployment are a direct cause of poverty linked to poor quality education, which leads to destabilising families, as fathers now are forced to look for jobs in urban areas – a legacy of apartheid, which will take many years to eradicate. This leaves girl children vulnerable to the burden of caring for the rural households. This poverty cycle makes the rural households' grant-dependen. It is for that reason that during pension/grant payout days for the elderly and disabled, girl children have to miss school to accompany them to the payout points. These are sometimes far away and implies that on such days the responsible girl children must miss school. The poverty cycle force girl children to early labour (child labour) as mentioned above in the preceeding paragraph. Thus, rural poverty adversely affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.4 Rural child-headed households and the burden on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

Drawn from the on-going discussions, it is clear that the face of rural life has evolved over the years. Whilst the issue of child-headed households is becoming a common phenomenon in both urban and rural areas, in rural areas it was uncommon. However, the dialogues reveal that the phenomenon is fast encroaching into rural areas. It is a disturbingly worrying phenomenon as it has completely changed and adversely affected the traditional rural family life in a big way. Hence the assertion that **“...enext door yaseKhaya naboBashonelwe bazali estradini saseKhaya mhlaumbe four of five yemizi enathibantwana kuphela”** as told in the shared stories. Whilst some of the rural child-headed households are due to parents' absence due to employment in far-off areas, others are due to orphanhood as parents have passed on. Echoed by TA and an educator co-researchers, is the fact that **“uyazi sisi amakhaya asele nabantwana awuyazi kudabulisa intliziyo njani ngobaabantwana sebaba ngaboMama umele aCleaner, apheke awashe kanti yena ngokwakhe usadinga ukunakekelwa...abantu abadala abekho basemaPitori emisebenzini ngoba phela impilo iseyabanzima uma unyasebenzi uyofa yindlala...konke kuyadura...”** In addition **“...naleHIV/AIDS iyabacqeda abantu la emakhaya kuyagulwa kuyashonwa abazali bashiya abantwana bezintandane kunzima...imalwa ngempela imizi esana bazali abahlala nabantwana...”** Whilst

also stating that **“aboGogo basebunzimeni obukhulu...lakungana bantwana kuphela kunoGogo noma uMkhulu usele na labantwana...ama teenage pregnancy nayo le HIV ne AIDS nokunye ngeke kwaphela...nako kukhulela phezulu ngalesimo”**. The number of child-headed households are escalating at a fast pace and worrying as they are compounded by a range of other issues such as HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies that directly impact on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Sadly, it is also a common phenomenon that even if there is an elder brother in the family, that the younger girl child is expected to somehow take the responsibilities of caring and overseeing family livelihoods. Thus, in these increasing child-headed households in rural ecologies, girl children carry the burden of caring for the siblings, as well as for households’ food provision. Another phenomenon that is intertwined with the discussion on poverty in (5.3.2) above is the blesser/blessee syndrome that I will deliberate upon in the proceeding discussions. It is also an influential aspect adding to the cycle of poverty I have alluded to above in (5.3.3.4). The increase in rural child-headed households puts unjust pressure on girl children to fend for the family, thus negatively affecting girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.4.1 HIV/AIDS: its impact on rural families and rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning

As mentioned above, some of the child-headed households in rural ecologies are a result of parents who have passed on. One girl learner narrated **“...firstly my dad was very sick, he moved out and went back to his parents’ home, my mother used to scream and tell him he deserves to be sick...its because of his ways...I did not understand what are these ways ways that my father got to and made him so sick...he eventually died. It was sad to see my father who used to do everything for us now thin...very thin sores around his entire mouth and that...he could not do anything for us. I cannot say this but it is better that he is dead as he was in bad pains. My mother started shotly after...Mam bengiphila eKliniki njalo...ethanda ukuthi yimisebenzi kaBabakho...manje bengingazwisisi ngoba naye wayengasho ukuthi uyenzi uBaba...uMma ugululile...kakhulu kwazekwangathi ulahlekelwa yicqondo...nagibona ukuthi naye uyaphela nje ngoBaba...waze washona ke...kubuhlungu kakhulu sisi futhi kunzima ukuthi usale nekhaya usemcane njengami...”** From this data set, the girl child nursed an

ailing father whilst her mother was also sickly. Her father ultimately passed on after which her mother's condition worsened. Ultimately, the mother also passed on. The girl child was only told after the passing that both her father and mother were victims of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The reality is, however, that rural ecologies are also experiencing the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Because of the poverty levels in most of the rural ecologies, there are high levels of alcohol abuse associated with multiple partners and unprotected sex. A local NGO activist lamented that **"...agona mmereko mo magaeng so batho ba keeper busy ka go drowner their sorrows away...batho bamo magaeng ba abonwa bjalo [shoooo] o ka se nwe bjalo ka bona...vroeg...motshegare...boshego ba duletje bjala...o kase tsebe le gore ba etseya kae tjelete ya bjala mara go se na dijo ko tlong...bjanong problem ke gore ge ba fetja gonwa ba arobalana...no condoms...not even one partner... [shooo sesi ke tlhakatlhakano engwe neh] ...ga gona gore HIV/e sa ba bolaya...theyre too reckless..."**

Further he stated that **"...dikliniki le dipetlele oa dibona dikgole bjang...bjanong motho olwala nako asaye ko ge a fitlha se a le worse"**. He was emphasising that the HIV/AIDS situation is exacerbated by the long distances to clinics and hospitals, and thus people live long with the un-diagnosed pandemic. It is known that the sooner HIV/AIDS is diagnosed, the sooner medical treatment will begin. Another sad factor is that of denial as well as disclosure. From the girl learner's narratives above, she only learned of her mother's HIV/AIDS status after her passing. There are many cases, hence one co-researcher mentioned, ***"You know there are a lot of child-headed families here because the children have lost both parents, mostly due to HIV/AIDS Now these families have mostly girls as the ones who must take care of the household"***.

As reflected in the girl learner's narrative above, nursing an HIV/AIDS patient is indeed complicated, especially when diagnosed at its late stages. It involves many clinic visits to check the response to drugs, to monitor the viral load and so forth. There are in some cases the issue of drug resistance, thus the patient may not respond to the administered drugs and such related complications. Throughout, the girl children who are the main caregivers, have to either miss school, or perform extended hours of nursing the ailing parent with little or no attention to schoolwork; the emotional and psychological stress and disturbances renders her academically incapable. It is

against this backdrop that the HIV/AIDS pandemic have a negative impact on household livelihoods and consequently negatively affects girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.4.2 Divorce and parents' separation: the impact on rural families and rural girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

Some of the child-headed households are because of divorce and/or separation of parents. In the dialogues, one educator co-researcher articulated the fact that **"...you will think divorce affects urban communities...I mean I travel here daily I live in an urban area and know how divorce is common there...in these rural areas it was unheard of (claps hands) but with (eyes wide open in astonishment)...believe me things have changed so badly here....divorce is very rife and these poor girl children suffers the most....our divorce is even worse because in most families the father just disappears for very long periods to come back dead at times...they get other women in the urban areas and you know mos programmes like Khumbulekhaya (laughing)...so next time you must have a study on rural women...it is very sad as now because of that ...parents separate and now the mother would have to go out and look for a job in the towns and cities around here. Girls must then look after the home..."**

Drawing from this statement, divorce and separation are therefore not isolated to urban ecologies only. Rural areas also experience these phenomena, which used to be pervasive in urban ecologies. Rural ecologies were for a long time regarded as cultural and traditional values, systems and beliefs stronghold and thus likely to preserve traditional family units and life. However, this phenomenon is encroaching rural ecologies swiftly as revealed by the data presented in the situational analysis. Unfortunately, parental divorce and/or separation of any kind negatively affects children and general household livelihood and is an obstacle for girl children's access to sustainable in rural ecologies.

5.3.5 Menstruation challenges and girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies

Reminded that CDA seeks to analyse the unsaid, for example, the stereotype that aspects of mensuration are disgusting as **"Nkoko says I must not play with boys..."** drawing from the story narrated above. Also mentioned by the NGO activist co-

researcher was that, ***“We are collecting sanitary towels for distribution amongst the rural girl children who are disadvantaged. Those we identified, would either miss school when in their cycle as they must use a cloth as a pad and other toilet papers, which are not hygienic, but also does not hold the flow very well resulting in blotting that causes embarrassment. Most of these girls are from child-headed families”.***

Other commonly held socio-cultural myths and stereotypes include the fact that the menstrual cycle is associated with being dirty to a point that you are not allowed touching or entry into spaces considered sacred. This stereotype is even strongly upheld in religious, cultural and traditional spheres, which makes it unpleasant for girl children who may be menstruating. For instance, there are churches, traditional healers and leaders that when a girl or woman is going through her cycle she is not allowed to enter into or touch some sacred designated areas. For example, ***“ka gae re maSione, ge o lekgweding ga o ye kerekeng...ga otshware ditaelo...ga o apee le bashimane le boNtate...diSione le Postola tje dintji di a swana...bjalo ge osa ye kerekeng bashimane baa tseba gore ke ka lebaka la gore o dikgweding ga gobose ka gore ba go dira metlae... ‘Otlhabile kgogo’dilo tja goswana le tjeo tja gotena...*** The practice thus affects school attendance. Because the menstrual cycle is perceived to be disgusting, girl children are more likely not to attend school during this period. For instance, they cannot play freely for fear of being seen and/or noticed by the boy children, and they fear that playing increases their flow as ***“ha ke ema ema ditswa thata...diPads di tla fela”*** as articulated in the story above. These gendered socio-cultural stereotypes include not wanting to play or go to school for fear of being noticed and ridiculed”. They are even more pervasive in rural ecologies inevitably affecting girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

Secondly, I mention “personal girl situations” because as a woman myself, I have been through the same stages. Available information during this sensitive developmental stage would be sought or shared formally (through reading various books, internet and so forth) and informally through engagements with other women. The reality is that this aspect is not comfortably and openly discussed in the home. Rural grandmothers consider it a highly confidential and confidential. Their steadfast cultural and traditional beliefs bar them from these topical discussions with girl children. As highlighted in preceeding deliberations, rural mothers are absent from their girl children’s lives due

to employment opportunities. Thus, cannot also have frank discussions with girl children on their menses. So rural girl children are left with very limited avenues for information. In most instances, rural girl children's menstrual experiences and all related information including what these means and so forth are self-taught. I refer to my experience here because the situation then and now in the rural ecologies seems to remain the same. It is late in life that perceptions about menstruation are openly dealt with and addressed. The correct and relevant information is often gathered late. For these co-researchers, it is usually through private engagements and interactions with the life orientation or other women educators. That is, those women educators that are perceived as "kind and understanding". For some, even after being pregnant (and have decided to abort or enter the teenage motherhood). That was also my experience as a black girl child in rural ecologies at the time. The truth that menstruation symbolises the start of journeying into womanhood, a celebration of girlhood because it confirms puberty and femininity, a culmination of biological and physical maturity is often untold. Unfortunately, when the truth surfaced, it changed my personal situation. From viewing it as a curse, to seeing it as a loving and intimate relationship with my bodily functions, and thus made me feel special. That is the relationship I have since come to observe with girl children in urban areas where information is easily and readily available. Their lifestyle, which allows for such conversations, facilitates this intimate self-assuring experience with menses. The same cannot be said about rural areas where these conversations are still taboo and even worse, generally unspoken amongst women and even girls themselves. It is disappointing that in the school environments, these conversations are equally restrained. One teacher attested that **"...you can't be seen to be promoting sex and sexuality...these are rural schools and we are under close watch of the TAs, the information will reach them and you will be in trouble...topics such as menstruations are seen to be embarrassing girls whilst exciting boys as they laugh and all... so it is better to avoid talking...I just silently tell girls I think have a problem with pads to come and pick up some from my office as the principal I go out and buy a few packets and sometimes get donations from local NGOs..."** The study took place at the time of the introduction of Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) was a nostalgic topic in South Africa with some parents and guardians totally against it. Thus confirming that these issues remain taboo in communities, and even

more in communities that are rural. I will keenly follow the debates and developments with regard to the CSE implementation.

5.3.5.1 Sex and sexuality matters: rural girl and boy children in perspective

In our dialogues, the discussion on rural girl children and menstruation is raised as priority when it comes to issues of sexuality. However, overall, the issue of sexuality on its own is a challenge. The co-researchers insisted on this discussion “...**because the problem is that culture excuse is often used here, everyone runs away from talking about sex and sexuality...they never take time to have talks with the girls (grandparents as many are living with them, teachers at schools, priests at churches everyone avoids the topic and say culture that...that... These girls, at ages of 14 – 18yrs around there, can’t even talk about their bodies about their menstrual cycles for example about dating and so many other things**”. Another stated “...**it is taboo for them to talk about their own sexuality (their menstruations, about sex, about dating including premature dating and others...**” These impact on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies as girl children are not empowered to negotiate their sexual encounters. That is why “**girls cannot take decisions about their sex, marriage, pregnancy and so on...they agree to everything that the boy do or say even if they are not interested...**” What this means is that whether the sexual advance comes from the peer boy children, or the older men who prey on young girls, it is often without negotiation. Consequently, forced sex and statutory rape and rape in general goes unreported. Secondly, the girl children are likely to fall pregnant at their first sexual encounter and hence the discussions on teenage pregnancy that follows. All of these emanate from the fact that “...**mothers find it difficult to talk to their daughters about these matters, and men the same prepares boys to be men through using force instead of negotiation...the thing that boys must be brave to show they are men is rife here sisi and is a problem**”.

5.3.5.2 Sexuality issues: Lesbians, Gays, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBTI) issues and complexities

The LGBTI issues are the new gender dynamics that rural ecologies more broadly have to deal with. The rural family, school and communities are seeing an increase of learners who are LGBTI, which complicates discussions, and overall issues of

sexuality. In one incident when distributing sanitary towels amongst the girl children there were shouts. Learners screamed “...ongabaphi...ose ke wa bafa...ke bashimane...” The learners were referring to two girl learners who are lesbians. The two extended their hands to get pads. During the argument, the LO teacher took these pictures, so that it could be used for discussion.



Picture 2: Primary researcher with Life Orientation Educator distributing sanitary towels in one of the high schools’ research sites

I gave them their share but opened up a discussion about why they insist the two should not receive the sanitary towels. Fortunately, the scene happened in the presence of the LO teacher. Robust discussions and debates ensued and that included “**they behave like boys and now why do they want pads...those are for girls**” and referring to gay boy learner that “**maybe o ka fa o**” with lots of laughter and screams. The LO teacher confirmed that “**...these are sensitive sexuality issues...here at school and in home...in the whole community actually...ha re so di utlwisisi le gore re ba bitja jwang ka gore bashimane ke banyana mola banyana e le bashimane... le rena diTeachers re sa zama go ba accommodater**”. The educators further stated that “**... in some instances these learners feel victimised and drop-out of school and even leave this rural places and go to**

urban areas as they feel there it is better as people don't treat them as bad as here... ba a bona gore ga re ba understanding”

Thus, future research should extensively engage with the LGBTI topic, especially in so far it relates to rural ecologies, especially interrogating the issues of discrimination and victimisation that are evident.

5.3.5.3 Comprehensive coverage of sexuality issues in LO in rural schools

Another challenge raised in the dialogues, especially with the local NGOs was that **“...in the LO classes, the teacher only uses the textbook... and doesn't relate to the real things happening in our areas...”** He further stated that **“...because of the culture and tradition excuse...and I say excuse sisi because so much bad things are happening and culture is used as not teach more in the LO classes because educators fears being reported to the SGB as promoting sex...”** The data thus suggests that the LO subject does nothing but to touch superficially on sexuality matters, that LO doesn't connect the sexuality issues with real daily-life experiences of girl and boy children which then fails in its function of orientating learners in real life. A girl learner also raised the fact that **“*siyasaba ukubuza kakhulu uma siku LO ngoba kuzithiwa siyaganga*”**. Another stated that **“...*ge obotjisha kudu ba tla re go ra gore setje othomile go mensa o ke tsenyetja goba go robalana why onyaka go tseba...*”**. Interestingly though, boy children seem to take the opportunity and engage on the LO topical issues as **“...*go bolela bashimane kudu...ba rata ge go bolelwa ka reproduction...gape ga ba tjabe mam...*”** The statement also suggests that girl children fear asking too much about sexuality as it might reveal that one has started menstruating and would cause unnecessary attention, whilst boys do not fear and confidently ask with keen interest on issues pertaining to reproduction.

The opportunity presented by the LO period is not optimised for the benefit of girl children. Boys appear to articulate more on issues of sexuality and thus maximally benefit from the LO classes. For girls, their fear of stigmatisation hinders them from asking many questions that could otherwise help them navigate through their sexuality journey. Thus, the one potential avenue, the school, where girl children can be educated and empowered about sexuality issues is equally disabled. It thus suggests that girl children cannot be empowered on various sexuality matters in the home and the school. Rural ecologies are considered **“*cultural environments*”** as

many researchers alluded, and educators do not want to be seen to be promoting sexuality and thus they rush through the LO curriculum which does not benefit the students. Robust discussions are necessary to enhance the understanding of the LGBTI issues raised in 5.3.5.1 above.

“If they can’t talk amongst themselves about issues affecting them how much more difficult will it be to talk about rape (including marital rape (forced sex), HIV/AIDS, and so on. Because those are very sensitive. We struggle in these workshops to have them open up...it takes up to four consecutive workshops to get them to start opening up. So really my sister these issues are cultural taboos in these areas. However, very sad because they are very very real...so real believe me. It is also this not talking that we are experiencing high rates of teenage pregnancies and blesser issues in rural areas”

Overall, data sets on this aspect points to the lack of adequate coverage of sex and sexuality matters within the LO subject. The consequence is unprotected sex that leads to teenage pregnancies which spirals out to girl children’s dropout and thus obstructs girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.5.4 Menstruations, teenage pregnancies and Illegal terminations of teenage pregnancies (abortions) in rural ecologies.

I have focused on data sets that revealed issues pertaining to menstruation, teenage pregnancies in 5.3.5.1, 5.3.5.2 and 5.3.5.3 above. This part on the data generation reveals an interconnection between the menstruation, teenage pregnancies and illegal termination of pregnancies among rural girl children. As mentined above, rural girl children do not have access to thorough education and information on menstruation and its implications in their lifes. Most of what they know about menstruation is self-taught as many girl children stated above. Therefore, they have limited or no knowledge at all about important menstruation related aspects and susceptibility to pregnancy. From their own statements, they mention that “...**akere Mam motho o ipona othoma go ya kgweding...ga o tsebe gore go ra gore ge oka robalana o tla ima...ga go na motho a tla go botjang gore ge othoma go ya kgweding ke bona bosadi...**” Another one interjects saying “ **...kanti futhi Mam asitjelwa ukuthi why kwamele usabe abafana noma amadoda umane uyasabiswa nje...athi uGogo...ungadlalele ebafaneng bayingozi...njane awuyazi...ke bona abafana**

bayasondela bayakhohlisana uthi uvula amehlo ubese uvuka naye embhedeni sekumoshakele njalo (loud laugh)". Another adds, "Yebo...abanye babone leyo Menstruation Kanye kuphela elandelayo ayisavele..." Another interjection, "...nakhona still Mam aeuyazi ukuthi uma ingasavele kusho ukuthini...uzobona ngokuzonda ukudla okunye...omunye uyahlanza...kulapho se ubona ukuthi kunenkinga uya eKliniki bazokutjela be kuthuka aboSister ukuthi ...sies umncane kanje use uPregnant...bayabizana bahlekisa ngaye..." And "Mam wena o maketse hore kganthe bjanong keimile bjang ho irahetse eng...(ao shame...followed with clapping hands)... boNurse bat la ho ntsha moya neh...ba re ho irahetse bjang o ra bjang...ho kene eng mo...pointing at your private parts...ke yona ntho e irahetseng eo he Nana...akere o mosadi wa robalana...ke MaNurse he ao ke ho botse...mos o tla tswa ko kliniking otlhafetswe ke bophelo Mam..." Then, "otshwanetse o tseye decision hore o tloba Mme or bjang...dichomi tse dingwe ditla ho botsa ka Abortion and maybe le wena oa bona hore o sa batla hoya sekolong...maybe le motho o a ho imisitseng ha o moebella oa bona hore mo...ha hona plane ke hona hore ke dire abortion...basa ho botsa maka Mam ba bantshi mob a ntshitse dimpa banwa dilo dilo mo..." Another adds "...yes Mam ukhuluma iqiniso baningi vele abakhiphe izisu la or maybe if uyasaba se uzoyekela umtete lomtwana umfake kulokuhlupheka kwakho naye...atleast leyoGrant izothenga impuphu umuphe umdoko...asazi (sad hands gesture that shows giving up)".

It is therefore important to include issues of termination of teenage pregnancies among rural girl children. Drawing from the above statements from individual and group dialogues, they reveal that girl children do not have information of what the beginning of menstruation signals and thus happen to be majority victims of teenage pregnancies. The absent rural mothers and increasing child-headed rural households, as well as the burden for overseeing households as revealed in the data presented in (5.3.3 & 5.3.4) compound the situation. These girl children are susceptible to male advances with promises of financial and other benefits. Moreover, their independence makes them easily accessible for sleep-outs that are accompanied by premature sexual encounters.

5.3.6 Rural boys and men's misconceptions about rural girl children's puberty, virginity and associated bodily changes.

For boy children “**banyana ba gola ka pela Mam...obona dicurve, matswele...o ba yellow Mam...bjalo ka perekisi...go ra gore ogodile bjanong othoma go batamela [loud laughter] ...**” Another adding that “**...amantobazana balula ukubabona ukuthi manje usekhulile...amabele...umpako [developing butt], se uyazi ukuthi se ungaqala ukushela...kodwa bamalanga la baqala kuseEarly...kubo 11years boMa 12yrs usekhulile**”. Boy children refer to girl children's bodily changes in terms of physical developments such as growing breasts and bodily curves, amongst others. For them, these signal girl children's sexual maturity. For girl children, these physical developments disadvantage them and make them susceptible to male sexual advances. Surprisingly, boy children also undergo physical changes. However, for boy children, these developments are generally accepted and welcomed in families and communities. They are considered important developments into boyhood - in actual fact, readying them for “*ukuyowela*” “*ingoma*”, the traditional passage into boyhood through to manhood. A boy with these signs starts receiving some form of respect and regard. That happens from an early age of around 13 and 14 years. That is why “***nokumitisa sengingamitisa***”. Interestingly, even at school, teachers start recognising these developments and acknowledging them in one way or another. Thus, the puberty growth and developments for boy children does not in any way affect their family, schooling and community experiences.

Indeed, boys equally goes through puberty with visible bodily changes such as developing a hoarse voice, and the appearance of facial hair. Hence, the assertion by one of the boy children (co-researcher) **that “...uma sengikhuluma nge “base” aaa...mem (laugh) kusho ukuthi sengimdala sengiyindoda...”** Thus, boy children take pride in their development as it symbolises manhood. These stereotypes continue to subject girl children to sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances from fellow boy learners, male educators and generally males in the communities. Some cannot withstand the pressure, and subsequently lured to these advances, which have adverse consequences for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Outside of the girl children's bodily changes associated with puberty, menstruation is another aspect that signals puberty for girl children. No matter how hard girl children try to hide that they are in their menstration cycle, boy children say

they always know and somehow see it. For example, boy children maintain that when girls are in their menstration cycle “...**ga ba tle sekolong ka matjatji a tshwanang mokgweding...or neng neng obona ana lemadi maybe mo skirting...or o bona atswa kort kort ko tlaseng aya toilet...**” And. “...**mos mam ge a menser go ra gore osetje a thomile go robalana...**” Therefore, boy children’s misconceptions about puberty-related bodily changes is that these signal girl children’s sexual readiness. These misconceptions affect girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.7 Discriminatory and disadvantageous cultural and traditional rituals and practices: girl children and ukuthomba

It is a general norm that rural ecologies uphold and respect culture and tradition. Traditional authorities are highly regarded and still preside over communal matters. In fact, some matters can only be resolved by these authorities. Emanating from the debate on gendered socio-cultural attitudes above, individual and group dialogues with both the 1st and the 2nd group of co-researchers as well as observations, suggest that cultural and traditional practices continue to entrench gender discrimination and inequality amongst girl and boy children, and women, and men.

The Nkangala District is predominantly Ndebele and Pedi. Both these ethnic groups have deep cultural beliefs, some of which are mandatory. Those that are emphasised in the data presented from all groups of co-researchers are the ukuthomba and ingoma (Koma) cultural and traditional ritual and practices. The Koma (Ingoma) is the Nguni ritual for boys and men. In the research sites, it would be for the Ndebele and Zulu boys and men. Importantly, in this part of Mpumalanga, there is uKuthomba, which is the cultural ritual for girls and women; the Pedi speaking in the same areas refers to both as Koma. Both have Koma and only differentiated as “Koma ya Banna goba ya Basadi”. Judging by utterances such as “...**abafana ukuthi ukhulile uyoza ekhaya belungisilela ukuthi uyokuwela...Na u welilileko uyindonda se uyazi imfihlo zamadoda.... nangekhaya uma kukhulunywa izinto nawe ubahlanganabo...Moshimane ke koma...ke lebollo la banna...othoma gotseba diphiri tja banna...that is why geobowa komeng ga go sa kgahlisa go yasekolong onyaka go ya banneng...mmerekong...osetjeonyaka lapa...bontji boimisha ge ba boya komeng...**”

The Koma (Ingoma) and the uKuthomba practices are the coming-of-age ceremonies for girl and boy children respectively. Both rural girl and boy children take pride in these practices. Firstly, because they symbolise maturity, and secondly because the ceremonies that are conducted serve as a passage for initiates. Whilst both these cultural practices and ritual leaves girl children with little or no choice regarding participation, it is well received by many as a passage into womanhood. That is observed as there is excitement that some girls show towards the practice. It is a mandatory cultural practice that carries with it pride and recognition. Especially because there is a general belief that this ritual signals maturity and womanhood. So whilst some might not be entirely ready or willing to participate in it, the pressure to be recognised that comes with this practice, forces them to succumb. In addition, because there are practice-related secrets that only girls who go through the practice are privy to. In as much as there are derogatory names used to refer to those girls who didn't support such practices such as "letjaboro", most of the girl children assert that **"...uKuthomba kuyakhulisana...ohlala nabomama abadalaphasi bese bayakubonisa ukhuthi intobazana kwamele iziphathe njani...uma uphuma usukhulile seuwomfazi uyazi imfihlo zabafazi...Koma ya basadi key a go go dira mosadi...o tsebe go re otshwanela go ke tshwara bjang gore o be mosadi...kganthe oa bona ledimpho the ba re fago tjona ke tja bosadi...mapae, dipitja, bontji re humana bedroom le mpeto go feleletje...le dikobo le diDuvet tja gona katjatji leo...abanye sithola neKist kusho khona ukuthi uqale ukubuthelela ngoba se uzoshada [loud laugh].**

Gender discrimination issues that directly impact on girl children's access to sustainable learning is because of the perceived entry into the womanhood stage that comes with uKuthomba, which is misinterpreted to mean permission for starting to date, engaging in sexual activity, and for some even experimenting with alcohol. The consequences of this perception for girl children is teenage pregnancies and ultimate school drop-out. Several times by co-researchers said, **"...ukuthomba ke koma ya basadi...yona e bese gape iyakgahlisa...re ipela ka setjo sa rena...bothata ke gore ge go fela basetsana babantji ba a ima, ba re ke basadi be setje ba tlogela sekolo ge ba fetja go belega ga go sa boyega..."** Loosely translated it means, whilst girl children take pride in the practice, because of the womanhood component, most experiment with dating and sex, and fall pregnant which then affects their drop-out

with little chance of returning back to school after the birth of the child. Secondly, the iNgoma practice for boy children also emphasises manhood. Therefore, after their passage, they start targeting girl children and may indulge in unsafe sexual activities. Some boy-children also drop-out after the passage. Some co-researchers mentioned that it would be better if these cultural practices are used to encourage abstinence, education and so forth. That is, **“go be go tlo ba kaone kudu nkebe nka Koma basetsana le bashimane ba kgothatjwa go robalana pele ga nako...ka gore baima ka bontji ge go fela koma...ba botjwa le ka kotsi ya go se ruge ka gore ge ba bowa komeng kemo goba go le diDrop-out the ntji...Ingoma le iyamotjangobaabanningi abasabuyi eskolweni batjo madoda ba yofuna umbereko manjesi akulungisi ngoba abafundi ukufikilela kumabanga aphezulu”**. Thus, whilst there are positive lessons drawn from these girls’ and boys’ cultural and traditional practices and rituals, there are those that negatively affect girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.3.8 Rural girl children and inadequate infrastructural provisions in schools and communities

Girl children are considered “girly” because of their love for beautiful things. However, that does not mean boy children do not like beautiful things. Differences in the order of priority is revealed during our group discussions wherein girl children ranked the overall state of the classroom as amongst key factors to sustainable learning in the ecologies. Whereas boy children highlighted availability of technology such as tablets as their priority. Thus, for rural girl children the aesthetics of the school ecologies is important. Hence, the old and broken class furniture, windows and doors, and cracked walls seem to be more of a nuisance for girl children than they are for boy children. These are some of the pictures presented in the group dialogues as their infrastructural challenges.



Picture 3: State of the non-habitable classrooms with falling ceilings, broken windows, cracked walls at one of the research sites

More importantly, girl children’s emphasis on the infrastructure provisions include the state of ablution facilities and exposure to health and hygiene risks. As indicated during the dialogues “...**thinking of toilets here at school is so so disappointing...I have trained myself not to want to use the toilet for the whole day...I only drink water at home...because of the toilet... (whole group clap hands in support of the statement)**”. Another co-researcher stated, “...**for boys it is not as bad as it is for us, we menstruate we use the toilets a lot...sometimes is best to just stay at home when in my periods because the toilets...makes me sick...**”



Picture 4: Ablution facilities in one of the research sites

The issue of infrastructural provision also extends to learning support facilities such as laboratories. Girl children themselves acknowledge that their lack of interest in the mathematics and science subjects is because of the lack of these facilities as well as time on their part. They argued that “...**Mam... ga re na dilaboratory mo sekolong and wa tseba gore boMaths and Science ba nyaka practice le bodiExperiment...ha re na tjona**”. Adding that “...**maths e nyaka nako ya go practisa....so ke tlo failer ka gore ga ke na nako...rena ge re fihla gae re a bereka, re kga metse, re a apeya o tl apractiser neng...bashimane bona ba na le nako entji...**” Boy children are generally considered the best in these subjects. Our interaction with girl children revealed that the non-availability of learning support facilities translates to no-support for them and thus makes it difficult to venture into the mathematics and science streams. The issue of time for the subject ties in with girl children’s household chores and responsibility discussed earlier in 5.3.1. Therefore, there is an acceptance that mathematics and the sciences are meant for boy children as they somehow perform better in these subjects. The implications are thus visible in the long term, considering that there are various specialist fields and professions that discriminate against girl children in their workforce. Overall, inadequate school infrastructure adversely affects rural girl children’s regular school attendance, and to some extent, their subject and future choices. Thus the state of infrastructural provision for rural schools continues to feature as an important aspect hindering girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

5.3.8.1 Teenage pregnancies: rural girl children's' school enrolment, academic performance, and drop-out rate

The literature review (chapter 3) of this study highlighted the fact that teenage pregnancies are closely associated with issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Data generated in this study confirms that teenage pregnancies are linked to declining school enrolments, academic performance and increased dropout amongst rural girl children. As highlighted in 5.3.7 above, the two cultural/traditional practices are amongst the main contributors of teenage pregnancies and dropout among rural girl and boy children. In the preceding discussions, we have raised the issues of premature sexual encounters that lead to teenage pregnancies, some resulting in dropouts at an early age.

Our dialogues with boy children revealed the fact that the girl children's dropout rates are attributed to teenage pregnancies. Statements made include, **“aaa... mam banyana ba batlogetjeng sekolo ba bantji ke gore ne ba imile batla mo sekolong ba ngwala mara ge ngwana a belegwa ga bas a boya sekolong...a kere babangwe ga ban a batho ba batla shalang le bana bangwe bagapeletjega go yo bereka ka gore o humane ese ngwana wa mathomo mohlomongwe e le wa bobedi go ba waboraro...”** Others added that **“ko primary bo grade 7 uthole ukuthi uyafihla ngoba phela ngamahloni ukupregger usemncane njalo...manje akezi eskolweni kanti futhi uthole bemsusa la emakhaya...bamusa ezihlobeni kwezinye izindawo ayotetela khona be se ke uyayekela eskolweni...kanti abanye bayafihla be se bayasikhipha isisu ngoba uye abonakale ukuthi uzithwele bese jikijiki umuntu u se rite...mara umtwana akekho...”** Though, **“...baba ko secondary maybe bo maGrade 10, 11 le 12...ba a tla until bangwale ba fetje diExam mara go bowa the next year e ba problem...”** It has become a common trend that girl children are not often impregnated by their fellow boy learners. Instead they are impregnated by older men outside the school, because **“...kuyenzeke phela ukuthi ubaba wakhona naye ungena khona la eskolweni be se ken aye uyayekela kakhulu uma ekhaya kibo ne khabo ntombazana be buthakathaka be se ku ya mmele a bazali ba yekele isikolo bay o funa umsebenzi...[laugh]...kodwa kaningi bamitiswa ngaphandle...ngaMasugar daddy...”** The older men aspect is said to be fuelled by poverty in most rural families, and hence I deliberate on the poverty aspect in the discussion that follows.

5.3.8.2 Teenage pregnancy and poverty in rural ecologies

In 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 the issue of poverty in rural ecologies is interlinked to the ailing rural economies and hence the reason for most parents' absence in families due to employment opportunities in towns and cities. Unfortunately, the escalating teenage pregnancies in rural ecologies are also closely interlinked to these. Especially raised and emphasised by TAs, educators, and NGO activists is that **“these pregnancies are definitely because the girl children are left alone to fend for the family food...even if the mother or parent sends some money and food maybe, you and I know that when the month-end comes even us who are working are dry...you sometimes struggle even with money for petrol to come to work that is why we even started lift clubs so that atleast we pull through the month..so what about these girls...they are even very small to deal with such issues”**. Another adding that **“uyabona lento yabazali abangekho emakhaya iyikinga kakhulu...kuningi futhi kukhulu ukonakala ulethwa yilento...labobaba abdala abgulayo abanye badlalela kulabantwana...bayasazi isimo sa lamakhaya be se baza bephethe impuphu...bayazi ukuthi ayikho yiko be se iyazumeka intombazana...haaayi uyazi angazi ukuthi kungenziwani ngoba uma sihlangene sibize umhlangano wabahlali abazali bathi akunamisebenzi la emakhaya akukho abangakuyenza kodwa lekinga baya ibona...”** The other also nods in agreement and adds that **“se se bohloko ke gore bon a diSugar Daddy the di na le metse di na le basadi and ka nako ba tsenela ban aba babatsebang gore badikobo di magetleng...ka mo ga ba berishi diCondom babashiyela mpa le bolwetji...ke bothatha bobogolo bam o magaeng...bofeteletje...”**. These older man are married and have families but prey on girl children in families that they know are poor and struggling to survive. Sadly, they do not use condoms and thus leave girls pregnant and sometimes sexually transmitting diseases, which is indeed a problem that is becoming rife in the rural ecologies.

5.3.8.3 Teenage pregnancies and the blesser/blessee phenomenon

Whilst the older men preying on girl children from poor families' issue is unacceptable, the more pervasive one is the blesser/blessee phenomenon. In this instance, not only girl children in poor families are victims. Co-researchers commented **“...e ya diBlesser key a banyana kaofela...kganthe ebile ga se banna babagolo fela ba eleng diBlesser tjeo tja gona...ba bangwe ke boAbuti fela b aba tsamaileng mo**

magae bay a ditoropong ba boy aba tshwere tjelete le dikoloi...ba nyaka banyan aba basekolo ba babonagalang gore esetje eba makgarebe...” Girl children’s bodily changes of developing curves, growing breasts (and so forth) make them targets for sex-pests, peverts and older men (blessers), especially those girls who are associated with sexual readiness (*diperekisi* or “ripe peaches”). The blessers are sometimes not even older men; they could be middle-aged men who prey on school-going girl children who are regarded as sexually ready and possibly virgins. The common factor with the ‘sugar-daddy’ phenomenon mentioned in 5.3.8.2 is that money is used as the symbol of attraction. Blessers target potential blessees who might not necessarily be poor but just sexually ready, but would do with extra cash for regular changing hairstyles, branded clothing and other such luxuries. This is considered targeting **“banyana ba baratang dilo.... bakgahlwa ke go tjentja dihairstyle...go apara di label and dilo tjeo ga di na mmereko...ka madimabe ba a imishana ba tlogele sekolo...asukuthi ekhaya kibo bayahlupheka or ini...ukuthanda nje izinto...be se bayPregger bayekela isikolo”**

These blessers exchange money (and other material goods) for sex, usually unprotected sex with rural girl children. This phenomenon was popular in urban areas and **“...ge be re ebona mo diTV ba re blesser what what...be re sa nagana gore etla fihla mo magaeng...bjalo efihlile ka matla a magolo...ke a go botja efihlile...”**and as boy children co-researchers confirms **“...rena ga basa re bona re le selo...akere ga re bereke ga re na tjelete ga re kgone gobaBlesser...banyaka maphodisa...maTraffic...maTeacher...wa bona mos...le ge ba tseba gore batho bao ban a le basadi le metse ba re ‘no strings attached...re a blessana’...haayi mam banyana ba bodile...mara ba a swinega ka gore diBlesser the di a ba imisha ba tlogele sekolo and ge a no ima di ja fatshe ga di sa bonala...di lata perekisi engwe gape”**.

The blesser/blesse syndrome is growing at a fast pace in rural ecologies and is amongst the contributors of teenage pregnancies and early school-dropout amongst rural girl children.

5.3.8.4 Teenage pregnancies, drugs, substance and alcohol abuse in rural ecologies

The issue of teenage pregnancies amongst girl children in rural ecologies is interconnected to a range of other issues such as poverty, the growing sugar daddies and blesser/blesse phenomenon, as reflected above. Together with these is the growing challenge of drugs, substance and alcohol abuse in rural ecologies amongst rural girl children. We separate drugs, substance and alcohol abuse because the co-researchers themselves separated them. For instance, one stated, “...**matjatji a bjala ke feshene mo baneng bamo magaeng...a ke tsebe le gore ke tlhaloshe ke reng...ba a botjela e seng gannyane...ba nwa ledingundu ke a go botja ba...ge o ba bona so ba anwa...go na mo di high school ke worse...go kaone baka diprimary basa tjaba ge e le babona [clapping hands] aowa go padile...gona geba fihla go grade 10 ba worse...**” Now “...**bothatha ke gore ge ba gahlana le diSugar Daadies tjeo le diBlesser tjeo tja bona ba rekelana majwala ba nwa e be ba robalana...no protection ogopole...then kgauswinyana o wamosetsana o tla be a imile o tlogela sekolo**”.

The issue of substance abuse is also a disturbing trend especially the use of nyaope substance. As mentioned by one co-researcher, “...**ubona ulutjha liqedwa yinto le bathi yiNyaope...umuntu owaza na le yo nto umele abulawe straight...bathibahlanganisa naMaRatex...uyawazi umuthi wamagundwane...amaDust anjani njani abathi atholakala kuma Plasma TV that is why bewatjontja kanje...amaARVs konke lapho bathi yi ‘cocktail’ be se bayabhema batjo...ubona intombazana noma umfana ohlakaniphile aphenduka kancane kancane acine seyinto nje ayekele isikolo agijimisane namadododa acine apregger ngapha bayagula...mayeee iyabaqheda lento abantwana la e makhaya...**”

Then came the issue of drugs, which are sold by foreign nationals who arrive and settle in these ecologies. As stated in “...**wa bona ntho ye ya democracy etlshitje mathatha fela mo...go fihla maNigeria, MaZimbabwe, MaMozambique batlo dula mo...ke bona ba tlishang diDrugs the boCocaine ba le BoTik ge ba dibitja ka mabitjo...dilo di fetogile ke a go botja ka gore dilo tjeo be re di bona kua Gauteng bo Hillbrow bao bjalo batjabela mo magae go senyega ban aba...ba a utswa go**

re bakgone go reka dilo the tja bona...re phela ka se key matjatji a...ba rekisha le dipitja...goboima kannete...”

Thus, the combination of drugs, substance and alcohol abuse among youth, also finds a place amongst girl children in rural ecologies with adverse effects on sustainable learning.

5.4 POSSIBLE WAYS TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE RURAL GIRL CHILDREN IN SEEKING ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Having built a comprehensive understanding of the situation, the aim is thus involving girl children in seeking alternative interventions to improve their access to sustainable learning.

Deriving from the data presented above (5.3), it confirms that girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies continues to be confronted by a variety of other obstacles. Amongst these are underperforming rural economies associated with rural poverty and unemployment, and teenage pregnancies that is linked to declining school enrolments, academic performance and dropout amongst rural girl children. The prevalence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that comes with persistent premature sexual encounters are related factors affecting rural girls’ progress at schools. As CDA seeks to delve deeper into the salient and silenced, one cannot isolate the child-headed household challenges, and the poverty issues as amongst the root causes of teenage pregnancies, especially against the backdrop of the blessing/blessee phenomena (5.8.3.3), that is engulfing rural ecologies. The consequences of which negatively affect girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. It is against this background that our data generation processes also led to the exploration of possible ways to actively involve rural girl children in seeking interventions to enhance their access to sustainable learning.

5.4.1 Active parental assistance, involvement, and guidance for rural girl children in the rural homes and schools

The issue of absent parents in rural areas is increasingly posing a challenge to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The absent mother as noted in 5.3 ‘delegates’ all the household caring, nurturing and overall responsibilities to the girl children. The debates and discussions in the focus groups indicated that parental involvement in the lives of the girl children is minimal, leaving girl children to

make and take decisions that would normally be taken by parents. For instance, the decision of missing school in the interest of taking the grandmother to the pension payout (5.3.1), as well as the decisions of succumbing to older men's sexual advances, due to the need for daily household sustenance and the pressure to provide for the siblings left under the care of the girl child. Most of these decisions are detrimental to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. As mentioned by one of the co-researchers that ***“ngihlalelani eskoleni uMma akhange angibuze nokuthi ngiquba njani eskoleni...kodwana uyazi ukuthi ngihlala ngilofer, ngiyazi ukuthi ngizoFailer mos...ngihlala ngisemuva ngomsebenzi wami ngoba ngimela ngikhambise uGogo ekliniki...be se ngibuye ngimkhambise eyohola impenshini...akungisizi ukuhlala eskoleni...”*** Another adding that ***“angisho abazali abekho sesabangaBazali...futhi ngoba bakude beza umakuphela inyanga kuphela...kwezinye abezi bathumela imali kuphela...kwamele mina futhi ngiyothenga lokho okufunekayo ekhaya...kubuye kushote...kwamele ngibe niplane....”*** Thus, as we seek possible interventions with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we propose the following:

5.4.1.1 Structured and sustained rural mother-daughter coaching and mentorship programme and projects

Whilst the absent parent syndrome refers to both women and men, mothers are generally considered as the centre of coordination and execution of caregiving, provision, and a whole range of domestic chores and responsibilities in the households. Hence, in their absence, the girl children are expected to fill the gap and assume the role with adverse effects on their sustainable learning. The story told by one co-researcher who went through a difficult period of nursing her ailing mother until she passed on as elaborated in (5.3.1.1) above, was elaborated on: ***“....be ngithandaza ukuthi uMma aphole abuye azosisebenzela...”*** She would pray for her mother to get back to health so she can work and provide for them. This statement shows the pressure and desperation that the girl children go through concerning an absent mother. Worse, still, if it is the mother herself who is sick or dead, as in this case. We also appreciate the fact that the mothers are caught at the crossroads. On one hand, the mothers have the duty to provide for the households, which means seeking employment at all costs including at distance places (5.3.1.2). On the other

hand, their diminishing role in the daily lives of the households, especially girl children create challenges. This is also acknowledged by one co-researcher who said, “...**ke a duma go dula le mama ake ampotje tja bophelo...anthushe ka se le sela...ke ye sekolong ke sa tshwenyega ka gore ke lokishetje Koko le baratho...mara ge a ka dula bonnyane bo abokgonang gore a romele reje bo ka sekgonege...re tlo dula ra lebellana ka tlala**”

Against these realities, girl children proposed a social cohesion platform for sustained mother and daughter coaching programmes, which would serve as a sharing and support structure. They collectively stated that “...**maybe for those mothers that visit home regularly and are able to attend burial societies, funerals and so forth...we should have a forum for mothers and daughters where these challenges are shared and ways of addressing some of those are discussed...**”

5.4.1.2 Continuous re-socialisation agenda: mothers, fathers, girl and boy children.

The girl children co-researchers indicated the need for continuous initiatives and interventions that should target boy children’s re-socialisation. This comment by a girl child sums the reason for boys’ need for re-socialisation: “...**Mam even if you ask a little brother to just clean his own bedroom for instance...you are calling for a fight... uzokulwisa athi yena akayenzi umsebenzi wa mantobazana...akayiso isitshimane yena**”. Worse still is when boy children assert that “**ngiyiNdoda mina... as we don’t say that by doing the household chores sesiBafazi**”. It is against this backdrop that the girl children expressed the need for regular talks and tasking by both mothers and fathers as a strategy to demystify the gender discriminatory “boy-specific chores and responsibilities”, and instead instil the gender-responsive household environment.

The data indicated that in families where there are active fathers, they take the lead in re-socialising both girl and boy children. Fathers should themselves “**be seen not only heard**” doing that which is considered “**women and girl-specific household chores and responsibilities**”. Co-researchers emphasised that “...**ga go na gore motho ke monna go ba wo ke mosadi...ka moka re batho and ka moka re tshwara ke tla kamoka re rata go dula mo go leng skono and ebile ka moka rena le matsogo bjale taba ye ya gore basetsana ke bona ba swanelang go shoma, ko**

apeya, go tlhatswa...tjona dilo tjeo ga se nnete”. But “...boNtate ke bona ba swanetjego go bontja bashimane ba...ibile babarute gore le ka moso bakgone go thusha le ka metseng ya bona ge ba setje bagotje...mehla le mehla hee basetsana re a ba ruta gore ba be basadi...bashimane bona...ke mang a nyakang monna wa leshaed wa go sekgone go alola mpete wa gage, go apeya...dilo di fetogile ebile ge monna akgona go dira tjeo re morata kudu...re re he’s caring, loving, considerate...with a [loud cheer from other co-researchers especially girl children”. This will gradually eradicate the “**isitshimane**” stigma that is often cited by boy children. There is indeed “**nothing wrong with fathers cooking...for example**”, one co-researcher commented. In addition, that in families where the fathers are absent, mothers should lead by allocating domestic chores and responsibilities in a manner that eradicates overburdening girl children. That would bring about gender justice and transformation within rural families that will give ‘free time’ for the girl children to focus on school matters. The same efforts should be encouraged in the rural school and community ecologies. Male teachers should extend the role of fathers and break the stereotypes across subject choices and other scholarly activities that are considered “male-orientated”. Female educators must continuously break and discourage the pervasive gender stereotypes and challenge both boy and girl children to new gendered ways of relations. In this way, schools will be more conducive and thus enhance girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

5.4.2 Need for educator(s) adopt a girl learner(s) initiative in rural ecologies

As raised above, girl children stated that having women educators in rural schools serves various needs (i.e. role modelling, caregiving, counselling, nurse, mentor, to mention a few). Girl children suggested “...**kuncono ukukhuluma noMam kuno Sir ngoba phela uMam naye wumfazi uyazwisa mhlambe umangithi ngiku maperiods and anginawo amapads bese uyangiphathela...angeke ngatjela uSir loko uzothini vele...**” Another said “...**uMam unozwelo... uyangibona noma mhlambe angilalanga nje ngoba uMma egula kakhulu be se uyabuza ukuthi uvuke njani be se uyangisiza nangama Homework...**” These initiatives, inform not only intervention strategies, but also foster stakeholders to respond to programmes that are informed by girl children themselves. This is alluded to in “...**uyabona aboMam ba baluleke kakhulu...ba yazazi izikinga zethu simantombazana futhi**

bayazi zwisisa...nesimo le si sasemakhaya ba yasazi manje bayakwazi ukuthi bakuthathe nje ngentombazana bakubonise impilo kahle uzeukhule...kanti futhi ba nalo nolwazi so bayaqceda ngoma advice ukuthi ungafikelela njani izifiso zakho...amaBursary, amaUniversity amaCareer nokuthi ukhono lwakho ba lubona kukuphi". They therefore indicate that women teachers should be encouraged to "adopt a learner" for sustained support. For some the "adopt a learner programme" is conceptualised for purposes of creating an opportunity for information sharing, whilst for others, it is for counselling and support on matters that affect them specifically. These individual sessions are capable of building relationships of trust and confidence between the rural girl children and the rural women educators and thus provide platforms for registering girl children's voices in matters directly affecting them.

5.4.3 Rethinking peer-information-sharing, education and communication programmes, indigenous games and activities

A number of youth organisations, and indigenous games and activities focused on rural ecologies. One said: **"you remember...there used to be many youth organisations such as LoveLife...Soul City...what is that Soul buddies and others that contributed to sharing information amongst youth"**. These Love-Life sessions, which were run nationally, are cited as one civil society initiative that made a difference in rural communities specifically, especially so because they were youth-orientated, ideal peer platforms and had several support initiatives such as referral, counselling and so forth. Unfortunately, the programme suffered budget cuts and most of these rural area initiatives had to close down as indicated in **"...uyazi mos thina amaNGO siphila nge funding ya maSponsor so eziningi ziyavalwa uma iSponsor singasafaki imali...kwashokhona ukuthi be se na ma programmes azoceda intja ayamiswa ke..."**

Whilst there are other civil society, formations such as the one that was a co-researcher in this study. However, they are also struggling financially and thus are limited in their interventions. That is so despite the fact that they notice **"... a huge gap in the area of peer education...that is a problem...as you know young people learn best from each other...they like imitating Mam so peer education is very effective as we use them to role-model good behaviour, leadership and so forth amongst themselves...."** Another adding that **"at least these centres allowed youth to play educative games such as diketo, kgati, morabaraba and all those**

contributed a lot to information-sharing amongst youth". Some of the learners (co-researchers) had the same views about the peer education programmes that, **"...we used to have love-life visiting our schools and motivating us...but they do not do it anymore...it was better because they even had offices around here and some of us enjoyed their exercises...as they also helped with doing homeworks and revisions for Matrics"**. Thus peer-information-sharing, education and communication strategies present opportunities for girl children to directly make an input and influence processes in seeking alternative interventions.

5.4.4 Gaps in rural girl children's' personal and leadership competencies and skills: a need for leadership development and support programmes in rural ecologies

The data revealed that rural girl children need support in leadership development. We acknowledge that this aspect could be packaged with other alternative interventions that are identified by girl children. However, from the data gathered, girls' leadership development is highlighted as a large component requiring specific focus. Rural girl children do not see themselves as potential leaders in the future. Whilst there are those who have aspirations, they do not necessarily place those within the context of first, personal leadership and then broader leadership. Hence as one educator co-researcher stated: **"...we need strategies and opportunities to explore and unpack cultural norms and pressures in these rural ecologies that blocks rural girl children from developing as leaders and use those to close the gaps..."** Also because **"the issue of leadership here is seen as male only...the traditional leaders are male, principals are male, president of the LRC is male...all those that have influence are male so girls don't see themselves as leaders..."**. A Girl stated, **"Mam uyabona ukuba yinkokheli umele ukwazi ukukhuluma, ungabi namahloni, manje thina amantombazana sihlushwa wukuthi asikwazi ukukhuluma namahloni...kanti la emakhaya uma uyintombazana uyenza lezozinto bathi uyaphapha..."**

The data thus proposes leadership development for rural girl children as amongst the key areas for infusing Bourdieuan agency. Hence **"mhlambe kuyafuneka ukuthi kube namaproject asifundisayo ngobokhokheli ukuthi uyenza kanjani ukuthi abantu bakulalele futhi bakuhloniphe..."** The other researcher emphasised that **"...girls in these rural areas must be trained...must be given practical and**

hands-on ways to understand that leadership starts with the self, with taking decisions about your life first...they must start with treating their bodies with care and respect and not sleeping around...” Thus, the empowerment of girl children to take the lead and become change agents is vital. Through leadership development, they should expand their vision and thus open themselves up to a world of possibilities, viewing themselves as potential leaders and stimulating amongst themselves, new actions and responsibilities. Thus, rural girls’ leadership development is identified and recognised as a platform and intervention for creating a powerful rural girl constituency towards building and shaping sustainable learning for girl children in rural ecologies.

That is so because coaching is, according to the co-researchers, an avenue for developing leadership amongst rural girl children. It is a forum that would prepare them for their next level. Thus according to school principal co-researchers: **“...coaching is a process of collaborative conversations between those that have greater insight and experience and those that wants to be assisted and support in a journey of personal development....”** In addition, as an educator co-researcher further stated, **“...it deals with self-awareness and that is very important for our girl children...they must see themselves beyond their circumstances.... must not be defined by being an orphan.... poor and all these negative things...and they must be empowered...”**

Coaching and mentorship programmes are identified as platforms where all those who are concerned with girl children’s access to sustainable learning, could offer support through engaging and interacting directly with girl children. It is a platform that should be created to allow girl children to dream about their futures and then detail what and how they aspire to be assisted. Thus, the coaching and mentorship programme would be entirely shaped by the girl children’s expressed needs. However, will at the same time serve as a pool for expertise, for career counselling and guidance, for education of life lessons, on decision-making and various other aspects that are raised in the study. It is a platform for a more personalised direct engagement with resource persons and possible resources. As indicated **“... re ka thabela programme e go bitjwang batho bao ba tla re thushang ka maele, akere ke nyaka go ba Ngaka...go ba Scientist ke boledishane le setsibi anthushe”**. That should also help **“...gore ke tsebe gore ge ke gahlana le bothatha ke tlo kgona go bolela le**

babangwe mmogo le ditsibi...ke ra le tja bophelo...diBursary, go humana maele ka go fapana". Therefore, the coaching and mentorship programme suggested herein is conceptualised as a facilitative long-term collaborative intervention, with expertise drawn in from various spheres, to build, encourage and support rural girl children in taking charge of their development and accountability of the results.

5.4.5 Uncoordinated multi-stakeholder interventions towards girl children

Girl children sharply raised the need for more coordinated multi-stakeholder interventions that allow for direct interaction with girl children. For example, that Departments of Education, Health, Social Services, and SASSA conduct workshops that look into issues that affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In such forums **"...we will be free to talk about contraceptives, about the grants, especially us child-headed households...about the food parcels and many others that directly affects us and we cannot raise in front of others"** Thus the platform will create direct interaction with girl children and thus help in developing responsive programmes in this regard.

Other critical stakeholders are the traditional authorities and SGBs. The predominantly male nature of traditional authorities and SGBs are regarded as a gatekeeper for girl children. It is viewed as an institution that does not listen in any way to women and girl children. For example, "there are few women in rural areas who occupy leadership" only "primary schools are given women principals and high schools are allocated to men". One commented: **"...you can ask around most of the high schools have male principals"**. Moreover, in one high school where the principal is female, she lamented that she struggled extensively with recognition from fellow male educators, community members including the SGB, which was predominantly male, and the traditional authority. Comments such as **"why batlisha mosadi..."** were the order of the day. It got to a point where they would propose meetings on school matters with the deputy principal and maintain **"...he will give feedback to her..."** The sarcasm got so bad that **"...she would be ridiculed for not originating from the community.... not being of the same dominant ethnic group in the community and so forth..."** Such attitudes and behaviours are barriers for girl children's participation in these structures as they are viewed as anti-women. Therefore, there

is a need to filter through women and girl children's voices so that these structures are gender responsive.

5.4.6 Proposal for after-school care and support programmes for rural girl children

Another important intervention that rural girl children suggest would be valuable is the after-school care and support programme. Whilst they acknowledge that these programmes would benefit both girls and boys, they hold the view that they would benefit more. Especially concerning schoolwork such as homework assistance. If these homeworks are done at school, they free up the girl children's balancing act. When they get home, they will only worry about their daily domestic chores instead. The other component should be life orientation sessions. With the life-orientation sessions, at after-school it is easy to separate the two and have focused session with each group, as most of the classes would be free to use. Rural girl children themselves have ideas of who and how these after-care and support should be structured and offered. They maintain that there are many unemployed graduates in the rural ecologies, either in their own village or many of the surrounding villages.

These proposals derive from girl children's assertions that **"...ge re ka ba le after-school class re tlo ba kaone...r tla fetja mmereko wa sekolo mo sekolong and okgona go butjisha if obona o sa kwishishi selo gabotse..."** Because **"...ma ufika ekhaya sincane isikhathi uyokha amanzi uyapheka uyacqocqa ma ucqeda ukhathele kuma uya ezincqwadini...awusa ziphi wonke a mandla akho acqedwe yilemisebenzi ya sekhaya..."** Because this is a joint group of girl and boy children, the boys also adds that **"...nathi sizo sizakala ngoba noma sinaso isikhathi ekhaya akekho umuntu ungambuza if kone something ewungayitholi kahle..."** Another boy adding **"...mina no mngani wami siyenza amaHomework together...sometimes ngiya kubo sometimes yena uzakimi bese siyancqedana but na lapho if si wrong sib a wrong sonke..."** There is consensus on separate after-school life orientation sessions, especially because, for girl children **"... we can have the unemployed graduates Mam...bazositjela ukuthi bonahow did they survive and how did they cope, and can freely share experiences and advices without any fear..."** In addition, **"...futhi abanye ba la magraduates ba hlangebezane nazo lezinkinga so bazo sitjela ukuthi singayenza njani –**

ukuyakhana si mantobazana kuphela Mam...” Yet boys also feel that “...nathi nje as abafana siyadinga ukuhlala sodwa sibonisane... maybe singa thola ulwazi ngoba seziningi lezinto...amanyaope a la and thina yithi amaTarget...kunjima Mam kula Malanga...”

5.5 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO INFUSE BOURDIEU’S THEORY OF PRACTICE

Whilst there are similarities between issues confronting girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, there are differences. Those are pertinent especially between the girl and boy children in primary and in high school. These differences present opportunities for infusing Bourdeiu’s theory of practice to enhance girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. For instance, in the rural primary schools that are research sites in this study, boys and girls across all grades are assigned the same roles and responsibilities. With regard to routine school, cleanliness they are all assigned to pick-up the papers on the school grounds and to clean their classes and pack-up their belongings. My observations are that in these lower levels of schooling, the schooling ecology is itself much well kept, clean and organised than in high schools. Thus chores and responsibilities are assigned equally without a deliberate focus on ‘being’ a boy or a girl. Generally, even during school breaks, boys and girls sit and play together. Most co-researchers’ especially educators, TAs, and SGB members confirm that **“ba banyenyane ga ba na mathatha...ke bana...ba sa utlwella molao...ba senyega ge ba fihla ko high school...”** Another adding **“...asazi singayenza njni ukuthi loku abakufunda la na seKhaya ba kuyenze ngoba la abanankinga bay a hloniphana bayenza umsebenzi ofanayo kanti futhi kukhona amaClass la uthole intombazana kuyiyo ephambili kuwo wonke amaSubjects...”** However, **“mathatha ke ge go ba fitlha ka ko high school...motho ga otsebe gore ke stage...adolescent.... or ke peer pressure or ke gore le ko gae ga o sa kgalemiwa or ke eng...ngwana o a tswileng mo a le bohlale a itshwere pila ge a fitlha ka ko high school utlwa gore o thoma go changer...”** Thus, the opportunity lies with inculcating gender equality attitudes, behaviour, and sustaining those throughout the schooling years. However, the rural home and community are equally important ecologies and role-players, so they should be able to inculcate good non-discriminatory habits.

5.5.1 Bourdieuan analysis: exploring opportunities in the rural home for girl children's access to sustainable learning

Data derived in line with this objective suggests that we explore opportunities in the rural learning ecologies from a Bourdieuan perspective and that we should start with the home. Considering that, “...mo sekolong re ka ruta bjang le bjang mara thuto ekgolo key a ko magae...batswadi ga ba tshwanela go rutulla...” In addition, “wa tseba ntho etshwenyang ke gore ba berekisha setso...and setso sa rona ke sa go thusana ...setso se re le robiwa le sa le lelefsya...” And “hlompho le maitshwaro ke ntho ekgolo ya setso sa rena...ra tlhomphana so batho ba se ke bay a ko ditoropong ge ba etela batswadi ba bona ge ba fithla ko bakopa dilo the disnaks ba bowa le tjona mo magaeng ebe ba re magaeng go senyegile kganthe go senyegile bona...” Further, “...ka setso...mosadi otshwara thipa ka bogaleng...and ke setjo go re mosadi ke moetapele...lapa la go tlhoka mosadi le a bonagala ka gohlahlakana...”

There is a sense that urban influence deriving from regular urban visits is the cause of some of the gendered challenges. That is so because according to the co-researchers, culture and tradition are in their origin, relational and reciprocal and promotes co-existence. Because “indaba enkulu isemakhaya...abantu abadala mele basicede ngoku buyisa isintu sethu...inhlonipho, ukanakekelana, asithi uBuntu nje...” Therefore, the rural households and families should take lead and responsibility to continuously entrench relational living that promotes gender equality and equity. Bourdieu's theory of practice insists on the intertwined nature of the field, the habitus and the capital. In the same way, the data analysed and presented suggests a multi-pronged approach to identifying opportunities with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In the rural homes, data that emanated proposed that we should relook at investing in girl children's education through the following interventions:

5.5.1.1 Building the agentic self: conscious and continuous empowerment of rural girl children

Co-researchers maintained that “kakhulu sifundise nawo lamantombazana ukuthi baziqenye ngobuntombi babo futhi bona amathuba wabo se amakhulu kulamalanga...abantu besifazane bazuza kakhulu ezintweni eziningi manje me le si bakhuthaze ukuthe nabo bakwazi ukuzuza...kahulu ekufundeni ngoba

akusekho ukuthi intombazana ayifundi nje ngakudala...bamele baququzelwe bakwazi ukuthatha amathuba akhona maningi futhi...” I have mentioned in 3.6.2 of this study, derived from Arnot et al. (2012:3) that girl children know the value of education, but they do have future aspirations. Data herein confirms this assertion. However, what is lagging is improving access to information that would allow for self-empowerment. That is, building the requisite ambitious attitudes, behaviours and habits that challenges the way of doing things. Especially because most girl children co-researchers assert that “**...imfundo ibalulekile yona...siyazibona intanga zethu ziyaphumelela umazikhonile ukufingelela kumabanga aphezulu ngemfundo...kodwa la emakhaya asinalo ulwazi eliningi ukuthi mhlambe uma uhlupheka...abazali bengekho usizo uluthula njani ukuthi uqhubeke ngokufunda uthole inxaso yezezimali...**”

Therefore, the priority lies with empowering and nurturing the rural girl children themselves; that is, building the agentic self. Collectively, all groups of co-researchers agree that the most feasible and sustainable investment and opportunity is girl children themselves. We have highlighted the challenges that continues to confront girl children in the literature review (chapter 3). We also confirmed those that are pertinent to rural girl children in the research sites as alluded to by rural girl children themselves. Hence, the girl children should be consciously and continuously taught to create new ways of balancing the domestic and the schooling. That requires enhancing girl children’s self-management, which includes a range of other factors such as self-discipline, cultivating high levels of personal future enthusiasm, educational resilience, and sound morals and ethics, amongst others. Educational resilience comes the realisation that pursuing and prioritising education presents them with an opportunity to have and play a role in society. In being agentic, girl children highlighted the need to be equipped and supported by willing and knowledgeable adults who would serve as resource people. Thus, the inherent opportunity lies with capacitating the girl children to enter the gendered field of play with an advantage, and to thus take the lead. Hence, the emphasis is on the need for conscious and continuous personal development and empowerment programmes that includes setting personal goals, vision and plotting for themselves how they will navigate through to attaining their set goals.

5.5.1.2 Developing the habitus: addressing rural girl children's triple oppression

As outlined in Chapter 2 of this study, according to Bourdieu, habitus is the physical embodiment of the cultural capital. It is the ingrained habits, skills and dispositions through which the individual perceives the social world around them and reacts to it. With the presented data, we see the way clearer to delve on the rural boy and girl children's habitus. In their journal entries for instance, girl children confirm the 'time element' linked to poverty issues that result from their triple oppression. As mentioned in the situational analysis presented by girl children themselves (5.3), girl children are expected to take care of the household as detailed in 5.3 & 5.3.1. They should strive for family provision, hence the selling of tomatoes and onions for sustenance, which is making a living from early age (robbing them of their childhood), and having to attend and perform at school. I have consistently highlighted the issue of time that is inherent in these multiple oppressive roles and responsibilities. We therefore realise from the data that girl children are burdened with multiple responsibilities and expectations and are thus bound to underperform at school. Data reveals that they allocate the least period to academic work, struggle at regularly attending school and sustaining high performance related to academic commitments. There is no picture in the photo-voice that shows adequate attention to schoolwork.

Yet, rural boy children's journal entries depict relatively few roles and responsibilities with more than enough time for schoolwork and play. This is an opportunity for re-orientation and according to Bourdieu, an opportunity for re-embodiment of the cultural capital as most girl children alluded to in their proposals that we focus on boy children has deeply ingrained habits and dispositions through focused interventions that seek to re-negotiate and seek gender redress. Importantly though is the opportunity presented by such programmes in deconstructing femininities and masculinities, breaking patriarchal stereotypes and sustaining gender equality into the future which will benefit girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.5.1.3 Nurturing the Unrecognised Cultural Capital (UCC)

In Chapter 2 (2.8.1.2) of this study, we mentioned the UCC, which is Bourdieu's cultural capital; the aspect that is usually hidden but inherent in the daily resistance of the dominated. Data affirms that girl children as the dominated possess the ability to challenge and resist the norm thereby facilitating change as mentioned in 5.5.1.1

above. I therefore draw on and re-emphasise Lo's (2015:126) stance as outlined in 2.8.1.2 that "non-dominant cultural skills and competencies that dominated groups do possess, grouped as unrecognised cultural capital (UCC), may be converted into useful resources for change and at times resistance". Girl children themselves articulated the following: "...*thina si nePlane mam...net siyasaba*" and "...*a go na motho o a rerutileng go rekisha gore re reke borotho...re no bona seemo ra loga mano*". That which is interpreted as being forward as boy children say "...*bayaphapha mam Amantombazana...*" The "*ukuphapha*" is not viewed positively to mean that girl children are assertive and resourceful. Moreover, that these girl children's "*ukuphapha*" benefits them and in some instances the entire household. It is therefore vital to explore techniques of nurturing the UCC in ways that "affords resources for pushing back the forces of domination to some extent and energises everyday practices of resistance, thereby assisting the dominated in their struggles against complete exclusion from the field" (Lo, 2015: 126-7). Girl children's participation in extra-curricular events is identified and mentioned as amongst the platforms for identifying and nurturing this UCC. For instance, in the high schools that constituted the research sites, girl children dominate the Learner Representative Councils (LRCs), and importantly, they occupy leadership positions such as president, deputy president and secretary. These are influential, powerful decision-making positions. They are testimony to the fact that girl children have the potential to lead, the UCC, and that includes leading their own lives. This is therefore an opportunity worth being exploited with regard to building girl children's personal development and leadership competencies and skills. The lessons learned with the tasks, responsibilities and decision-making they assume in these structures can be potentially nurtured to extend into their own lives including decisions on delayed sexual activity to address teenage pregnancies and school dropout amongst girl children. All of which are likely to positively benefit girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.5.2 Bourdieuan analysis: exploring gender transformation opportunities in rural schools

Whilst the rural households are generally the primary socialisation ecologies, the schools are secondary and vital. In 2.7.1, 2.7.2 and 2.7.3) in this study, we highlighted that rural schools are an integral component of the rural ecologies. Data analysed

shows that both girl and boy children spend reasonably long periods in the school ecologies. Thus, most of the interactions and relationships are built through and in the school set-up for girl and boy children. It is against this background that most data presented in this chapter suggests greater focus on the school ecologies. Further, data showed that the school ecologies present a range of opportunities that could facilitate gender transformation. During a dialogue with practitioners from the NDBE, a former school principal highlighted the importance of disrupting the norm and introducing new ways of doing things. That for Bourdieu implies reflexivity and facilitating the hysteresis and challenging the doxa (2.12 & 2.12.1). The practitioner for instance, specifically mentioned the school starting times. Given the challenges faced by girl children in rural ecologies such as collecting water, cooking for the elderly and so forth, the school starting time in rural ecologies should be reconsidered. She as a former school principal introduced 08:00 as the official school starting time instead of 07:00. That was done against the backdrop of the range of various chores girl children are expected to perform prior to going to school. She further introduced a 'no-homework policy' so that all schoolwork is completed during school hours, considering the burden of chores that girl children have to perform after school. These practical creative ideas and practices make the school an opportune learner-friendly ecology for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural areas.

In addition, given the fact that schools are institutions governed by legislation and policies, which are gender-sensitive and promote human rights, it is assumed that school authorities would entrench gender-friendly attitudes, behaviours and practices. This means that sexual harassment will be addressed, symbolic violence will be eradicated, facilities will be upgraded to become learner-orientated, and mandatory quotas in enrolments abolished (among others). However, research shows that very little is done to help the underprivileged.

5.5.2.1 Focus on closing rural-urban divide in schools-resource-allocation

The under-resourcing of rural schools is identified as amongst the key challenges raised by co-researchers, especially so when compared with the resourcing of urban schools. Understandably, apartheid advantaged all white schools especially in urban areas, but township and rural schools were neglected with no or meagre resource allocation. In addition, urban schools are located mostly in areas where critical

infrastructure such as electricity, roads, water and sanitation are readily available. Added to that is that learning support services and facilities are also readily available and accessible. Libraries, laboratories, hospitals, internet services, good sanitation, and sportsfields benefitted urban learners. These services make learning sustainable for urban learners.

However, the bleak situation for sustainable education in rural areas can be turned around by closing the rural-urban-divide. Here, Government should be particularly generous in resource allocation towards rural schools, given the historical background. The emphasis does not only come from learners themselves, almost all stakeholders and role-players share this view.

Another real threat is the future retention and/or attraction of rural educators generally, and more specifically women educators. This is coupled with infrastructural improvements, so necessary to retain and attract skilled and qualified teachers. Generally, the basic working conditions of educators in rural areas are very different from those of their urban counterparts. Basic facilities such as the staff room, educators' ablution facilities, teaching resources and security (amongst others) are lacking. These gaps propel learners' migration to urban schools, which in the long-term has its own set of challenges. In this regard, we are starting to experience the incapacity of urban schools to cater for the ever-increasing number of learners seeking enrolment. This would also entrench the commonly-held assumptions, attitudes and beliefs that rural ecologies are less valuable than urban ecologies; and that they are backward (Robert & Green, 2013; Bell, Llyod & Vatovec, 2010). It cannot be acceptable that rural ecologies are neglected, specifically in education. Communities have to pressurise Government and the private sector to do their social duty.

5.5.2.3 Addressing the misconceptions and stereotypes about rural school management that negatively affect girl children

The gender representation of women teachers in strategic key positions such as high school principals in rural areas presents an opportunity for challenging and changing gender stereotypes within rural ecologies. In the study's research sites, the two principals at the two high schools are male and the two primary schools' principals are female. There is an 'unofficial-yet-official' commonly held notion that women are fit for principalship at primary level whilst at high schools these positions are preserved for

men. Taking into consideration that this is a Bourdieuan analysis, practice and structure are important avenues to be explored. We have highlighted the challenges that the only one high school woman principal undergoes, especially being shunned by members of the community such as the traditional authority. Broadly, community members have been socialised to believe that women cannot hold such positions of power; traditional authorities who are highly influenced by patriarchal notions of male dominance and superiority and female subordination. Also, fellow educators, especially males who are influenced by traditional habits, regard women in high positions as ‘irrelevant’. Gender inequality in education remains an unfulfilled dream as the schools and rural communities for this study, do not advance and push for gender representation amongst the various levels of the management. Thus, co-researchers identify the rural school management structure as another opportune avenue for filtering through gender transformation, which should begin with gendering the various school management teams in the various rural schools.

5.5.3 Bourdieuan analysis: exploring opportunities in the rural communities

Data revealed that the communities, rural communities for this study, are important roleplayers and stakeholders in sustainable learning across spheres. At the level of rural households, practices are shaped and aligned to community-expectations and thus households strive at always wanting to fit-in. Hence, the common reprimanding saying of “*batho ba tla reng*”. In education matters, especially at localised levels of the school and schooling, communities’ perceptions and regard for education and must be workshopped to create a sense of liberalism to emancipate their own members of their community whom they are oppressing to ironically disadvantage them further, thus lowering the quality of life in the community. It is within the broader communities that decisions about the value of education are made – it should begin by emancipating leaders in the community to unchain their minds and inculcate in them the true spirit of *Ubuntu*.

There is also an agreement that the socio-cultural, economic and political changes, that is, the way of doing things that is changing nationally, internationally and globally does impact on the way of life in rural ecologies. For instance, they are able to distinguish between the South African apartheid era and the democratic dispensation. Therefore, the opportunity lies with building gender-receptive and responsive

communities to allow for broader community gender transformation. There should be efforts towards building the view that education of girls is as important as that of boys. As one co-researcher mentioned, “...**go atshwana sesi ka gore re botja bana gore goima o se wa fetja sekolo ke go ititela le go ditela bokamoso bja bona...mara gona mo motseng ge o fihla mengwaga e itjeng o se na ngwana ibile o sa nyalwe ke polelo...le bona batswadi okwa ba re go bona dithaka tja gago di na le bana...obviously ba encourager goima...**” The belief and practice that at a particular age the girl child must be pregnant and married persist. It is unwise for girl children to be pregnant before the completion of studies, but families and communities have different expectations that negatively affect girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

5.5.3.1 Addressing barriers for girl children’s decision-making and full participation

Data has revealed that poverty, lack of parental involvement and support for schooling, household chores and responsibilities, are amongst the key barriers for girl children’s access to sustainable learning. The proposals, some of which will be thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, include amongst others, introducing anti-poverty programmes, Government-sponsored ECD and Care Villages for the sick and the elderly in rural communities. That these centres are adapted to suit the rural needs remains to be seen. Co-researchers reveal that their grandmothers would not be so keen on staying at the care centres over long periods but would instead agree to spending time between home and the centre. That would free the girl child’s time and allow her to attend school regularly comforted in knowing that the grandmother is cared for at all times. The issue of illiteracy and adult basic education (ABET) for parents presents an opportunity to emancipate communities.

5.5.3.2 Symbolic power and violence: prevalent practices of exploitation and GBV

Another opportunity for infusing the Bourdieuan analysis is in dealing with the prevalent practices that exploit girl children (e.g. gender-based violence). For example, drawing from available data and observations, there is a general trend of teenage pregnancies, which is rife amongst girl children between the ages of 13 – 16 years. This under-age group ideally, should have the perpetrators charged with statutory rape. However, the girl children themselves, or their caregivers and (or) guardians are

not willing to pursue the legal route. They are complicit to the situation citing issues of poverty and child-headed households. According to Bourdieu, this is symbolic “violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:167). For instance, one SGB member stated “...I went into that family after I was told that the 13 year-old is pregnant...the aunts laughed at me and dismissed the issue as untrue...I paid a second visit to make sure.... they said at least she will get a child support grant...she will also contribute to buying food in the house...”

From a Bourdieuan analysis, these are issues of symbolic power. They are a show of force and demonstration of power as well as showing ‘who can get away with what against whom’ in these ecologies. It thus further functions as an instrument of social control that tends to maintain the existing social order, which needs conscious disruption.

5.6 CONTEXTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE IDENTIFIED ROLE-PLAYERS COULD POSITIVELY SHAPE AND INFORM ISSUES OF GIRL CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

In the previous chapters, the study emphasised the fact that the issue of girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural areas requires collective involvement and participation by relevant role-players and stakeholders as outlined in 1.9 of this study. Those mentioned are the NDBE, the Province (MDoE) through the Nkangala Regional Office, the Rural Education and the Gender and Transformation Directorates, school principals at each of the four schools, HODs and LO teachers at the selected schools. Added to this team would be parents through the SGB members and the local NGO as well as representatives of the TAs. From the dialogues and focus group discussions with this group(s) of co-researchers, a comprehensive approach with all role-players will yield more progress and visible results. In this regard, the following are priority areas for role-players’ active involvement:

5.6.1 Lack of rural parents’ active participation and involvement in learners’ school matters

Parents are an integral component in the socialisation process. According to the Bourdieuan analysis of the social fields, parents play an active role concerning their children’s lives in the home, the school and in the community. Thus parents are the

only influential role-players and stakeholders who play in all these social fields. It is with this context in mind that we seek to know how parents can positively shape and inform girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The data in 5.3.2.1 and 5.3.2.2 above, highlighted issues pertaining to gender stereotypes in the rural households as well as the impact of the parents' low levels of education on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Another matter is that I alluded to in 5.3.3, is the growing trend of child-headed households. Thus in the school ecologies, data presented suggests that parents' active involvement and participation in the learners' and school matters is an important platform that fosters growth in all spheres of learning. It presents an opportunity for strengthening relations between the teachers and the parents, for instance. It also allows parents to keep abreast of regular changes and other matters in general school affairs. However, **“it is difficult for us to wholly intervene in the learners' issues...even if we see that she has problems...we can't say bring your parents as they are either not there or they are not interested...”** Also, **even if they are there at home they don't understand why we want them to be involved...for them schools must see to finish ... even with simple thing such as helping with homeworks...they will tell you teachers get paid for what if they are to be involved...”**

Therefore, reasonable focus should be directed at improving rural parents' active involvement in the learners' and the schools for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.6.2 Need for attraction and retention of rural women educators as coaching and support platforms for girl children in rural ecologies

Data presented in this category corroborates the fact that there are challenges with regard to the attraction and retention of women educators in rural schools. The challenges have however taken a different turn. There were times in which not many women educators took interest in rural schools. The majority of the educators who took up rural teaching posts were male. Many were discouraged by the working conditions in the rural ecologies. Worse still is that many of those who opted for these posts had to take up temporary residence in rental-compounds in the respective rural communities. As **mentioned “...you know the one-room arrangement was only suitable for male...”** which is why they were in the majority. However, **“...as you**

know, teaching positions are shrinking every year...we don't have any choice...the demand in urban areas is no more so we are forced to look elsewhere and the rural schools are that option...even if they mean travelling long distances as most of us don't stay in these areas...we travel daily and some of us very long travel like 80kms or so..."

As reflected in 5.6.1 above, the good relationship between the parents and educators is vital. With the travelling, these educators are not able to fully interact with learners and intervene where possible, especially in the case of girl children. Because ***"we can see their challenges...like that they are alone at home...they are going through the adolescence stages and all that..."*** Importantly, ***"...as women teachers, we are also mothers to these learners and you know mothers and daughters are able to share too much..."*** By implication women educators serve coaching and mentorship duties in the lives of rural girl children. Therefore, the unavailability of women educators leaves girl children with fewer avenues to exploit as they journey through education. It is therefore important to explore ways and means to attract women educators and retain them in the rural ecologies in the pursuit of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.6.2.1 Rural girl children's vulnerabilities and the role of the women educators

Rural ecologies are not immune to the realities of educator-learner intimate relationships. Several cases have been reported in these ecologies though many do not see any prosecution or punishment on the part of the perpetrators who are in the main male educators. As mentioned several times ***"...it is sad...very sad that male teachers are having relationships with this girls... some even impregnate them...but nothing happens to the male teachers because the same girls protect them...we know and hear of many cases but nothing has happened..."*** We have mentioned amongst others, parental absence in many rural households. Thus some male educators target girl children from these families, especially because with the absent parents, girl children take over the household chores and responsibilities as mentioned in 5.3 and 5.3.1 above. These home-caring responsibilities render girl children vulnerable to exploitation by older male, including male educators taking advantage of their situation. Also ***"because... remember most male teachers have temporary accommodation in the community...women***

teachers don't, they prefer to travel because they also have families so for men it is easy for them to stay and only go home over weekends...

It is also a fact that ***“the culprits are protected by the guardians...the girl will be pregnant and they demand a private settlement amount and never report the educator so it ends up nowhere because it is some status to be impregnated by a teacher...despite that he has a family and violating the law, it is sexual harassment...”*** These are acts of gender-based violence because in some instances these are unwanted sexual advances and forced sex by male educators. The targeted girl children succumb for fear of victimisation. Against this backdrop, the availability of women educators is viewed as a reporting avenue for socio-cultural issues such these and other economic matters that often affect plague children. For example, a female school principal in one primary school has to buy packets of sanitary towels every month, because ***“...there are those little girls that will not come to school for three of four days because they don't have sanitary towels...so the story is I keep them in my office and they know that they must come and get them when needed and just this simple act has made a difference...”*** Hence, the availability of women educators in rural schools is significant to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.6.2.2 Lack of educator-parent partnerships: women educators and mothers

In 5.6.1, it is highlighted that the role of parents in learners' and school matters, is crucial. We also mentioned the importance of the educator-parent relationship in the learners' lives. Data suggests that even more important is the rural mothers and women educators' relationships in the lives of rural girl children. As mentioned in 5.6.2.1, women educators play vital intervening roles with regard to girl children's vulnerabilities. Thus, their role would be even more effective if their partnerships with learners' mothers were to become stronger and more visible. For instance, there are cases ***“where as a woman educator you see that there is something wrong with this girl learner...say you suspect abuse, or pregnancy...and you know these teenagers like hiding pregnancy...she knows she isn't menstruating but continues to wear tight clothes and so participate in sports for example...”*** In such situations, ***“...it becomes necessary to have discussions with the mother or female guardian...but you find parents are away or it's a child-headed***

family...” And “...let me tell you, not many guardians do well with these children...they actually sell them too older men in exchange of money or the girl children themselves disregards them...you know no one can instil discipline or make you to account like your biological mother”.

In some instances, the mother is available but due to most women educators travelling, they are unavailable for consultations. The available times for parent consultations is usually after school. At that time, most of those remaining are male teachers. That makes it even difficult for female parents to take up the matter, as they feel defeated even before getting help and advice. It is “...**a common belief that men always protect one another so laying a complaint to one man about another is seen as useless**”. Thus, the partnerships between specifically women educators and learners’ mothers and girl learners themselves is important for girl children’s access to sustainable learning rural ecologies.

5.6.3 Challenges with cross-border role-players coordination and partnerships for rural girl children

Both the primary and high schools that constitute the research sites for this study are located cross-border. The schools in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality are on the Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga border, making it between 1- 30 km to the border of another province. The same with Dr J. S. Moroka Local Municipality where schools are located in the periphery of Limpopo. Mpumalanga and Gauteng borders. The challenges are with the coordination of services as well partnerships that would be in the interest of girl children’s access to rural ecologies. Currently the situation is complicated because at times, the schools and those communities receives services from two or three different provinces. For instance, the schools which fall under the Mpumalanga, Social Development and Health Ministry also fall under Limpopo - and the Municipality is Limpopo. Then, further complicating the location and access to service-delivery, is the local tribal authority which is coordinated from the Mpumalanga COGTA.

Having mentioned that rural girl children take care of the elderly and the sick in the rural ecologies (5.3.) above, it is therefore frustrating for girl children who have to deal with two to three different provinces to seek help for the elderly and sick. It is the same experience for educators who seek some form of intervention for girl children. Co-

researchers' narratives tell us: **“...uGogo uhola eLimpopo bese thina si register eBela Bela be se isikole kuyiMpumalanga...manje simele sigibele siye le nale noGogo...”**. It means that the grandmother receives pension from a pay-out point in Limpopo, but is registered as an indigent in Bela-Bela Local Municipality – the girl child attends school which is under the MDoE and that entails travelling from one point to another. On the part of educators **“...it is difficult to help these learners because you see where we are, we work with two provinces...we belong to Mpumalanga as schools but when I want to refer a girl for social or health issues...I must now deal with Limpopo...how they will follow-up and so on means I must make a plan...”** The provincial cross-border situation affects girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural areas particularly when it comes to access to issues such as social grants and clinics. Thus, the issue of cross-border coordination of services as well as partnerships amongst various role-players and stakeholders is crucial for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.6.4 Traditional authorities, NGOs, parents and SGB: issues for moral regeneration collaborative efforts

The focus group dialogues with various representatives from various traditional houses in the Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka Local Municipalities through the NDM raised several observations about girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Those are mainly centred on the evolution of rural life, especially concerning the rapidly growing number of child-headed households, alcohol and drug abuse amongst young people including girls, and the blesser- blessee phenomenon that is spreading to rural areas at a large scale. The TAs maintain that they command authority on various communal matters including girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. However, the cross-border issues mentioned above, the lack of proper coordination and communication between the institutions, government and other role-players, and what is referred to as a general moral decay and degradation within communities pose a threat. According to the TAs, whilst they work well with Government, the low degree of coordination and communication should improve to enhance initiatives and interventions that could potentially benefit girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Also, traditional authorities identified the need for closer cooperation and collaborative efforts with parents, the SGB and the local NGOs. The emphasis is on getting all

parents of learners, at least those that are alive, to be involved in the matters of education, especially learners and schools. The SGB representatives shared a concern that parents over-burden them, as in “...**go ba moemedi wa batswadi mo go SGB ha gore hore bjanong bona ha e sa le batswadi...bjanong bona ha ba sa na taba...ba tlohella merero kaofela mo ho rona...**”

Our proposals in Chapter 7 will attempt to incorporate these concerns to maximise participation by all rural role-players and stakeholders in girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

5.7 FRAMEWORK FOR GIRL CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES FROM A BOURDIEUIAN PERSPECTIVE

In our attempt at proposing a framework for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we firstly take into cognisance the situational analysis provided in 5.3. Because the issues raised cuts across the rural home, school and the community, our framework seeks to be comprehensive and cover these three critical ecologies. There are however essential characteristics that should be continuously inculcated in building agentic girl children in line with Bourdieu’s agency perspectives. These are in general the continuous efforts of developing girl children’s leadership and decision-making powers. Taking charge of own life situations and the ability and power to make decisions provide a solid foundation for girl children to reclaim their agency.

5.7.1 The need for gendering rural households to promote girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Data gathered in this respect points at the fact that the nature of rural households is characterised by gender discrimination and inequality. In essence, gender discrimination and inequality is woven into what is generally taken for granted, the order of things in rural family life despite the fact that it disadvantages girl children. Because it is interwoven and considered the normal status quo, it is almost impossible to challenge. The data thus suggests that focus should be directed at gendering the rural household. That is, educating, raising awareness, and sensitising rural families about the need for gender redress and transformation. This entails re-orientation of boy children towards sharing domestic chores and responsibilities that have been generally considered female. One co-researcher advises: “... **it is nothing fancy...we also don’t go to school to be taught how to clean, wash dishes...we learn as we**

do so they also can learn as they do it...” Thus beginning to share in household chores and responsibilities between girl and boy children is considered an important stepping stone towards addressing girl children’s time poverty issues. The issue of child-headed households, gendered cultural and traditional practices and others raised in 5.3 are highlighted as nodal points for consideration in proposing the framework. The data suggests that the proposed framework should from a Bourdieuan perspective, re-organise the skewed domestic playing fields that systematically favour some players to the disadvantage of others. In unpacking the proposed framework in the next chapter, data points to the importance of recognising and redressing the deep and complex relations of power embedded in the household gender inequalities and inequities.

5.7.2 The need for gendering the rural school environments: towards gender sensitive policy and practice for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The study focuses on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Inevitably, the rural schools are mentioned by all co-researchers as an integral part of the rural ecology, specifically concerning the “fundamental aim of education to equip children with the knowledge, skills and opportunities they need to realise their full potential and to participate effectively in social, economic and political life” (Mwanza, 2015:96). The stories and dialogues emphasised the need for schools to play a leading role with regard to girl and boy children’s general re-orientations, including re-orientations towards schooling as whole. The framework is supposed to include mechanisms with which women teachers can be attracted and retained in rural areas, the gender stigmatisation and stereotypes that find expression in the school ecologies amongst others. The school is viewed as the lead institution as it can go as far as introducing school-based policies that seek to advance girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. One co-researcher mentioned “**...there are many policies by government that could be brought to schools and introduced to support and encourage girl children’s equality issues...**” The same sentiment is echoed by another co-researcher who asserts that “**...there must be policies introduced to support rural women educators...maybe give the rural allowances or maybe build houses where they can stay to avoid travelling...as many don’t want this travelling they say it is expensive**”. There are also practice-orientated

proposals such as that **“...teachers must encourage girl learners to take up mathematics and maybe together with parents arrange for extra mathematics classes...”** and **that “...life orientation to address issues of future planning for girls...discourage early pregnancy and so on...”** The data thus proposes that rural schools as an integral part of the rural playing field, should actively engage the players (both girl and boy children) in nurturing Bourdieu’s agency and the habitus. Critical aspects of gender responsive policy and practice proposals will follow in the next chapter.

5.7.3 Need for gendering rural communities: strengthening multi-stakeholder structures

The proposal for a framework recognises that “education is first and foremost a social tool that is imperative for the continued survival and growth of the human society” (Alabi & Alabi, 2013:7). We thus derive from this assertion the need to coordinate, resuscitate, structure and manage all role-players with respect to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, especially so because the growth and development of rural communities are beneficial to the growth of human societies. As revealed by data in the study, rural communities regard and respect cultural and traditional practices, some of which are considered disadvantageous to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural areas. With the framework, as one co-researcher stated, we **“appreciate and pride ourselves with our culture...it is beautiful to see girl children ngesikhathi sa Maqude bevunulile bebahle...kodwa abafundiswe ukuzimela, ukuzithuthukisa, ukuthi imfundo ezobasa phambili ngempilo...not ukuthi sebaafazi...indoda loku na loku be se bayapregger”**. Therefore, the framework should elaborate on how culture and tradition could be used to address pertinent issues pertaining to girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. During the introductory (pre-planning phase of the study) which was during the ingoma/koma period, most boys were absent from school due attending this traditional practice. There are however, catch-up classes that are planned to ensure that they complete their respective academic year. The co-researchers with respect to girl children’s cultural and traditional practices suggest such interventions. Rural role-players should thus collectively engage and seek innovations on all aspects concerning girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies including the integration of culture and traditional practices.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

From the data presented, analysed and interpreted, we affirm that reasonable effort has been directed at improving rural education in South Africa. However, the slow progress does not take away the fact that challenges, especially with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies continues to exist in several parts of the country. Noticeably, the situational analysis objective yielded more data. This was not intentional; however, data pointed us in that direction. Whilst there have been changes, some situations remain the same. And in instances the situations have changed (or not changed) but have taken different forms and shapes that require different interventions. Mindful that this is a policy and practice study, we have highlighted the policy and practice specific priorities:

- Issues of poverty, the evolution of family and broader social life across communities which persist with adverse impact on girl children's access to sustainable learning;
- Inadequate infrastructural provisions in rural areas such as proper ablution facilities, classrooms and other learning support facilities;
- A rural economy that remains largely under-developed despite the mushrooming of malls in most rural areas. Some areas, especially those in far-flung rural areas still remain with the challenges of accessibility to convenience facilities such as ICT facilities;
- The gendered socio-cultural behaviours and practices that perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality are entrenched and maintained in a variety of ways in the rural ecologies. They straddle across the families/households, the schools and the communities;
- Gender mainstreaming for gender transformation is not central to the rural education, hence there isn't any gender mainstreaming policy for rural schools, given the unique socio-cultural, economic and political environment they operate in;
- Boy children and men do not make direct contributions to household chores and responsibilities, in the schools and home; to the disadvantage girl children; and

- Girl children and women do not possess formal power and authority, both in the home, school and the community. Thus, there are still various community activities and structures that are predominantly male.

Lastly, the data analysed and presented in this chapter indicates that despite global efforts directed at improving girl children's access to sustainable learning, the challenges remain, especially for rural girl children who are confronted by several other disadvantages that are as a result of their geographical location, exacerbated by social discriminatory practices. In chapter six, we consolidate the data presented in this chapter (5) to concretise the findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study is centred on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Drawing from the data analysis, interpretation and presentation in chapter five (5), in this chapter (6) I deliberate on the findings, conclusions and implications of the study. Generally, these suggest the need for creative and innovative initiatives and interventions that focus on improving rural education, specifically for rural girl children. This is particularly so because the study's findings confirm that issues of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies continues to be confronted with a myriad of disadvantages, various forms of discrimination, including gender inequalities, inequities and injustices. These confirmations draw from the preceding assertions alluded to in Aikman and Unterhalter (2006:1) as seen in 2.3 of this study. The authors argue that girl children, rural girl children for this study, are still confronted by untold discrimination, division and marginalisation that render them helpless to access sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Whilst the focus is limited to the Nkangala District of the MDoE, the issues provide reasonable insight into pertinent issues in most rural ecologies of South Africa.

Further, mindful of the research focus pointed out in (1.3), the study briefly highlighted the disjuncture between policy and practice specifically with regard to education for girl children in a broad sense. The findings and conclusions from the data analysis affirm this disconnection. It goes on to reveal that outside this disjuncture, there are other strategic issues within rural education that warrants policy intervention but do not have any. Whilst the country's rural education policy is nearing its final adoption, a lot still needs to be done in the area of policy interventions with regard to rural education. Furthermore, in 3.2.2 of this study, the researcher raised issues pertaining to the education of girl children and gender equality in general. The literature review in Chapter 3 of this study substantiated that educating girls is one of the ways of achieving gender equality and broader gender transformation across various spheres. We use these earlier assertions and literature review to authenticate our findings, conclusions and implications. Importantly, the study being a Bourdieuan analysis, we

continuously highlight the interconnection of Bourdieuan theory of practice; the field, the habitus and the capital as stated in 2.3.

Hence, the study points to the interplay between these core theoretical constructs as raised in (2.3), towards awakening agentic selves amongst girl children whilst advancing transformation of the field of play. The interconnection and the interplay are used to thread together these findings, conclusions and implications as they relate to the previous chapters of the study.

Lastly, as mentioned in 2.3, the study has blended the Bourdieuan theory of practice with feminist orientations, specifically mentioned in (2.4) is the feminist praxis to emphasise the deliberate focus on critical reflections of the oppressed masses (Glassman & Erdem, 2014:212-3). Through these critical reflections, rural girl children conscientise themselves of the need to actively grapple with their inhibiting habitus and capitals to emancipate and reclaim their agentic selves. Findings and conclusions confirm this approach as being beneficial. In this chapter, we therefore unpack these findings and conclusions and align them to discussions on policy and practice and its implications in this regard. We further align the discussions with the study's objectives as outlined in (1.3) of this study.

6.2 CHALLENGES NEGATIVELY AFFECTING GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES

The data analysis in the previous chapter, allow us to arrive at the finding, that there are a myriad challenges that continue to prevent rural girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies more broadly. The first major intervention at policy level, as mentioned in 3.2.2 was promoted through the MRRE (2005) with its 82 recommendations. That was followed by a number of other policy interventions such the merger and closure of rural and farm schools through rationalisation, introduction of inclusive education, the minimum norms and standards in school infrastructure regulations, and the no-school fees policy, to mention a few. All of these policy and practice interventions were geared towards transforming rural education. However, the time lag, especially in implementation has been dragging on for long to the disadvantage of rural learners, in particular, rural girl children. The cause for the delays in transforming rural education could be attributed to the fact that rural education as a directorate in the DBE was once done away with in 2009, only to be re-established

later in 2015. In addition, South Africa did not, until recently in 2018 have a rural education policy that would serve to propel initiatives and interventions in this regard.

In June 2015, the DBE compiled a report entitled *“Rural schooling, multi-grades schools, farm schools and non-viable schools: inclusive education implementation in special needs schools”*. The report, prepared by the DBE, was used to brief the parliamentary portfolio on education. In the report, the DBE acknowledges and recognises the fact that not enough attention had been given to rural education and emphasised the need for change. To date, very little has been implemented, confirming Dr Phumzile Langa’s assertion in the report that there is a dire “need for a multi-disciplinary approach towards improving the quality of rural education and subsequently learner performance in rural schools” (Dr Phumzile Langa, briefing the Parliamentary Committee on Education, 23rd June 2015, South Africa).

Bell, Lloyd and Vatovec (2010:205) claim that rural ecologies continue to be afflicted to a crisis point by many socio-cultural and economic problems (3.2.1). These crises, the authors contend, directly affect rural girl children’s access to sustainable learning largely due to under-development and the under-resourcing of rural schools and other critical services such as quality health care (clinics and hospitals), and lack of ICT infrastructure, amongst others. However, it is fundamentally important to mention the fact that these challenges have over the years changed to somehow take different shape and form. For instance, through the Government’s massive rural infrastructure rollout, most rural areas have tarred or paved roads. Nevertheless, the reality is that with the low economic activity in these ecologies, affordability remains a challenge. The same applies to electricity supply; whilst most rural areas have access to electricity, it has become an expensive commodity and thus not affordable to the majority of rural people. The conclusion is therefore that that the more things change for rural ecologies, the more they remain the same, with an adverse impact on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

This study found that in some instances, the availability of services has changed to challenges with regard to regular supply, such as the provision of habitable water. Most of the rural ecologies have communal taps installed within relatively easy reach of the majority of households. However, those communal taps lack regular water supply and thus rural girl children continue to fetch water from other sources. In some

communities, the municipality provides water tankers that stop at central spots at given days and times. Thus, rural girl children have to still go to those supply points and carry containers to store their water supplies. The water crisis is severe in some rural communities to a point that it has since become a business opportunity. For those who have transport, they fetch water in bulk and sell to community members. That again raises issues of affordability, which is a result of poverty in most rural ecologies. The data analysis reveals the factors which directly contribute to the the obstruction of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.1 Disconnections and intersections of rural poverty and livelihoods: its adverse effects

In the discussion in 6.1 above, the issue of affordability and disadvantage was raised which we relate to poverty in rural ecologies. In 3.3.2 the complexities of rural poverty as enunciated by Milbourne (2014:568) was dissected. Further, in 5.3.2, the data analysis articulated issues of rural economies and poverty linked to high unemployment rates in rural ecologies. This study declares that rural poverty and struggling families feature in a variety of disconnections and intersections with dire adverse consequences on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Krishna (in Antonelli & Rehbein, 2018:162) contends that there is a need to pioneer new ways of addressing these long-standing challenges that plague and render rural ecologies as being helpless. The realities raised in 5.3.2, for example, the absence of viable economic activities, parents' education levels, semi-skilled employment coupled with extensive travel to economic hubs (towns and cities) are a clear demonstration of the disconnections and intersections of rural poverty and livelihoods (Milbourne, 2014:568). Hence, many households in rural areas are Government grant-dependent; these Government grants thus serve as additional income, if not the only income for most rural families. The child-support grant will be discussed later in the chapter.

Further, in 3.3.2, it was highlighted that poverty is gendered, as articulated in the (World Bank Report, 2001). Findings suggest that the combination of rural poverty and gender inequalities in rural ecologies subject girl children to multiple disadvantages. Girl children bear the brunt of poverty by virtue of the gendered division of household roles and responsibilities. They directly undertake most of the household chores such as collecting water and firewood, and cooking (amongst others). Thus, girl children

directly interact with these disconnections and intersections on a daily basis by virtue of their daily interaction with availability and affordability of the necessary commodities that ensure the survival of families. For instance, if there is no water or electricity because of affordability, the situation becomes desperate, thus pressurising girl children to find means to put food on the table.

Due to parents being absent because of seeking employment in urban areas far from home, girl children now have the burden of caring for the rural households. In addition, as narrated in 5.3, girl children have to miss school to accompany the grandparents to the pension pay-out points. Thus, as Arnot and Naveed (2014:505) assert, the intersections of education, gender, poverty and rurality have direct negative consequences for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Whilst there are innumerable such disconnections and intersections, findings highlight those that have direct adverse consequence for rural girl children's access to sustainable learning such as those discussed in the following sections.

6.2.1.1 Lack of access to basic municipal services in rural ecologies and rural girl children's time poverty

It is important to appreciate that the democratic dispensation brought with it reasonable focus on the development of rural areas. Rural communities have benefitted from these as there are tangible development gains in rural areas such as massive infrastructural roll-out of roads construction, water reticulation, and electrification programmes. However, the burden of time poverty continues to be a reality for rural girl children with direct consequence on their access to sustainable learning. Unfortunately, in the post-democratic South Africa, rural girl children are socio-culturally still expected to shoulder the difficult balance of what is socio-culturally determined as girls 'domestic chores' (5.3.1 & 6.1.1) with their schoolwork from an early age.

Against the backdrop of the rural crises outlined above, and exacerbation by the pervasive gender discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes, behaviours and practices in rural ecologies, often under the guise of culture and tradition (5.3.2.1), the dilemma between seeing to home needs and academic matters becomes real. These discriminatory socio-cultural attitudes, behaviours and practices dictate the gendered

differences between girl and boy children's life priorities in the home and at school as detailed in (5.3.2) of the study.

Drawing from the narratives outlined in (5.3), girl children spend reasonable time fetching water and firewood for cooking and other household activities. Ideally, water, sanitation and electricity are amongst the basic services. Water is a precious commodity, especially during the menstrual cycle. Thus, if these basic services were to be improved in terms of adequate, affordable and effective supply, girl children would be relieved of these cumbersome domestic chores and thus have free time. Unfortunately, this is not the case as data reveals the fact that the availability of communal taps does not make any significant difference to girl children's time poverty issues as they still travel long distances to carry water for the households. What has instead changed is that girl children have since come up with innovative ways of carrying water. Not many carry the water buckets and containers on their heads as was the case before; most have since opted for wheelbarrows. However, the reality of exhaustion leaves little energy for schoolwork, thus girl children's academic underperformance. Secondly, considering the girl children and women's physical make-up and the physical strain that comes with regular carrying or pushing of heavy water-loaded wheelbarrows (or bundles of wood), sustainable learning in rural ecologies becomes a far-off dream.

Whilst we acknowledge that these essential daily activities contribute towards rural families' livelihoods, we cannot underrate the fact that girl children's time is compromised. There is a need for gearing more efforts towards confronting and solving the challenges experienced with access and provision of these basic services. These basic chores that demands and takes time are done at the expense of girl children's academic work and consequently have an adverse impact on academic performance. Therefore, data confirms that the lack of basic services in rural ecologies burdens and robs girl children of their time to focus on academic work, and thus stifles girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.1.2 Inadequate infrastructure in rural schools

We cannot disregard the issues of time poverty with regard to girl children's subject choices as well as access to other learning support facilities. Whilst the learning support facilities such as maths extra classes and science laboratories affect all

learners broadly, they affect girl children much more as they do not have available time due to pressing family commitments.

Rural schools continue to benefit through the Government's ASIDI that was launched in 2011. However, issues with regard to poor school infrastructure persists in rural ecologies. The reality is that the infrastructure backlogs and challenges are massive and will thus take time and massive resource allocation to redress. Acknowledging this mammoth challenge, in the case of Mpumalanga, the MEC for Education convened a business stakeholders' breakfast forum held on the 7th September 2018, where the forum recognised that there were mass infrastructural backlogs in the rural schools of Nkangala District. It was a platform by Government to continuously appeal for corporate assistance and support by considering rural schools' infrastructure as a priority in their respective Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programmes. Girl children have a passionate affinity with their environment, and thus the ambience and aesthetics of the school ecologies are areas of interest for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Similarly, the value are ablution facilities which are considered the only sacred spaces in a school environment where girl children are able to perform what I would refer to as personal bodily checks and balances, that is checking on the position and state of the sanitary pads in the main. That is done as a regular hygiene norm for girls and women while going through their menstrual cycle. It is meant to check if the sanitary pad needs to be changed or if one hasn't smeared clothing. Thus, water and ablution facilities are rated as priority amenities. As highlighted in the excerpts below, emphasis is also placed on the fact that according to girl children's physical make-up, they have to sit down each time they visit the ablution facility, unlike boys who at times could stand only. Thus, with the state of ablution facilities at the research sites in some rural schools, girl children opt to miss school during their menstrual cycles. These regular missed school days negatively affect rural girl children's school attendance, thus compromising academic performance. Thus, these facilities directly affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The lack of learning support facilities such as laboratories and libraries in rural schools directly influence girl children's subject choices. The study revealed that girl children do not take science subjects because these are practice-based subjects, and their

choice is influenced by the time-poverty factor. For example, science requires practice time, which is a commodity they do not have. These factors hinder girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.1.3 Lack of (or inadequate) critical communal infrastructure and services

Findings indicate that the lack of critical services such quality healthcare services (clinics and hospitals), ECD centres, and ICT centres (amongst others) burdens girl children and aggravates their poverty status. Poverty here is contextualised to mean the non-access to critical and essential services that could otherwise serve to improve the conditions and status of life of rural communities. In some rural communities, the clinics are overcrowded, understaffed and sometimes run short of resources; while in some rural areas there are no clinics at all which means walking long distances to the nearest primary healthcare facility. In both scenarios, girl children are affected because they double as primary caregivers in most rural families; they have to miss school to accompany a sickly family member to these facilities. For those who are referred to hospitals, most of which are even further and over-crowded, girl children's period of absence from school increases.

Girl children themselves have regular need for these primary health care facilities. For instance, they visit these facilities regularly for contraceptives, including injections. They experience monthly period pains and cramps but most prefer self-medication. Many learners mentioned that they sleep off their period pains and if they happen during school days, they unfortunately have to miss their classes, as the pains are unbearable and subjects them to ridicule from their boy counterparts. However, there is also the need for general health enquiries and information. For instance, generally girl children and women are encouraged to have regular breast and pap-smear tests for early diagnosis of infections and other related diseases. With the conditions at local health facilities, these tests are a luxury for girl children. Thus, the distances, the overcrowding and the under-resourced local clinics discourage young girls from accessing these services. This is detrimental as it is a missed opportunity for the empowerment of girl children on personal health issues such as curbing diseases, teenage pregnancies and so forth. However, regrettably, girl children's need for access to these services suggests more absence from school - a time-poverty issue contributing to poor academic performance amongst girl children in rural ecologies.

It is also important to mention that in some rural areas there are clinics nearby. In one of the schools, the clinic is situated right across the street, within less than a kilometre. However, the clinic does not cater for other serious ailments. In which case the clinic serves as a referral point and thus still calls for long distance travel to the hospital. A crucial matter that the study revealed is the need to re-evaluate the options that were confronted especially the availability of clinics. In one school amongst our research sites, the levels of teenage pregnancies are relatively very low. To be precise, it is only one girl child that got pregnant in the 2018 academic year. However, in another neighbouring school, eight girls were pregnant in the same period. Our conversations with girl children in the school with the lowest teenage pregnancy rates revealed that it is because of the availability of the clinic that there is minimal pregnancy. By implication, they are already sexually active, hence the use of contraceptives accessed from clinics. That includes the grade 7s who are fairly very young. It thus made sense why the 13 year-old in one of the schools got pregnant. I mention the re-evaluation component because the reality is that rural areas have changed their social make-up. The option therefore is to acknowledge and encourage girl children to use contraceptives so that they prevent pregnancy and sustain their schooling. The dilemma lies in whether to discourage the use of contraceptives and preach abstinence, while the reality is that we will be faced with an increasing rate of rural teenage pregnancy, as is presently the case.

Services related to ICT in the modern day South Africa is not a luxury but an essential commodity, a way of life and a necessary educational aid for most learners. It was found that the ICT infrastructure continues to be a challenge for most rural schools and communities. However, for this study, findings isolated ICT in the context of girl children's time-poverty priority issues. We found that ICT challenges with regard to connectivity to technology (internet and Wi-Fi) would facilitate easy access to banking and other electronic transactions. For instance, as mentioned in the narratives in 5.3, girl children have to miss school to take their elderly family members to pension pay-points and stay with them in the long queues for the day. Whilst we acknowledge and appreciate the national roll-out of Post Bank payments, there are rural areas that do not have post offices nearby and one would still have to travel long distances to get to one. Thus, the roles and responsibilities of girl children in this regard remains. The study does not aim to compare and contrast rural and urban ecologies. We believe

and embrace rural characteristics and diversities. However, such a comparison is useful to highlight how ease of access to telecommunications makes for viable business investments such as ATMs, Post Offices, and internet cafes within close proximity. The availability of such infrastructure consequently makes urban schools more viable as most have computer laboratories, E-learning programmes and related ICT services, which make notes, lessons and additional research available to the learners. It also makes catch-up possible in the event a learner having missed classes. This finding therefore implies that girl children in urban ecologies would not have the same challenges, as compared to rural ecologies as far as access to ICT infrastructure is concerned.

In 3.3.3.1 of this study, the dearth of ECD opportunities in rural ecologies, was mentioned in the context of school-readiness for children as ECD is an important time-poverty issue for girl children. As indicated in the narratives, girl children have to budget time to drop-off younger siblings at the ECD centres before going to school and pick them up after school; that is, if there is such a centre and that they can afford it. Findings confirm that access to and (or) affordability of ECD opportunities in rural ecologies is another critical issue that was 'left behind' by the authorities. Most ECD centres are privately owned and thus unaffordable to many rural families. In which case the grandparents would have to take over the duties of childcare. Whilst the situation robs rural children access to this critical preparatory phase, it further adds to girl children's time-poverty.

6.2.2 Changes in rural family and community landscape: patterns and challenges

The landscape and patterns of rural family life and ecologies are rapidly changing. The study revealed that there are several factors that contribute to the changing landscape but I would deliberate on the two factors that significantly relate to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Firstly, there are changes as a result of the non-vibrancy and the non-viability of rural economic activities. Secondly, there are changes in rural familial life associated with parents' divorces and (or) separations. Most rural parents in present day rural ecologies and families are forced to work far (either as stay-over domestics, gardeners, and other menial labourers). In the research communities, most parents are employed in Pretoria and Johannesburg which is 60-100 kilometres away from home. The long-distance travel is necessary

because of the expensive rentals in towns and cities. With the long-distance travel, parents leave homes as early as 04:00 and return at 07:00. Thus their presence is rarely felt in so far as overseeing children's academic work and other household chores.

The issue of divorce and (or) separation is also common in rural areas. That is a break-away from the norm as rural ecologies are generally considered deeply cultural and traditional as compared to urban areas. Thus, rural ecologies are considered to be relatively stable where the nuclear family is regarded as tightly knit. However, the study revealed that this is no more the case. The difference in these ecologies is that the formal procedures are usually not followed through. In most instances the father would go looking for employment and upon finding a job will visit home during month-end bringing family provisions and attending to family matters. However, he will gradually make fewer home visits, neglect family provisioning, and eventually never come back. When his whereabouts are pursued, it would be revealed that he has another wife and family. That then forces the ordinarily stay-at-home wives, those popularly referred to as "housewives", to seek alternative means of family sustenance. Thus, there is an increase in female-headed households in rural areas where the mothers are the sole breadwinners. Hence, girl children are expected to assume the roles of the absent mothers. Whilst, as a socio-cultural norm, girl children continue to bear the household chores and responsibilities, as mentioned in (6.1.1.1), the findings reveal that these have since intensified with the absent parent syndrome. Thus, in addition to the household chores and responsibilities, girl children are burdened with caring for their siblings, elderly, the sick, which at times happen to be the 'parent' themselves in the overall management of the households from an early age.

6.2.2.1 The shifts in traditional rural family life: absent mothers and the vacuum of maternal life coach and role-modelling

Our findings suggest that there have been shifts in traditional rural family life. The fact that rural women are actively participating in the families' provisioning and sustenance through seeking formal paying employment is commendable. It is indeed a gain for the women empowerment sector considering the long-standing background of women's unrecognised and unpaid labour in households. As mentioned in 5.3.2.1, because of the lack of education, most rural women are in unskilled and semi-skilled employment with meagre salaries that barely covers basic living demands and necessities.

However, these employment opportunities are in distant places hence the persistent increase of absent mothers in rural ecologies. The situation thus implies that girl children have to take over the daily roles and responsibilities of the absent mother which adds to their time-poverty issues reflected above. The situation is worsened by the realities that outside of their own dependents, rural women have the duty to directly care for the extended family. Usually they are foster children of a family member who passed on, the elderly grandparents and so forth. For this reason, their meagre salaries are usually supplemented by the social grants in the form of child support grants and/or pension payouts; in a few cases, the disability grants as well.

The absence of rural mothers for coaching and role modelling has detrimental effects on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. As stated in 5.4.1.1, the relationship between mothers and daughters is important especially for girl children as this is a critical development phase in the life of the girl child who shapes the future woman to be. Thus, the absence of most rural mothers denies the girl children the daily coaching and role-modelling opportunity. The result is that girl children are left on their own to experience life's lessons. Whilst this is not a comparative study of urban and rural girl children, some comparison provides for reflection and situates the discussion. For instance, whilst rural girl children are left to navigate through life alone, the same cannot be said of urban girl children. Most of these rural mothers are domestic helpers for urban families. Girl children's time in these urban families is freed by the services of a rural mother giving the urban girl children sufficient time to focus on academic work. Thus the urban girl children do not have time-poverty issues, as basic services and critical infrastructural provisions mentioned in 3.3.5.2, 5.5.2.2 and 5.3.7 are within easy reach. In the African Ubuntu context "every mother is your mother, every child is your child", and this means the urban girl child has the benefit of girlhood coaching from two mothers. Their mother and the (domestic) rural mother who assumes the role of the 'real' mother in her absence.

Unfortunately for many girl children, the absent rural mother situation and the realities associated with it, lead to poor academic performance and subsequent drop-out, and a range of other interrelated issues such as early marriages and pregnancies such that the cycle is ongoing. I will elaborate more on the findings on teenage pregnancies in rural ecologies later in the discussions that follow.

6.2.2.2 Increasing rural child-headed households and caring for the sick and the elderly

It is important that we separate and concentrate on the issue of child-headed households and caring for the sick and the elderly in rural households. The trend is spreading rapidly and because of the gendered expectations, girl children are the most affected. We gathered during the various sessions that the child-headed households' trend owes itself to two dominant issues. Firstly, the absent mother due to distant employment opportunities as mentioned above. Secondly, because the breadwinner has passed on. There are also child-headed households where the parents are alive but too sick to provide for the family. Thus girl children are often tasked with the responsibility of caring for the sick and elderly which leads to long periods of absence from school. It further denies them opportunity of playing and interacting with peers given the fact that they must always be mindful of the time for medication, time for preparing food, and so forth.

There is also a great deal of trauma that the girl children go through with the sick, especially if it's a sick parent (even worse a sick mother). Girl children in particular endure the trauma throughout the period of a sick parent through to the ultimate passing on. They virtually nurse the sick family member daily and that entails missing school whenever the sickness deteriorates, or going to the clinic or hospital. As is the case in most of the aspects discussed above, these caring duties and responsibilities leads to girl children's neglect of school attendance, and academic performance, and this ultimately leads to failure. For some, faced with the possibility of repeating a class and being ridiculed, they opt to drop-out.

Girl children in child-headed households also encounter the pressure of having to provide for the family's livelihood, especially if they are orphaned. Girl children have to ensure that they are registered to receive the social grants, food parcels and other forms of social relief. These are children themselves and that they themselves still need to be taken care of. Thus the increase in child-headed households as well as the caring responsibilities in rural ecologies has created over-dependence and reliance on rural girl children. It is for this reason that older men, referred to as "blessers" prey on younger girl children in exchange for money and other luxuries. The blesser-blessee trend is gaining momentum in rural ecologies with adverse impact on access to sustainable learning.

6.2.3 Manifestations of patriarchy and gendered subject and career choices

Most rural ecologies are considered conservatively cultural and traditional and thus the steadfastness on gender roles and responsibilities in all spheres remain. The study revealed that it is within this context that patriarchy and patriarchal attitudes, behaviours and practices are entrenched in these ecologies. Drawing from the on-going discussions, these attitudes and behaviours manifest themselves from an early age through the gendered division of household domestic chores and responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking, collecting firewood and so forth which are meant for girl children and women, whilst boy children and men are expected to be responsible for ploughing farms and herding livestock. However, the study confirmed that ploughing and keeping livestock has steadily dwindled in many rural households. Not many rural families have farms or livestock. Thus, rural families that have large herds of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats are those considered wealthy in these communities. These families primarily breed livestock for business purposes. Hence, they usually employ unemployed young men in the communities as herdsmen. However, the dominant activities are subsistence farming, which is small-scale farming by way of small food gardens near the home and poultry keeping (mostly chickens). Girl children and women mainly are usually responsible for the care and upkeep of these as a direct response to their food preparation roles and responsibilities. These household activities further add to girl children's caring and nurturing roles and responsibilities in rural households.

Interestingly, the patriarchal attitudes and behaviours continue. Through these attitudes and behaviours, boy children and men are generally excluded from general housekeeping tasks and responsibilities. These patriarchal socio-cultural practices across communities have since become embedded and carried through from one generation to another. In rural ecologies, these socio-cultural practices receive even more recognition and preservation under the guise of culture and tradition. What this therefore implies is that boy children and men have the luxury of time, which is mostly used to focus on academic work. Further, these patriarchal practices continue to influence girl and boy children's subject choices. However, there is some 'improvement' in subject choices; whilst girls are not taking the mathematics and science streams due to stereotypes mentioned earlier (3.6.4), they dominate the accounting and business streams and most outdo boy children. That accounts for

some progress, as the norm was that girl children preferred the general stream that consequently limits further studies and future careers. It however remains concerning that the mathematics and science streams remain male-dominated, so many 'higher' career fields will remain male-dominated. Hence, our assertion that those patriarchal attitudes, behaviours and practices continue to pose a threat to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.3.1 Gendered stereotypes, power relations and decision-making amongst rural boy children disadvantage girl children

I have raised the issue of gendered power dynamics and decision-making in several sections of the study (2.7.2, 2.11.1.3, 3.3.4 & 3.5.3). Patriarchy and patriarchal attitudes and behaviours inculcate gender stereotypes with negative effects on girl and boy children relations. In our dialogues with girl and boy children in both primary and high schools, these gendered stereotypes and socio-culturally crafted differences came across strongly. At times even through sarcasm - if you are a boy seen to be doing girls chores, you risk being labelled gay, in local derogatory language of "*setabane*".

The issue of gendered power dynamics in relation to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies is of fundamental importance. Even more so in the context of gendered attitudes, behaviours and practices that are pervasive in rural ecologies as reflected in 3.5.2 and 5.3.2. The different gendered roles and responsibilities determine whom, among girls and boys (including women and men) has the power including decision-making powers, and at times resources. As is the case in 5.3.1.1, these power dynamics manifest themselves across the rural homes, schools and communities. However, what stood out in our engagements and interactions with both girl and boy children is that boy children exercise the most decision-making powers. Using the example of pregnant school-going teenagers that was part of the dialogue, the decision to engage in unprotected sex was entirely a forced-issue, especially because older males who exert some form of power over vulnerable girls impregnate them. For instance, they are older and more experienced on matters of sex and sexuality, they possess economic power to attract the vulnerable girls with luxuries, and some have social standing such as male teachers, other senior government officials and married men. In addition, it was revealed that in the case of male teachers, senior government officials and married men, the girl children and

parents connive to conceal the identity of the father for fear of possible dismissal. However, such transactions entail an exchange of large sums of money, almost like an “admission of guilt and promise to take care of the girl and child” type of agreement between the teacher and parents/guardians. Dialogues with the pregnant girl children also revealed that if they had the option they would have terminated the pregnancies. A clear demonstration of the fact girl children are rendered powerless and thus cannot take decisions even on matters that directly affect them.

6.2.3.2 Concealed and/or delayed discussions on sex and sexuality matters

Given the conservative nature of rural ecologies under the pretext of culture and tradition, open discussions about sex and sexuality are regarded as immoral and thus discouraged. These entail discussions on issues of sexuality such as when and how to engage in sexual relationships, puberty, menstruation and so forth, which are critical for girl children given their vulnerabilities. The delayed discussions deny girl children decision-making powers as far as sex and sexuality matters are concerned. Moreover, these discussions would empower girl children and inform their decisions as to when to engage in sex and to negotiate safe sex. It is therefore true as Moletsane and Theron (2017:3) observed, “...customary practices, particularly the taboos relating to discussing sex and sexual activity ...that many parents, school governing bodies and other stakeholders across the country are reluctant to allow comprehensive sex education and the distribution of condoms in schools”.

The impact of the delayed discussions on sex and sexuality has severe negative connotations for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. These are, amongst others, premature and unprotected sexual activity with high likelihood of teenage pregnancies, early exposure to STIs, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections and diseases, early marriages, and early school-drop-out amongst rural girl children.

Whilst the delays in sex and sexuality discussions do affect boy children, the impact is not as intense. That is so because boy children dominate in their intimate relationships. For example, most of the boys in the dialogues cite peer pressure and self-affirmation as the reasons for engaging in premature and unprotected sex. Girls cite coercion by the boys and the general acceptance that the boys have the power to decide and determine the nature of the sexual relations. These gendered power

dynamics also makes girl children susceptible to older men's sexual advances due to their socio-economic power hold. The sex and sexuality discussions are important in so far as empowering boy children's respect for girl children and decisions with regard to safe sex; and delaying discussions would compound the problem.

6.2.5 Increase in teenage pregnancies, early marriages, and school drop-out

Literature has demonstrated that the consequences of premature sex are detrimental for girl children in general. In 3.2.1.3 an overview of the Mpumalanga's status on teenage pregnancies was provided. Highlighted in 3.3.5.4 were instances where girl children seldom return to resume their studies after giving birth. This is sometimes due to the complications that are associated with early motherhood. Not only do they suffer from health complications but also socio-economic challenges that entail providing for the child, regular clinic visits especially in the first year, and related motherhood responsibilities.

The study found that the statistics concerning teenage pregnancies in rural areas is disturbingly high. For instance, in the Nkangala District, statistics indicate that most pregnancies happen between the ages 13 -16 years, which are elementary years in high school indicating that, concealed and/or delayed conversations on sex and sexuality renders girl children vulnerable. In 3.2.1.3 of the study, a synoptic view of teenage pregnancies in Mpumalanga in 2015 was provided. Data generated during the study confirms that the situation remains and has in fact worsened over the years. More concerning is the increase in numbers of learners' pregnancies between the ages 13–18 with the 16 and 17 year olds topping the list. Which means learners' pregnancies catches up with girl children during the prime years of schooling (grades 9 -11). For instance, as revealed by the MDoE, in the academic year 2017, in the 1st and 2nd quarters, NDM recorded a total of 360 and 227 and in the same quarters of 2018 academic year 314 and 284 respectively. The implication is therefore that the likelihood of school completion and advancement to further education for these girl children diminishes considerably.

Importantly, the decrease in the second quarter does not in any way suggest a decrease in teenage pregnancies amongst learners. Instead, it suggests that some learners came to school after the December holidays highly pregnant and would have left for childbirth in the second quarter. We have alluded to the issue of time- poverty

as the main cause of concern with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. We specifically highlight the issue of time- poverty as it relates to girl children's academic performance, sustained stay in school and the ultimate dropout. This study coincided with preliminary examinations for matriculants and final examinations for all other grades in both primary and high schools that were utilised as research sites. We thus had an opportunity to observe and interact with the pregnant girl children. One was a 13-year-old grade 8 learner who indicated her struggles with morning sickness and general complications, and yet has to prepare for examinations. A long-term study would have allowed us to track her results and to ascertain her return to school in the next academic year. Another was that of a 15 year-old who had miscarried the previous day and because the exams were starting the next day, came to school for examinations (a day after the miscarriage). This is a demonstration of reflexive agency as reflected in 3.4.5. Girl children's agentic abilities can be aggravated by their acquired reflexivity and thus make choices and decisions on investing their socio-cultural capitals.

From the District DoE perspective, this is a critical examination preparation period. Hence, all learners are taken to what is termed "Last Push Camps" for intensive teaching and supervised learning. From our research sites, the pregnant matric learners could not be taken to these camps. The reason being that these camps are held in distant secluded venues to avoid disturbances and interruptions. It is becoming a risk to take pregnant learners to these camps given the potential pregnancy complications. This is amongst the initial disadvantages of teenage pregnancy at school-going ages. If these rural girl children were empowered and had the benefits of support services such as clinics, they could have perhaps been extra careful and took precautionary measures such as the use of condoms, contraceptives and so forth. They would have perhaps realised that they are in matric and thus in their last year of school and the beginning of realising long-term future aspirations. In essence, they would have exercised their power to take firm decisions and aligned themselves to their futures.

Having eight matric learners pregnant is an immediate indicator of high possible dropout. It also implies that even if the school had planned for 100% matric attainment, it will now be impossible. The same applies to all other grades where there are pregnant girl children. This negatively affects the overall District educational

attainments. These factors are indeed a threat to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. However, the same cannot be said of rural boy children. Whilst we acknowledge that, the study revealed the fact that boy children also do dropout, the extent to which they do so is relatively low. It mostly happens after the iNgoma cultural and traditional practice. In addition, their dropout is often voluntary, usually associated with being bored of school attendance, and peer pressure to earn money.

6.2.5.1 Escalating blesser-blessee syndrome

South Africa as a country is witnessing an escalating trend of the “blessers and blessees” phenomenon. The trend generally entails intimate relationships between old men who have economic power and young vulnerable girls who are attracted to fancy lifestyles. Whilst this trend is pervasive in urban areas, it has since found its way in a very big way in rural areas. As observed in Hu (2012:1046) in 3.6.3, the alarming increase in absent parents and the growing number of child-headed households in rural ecologies means some form of independence, or rather lack of guardianship for girl children from an early age. Thus, the older men make rural girl children susceptible to sexual advances by the dire situation they find themselves in. These men usually use money and other luxurious offerings to entice girl children who now see no way out of poverty and its disastrous implications. Indeed, the phenomenon is worryingly pervasive, as it has taken a firm grip in rural ecologies. It will be difficult to isolate this phenomenon from the on-going discussions on girl children's roles and responsibilities including their interactions with poverty in households as mentioned in 5.3.2 & 5.3.2.1. In addition, we cannot underestimate the power of the common myth that unprotected sex with virgins cures HIV/AIDS. Thus rural girl children are equally attracted to these blessers as they provide them with the much-needed resources. Unfortunately, these older men have experience in sex and sexuality and command decision-making powers because of the economic power they usually possess. Unfortunately for girl children, their lack of knowledge, experience and decision-making powers in sex and sexuality matters make them succumb to unsafe sexual practices, hence the rapid increase in teenage pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

It has been mentioned in several instances by the different groups of co-researchers that some of these blessers are male educators; in some cases, senior educators that

serve on the SMTs. Further, some have impregnated girl children in the same communities. However, because of the power they command, they 'bribe' the parents and the affected learner into secrecy. As one co-researcher mentioned that because of the absent parents, the guardians who are usually family members leave the matter unpursued. For instance, the guardians would not reveal the identity of the suspected educator, and the affected learner would deny any association with the educator. This is mostly because there would be monetary transactions that are much-needed given the poverty issues raised in 3.3.2. The reality of this pervasive blesser-blessee syndrome is that ultimately, lured by the 'luxuries' that come with these transactions, rural girl children drop-out from school. Thus, the blesser-blessee syndrome that has since encroached into rural ecologies negatively contributes to challenges that confront girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.5.2 Drug and substance abuse amongst rural youth

I deliberately discuss the issue of the increase in drug and substance abuse amongst rural girl children and relate it to unsafe sexual practices, teenage pregnancies and the blesser-blessee syndrome. The study found that there is an intrinsic correlation concerning these practices. Unsafe sexual practices are rife in the blesser-blessee relationships, with the monetary transactions being the main determining factor. Because of the dominant blesser and exchange of money and gifts, girl children are introduced to drugs and alcohol to a point of abuse, and this eventually becomes an addiction.

In one of our research sites, we were introduced to the 'Ladies Thursday and Sunday Night Chillas' events as a topic for discussion. The 'Ladies Thursday', hosted in the local taverns, is the meeting point of blessers and blessees. Rural girl children flock to the local tavern to meet the older men. These men splash money on drugs, alcohol and food as the local taverns have what is popularly known as "Chesanyama" (braai place). These places are havens for drug-pedlars, who especially sell the notorious nyaope (an illegal toxic drug) and cocaine. These days are generally characterised by over-indulgence in alcohol and drugs and thus leads to unsafe sexual activities. Therefore, a common trend schools in these areas experience high absenteeism due to the Thursdays' after effects, most of which are result of drugs, alcohol and sex abuse. Then there is the 'Sunday Night Chillas' that take the same shape and form of

the 'Ladies Thursday'. Thus again, on Mondays there is a high absenteeism rate at school. By implication, rural girl children are most likely to have a minimum of two days per week of non-school attendance with obvious strain on their academic performance. These are mainly attributed to reckless behaviour such as these ladies' nights. These have dire effects on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.6 Misconceptions, myths and difficulties about menstrual cycle

The issue of girl children's menstrual cycle is somewhat intricate. Girls, in both urban and rural areas, have a complex yet intimate relationship with their menstrual cycle. I mention complex because ideally this period is supposed to be embraced with pride as it marks the beginning of maturity for girl children. It is also an important phase in the life of a girl child as it signals reproductive readiness, that she can fall pregnant if she engages in unprotected sexual activities. However, the study reveals that there are many misconceptions that exist with respect to this female natural growth and development process. The commonly held misconception is that girl children who are in their menstruation cycle are considered 'dirty'. During this period, they are barred from some of their activities and chores such as cooking, playing, especially with boys, attending church and so forth. Such misconceptions lead to non-school attendance during this period.

In the same way as concealed sex and sexuality matters (5.3.4.1 & 5.3.4.2), the study revealed that conversations on menstruations are restrained and off limits. Rural women are uncomfortable to openly talk about their bodies, and topics such as sex, menstruation, and so forth, understandably so because these conversations are difficult in the context of conservative rural relations. However, difficult as they may be, mothers are able to navigate through this and reach out to the girl children. With the absent mother trend referred to in 5.3.3, 5.3.3.1 and 5.3.3.2, girl children are thus left to experience this phase on their own. Also, the LO teaching in rural ecologies are superficial and no in-depth teaching on this topic is done in addressing these matters, because LO teachers are equally cautious in conservative rural contexts.

The study further found that the shortage of sanitary towels amongst rural girl children is a reality. Local (spaza) shops run mostly by foreign nationals (e.g. Pakistanis) are expensive as they are profit-driven. The long distance travel to towns where this

commodity is reasonably priced incurs expenses. As a result, rural girl children opt for other means of padding during their menstruations. They either use a cloth that they will wash and re-use or toilet paper as it is reasonably priced even in the local shops. Both these alternative methods are unhealthy and uncomfortable with high possibilities of smudging on the school uniform. Especially in the context of the myth that menstruation overflows when one is active or when one is looked at by many people. Hence, girl children choose not to attend school during their cycle for fear of blotting and being subjects of ridicule. We acknowledge the Nkangala District Municipality for the initiative of providing sanitary towels to rural and farm schools. Our research sites benefitted from the initiative as the visits were accompanied by sanitary towel distribution as presented in the research site. In the next chapter, I will deliberate on the proposals for long-term interventions in this regard.

6.2.6.1 Boys' and men's misconceptions and myths about girl children's puberty, virginity and associated bodily changes

The stories told as well as other data generated from the dialogues elicited the need to separate discussions on puberty and associated bodily changes from the one on girl children and menses. Girl children's bodily changes are topics that lead to stigmatisation boys and men in general. Girls' growing breasts is a sign of maturity together with curvaceous developing body, which gets male attention for the girl children. The stigmatisation cuts across the home, the school and the community. In the school environment, the attention would be from boy children and male teachers, and in the community, elder men. Thus, in essence, girl children's puberty and other bodily changes render them susceptible to stigmatisation and prey to unwanted male attention. Not all girl children are able to stand up to and pull through the pressures of this challenging stage. Some girl children wither and fall victim along the way and drop out due various reasons associated with these physical body developments. Thus, besides menstruation, puberty and other bodily changes directly affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.2.7 Complexities in Attracting and Retaining of Rural Women Educators

The issue of working in rural ecologies is complex for educators in general, even more so for women educators. I specifically mention 'complex' because the study revealed that in some schools, women educators outnumber their male counterparts. In some

instances, even in management (as HODs). The complexity, however, is that rural women educators are far less represented as school principals especially in high schools. In one of the schools (research site), there are more women educators than men, including the two women HODs but because it is a high school the principal is male. Women principals dominate in the primary schools. It is an opportunity for future research studies to explore this gendered aspect in the education sector regarding the promotion of women educators. From a gender perspective, these biases and stereotypes should not be left unchallenged, especially so in the context of women educators who serve as role-models for girl children. These biases set a gendered precedence that is limiting and could potentially discourage young girls to pursue careers in education.

Further, as highlighted in 5.6.2, most women rural educators live in surrounding urban areas. Therefore, most have to travel long distances to and from their place of work. The study found that there are several issues affecting rural women educators. The average distance they are expected to travel daily is between 60 – 80 kilometres, single. First is the issue of personal safety; most schools start between 07:30 – 08:00 and because of long travelling distances, they are obliged to leave their homes as early as 5:00 to avoid traffic delay so that they are at work on time. In general, driving during those early hours exposes one to criminal activities such as car hijackings and accidents, especially in bad weather. Secondly, the issue of long distance travel for rural educators has severe cost implications, and there are unfortunately no provisions for rural educators' travel allowances, nor accommodation – a rural teachers' residential complex could be an option. As a result, rural teachers have to bear all the costs on their own. It is for these reasons that most rural women opt for a collective transport (lift-clubs), a privately arranged staff transport that they jointly pay for at the end of the month. However, added to these challenges is the issue of exhaustion from long-distance travel as a daily lived reality for rural teachers. Against this backdrop, it is difficult for educators to offer extra time for individual learner interaction outside their classes. In the absence of rural mothers, girl children prefer to confide, seek counsel and guidance from the women educators. Thus, a combination of these complexities denies girl children the opportunity to receive counselling, guidance and support from women educators and thus constraining to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

Bhagavatheeswaran et al. (2016:265) in 2.6.2 (diagram) contextualised this study to depict the barriers and enablers for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Data analysed revealed that the micro and macro barriers continue to hinder girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Poverty, lack of parental involvement and support for schooling, girl children and households' chores and responsibilities, lack of critical services, challenges in infrastructural provisions, amongst others, are identified and detailed as amongst the key barriers obstructing girl children's access to sustainable learning.

6.3 OPPORTUNITIES: THE INFUSION OF BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE

The findings reveal that there are opportunities in the rural learning ecologies that could benefit from the infusion of the Bourdieuan analysis. Drawing from Yang (2014) mentioned in 2.2 of this study, that Bourdieuan theory of practice has the ability to open new vistas. These new vistas, from which opportunities arise, demand collective change efforts and responsibility from all the role-players and stakeholders in order to advance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. At this point, we are reminded about the main reason for adopting the Bourdieuan theory of practice with a feminist orientation – Bourdieu's and feminist commonalities in so far as deep concern for social change amongst others (Cornwall & Sardenberg, 2014:73). Throughout the data generation and analysis processes, the findings affirm that there should be some serious changes in the rural ecologies. Stakeholders should acknowledge, amongst others, the rural settings, identities, and constraints (Anderson, Datta, Dyck, Kayira & McVittie, 2016:15). Further, it is vital to continuously remind ourselves that this is a gendered study with a bias towards girl children. Thus, the findings also point to the direction suggested in 2.4.3 where we counter the normative construction of girlhoods and adopt the relational framework in the quest to propose new directions of thinking about girlhoods transnationally (Bent & Switzer, 2016:122). Thus, the findings identify rural households as fundamentally crucial in pursuing opportunities for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.3.1 Bourdieuan Analysis: Exploring Opportunities in the Rural Households

The study reveals the changing landscape of rural households. The glaring changes being those of absent parents and child-headed households (amongst others) as

alluded to in 5.3.1, 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2. Against the backdrop of the earlier notions of rurality (3.3.1), findings affirm that there are considerable changes negatively affecting rural households. Whilst in the distant past the rural households were considered stable as far as family life was concerned, that is no more the case. The situations of past generations required girl children to do minimal chores, which were meant to assist in the responsibilities of a present mother. The norm back in the days was that most rural mothers stayed at home and thus were custodians of most of the rural households. Rural fathers were the ones taking up long-distance employment with regular month-end visits to the family. From a Bourdieuan perspective, the field has undergone drastic changes, the hysteresis. The opportunities therefore lie in situating the girl children's voices in the hysteresis. The study revealed that girl children are aware of the emergent issues confronting them. Accordingly, from the Bourdieuan analysis, the study suggests changes in the rural households' cultural capital to align and match the new demands of the field. This is also echoed by the educators, the SGB, traditional authorities and importantly, by girl children themselves. The analysis thus identifies the areas of opportunities in the rural households, which are potentially able to facilitate access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies by using the voices of the girl children.

6.3.1.1 Rural households' hysteresis and the need for re-alignment of cultural capital

Whilst the absent parent refers to both women and men, mothers are generally considered as the centres of coordination and execution of caregiving, and a whole range of domestic chores and responsibilities in the households. Hence their absence creates a huge vacuum that the girl children are expected to fill with adverse effects on their sustainable learning. The fact is that the mothers are caught in the crossroads. The study revealed that girl children understand the dilemma that the rural parents (mothers) find themselves in; on one hand, the mothers have the duty to provide for the households, which means seeking employment at all costs including at distance places. On the other hand, their diminishing role in the daily lives of the households, especially concerning caring for the girl children, creates challenges. The reality therefore is the fact that given the current socio-economic realities in the rural households and the rural ecologies, mothers (women) have no option but to be economically active to sustain family livelihoods. Therefore, an opportunity in the

mentioned hysteresis (2.6) lies with embracing the difference and re-shaping the demands to respond to and re-align the cultural capital to the realities of this particular hysteresis (Hlalele, 2014:462). The “how” part will be addressed and detailed as part of the framework proposals in the next chapter.

6.3.2 Bourdieuan analysis: exploring opportunities in the rural schools

Rural schools are an integral component/institution of rural ecologies. Data analysed shows that both girl and boy children spend long periods in school ecologies. Thus, most of their interactions and relationships are built through and in the school set-up for the majority of girl and boy children. The findings thus confirm school ecologies are as Bourdieu maintains, an important field, as it is in the schools, through education that existing social patterns, and consequently accompanying social injustices, are entrenched (Bourdieu, 1974:32).

However, through various engagements and interactions in the study, there are opportunities that lie within the school ecologies. Those are at the level of policy and practice. Mindful of the fact that it is not possible to introduce policy and practice at the level of the rural households, the school presents such an opportunity. Drawing from the data analysis, schools presents an opportunity for promoting gender transformation in various ways. Schools are institutions that are governed by legislation and policies. Thus, the first opportunity highlighted by girl children themselves are gender-sensitive and responsive policies. Amongst those mentioned are sexual harassment and school safety. Issues of gendered school management that will address the gender representation of women teachers in key strategic positions such as high school principals in rural areas as revealed in the study, present another opportunity for changing the policy habitus. Whilst appreciating and acknowledging that the rural education policy has been promulgated and gazetted accordingly, some additional policy or guidelines should be introduced at the level of rural schools' ecologies to address some of the challenges identified with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.3.2.1 Nurturing activism and enhancing the policy habitus and practices of policy agents

Theron (2016:87) emphasises that schools are integral to a social system. However, from a Bourdieuan perspective, schooling is not a level playing field. Hence, it is

necessary for these ecologies to adopt and nurture activism. It also affirms the the fact that these activisms must be premised on assertions by Behrens (2014:180), and Monyane (2013:80) mentioned in 3.5.4, that indeed there are some good practices in the rural habitus that could be nurtured in a way that could potentially empower the disadvantaged groups to reclaim their pride and self-esteem thereby promoting social equality and justice. For instance, Hlalele (2014) points to policy and practice that acknowledges diversity in terms of ability, socio-economic and cultural circumstances which promotes the basic human rights and respect for individual and collective choices. Such policy and practice interventions in the school ecologies thus encourage the “humanising process” (Hlalele, 2014:462). These opportunities will open up the schooling ecologies for active involvement and participation of all role-players and stakeholders, thus establishing solid community networks and partnerships among all role-players and stakeholders in terms of activism towards transformation (Green & Somerville, 2013:841) from inside the school ecologies to outside and vice-versa. Such interconnections and interdependence will benefit girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.3.2.2 Closing the gap in under-resourced rural schools that exacerbates the rural-urban divide

Through the interrogations during the processes of this study, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that it is true that the challenges facing rural schools and the broader education in post-democratic South Africa are complex and largely interconnected [as Du Plessis (2014:1109) asserts in 2.6]. Amongst these challenges, the under-resourcing of rural schools is identified as key. The issues of infrastructural provision, the conditions of service for rural women educators, the availability of learning support facilities and materials, are examples of obstacles. These challenges are exacerbated by the inadequate essential infrastructure such water, electricity, ICT connections and others in the broader rural ecologies.

The same cannot be said with urban schools. Urban settings have the benefit of abundant infrastructural provisions that well complements the schools’ resources. For example, on issues of ICT connectivity, it is general knowledge that essential research tools such as internet cafes are found at every corner in urban areas. Most have even advanced Wi-Fi connectivity as generally ICT infrastructure is relatively reliable and stable. Thus for urban learners, this sustainable learning facilitating commodity is

easily accessible. In the rural areas, there are areas especially in our research sites, that a mere cell phone connection is a problem due to network issues. This is but one example that demonstrates an area of opportunity; in Bourdieu's (1977:168) terms, "the dominated may be moved to challenge the status quo" (2.6.2). The roll-out of the ASIDI programme by the NDBE is welcomed, however, the time lag (delay) and slow progress with regard to addressing some of the historically entrenched disadvantages, is worrying. In the next chapter, we provide proposals, as informed by rural learners, parents, and all other role-players and stakeholders, in addressing some of these challenges.

6.3.3 Bourdieuan analysis: exploring opportunities in the rural communities

The data presented throughout the previous chapter suggests a paradigm shift in the way rural communities are viewed, as well as with the approach in targeted initiatives and interventions, especially those that seek to advance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. That is, building gender-receptive and responsive communities to allow for broader gender transformation in rural ecologies. Taking cognisance of the interplay between Bourdieu's social and cultural capital and the habitus, both of which derive from communities, this suggests that it is important to secure the buy-in from communities. The opportunity that comes with such an approach is that communities will if convinced, and thus inculcate the required set of capitals and habitus, which will in turn yield the requisite practice in girl children. For instance, efforts should be directed at ensuring that communities view the education of girls as important as that of boys. As discussed in the previous chapter, co-researchers identified the traditional authorities and NGOs as strategic and influential community structures that should champion gender justice through various advocacy and education programmes.

Literature (Mutekwe, Modiba & Maphosa, 2011) confirms that exploring opportunities to advance girl children's access to sustainable learning should begin with the active role of the significant others: parents, teachers and the broader communities in breaking gender stereotypes. Additionally, Mwanza (2015:107) advances that "government together with its stakeholders should increase efforts to ensure that vulnerable communities especially in the rural areas are educated on the importance

of girls' education". This requires the active involvement of communities which is so crucial to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.3.3.1 Prevalent practices of sexual exploitation and GBV in rural ecologies

Sexual exploitation in rural ecologies has reached extreme proportions as discussed in 6.2. Literature review revealed gender-based violence as a threat to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The study revealed that girl children in rural ecologies are the main targets of sexual exploitation and other forms of gender-based violence, and even worse those that are vulnerable such as those in child-headed households. Our conversations with both girl and boy children revealed that whilst violence at schools is not top of the list, girl children are more exposed to other forms of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. More especially the blesser-blessee phenomenon as discussed earlier in the study.

Elderly men use financial and other economic resources to entice girl children in exchange for sexual favours. Alarmingly, some sexual exploitation happens under the watchful eye of other adult community members and even guardians. During conversations with the pregnant girl children, it was discovered that most of them are from child-headed households, dependant on the perpetrator (blesser). Of concern is that there are many cases that constitute statutory rape, but no cases have been opened as the general sentiment is that these are voluntary, willing and consensual sexual encounters and thus not punishable. As indicated earlier, the high rate of teenage pregnancy in our district research sites are between the ages of 13-16 and the perpetrators as revealed in the dialogues, are adult men between 25 and 35.

The local shebeens have been mentioned as the breeding ground for sexual exploitation that negatively affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. There are days such as Thursdays that are referred to as ladies' nights then Sundays are 'chillas'. On these days, elderly men with financial resources visit the local shebeens targeting girl children by buying alcohol in exchange for unsafe and reckless sexual activities including multi-partner sexual encounters. By implication, therefore Fridays generally experience low learner turn-out as a result of Thursdays' activities, for example hangovers. These activities are known by communities but there is a deafening silence about them as no role-player nor stakeholder including local police, social workers, traditional leaders and others, dares to intervene. They say it is

consensual as these girl children go to these sessions themselves without being forced. That is despite the fact that these illicit activities negatively impact on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. This 'blindness' by the community is concerning and requires immediate attention.

Taking cues from Treffry-Goatley, de Lange, Moletsane, Mkhize and Masinga (2018:1), from their study on exploring sexual violence in South African universities, we also "conclude that the individual and collective silence that surrounds such violence enables its perpetration". We further agree with the authors that "the pervasiveness of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in South Africa, and the inadequacy of the state's response, have fostered a 'rape culture' in which sexual violence has become normalised". Hence, our insistence on multi-stakeholder interventions to ensure the active involvement of role-players and stakeholders in rural ecologies.

From the on-going discussions, exploring opportunities to advance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies should be located within the three fundamentally important social fields: the family, school and community. We further take note of the need to deliberately focus on the girl children themselves. That is, awakening their agentic selves, their desire for reclaiming their agency as Bourdieu postulates. Secondly, that the opportunity lies within the rural families and households in so far re-socialisation is concerned; and thirdly, within the rural communities through igniting gender activism and consciousness. The combination thus caters for and maintains Bourdieu's field, habitus and the capital, and thus begins to shape a multi-pronged framework that would consider these essential areas of intervention.

6.4 POSSIBLE WAYS OF ACTIVELY INVOLVING GIRL CHILDREN IN SEEKING ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS

6.4.1 Multi-stakeholder interventions: coordinated girl children's targeted service interventions

Girl children sharply raised the need for multi-stakeholder interventions that allow for direct interaction with girl children. For example, that Department of Education, Health, and Social Development including SASSA should conduct workshops that look into issues that affect girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. This

platform will create a direct interaction line with girl children and thus help in developing responsive programmes.

6.4.2 Recognising rural girl children's voices: traditional authorities and SGBs

The predominantly male nature of traditional authorities and SGBs are regarded as a gate-keeper for girl children. It is viewed as an institution that does not listen in any way to women and girl children. And in one of the high schools used as a research site, the principal who is female struggled extensively with recognition from fellow male educators, community members including the SGB which was predominantly male, and the traditional authority. Such attitudes and behaviours are barriers for girl children's participation; firstly, in these structures, and secondly in these positions of authority. These patriarchal institutions are viewed as anti-women. Therefore, there is a need to filter through women and girl children's voices so that these structures are gender-sensitive.

6.4.3 Building the agentic self: conscious and continuous empowerment of rural girl children

Authors such as Hart (2013:182) mention that girl children know the value of education; that they do have future aspirations (3.5.4 & 3.6.2). Data herein confirms this assertion; however, what is lagging is building the requisite ambitious attitudes and habits that challenge the way of doing things. That, girl children themselves are consciously and continuously taught to take new ways and effort in balancing the domestic and the schooling, is a step in the right direction. That requires enhancing girl children's self-management skills, which includes a range of other factors such as self-discipline, cultivating high levels of personal future enthusiasm and educational resilience, amongst others. Educational resilience comes the realisation that pursuing and prioritising education presents them with an opportunity to have and play a role in society. In being agentic selves, girl children highlighted the need to be equipped and supported by willing and knowledgeable adults who would serve as resource people. Thus, the inherent opportunity lies with capacitating the girl children to enter the gendered field of play with advantage, and to thus take the lead. Hence the emphasis on in the need for conscious and continuous personal development and empowerment programmes, and that, includes setting personal goals, vision and plotting for

themselves how they will navigate through to attaining their set goals as depicted in their journals and images.

6.4.4 Developing the habitus: addressing rural girl children's triple oppression

As outlined in Chapter 2 of this study, according to Bourdieu, habitus is the physical embodiment of the cultural capital. It is the ingrained habits, skills and dispositions through which the individual perceives the social world around him/her and reacts to it. With the images presented, we take the opportunity to delve on the rural boy and girl children's habitus. In their journal entries for instance, girl children confirm the time-poverty issues that results from their triple oppression. As mentioned in 3.3.5.3, girl children are expected to take care of the household, and girl children are also supposed to strive for family provision, hence they sell tomatoes and onions for sustenance, which is making a living from an early age (robbing them of their childhood), and having to attend and perform at school.

I have consistently highlighted the issue of time-poverty that is inherent in these multiple oppressive roles and responsibilities. The study thus reveals that indeed girl children are burdened with multiple responsibilities and expectations and are thus bound to underperform at one stage or another. Unfortunately, it reveals that they allocate the least amount of time to schoolwork (academic) and thus fail at regular school attendance and sustained performance. There is no picture in the photo-voice that shows adequate attention to schoolwork. There are also few aspirations beyond the home for rural girl children. Rural boy children's journal entries depict relatively few roles and responsibilities with more than enough time for school work and play. This is an opportunity for re-orientation, and according to Bourdieu, an opportunity for re-embodiment of the cultural capital as most girl children alluded to in their proposals. That we focus on boy children has deeply ingrained habits and dispositions through focused interventions that seek to re-negotiate gender redress. Importantly though is the opportunity presented by such programmes in deconstructing femininities and masculinities, breaking patriarchal stereotypes and sustaining gender equality which will benefit girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.4.5 Nurturing the Unrecognised Cultural Capital (UCC)

In Chapter 2 (2.8.1.2), we mentioned the UCC, which is Bourdieu's cultural capital, the aspect that is usually hidden but inherent in the daily resistance of the dominated. Data affirms that girl children as the dominated possess the ability to challenge and resist the norm thereby facilitate change. The unrecognised cultural capital (UCC) may be converted into useful (power) resources for change and at times, resistance. Drawing from the engagements with both boy and girl children, girls are generally considered outspoken, assertive and resourceful. It is therefore vital to explore ways of nurturing the UCC in ways that "afford resources for pushing back the forces of domination to some extent and energises everyday practices of resistance, thereby assisting the dominated in their struggles against complete exclusion from the field" (Lo, 2015). Girl children's participation in extra-curricular events is identified and mentioned as amongst the platforms for identifying and nurturing this UCC. We will delve deeper into details of the various extra-curricular platforms and how these could be used to enhance girl children's UCC and ultimately enhance their access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.5 CONTEXTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH IDENTIFIED ROLE-PLAYERS IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES COULD POSITIVELY SHAPE AND INFORM ISSUES OF GIRL

In the previous chapters, the study emphasised the fact that the issue of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies requires collective involvement and participation by relevant role-players and stakeholders as outlined in 1.9 and 6.3 of this study. These are Provincial Department of Education officials in the rural education and transformation, officials in the Nkangala District Office of the DOE, school principals at each of the four schools, HODs and teachers in Life Orientation at the selected schools. Added to this team would be parents through the SGB members and the local NGO as well as representatives of the Traditional Authority (TA). From the dialogues and focus group discussions with this group of co-researchers, a comprehensive approach involving all role-players will yield more progress and visible results. In this regard, the following are priority areas for role-players' active involvement;

6.5.1 Lack of rural parents' active participation in learners' school matters

Whilst we have mentioned the issue of absent parents, there are challenges identified with regard to those who are available. Co-researchers have raised the issues of parent active participation as critical role-players sharply. The assertions are that parents are not active in the actual school matters, such as the availability of teachers, and have relegated the responsibility to the SGB who are predominantly male and would not pay particular attention to girl children's specific problems. The parents also neglect their roles and responsibilities concerning the actual academic performance of their children with consequences for girl children. They are thus unable to gauge at earlier stages the deteriorating academic performance and seek intervention. The fact is that most rural parent are themselves not educated and thus unable to help their children. Therefore, parents, are identified as influential role-players with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. If they start understanding the schoolwork and progress of their children, more specifically girl children, they will start sharing in the future aspirations and perhaps also assist in accessing other additional support resources. They could initiate others such as extra classes, winter and spring lessons, and so forth. Unfortunately, these are usually initiated and coordinated by the schools, and the educators themselves from the pressure of wanting their school attain optimal results. The lack of parents' active involvement and participation in the learners' school lives have seen some teachers already embarking on an informal 'adopt a learner' programme. The following excerpts demonstrate some of these assertions;

6.5.2 Difficulties with the attraction and retention of rural women educators

For the rural girl children, the absence of women educators means unavailability of role-models, minimum guidance and generally lack of mentorship and coaching on a girlhood level. Thus, when girl children are confronted with daily life challenges they are more likely to confide in female teachers. In essence, informal counselling, guidance and support resources that are usually characteristic of women educators, is not sufficient for girl children. The same cannot be said of boy children, because male educators in rural areas are often in larger numbers than female educators. Therefore, boy children have role-models and avenues for guidance and support in

these educators. Equally, boy children are more comfortable to confide in the male teachers of their daily life challenges than they are to women educators.

Generally, the role of women teachers in the lives of rural girl children is highly significant. It is believed that women teachers bring with them the motherhood component that is ordinarily not there amongst many rural girl children as mentioned above. The bond between mothers and daughters is generally considered strong in families and communities – female educators fill in this gap when mothers are absent. Therefore, women educators' long-distance travel and consequently their unavailability, negatively impact on rural girl children's access to sustainable learning. Even if there are women educators in the schools that we focused on, they affirm that they are always looking for positions closer to their homes. Most of these women teachers cite the travelling as unbearable as most travel distances daily. In addition, the working conditions such as staff rooms, ablution facilities, and supportive teaching facilities such as laboratories to enhance their teaching, are wanting, thus their reluctance to remain at rural schools. The analysis of the data demonstrates that the tiresome travelling and uncondusive teaching environments are indeed challenges for women educators working in rural ecologies which renders them unavailable for rural girl children both at the level of strategic support and role-modelling. This is a threat to attracting and retaining these critical resources for girl children in rural ecologies.

6.5.3 Rural and gendered abnormalities and national cross-border locations

The study's research sites are located at border municipalities as discussed in detail in the study. Whilst findings revealed that the border locations are a service delivery challenge, I am of the view that some intense focus should be given with regard to girl children specifically. The national cross-border locations allow for an influx of migrants from the neighbouring countries. For example, according to my observations and conversations during 'community walk-about' in the study's research sites, there is a relatively high influx of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland nationals. Whilst there are women, my observation in these research communities is that the men are in the majority. Further, upon arrival in South Africa, the new trend is that they target settling in the remote rural areas. The reason is that policing in these areas is not as vigilant as it is in towns and cities as most do not possess the required documentation. Their immediate mode of survival is opening small businesses such as tuckshops,

small businesses, steelworks, and so forth. They then solicit girl children especially targeting the vulnerable ones such as those in child-headed households or those staying with grandparents. Because they have some reasonable cash flow they are then immediately considered as potential blessers. Some of the teenage pregnancies are attributed to this influx and thus future research should consider focusing on this phenomenon.

6.5.4 Rural and gendered consequences of developing rural economic hubs focusing on shopping malls for rural girl children

The study observed the the rapid spatial development in rural ecologies. Rural economic development through developing economic hubs such as local shopping malls are on the rise, and these have brought some socio-economic viability such as employment opportunities, convenient shopping with less transport costs, and other such spin-offs. However, these establishments have consequences for rural girl children. Firstly, they are exposed to the fancy clothing and goodies as they are within easy reach. It is with these attractions that they are lured into these pervasive blesser-blessee relationships in exchange for sexual favours. Therefore, these places are turned into 'fishing sites' where adult men tempt girl children. The pouncing starts with communicating like taxi drivers who also take advantage of the girl children. This phenomenon is termed "the breeding of taxi queens" (Potgieter, 2012:152).

Secondly, they present or even limit girl children's future career aspirations as they offer some form of attraction to possible local employment. That is so despite the fact that most job opportunities created by these developments are casual and unskilled. They are however, highly regarded in these communities as they provide for immediate income and survival. Drawing from a Tanzanian study, De Jaeghere (2018:237) maintains, "aspirations to be educated expand the possibilities of opportunities, they also go unfulfilled in an environment of ...high unemployment and constraining gender norms that can leave many secondary graduates disempowered". Further, for a Bourdieuan study such as this one, is it important to highlight "how aspirations and agency are dialectically related and socially situated, allowing for openings in agency to occur even when faced with gendered constraints to aspirations" (De Jaeghere, 2018:237).

6.5.5 Challenges in inter-governmental coordination in service-delivery for cross-border communities for rural girl children

The rural communities that constituted the research sites in this study are in cross-border locations. Different provinces service all these communities at the same time. For instance, the current situation is that clinics are governed by Gauteng. Social Development by Limpopo. Education by Mpumalanga, and Municipal Services from Gauteng. The main challenge is thus the coordination of access to services that directly affect girl children; for instance, clinics for contraceptive administration, grants for the child-headed families, and some municipality related services that have direct impact on child-headed families such as indigent registers. At times, even when educators want to assist with intervening in some cases, it becomes cumbersome as one must travel and interact with three different provinces. Thus, a coordinated effort is required to enhance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.6 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE BOURDIEUIAN ANALYSIS TO ENHANCE RURAL STRATEGIES AND POLICY INITIATIVES

In order to integrate the lessons learnt throughout the study, we maintain the interconnection between the home, the school and the communities. This is aligned to Bourdieu's insistence that the field, habitus and capital cannot work in isolation. We therefore use this connection to argue that girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies should entail deliberate and comprehensive strategies and policy interventions that criss-cross the rural home, the school and the community.

Learners have an interest in education and know that sustained stay in school has future benefits. However, that the *situs* thus restricts the learners, and girl children more specifically. Their attempts at navigating through the education system are confronted by a variety of the challenges (5.2). There are those problems that cut across the rural households, the schools and the communities. Therefore, the *situs* short-changes their choices and thus disempowers them.

6.6.1 Changing rules of the game: disrupting the status quo

With 'changing the rules of the game' we intentionally focus on the cultural and social capitals. We take into consideration that cultural capital is "embodied" in individual dispositions and competencies. Social capital is expressed in the possession of both informal and formal networks of acquaintance (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). We

therefore argue that from the data analysed, there is a clear need for intensified focus on these two forms of capitals amongst girl children. There is the need to disrupt the existing stereotypes about rurality and focus our efforts towards reducing the marginality of rural areas (Azano, 2014:61-62). Amongst the lessons learnt from the Bourdieuan analysis is one of tapping on the agents' reflexivity that will facilitate changing the "rules of the game". We must rethink strategies that will allow girl children's choices in so far as position-taking in the field of play is concerned. Thus as Lo (2015) argues, convert those useful resources for change, and instil amongst rural girl children the drive and urge to disrupt the status quo and resist rural stereotypes.

6.6.2 Nurturing rural girl children's capitals: conversions and transmissions

The data presented and analysed suggests that in the rural ecologies, the fields are marred with challenges that are not favourable to rural girl child's position-taking. Drawing from the literature review in chapter 3 as well as the situational analysis in 6.2, the myriad of challenges rendered the playing fields hostile towards rural girl children. We deliberate on the rural fields in the discussion that follows (6.6.3). It is therefore pivotal that policy and practice initiatives and interventions that are geared towards improving girl children's access to sustainable learning take into consideration the need to ready the rural girl children, and equip and where necessary nurture them with the necessary cultural and social capitals to resist being stereotyped.

6.6.3 Recognising the different rural fields of play and different gendered fields

The study reveals that we should acknowledge that we are indeed operating within and with different rural fields, and different gendered fields. Oliva (2010:278) alludes to the differentiated rural playing fields - the changing rural trends and patterns that go against some of the traditional assumptions about the rural world is gradually being recognised. Data confirms that rural ecologies are experiencing unprecedented changes that have since reshaped and fundamentally reconstituted the rural. Drawing from the data, phenomena such as parents' divorces and separations, child-headed households, and most recently the blesser-blessee syndrome are amongst some of those that are observed and need to be eradicated.

Also, mobility in rural ecologies has also seen relative increase. For instance, in the Nkangala District, especially the two municipalities that are the study's research sites, the increase is a result of the rapid spatial development patterns by way of new

residential areas and shopping malls. From a rural economic development perspective these are meant to stimulate local economies through job creation and access directly or indirectly benefitting all associated with these amenities. Indeed “these mobilities [that] are consolidating processes that just a few decades ago seemed unthinkable, such as the economic revitalisation of rural areas that previously were in a process of decline, the consolidation of the population and increasing reflection about local resources and intensified efforts and energies towards building local economies” (Oliva, 2010:278). However, data revealed that there are disadvantages that comes with these malls, one being is that they also serve to perpetuate school neglect amongst rural girl children. Most of the blesser-blesser transactions happen at these malls because of their easy access. Thus girl children are able to deliberately neglect school attendance to honour the appointments at the malls; most of which have financial benefits such as being bought clothing, food and cell phones, among others. Thus the lessons learnt with the Bourdieuan analysis, and in particular, the nurturing of capitals, is its strong alignment to the fields. Thus nurturing the girl children’s capitals should take into consideration the dynamics in the rural fields and align these investments accordingly.

6.6.4 Cultivating the educated and the education habitus of rural girl children

Nash (2002:31) notes an important aspect of the “habitus in the field of education concerning attitudes toward schooling. In a stratified society, individuals from different social classes do not share the same ‘objective probability’ of educational success”. Nash (2002:31) terms this “positive orientation to school the ‘educated habitus’ more than just an instrumental view of education; it includes the desire to be educated and to identify and be identified as such”. In cultivating the habitus, we affirm the assertions in 2.4.3 articulated by Bent and Switzer (2016:122) that when addressing issues of girl children, we must do so outside sameness and positionality. Instead that we should consider relationality so as to challenge how integral issues such as social location, structural violence and other historical vulnerabilities, processes and inequalities serve to hinder girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. At the same time, we should take into consideration the vast incongruences between urban and rural ecologies that disadvantage girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies (Hlalele, 2014:462). We should thus seek to cultivate an education habitus

in a way that appreciates that rural girl children are as able and capable; and thus close the urban-rural divide.

Clearly, the lesson learnt from the Bourdieuan analysis is also that the habitus plays a pivotal role in what I choose to call ‘learning and un-learning’. Thus, educating the education habitus cultivates amongst girl children the ability to “challenge the rural myths and meanings in ways that destabilise and reconstitute rural ideologies and [ecologies]” (Pini & Leach, 2012:2) and pursue their future desires.

6.7 A REFLECTIVE SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

With this synthesis, I seek to draw from the study those findings that I consider critical as guided by the study’s Bourdieuan analysis for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. I reflect on these as they relate to nationally (and inter-provincial) issues of concern. I further reflect on a selected few neighbouring countries, for instance Zimbabwe and Namibia. It is however, done not to generalise or compare findings. Instead, it is meant to ground the study through providing the international perspectives. Importantly because as the study ends, the study’s perspectives will provide useful insight towards the framework proposals for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The study has arrived at a number of findings and conclusions reflected throughout this chapter. The synthesis is not a repetition of these. However, I use literature to flag and emphasise those I have selected based on their envisaged long-term negative effects on girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. That is, to ground this research study in “following Bourdieu's own public strategies of socio-political action, [and enacting] educational research methodology that is radically reflexive [and is endowed with] the capacity to found a critically effective discourse with practical [action and] consequences” (Grenfell & James, 2004:507).

6.7.1 The normalised abnormalities: girl children and the traditional gendered norms, roles and responsibilities

From a Bourdieuan perspective, rural girl children’s field of play is remains uneven and thus vantage position-taking remains a continuous challenge for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. That is so in view of the fact that, as gathered in the study, the gendered norms, roles and responsibilities are an integral part of the girl children’s daily life. I unilaterally add norms in order to broaden the

scope to include all other gendered ways of doing things that are abnormal but have been normalised from generation-to-generation through culture and tradition. It is however important to note that there are negatives and positives derived from these abnormalities normalised. Starting with the negatives, these norms, roles and responsibilities are girl children's burden of daily domestic house-keeping, ranging from water-collection, cleaning, and cooking. These time-consuming domestic activities are considerable threats to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

On the positives, these domestic house-keeping activities are viewed and valued as an important elementary training for both adulthood and womanhood. That is so because the training exposes them to overall 'running of the household' including how to save, how to make more with less and all such related housekeeping activities. It is for this reason that they rate themselves more advanced and matured in this area as compared to their urban counterparts who in most instances have some form of assistance. Importantly, some rural girl children have since acquired some level of gender awareness and activism. Drawing from their insistence that whilst they value the training, it does not prepare them for marriage or being a good wife, it is for self-keeping. Also, they believe that these roles should be shared and that these stereotypes should be eradicated. Therefore, the positive spin-off is the hope that some of these oppressive and discriminatory traditional practices will disintegrate as a result, of the resistance by rural girl children themselves from within the rural ecologies. Another positive aspect is that there are rural girl children who are highly driven and willing to push and break the barriers imposed by these traditional practices. They have future career aspirations, some in the most sought after professions such as women engineers, pilots and some occupations in the medical profession. For them, the emphasis is on getting the requisite career guidance, and possible socio-economic support.

Drawing from Zimbabwe, Mutanana and Mutara (2015:39) state that "teenage girls in the rural communities of Zimbabwe have been known to be still practising traditional roles like going to fetch water, going to the river to wash clothes, cooking for all family members", among other duties. I also concur with the authors that some may mistake this as maturity into adulthood, and as such may engage in adult activities prematurely. That includes premature sexual encounters that lead to teenage pregnancies, early

school drop-out, and many such related disadvantages. In my view, there is nothing normal about boy children being socialised differently from girl children in so far as domestic house-keeping is concerned. Instead, I argue that as contributing and cohabiting members of the family, it is in my view, reason enough for both to share in the domestic housekeeping activities, thus creating the idea that “changing gender power relations and the transformation of boys, men and masculinities” (Ratele, 2014:30) in rural ecologies is urgent. It is for this reason that in the proposed framework that follows in the next chapter (7) I suggest girl children’s reclaiming agency through gender equality activism. I draw on Pearse and Connell (2016:30) who maintain, “...norms change in multiple ways, both in response to broad socio-economic change and from the dynamics of gender relations themselves”. I thus advance the need for the “restructuring of gender orders, diversities and contradictions in gender norms, [in rural ecologies to] give scope for activism”. (Pearse & Connell, 2016:30).

6.7.2 High Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy amongst Rural Girl Children

The study’s findings revealed the challenge concerning the high rise in teenage pregnancy in the research district. Boy children and adult men highlighted it in the discussion in chapter 3 that sexual encounters continue to be initiated especially with the growing blesser-blessee trend in rural ecologies. There is an urgent need for an intensified focus on comprehensive sexual health education to include some intentional focus on boy children. As highlighted in chapter 4 of the study, initially the focus was meant to be exclusively girl children, however, educators insisted on the inclusion of boy children, which proved valuable. The reality is therefore that girl children remain weak in negotiating sexual encounters thus placing the duty on boys in negotiating sex first and safer sex second; this will not yield the expected results of reducing the high rate of teenage pregnancy.

I thus draw from a study conducted by Lebeso, Maputle, Ramathuba and Khoza, (2013) on adolescents in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa whose findings revealed that adolescents are aware of the availability of contraceptive services. However, they lack comprehensive knowledge about contraception and contraceptives, which led to negative attitudes towards using the services. Also, that cultural health beliefs and attitudes were also identified as a barrier to the use of

contraceptives (Lebese, Maputle, Ramathuba & Khoza, 2013:1). Whilst in the Zimbabwean context, Mutanana and Mutara (2015:39) in their study found that abstinence only articulated through sex education is less effective. Thus, gender activism mentioned above (6.7.1) combined with comprehensive sexual health education that intentionally target boy children might yield some positive results in curbing teenage pregnancies.

6.7.3 Large-scale Emergence of Rural Child-headed Households

The worrying large-scale emergence of child-headed households is detrimental to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Whilst there are a variety of factors that contributes to this trend, the reality is that the burden of family care in rural families is shifted onto the girl children. Importantly, it denies all children the benefits of having parental involvement in their lives. It further denies the girl children of the usually intimate relationships with their mothers. In the same way, it denies boy-children exposure to what Wood and Brownhill (2018:172) refer to as 'positive male role models'. The challenge is therefore, resuscitating and promoting parental guidance and support. That is embracing and enacting the true nature of rural living wherein "every child is my child, and every parent is my parent".

6.7.4 Rural schools' infrastructure and its impact on sustainable learning and teaching

Poor or run-down infrastructure at schools affect educators and learners in rural ecologies. Inadequate or broken ablution facilities, specifically for girl children is detrimental to girl children's access to sustainable learning. Some girl children opt for non-attendance during their menstrual cycle due to poor ablution facilities in schools. However, there are efforts by Government to address the issue. The pace is however slow and the demand enormous, especially as it relates to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural areas.

6.7.5 Entrenching rural communal vigilance for girl children

Rural communities enjoy a deep sense of co-living and neighbourhood watch. Unlike in towns and cities where everybody minds his/her own business, the African communal Ubuntu spirit of "motho ke motho ka batho" (I am because you are) exists. The worrying threat is the proliferation of alcohol, drugs and substance abuse, blesser-

blessee relationships, and other social ills, in rural ecologies. These breed a “foreign culture of disrespect and lawlessness in rural ecologies”. It is therefore incumbent upon the rural communities to collectively address these challenges in order to contribute towards girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations that emanate from the data presented and analysed in the previous chapter. The findings are a result of enriching, insightful shared experiences and interactions with a total of 381 primary and high school girl co-researchers, and a further 60 role-players and stakeholders comprised of school principals, educators, officials from the DOE, TAs and NGO activists/practitioners in the research communities. Fundamental insights drawn from these findings and conclusions confirm that girl children in rural ecologies continue to be confronted with the traditional gender norms, roles and responsibilities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES FROM A BOURDIEUIAN PERSPECTIVE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, an attempt we attempt to comprehensively integrate assertions from the literature review in chapter 3, data generated, presented and analysed in chapters 4 and 5, to shape and inform the proposed policy and practice framework with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Burch and Heinrich (2016:85) advise that policy processes and studies have design and implementation phases. Thus, with the proposed framework, the study sought to incorporate proposals that speak to both the design and implementation aspects. As highlighted in chapter one (1) that whilst the study's focus is on sustainable learning, the researcher acknowledges the fact that education, and in particular schools and schooling, is an integral component (1.3, 2.8, 2.10 & 2.11.1.2). Hence, sustainable learning and/or education are used interchangeably throughout the study.

In Chapter 3 of this study, literature confirmed that South Africa has made significant strides and progress in the area of improving access to basic education for all and even more so for the previously disadvantaged communities. In this regard, the country legislated the right to basic education in the country's constitutional and various other legislative frameworks as detailed in 3.2.2. However, the study also alludes to the challenges that continues to confront education, and more specifically, those with regard to access to sustainable learning for rural girl children. Further, noting that the study focuses on the Nkangala District of the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, we provided in this chapter a situational analysis that highlighted these challenges such as girl children's school dropout rate, teenage pregnancies, poverty, and poor academic performance, amongst others.

Thus, the proposals in this chapter are based on the responses and observations from rural learners, parents, educators and all other roleplayers and stakeholders.

7.2 REPOSITIONING GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES

As a starting point, we take heed of the call made in Moletsane (2012: 6) not to ignore the agency of rural communities and people [girl children in particular], as well as the assets that are available therein and that can be harnessed in developing and implementing relevant and effective interventions. Also, considering the feminist orientation of the study, there is a centring and repositioning of proposals on women (and girl children's) empowerment and gender equality. More specifically, empowerment in the context highlighted earlier in 2.7.2, which locates empowerment within agency, resources, and achievements (Kabeer, 2005:13). Gender inequalities are viewed from the vertical and the horizontal perspectives (Kabeer, 2015:90) as outlined in 3.3. That is, vertical inequalities that entails placing individuals and households in a particular social bracket and class-based on their income and wealth, and the horizontal inequalities being those inequalities between socially defined groups.

Therefore, repositioning debates and discussions pertaining to girl children's access to sustainable learning require "focusing on rural contexts in strength-based paradigms... [and exploring] the dynamic interactions of the people [rural girl children] who live, learn and work in these communities, [and] the ways in which they engage with and shape their lives in their environments" (Moletsane, 2012). Our framework proposals are centred on exploring opportunities (6.3) of building and resuscitating girl children's resistance and resilience. That therefore demands of girl children a resilience that strengthens primarily their own their empowerment process, their agentic selves, that they rise above all barriers and hindrances and cultivate their inner abilities and capabilities to pursue their own sustainable learning.

7.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK ON GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES

Reminded that this is a Bourdieuan analysis, the theoretical constructs of the field, capital and habitus as explained in Chapter 2 are thus used as a basis throughout the study. Mindful of this focus, policy and practice proposals are generated that would attempt to shape and inform new directions with regard to girl children's access to

sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Therefore, these proposals advocate for a comprehensive approach that include a range of policy changes, initiatives and interventions that are relevant and could potentially bring about social change in these ecologies. This is done through situating rural girl children's access to sustainable learning within a holistic view of rural ecologies wherein we consider other broader development matters such as overall levels of poverty, perceived value of education, gender relations and other related matters in rural ecologies. In 2.2 the issue of power dynamics and relations that influence rural girl children's choices and decisions, were explained. As indicated above, proposals are comprehensive, having a multi-pronged framework, with its thrust on four fundamental areas where power is centred. This framework refers to these areas of intervention as realms of power; these are the individual-intimate, the private-family, public school, and the community realms of power.

The first refers to Bourdieu's emphasis on the agents themselves paired with reflexivity to make reflexive agents. Thus, the emphasis as explained throughout the study is on the self, which for this study is the rural girl children themselves. This realm is 'intimate' because it is about rural girl children rediscovering their agentic selves. Interventions in this regard would therefore strive to create the belief in one's own ability to inform and shape personal growth and development. These will tap into girl children's self-driven development, focusing on their self-actualisation, development and/or nurturing of self-confidence, for instance. The second is the private realm, which is located in the respective families as the primary unit of socialisation. It entails rural families re-negotiating re-socialisation of boys and girls so as to break the gender-stereotypes from early developmental stages, and in so doing entrench and promote women's empowerment and gender equality throughout the children's upbringing. Interventions in this regard would be encouraged to inculcate gender neutrality in household chores and responsibilities. The third realm according to our proposal is the public realm wherein the rural schools as public entities are subjects of focus. This realm entails challenging the rural schools to be gender-sensitive and responsive and to cater for various gaps that have been identified as continued barriers with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning such as gendered enrolment and curriculum matters. It is in this sphere that issues of mandatory, government-supported (subsidised) rural ECDs should be given priority. Overall, this realm would focus on

gender mainstreaming policies and strategies to address girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The fourth is the community realm that would consolidate efforts toward improving girl children's access to sustainable learning through strengthening and sustaining continuous women's empowerment and gender equality advocacy and education programmatic interventions and initiatives. It is at this realm that traditional authorities, CBOs and NGOs and the various roleplayers and stakeholders are expected to join forces in the interest of girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. In the discussion that follows, this research project unpacks the proposed programmatic interventions and initiatives aligned to the various realms.

7.4 THE INTIMATE INDIVIDUAL REALM: RESUSCITATING RESISTANCE

The NDBE's progressive step on rural education policy was gazetted for comments in January 2018. While appreciating that to some extent it focuses on the learners themselves, its shortcoming however is firstly that of placing all learners in the same development level bracket. The study revealed the need for addressing the gendered particularities between girl and boy learners as a priority, at conceptual stages. Secondly, the draft policy also puts teachers and learners in the same development bracket. We thus argue that such an approach might deny focus on the intimate individual and conceal the associated particularities, which are, according the proposal, the thrust. This study therefore states that issues facing rural girl children are different in form and intensity. Therefore, from the conceptual stages, any framework that seeks to address rural education, should take cognisance of these particularities.

Placing rural learners and teachers in the same bracket is problematic as their issues are inherently different. Resistance and resilience are central to turning girl children's situation around. To that effect, Gopal and Nunlall (2017:63) mention, "it would be unlikely that any individual would be resilient in all situations across their life span [because] resilience changes over time and varies between individuals", and that "resilience is thus not one trait nor one thing". The main researcher and co-researchers appreciate and are mindful of the fact that resilience is not static and varies amongst individuals. Also that perhaps the overall rural ecology with a combination of a range of family and community factors might be daunting and difficult to navigate. We

however assert that primarily the power to transform and triumph over any situation lies within the individual. We deliberately use the word “redirect” as used in chapters 4 and 5 of this study, that rural girl children have power within themselves. Our findings bear testimony of their power to overcome the most adverse situations that confront them. We therefore propose interventions that are able to redirect girl children’s inherent power and channel it towards positive resistance and resilience for positive change and transformation.

We thus maintain that the first port of entry, the primary source of resistance and resilience, is at the personal decision-making level. That is, a decision that an individual makes to conform or to challenge the status quo. Whilst we acknowledge all other factors in the ecology that might serve to impede the girl children, reminding ourselves that this is a Bourdieuan analysis study (1974:32) maintains the importance of individual gifts or lack thereof, hence we propose that our framework should intensify focus on the individual girl and boy children. Hence, our assertion that all other factors are secondary; that first and foremost we must seek to identify, cultivate and nurture the girl children’s individual gifts. These will enable and ignite a sense of confidence, which is necessary for decision-making at the individual level. The nurtured individual gifts will in essence give the girl children a voice, and some level of drive to participate in matters affecting them. Hayson (2017:1-2) contends that “the voices of young women and girls need to be heard if resilience is to have meaning as an inclusive [gender-equalising tool] and to move from knowledge capital to social capital and resources that support gender equality”.

Pursuant to our earlier assertions on the interconnection of the rural families, schools and communities, we therefore argue that none presents a level playing field as they are characterised by various forms of struggles. Therefore, it is within the agency that we find the ability to resist the rules and disrupt the status quo, which only the agent is able to mobilise and choose the capital to enter and move in the different fields (2.7). For this study, we focus on girl children’s personal power through nurtured individual gifts to advance and at times demand access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.4.1 Reclaiming Girl Children’s Agency and Hope: Developing Rural Girlhoods

In situating our proposals for girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we argue that girl children themselves should be at the centre. We therefore

propose a gendered separation of the self-esteem aspect of the draft rural education policy as advised in our proposal that it should explicitly, and intentionally, include reflection on gender. We contend that the self is always gendered so a gendered reflection would highlight the different gendered challenges and requisite interventions. However, an essential component for reclaiming the agency, or rather awakening girl children's agentic selves, lies with building girl children's sense of self. Some of the challenges such as teenage pregnancies, alcohol and substance abuse, the blesser-blessee syndrome and all other social ills and challenges (as detailed in chapters 4 and 5) that are encroaching on rural girl children emanate from the lack of self-confidence, esteem, dignity and pride that comes with the lack of self-affirmation. In this study, much focus has been directed at policy and practice. It is therefore important to develop gender policies for the education sector to entrench issues of gender into the mainstream of schooling and thus integrate gender considerations across all levels of teaching and learning. More that the policies and the integration should especially pay attention to the issues that are pertinent in rural ecologies.

Policy might fall into the trap if gender issues, especially that of girl children are not separated. Data in the study suggests that girl children need differentiated support in the various spheres of life. Hence, in 3.2, the importance of building girlhoods and the girl effect, are emphasised, with specific importance to separating or isolating the unique challenges (from other challenges) that confront girl children with regard to access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. The study confirmed that those are different from those confronting boy children and even those facing girl children in urban areas. Thus, initiatives and interventions should take these differences into cognisance.

7.4.2 Structured Rural Girls' Coaching and Mentorship Programmes

During the course of the study (July 2018), the researcher was invited to the DBE's Mpumalanga's Boys and Girls Education Movement (BGEM) which is a UNICEF supported annual convention which selected girl and boy learners from various schools in the Province. This is a structured girls and boys coaching and mentorship programme that covers a range of issues affecting both girl and boy children generally, some of which have been raised in the study. The identified challenge, however, is the scope coverage, frequency and intensity with consequent issues on the programme's

overall impact. However, firstly, the limited funding, because it entails learners' accommodation and travelling costs from different locations across the Province, compromises this initiative. We therefore propose expanding the programme and cascaded it to local school and community levels for maximum participation. Locating such programmes at local level saves costs and opens up accessibility.

The coaching and mentorship programme is identified as a platform where all those who are concerned with girl children's access to sustainable learning could offer support through engaging and interacting directly with girl children. It is a platform that should be created to allow girl children to dream about their futures and then detail what and how they prefer to be assisted. Thus, the coaching and mentorship programme would be entirely shaped by the girl children's expressed needs. It will however, at the same time, pull together different competencies, skills and knowledge from diverse professions and individuals to share expertise. To provide career counselling and guidance, for education of life lessons, and on decision-making on various aspects raised in the study. It will serve as a platform for a more personalised direct engagement with resource persons and possible resources.

We therefore add that these programmes are crucially important for girl children reclaiming their agency. For instance, the BGEM has the 'Technogirls' initiative that identifies high achieving 15–18-year-old school girls from disadvantaged communities, especially those coming from rural areas. The girls are placed in corporate mentorship and skills development programmes where they also benefit from academic scholarships. Therefore, in this study, we advocate that these programmes should widen their scope and facilitate its implementation at all rural schools, thus integrating the LO curriculum to add depth. In this way, the impact would be more meaningful for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.5 PRIVATE FAMILY REALM: BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND RE-SOCIALISATION

According to Bourdieu, the interplay between the field, capital and habitus is fundamentally important as discussed in-depth in 1.4 and 2.2 of this study. For the rural learner, the field in the private realm is mainly the intimate relationships such as that of the individual and the family. Which therefore means that the habitus and the capitals that the learners are exposed and accustomed to in this primary field of play,

shapes and informs their adaptation to and reception of the external realms, such as the public (schools and the communities). Figure 2.1 features the barriers and enablers of access to education for learners to demonstrate the centrality of realities of this interpersonal realm and their impact on the learners, the rural girl children in this instance. It is against this backdrop that we emphasise what we will refer to as the ‘gender transformation synergy’ of breaking gender stereotypes and re-socialisation across the various fields of play. We maintain that it should start with the individual, followed through to families, the interpersonal microsystem, and then spread into the external realms. We therefore suggest that the re-socialisation agenda should begin in the rural household, and that it should include both girl and boy children.

7.5.1 Continuous Re-socialisation Agenda: Mothers, Fathers, Girl and Boy Children.

Appropriately, girl children co-researchers indicated the need for continuous initiatives and interventions that should target boy-children’s re-socialisation. Girl children expressed the need for regular talks and tasking by both mothers and fathers as a strategy to demystify the gender discriminatory “boy-specific chores and responsibilities”. This instils a gender-responsive household environment. The data proposes that in families where there are active fathers, that they take the lead in re-socialising both girl and boy children as it will slowly eradicate the “isitshimane” stigma that is often cited by boy children. There is indeed “nothing wrong with fathers cooking, for example” as one co-researcher commented. In families where the fathers are absent, mothers should lead by allocating domestic chores and responsibilities in a manner that eradicates the over-burdening of girl children. This would bring about gender justice and transformation within rural families that will free time for the girl children to focus on schoolwork. The same efforts should be encouraged in the rural schools and communities. Also, male teachers should extend their role of fathers and break the stereotypes across subject choices and other scholarly activities that are considered “male-orientated”. The same is raised for female educators to continuously break and discourage the gender stereotypes that challenge both boy and girl children. In this way, schools will be more habitable and relevant, and thus enhance girl children’s access to sustainable learning.

7.5.2 Structured and Sustained Rural Mother-daughter Coaching and Mentorship

Girl children proposed social cohesion platforms for mothers and daughters coaching and mentorship programmes which would serve as a sharing and support structure. In the spirit of inculcating Ubuntu, the mothers should not necessarily be the biological mothers. Instead that mothers becomes more communal and rescucitate the adage that “every child, my child”. Against the realities of the scourge of HIV/AIDS that has led to deaths of parents in some rural households, and other social problems, we propose mothers to be people who would connect with and share positive life lessons at the maternal level with the girl children. We propose revisiting the traditional pairing of a female adult and a girl child in a long-term coaching and mentorship relationship. The pairing was traditionally based on either the girl child identifying a female adult who would be ‘adopted’ to assume the role of the mother whom she would want to emulate in behaviour, attributes and other positives. Also, as another alternative, the female adult may identify a capable girl child with potential for future prosperity and ‘adopt’ her as a daughter. She would then undertake to both formally and informally, oversee the growth and development of that girl child especially with regard to inculcating positive attributes, behaviour, career advice and such related matters. These relationships provided for meaningful conversations, guided by the wisdom and insight of the female adult. They could therefore provide the much-needed guidance and support for rural girl children especially those in child-headed households. Thus, this becomes a critical intervention towards improving girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.5.3 Revisiting Traditional Elderly Women Counsel: Conversations on Sex and Sexuality

Pursuant to the recommended mother-daughter coaching and mentorship programmes, this study advises and proposes resuscitating the traditional elderly women counsel. As “girl children are not sexually innocent”, as Moletsane and Theron (2017:3) state, we should use this counsel to give voice to the “silenced dialogues and debates” of sex and sexuality, especially seeing that LO educators don’t delve deeper into issues of sex and sexuality for fear of being perceived to be promoting it. These dialogues and debates are covered under the socio-cultural veil, hence it is appropriate to use the traditional elderly women counsel to wisen girls about sex and

sexuality matters. To some extent, the uKuthomba ritual provides for this platform. Elderly women are summoned to a session with the initiate and she is then taught about womanhood, as mentioned above. However, these are limited to the initiate and thus those that do not undergo the ritual are denied this counsel. We therefore broaden this platform to be a structured communal programme wherein elderly women and girl children in the rural ecology are able to participate in. It is during these sessions that positive girlhood and womanhood values would be shared, including addressing issues such as teenage pregnancies, blesser-blessee trends and so forth. We also propose that these sessions include some form of future planning and support for sustainability. And that the future planning must entail building and igniting career aspirations and empowering all girl children of the importance of education.

7.5.4 Mainstreaming Positive Values into the Cultural and Traditional Practices

The study demonstrates that gender discrimination in the rural ecologies persists though usually disguised as cultural and traditional norms and practices sustained through intergenerational transfers of what is acceptable for girls and boys respectively. That is so despite the changing patterns and trends in traditional rural life as mentioned throughout the study.

In 5.3.6, two prominent cultural and traditional practices in our research communities were outlined, and those were Ingoma and uKuthomba. We however argue that there are ways with which these cultural and traditional practices can be upheld and preserved without further disadvantaging girl children. Instead, these cultural and traditional practices could be used to mainstream positive values, those of promoting gender equality and equity for gender transformation. We emphasised the changing trends and patterns in traditional rural life, suggesting ways of transforming these practices. Amongst them would be introducing professional health and hygiene talks before and during these practices. In addition, professional services such as information and education on condom use, STIs, HIV/AIDS, and so forth are integrated and mandatory in these uKuthomba and Ingoma practices. These are the same professional values and principles that traditional healers in South Africa were made to adhere to so that they are recognised and registered accordingly. In this regard, because the study is biased towards girl children, our recommendations lean more towards positive values that would benefit girl children in rural ecologies.

The study found that boy children's dropout happens mostly after the ingoma – the traditional passage to manhood. That is so because boy children misuse and misdirect the lessons learnt there to mean that they are men and thus ready to engage in unprotected and unsafe sexual acts, alcohol and substance abuse, and so forth. The disadvantage is therefore that with sexual encounters, girl children bear the consequences. They are coerced into these premature sexual activities and the results are often teenage pregnancies and its related negatives. Whilst in most instances boy children voluntary dropout of school, girl children are forced to dropout due to medical complications that are often associated with premature pregnancies and the child-care-giving responsibilities after giving birth. We therefore endorse the DSD and South African National AIDS Council [SANAC] (Men's Parliament Session, 18th November 2018, Cape Town). This collaborated initiative advocates for institutionalising a responsive men's movement in order to concretise the role of boys and men in addressing social issues. The movement would serve to solidify initiatives and interventions, and intensify focus to include extensive gender sensitisation in rural ecologies, emphasising traditional practices, which are detrimental in nature to girls, as obstacles.

On the uKuthomba practice - girl children's passage to womanhood - we propose the inclusion of empowerment values that promote girl children's independence, especially with respect to decision-making. It cannot be that there are still incidences of teenage pregnancies wherein coercion is used as an excuse. Girl children should be empowered with knowledge thus enabling them to take informed decisions across all spheres, including sex and sexuality matters. The independence should extend to cover decisions in schooling, career choices and career advancement. Girl children must break the stereotype that after uKuthomba one needs to find a husband and be married so that the man can take care of her. Especially because this is another aspect that threatens girl children's sustained stay in schools. We therefore suggest that empowerment initiatives and interventions target this platform. We understand that it might be difficult for uKuthomba as these are individually conducted in the home. We however maintain that through collaborations and partnerships, especially with traditional authorities, that these could be regulated to benefit girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.6 PUBLIC RURAL SCHOOL REALM: NEW AGENDAS AND INFUSING GENDER ANALYSIS INTO RESISTANCE

Our proposed intervention with regard to this realm is the development of gender mainstreaming policy for rural schools to promote girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Our basis for proposals with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies begins with policy interventions that emphasise rural education. We are encouraged by the vision and mission of the DOE with regard to rural education (Appendix M). It is therefore our proposal that this vision and mission, especially the access and equity aspects therein, translates into robust programmes that facilitates and emphasises overall gender transformation in rural ecologies. Including, importantly as revealed in the study, equal gender representation in rural schools. The first entry point in these ecologies should be an increase in rural girl children's enrolment in rural schools. As depicted at research sites, girls outnumber boys in both primary and high schools. However, the reality is that the drop-out rate adversely affects girl children numbers at the end the academic years in terms of academic progression. Secondly, with regard to girl children's future academic completion and subsequent career choices, we recommend entrenching equal gender representation in school enrolments through the 50/50 and 60/40 quota system. The 50/50 represents normal enrolments without potential drop-outs whereas the 60/40 makes provision for biasness towards girl children's enrolments to cater for eventualities such as drop-outs due to the plethora of reasons as mentioned in chapter 6 of this study.

The proposal on increased rural girl children's enrolments is for entrenching girl children's presence and thus ensuring gender-friendly, sensitive and responsive rural schools. This should be a requirement that enrolment figures at all rural schools become gender representative. Such a demand would compel all relevant stakeholders and role-players to seek ways and means of encouraging enrolments for both girl and boy children. In the same way as political institutions were forced by the 50/50 quota system for gender representation, the same principle should apply to school enrolments; the emphasis being that gender representation in rural schools should not happen by coincidence, rather by deliberate, systematic, planned and monitored initiatives.

Whilst we advocate for the 50/50 gender representation in enrolments, we take utmost consideration on the need for sustaining rural girl children's stay in schools. We appreciate the fact that access does not translate to sustainable learning nor sustained stay and participation for girl children in rural ecologies. However, that it is a critical starting point for facilitating girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.6.1 Coordinated School-based Inter-governmental Relations (IGR) and services

The study has pointed out that rural schools should be used as centres of coordination for poverty relief initiatives such as food parcels and social grants as offered by the DSD. Thus, at a larger scale, we propose strengthening IGR so that all Government departments are involved as critical players in uplifting rural areas, especially in uplifting the standard of education, specifically motivating girl children to overcome obstacles that hinder their progress towards their ambitions. We propose that the forum comprised of all municipalities, represented by officials who are responsible for transversal (special) programmes. It is against this backdrop that we propose IGR-driven initiatives and interventions for issues such as addressing poverty, and other socio-economic challenges. We therefore propose more structured and consistent visits that could use the schools as centres of coordination, as points of synergising initiatives and interventions for role-players and stakeholders. This is especially so because educators are best placed to reliably identify these distressed learners and enlist them on the DSD beneficiary list to be included for such relief as social grants and school nutrition programmes. The same approach should be applied to addressing the pervasive teenage pregnancies, gender-based violence, and poor health services. For instance, we maintain that it is possible to coordinate at rural schools on scheduled days and time, a "services-open-day". On the day, departments should advertise and offer services such as health education, which should include sex and sexuality matters specifically targeting rural girl children, contraceptives and condom distribution, enlisting eligible beneficiaries for food parcels distribution, and other services that could be school-based. Such initiatives and interventions at a practical level will address the dearth of information characteristic of most rural ecologies. Long distance travel to services is also highlighted as a challenge that contributes to girl children's absence from school. Thus, these proposed school-based

interventions will go a long way in ensuring girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.6.2 Formalising Rural School-based Professional Counselling and Support

We recommend the formalisation of rural school-based professional counselling and support with intensified focus on rural girl children. The services offered would cover psycho-social counselling which would address issues such as teenage pregnancies and child-headed households. Importantly, these services would provide the much-needed career counselling and guidance for rural learners, and in particular girl children. We note that the DBE has since introduced psychologists who are clustered according to circuits. We however hold the view that given the number of psychologists employed by the Department, and the vastness of the areas, this service is not adequate. For instance, in all the research sites of the study, learners were not aware of such services. Hence, we narrow our recommendations to being school-based.

We specifically point at academic motivation as the study revealed that some rural girl children do have future career aspirations. However, that lack of information is directly linked to this aspect. We also highlight in our framework that strengthening of counselling services offered to girl children in schools particularly targeting those who are pregnant, those coming from child-headed households, and those involved in drug and substance abuse. This will contribute to improving girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.6.3 Introduction of Rural Teachers' Allowances and Other Perks for Attraction and Retention of Rural Women Educators

We propose that Government considers introducing allowances and other benefits for rural educators, especially women. In the previous chapters, we deliberated on challenges that threaten women educators' stay in rural schools. We thus propose that adequate attention should be given to attracting and retaining rural women educators through consciously creating enabling conducive environments. That begins with having basic infrastructure such as decent staffrooms and ablution facilities, amongst others. The declining state of rural school physical structures leads to the exodus of qualified teachers in these ecologies, let alone attracting teachers to be employed at such schools. We also recommend allowances and other benefits owing to the fact that most women educators raised issues of expenses incurred with the daily long-

distance travelling. We acknowledge the NDBE programme on the Fundza Lushaka - a programme that encourages young people to pursue careers in education, and in particular teaching in rural schools through the provision of bursaries. We however maintain that more impetus should be directed at such initiatives whilst pairing those with accelerated infrastructure upgrades and provisions to ensure habitable working environments for those educators who opt to teach at rural schools. This study especially considers the important role women educators play in improving girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies; and as such, it recommends that strategies like allowances must be in place to attract and retain them.

7.6.4 Establishing Role-model and Mentor Support Networks

Our framework presented in 7.2 situates the rural schools as the third tier of influence with regard to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Sahoo, (2016:139) highlights that what "works with schools [is] to build networks ...role models and mentors, train female teachers, and offer social support to help create a safe space for girls to learn". As raised in 5.6.1, girl children stated that having women educators in rural schools serves various needs (i.e. role-modelling, caregiving, counselling, and serving as a confidante, to mention a few). It is therefore clear that women educators are a critical resource and a potential first port of call for rural girl learners. Against this backdrop, we therefore propose that women educators should be encouraged to 'adopt a learner' for rural girl learners' sustained school-based support. The 'adopt a learner' programme is conceptualised for purposes of creating various and alternative opportunities for rural girl children to tap into for information-sharing, for counselling, guidance and support, and they feel comfortable to specifically share this with a female adult (educator). At the same time, these would create avenues for girl children to inform interventions, but also for stakeholders to contribute to programmes that are informed by girl children themselves.

7.6.5 Review and Re-alignment of the Curriculum (especially LO)

In chapter 6, the issue of LO was pinpointed as one of the subjects that is taught in such a way that it does not do justice to its intended objectives. This affects both girl and boy children in rural schools by widening the knowledge-gap. We further indicated that the lack of extensive coverage is mainly attributed to sensitivity around some of

the topical issues that might be seen as promoting low morals amongst learners. However, the study demonstrated that the rural and rurality do not isolate girl and boy children's experiences with regard to social trends and patterns. For example, the fact that in Mpumalanga, and the Nkangala District in particular, the highest teenage pregnancy rate, instances of drug and substance abuse, and other social evils are confirmed through findings in this study. We therefore propose that reviewing and re-aligning the curriculum, especially LO, should take cognisance of these developments, especially because the Draft Rural Education Policy (2018) as gazetted, states that it views "rurality as a driver of educational reform, not a follower of urban agendas and priorities".

Perhaps the review and re-alignment must take the particularities of rural ecologies into perspective whilst simultaneously appreciating the urban agendas and priorities are largely intertwined with the changing cultural, socio-economic trends and patterns in rural ecologies. It is therefore becoming increasingly challenging to use a blanket approach for all rural ecologies and hence it is important to acknowledge these dynamics in reviewing and re-aligning the curriculum. With regard to LO, we propose that it should consider integrating and giving extensive coverage on issues such as teenage pregnancy, menstruation, and the complexities of child-headed households, that are the new realities confronting girl children in rural ecologies.

7.6.6 Acceleration of Infrastructural Upgrades and Provisions for Rural Schools

Drawing from the rural schools that constitute research sites for this study, infrastructural provisions as revealed in findings continue to be a challenge for learners. Whilst we reflected on these challenges broadly, for this study, we limit our proposals to those that directly affect rural girl children's access to sustainable learning. The undesirable state of ablution facilities, as presented in one of the focus group photo-voice sharing session, is at the top of the list of infrastructural challenges according to the girl children themselves. Followed by the dilapidated state of classrooms. Whilst the state of classrooms affects both girl and boy learners, girl children specifically mentioned the lack of (or broken) classroom furniture, the cracked walls, falling ceilings, broken windows and doors, and lack of ventilation (fans). Then mentioned were the absence of learning support facilities such as laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, sports equipment and safe playing fields.

Throughout the study it was emphasised the need for initiatives and interventions that respond to the particularities of rural ecologies. We therefore propose that the rural schools continue to be a priority for the ASIDI programme of the NDBE. That focus should be given to upgrading and maintenance of existing rural schools. Especially so because some of these rural schools that are well-kept and managed and can benefit from minor upgrades. See for example one of the primary schools that was a research site (Appendice L). We further propose that the ASIDI programme also include the provision of adequate and proper infrastructure for mandatory Government-run ECDs. Also, urgent attention should be paid to habitable classrooms, ablution facilities and other learning support facilities. We further propose that against the escalating rate of teenage pregnancy and other health related issues that IGR which is more coordinated and structured, should effectively and efficiently intervene. For example, an arrangement with the DoH on mobile clinics specifically visiting the schools at given days and times, should be considered. Bringing the information and the services within easy reach might serve to alleviate some of these challenges. We thus maintain that accessibility to critical services such as clinics contributes to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.7 THE RURAL COMMUNITY REALM: REIGNITING UBUNTU AND BUILDING RURAL GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

The interactions with rural girl children reaffirmed the fact that the changing patterns in the rural ecologies, for example, absent parents, child-headed households, poverty and others suggest different initiatives and interventions at different levels. It is no longer feasible for instance to consider parents, and women more specifically as the main custodians of family life in rural ecologies. The reality is that traditional family units have disintegrated due to a number of reasons as detailed in chapter 3 and 5 of this study. It is against this backdrop that we therefore in our framework, propose the community-based initiatives and interventions. These should be geared at and seek to reignite Ubuntu as presented in chapter 6. The proposed framework seeks to encourage communal solidarities with regard to advancing gender equality and equity. In our framework (7.2), we intentionally locate the rural community on the outer layer and sphere, the buffer yet protective sphere. We hold the view that as an outer sphere, rural communities should serve to fiercely protect and promote gender equality and equity within these ecologies, as we strongly believe that any ecology that accepts

and entrenches equality and equity, and more specifically for this study gender equality and equity, inherently promotes human respect and dignity.

We therefore propose re-instilling communal vigilance in rural ecologies, which is a back to basics approach of celebrating positive African philosophies such as *“ngwana ke wa setjhaba”* (every child is my child). Essentially this entails apportioning the child-rearing responsibilities to all adults in communities, and subjecting rural children to respecting all adults in the ecology as their parents. In this way, the community (including religious organisations) becomes centres of Ubuntu where the challenges that come with the increase in child-headed households, teenage pregnancies and so forth, will be gradually dismantled at all levels. We align our proposal to the South African Draft Rural Education Policy of 2018, illustrated in figure 6 (3.4.2). The policy mentions meaningful social connectedness. We thus delve deeper to suggest that this social connectedness should be based on relationality, hence our Ubuntu propositions. Thus, girl children’s access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies would be everybody’s business.

7.7.1 Strengthening Collaborations: Role-players and Stakeholders, Traditional Authorities, NGOs, Parents and SGBs

Traditional authorities are important role-players in rural ecologies. There are communal matters that cannot be resolved by any other authority in rural communities other than by this institution. It is an institution that commands high authority and thus has gained recognition by Government, especially so in the democratic dispensation. This study revealed that whilst there are good relations between the Government and the traditional authorities in most rural areas, there are gaps with regard to interaction between traditional authorities and the other stakeholders and role-players such as with local NGOs, parents and SGBs. This gap originates because collective initiatives and interventions are not communicated to all roleplayers in the community. For example, it is the traditional authority’s role to have records of all child-headed households (either due to death of parents or through distant employment), but this does not occur due to the assumption that others will take care of this duty. It therefore from this point that an “oversight programme” run collaboratively with other role-players such as the local NGO and the respective schools, would gain traction.

We further note that issues of rural girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies are not considered a priority in the agenda of traditional authorities, perhaps because of the gender stereotypes considering that traditional authorities are patriarchal in their nature. For example, the high rate of teenage pregnancy caused by those by older men who prey on girl children would be dealt with more decisively if the collaboration between these role-players and stakeholders were more synergised. Whilst DBE and the local and district municipalities have a joint intervention programme that targets girl children in schools, the traditional authorities would have a parallel intervention targeting parents and the elderly men. Therefore, there is firstly the need for close working relationships between and amongst the traditional authorities, NGOs, parents and SGBs in the respective communities. Secondly, there is a need to elevate the focus on rural girl children amongst role-players and stakeholders in the respective rural communities to ensure that issues facing girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies are dealt with from all angles and by all role-players and stakeholders.

7.7.2 Resuscitation of MRM: Establishment of Rural-based Localised Structures for Community-centred Gender Advocacy and Education Programmes

During the course of the study, the municipalities together with the District re-launched the (MRM). This is a nationally adopted Government programme that seeks to address the rampant social ills that have plagued many communities with dire consequences for young people. We therefore propose that these structures should be localised and extended to rural communities. We specifically mention this because District authorities have the tendency to be biased when focusing on these structures in semi-urban or urban ecologies, disregarding rural ecologies. That is usually because of the commonly held assumptions and beliefs that rural ecologies are a culture and traditional preserve and thus considered safe heavens. However, the study has revealed that is not the case and that reasonable attention should be directed at these ecologies. We take note that the nationally adopted Charter of positive values as outlined in appendix J. drives these structures. It is against this backdrop that we propose the resuscitating of the rural-based MRM structures. It is envisaged that equality and dignity are prioritised in the promotion of gender equality and the preservation of the dignity of girl children.

We therefore recommend that MRM, as a community-centred programme, should serve to advance issues of gender transformation. It should utilise its advocacy and education programmatic interventions and initiatives to facilitate girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural areas.

7.7.3 Strengthening Private Sector's Corporate Social Investments (CSIs): Collaborations and Partnerships with Rural CBOs and NGOs

Collaborations, linkages and partnerships do exist in the respective communities that constituted research sites for this study. However, these are not intentionally geared towards improving girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. We intentionally lock the rural community, family and schools in one inter-dependent and circular relations in our proposed framework. We do that to highlight the important inter-connections between the rural households, the school and the communities, and between the parents and the schools

Thus our proposals include extending knowledge of the plight of rural girl children's access to sustainable learning in order to attract the private sector who through their corporate social investments (CSI) will give priority towards re-aligning and re-directing resources to revive, strengthen and support both community and school-based initiatives. We are aware of large-scale infrastructural investments that most private sectors are partnering in, some with Government departments. However, considering that peer information-sharing, education and communication presents opportunities for girl children to directly and tangibly contribute to and influence interventions, we advocate for a reasonable focus on the private sector's support for NGOs and CBOs that would make a difference in ensuring that girl children's access to active participation in sustainable learning is realised. It is therefore our assertion that a vibrant civil society provides for a strong interphase between the rural families, schools and communities. We thus maintain that civil society through its NGO and CBO formations is potentially amongst the key drivers in girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

7.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND THE STUDY'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter provided policy and practice proposals that infuses Bourdieu's theory of practice. We acknowledge that generally, as literature and data in this study has revealed, rural schools and schooling continue to face challenges that adversely affect

teaching and learning in these ecologies. These challenges emanate from inside and outside the school environments. We are however, limited by the focus of this study to only concentrate on girl children. As data in this study confirmed, rural girl children continue to be confronted by a myriad of challenges, most of which hinder their access to sustainable learning. Appreciating that there is rapidly growing interest in rural education, we recommend an increase in future research that focuses on the various issues in sustainable learning in rural ecologies in the interest of broader rural development and transformation.

In order to propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, we reflect and take heed of relevant components from various other models and frameworks. We combine and add these to propose a comprehensive framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Notwithstanding that, this is a Bourdieuan study, centred on girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. We considered the elements of participation and transformation as derived from the Mtintso's model as discussed in chapter 3. For this study, we note the fact that there is indeed a strong relationship between access, participation and transformation. We thus advocate and advance the notion of girl children's active participation through centring their voices. We argue that girl children should be the focus of all issues, interventions and initiatives directed at transforming their access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. Thus, this study contends that transformation, more specifically gender transformation, cannot happen without the active involvement of girl children themselves. We thus draw on this combination of elements from the Mtintso's framework and align it to Bourdieu's theory of practice to demonstrate the strategic (policy) and practical areas for the birth of initiatives and interventions that would advance girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies.

The first prioritised area of focus, at the practice level, is thus the rural girl children themselves; hence, the insistence on their repositioning. We are in essence arguing that sustainable change and empowerment should primarily take place at the self-level. We argue that the power to challenge and change their situation lies firstly within rural girl children themselves. Hence, the contention that rural girl children should actively pursue reclaiming their agency as mentioned throughout the study. To that end, we propose several initiatives and interventions that should serve to enhance

rural girl children's abilities and capabilities to re-prioritise re-order and re-envision their lives and futures. Rural girl children are prompted to exercise choice and decision-making on the ways in which they would want to trade or invest their different forms of capital, including the UCC.

Our framework further locates the rural girl children's access to sustainable learning within rural families as the primary field of socio-cultural practice. We therefore place the responsibility on families for the re-socialisation and realignment to the current realities in rural ecologies. For instance, we recognise and acknowledge the fact that child-headed households, owing to a number of socio-economic factors, are on the rise in rural ecologies. Therefore, socialisation processes at the family level should prepare both girl and boy children equally and effectively. The rural schools are equally influential social playing fields, and therefore identified on a larger scale as centres of socio-cultural and economic development. Hence, at the policy level, issues of ECDs, gendered enrolments and proportions in rural classrooms and schools (amongst others) are highlighted as an area of continued focus to ensure that the critical mass is sustained. Other related matters are the methods of delivery of the curriculum, the plight of rural women educators and the need to upgrade infrastructure. These must be done to ensure that, against the many potential barriers that might hinder girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies, progress is made to eradicate such hindrances to the quality of life.

In this chapter, we sought to harmonise and thread together the issues emanating from the different chapters of the study and the different areas of focus, to concretely develop and propose the afore-mentioned multi-pronged and multi-faceted model for girl children's access to sustainable level in rural ecologies.

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The purpose of the study is to propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan policy and practice perspective. The main aim being to critically analyse and explore varied ways with which the Bourdieuan theory of practice could serve to provide insight into practice and policy issues with respect to girl children's access to sustainable rural learning ecologies.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am currently a student with the University of Free State study towards a PHD and the research is a requirement for the successful completion of my studies.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: Awaiting clearance and number

WHY IS YOUR INSTITUTION/ INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The Department of Education is the custodian of all schools and because the study focuses on girl children's access to sustainable learning, schools forms an integral part of learning ecologies. Subsequently, because the study also focuses on rural ecologies initial contacts with the Department identified Nkangala District as one of those with predominantly rural schools. That was also considering that it will be convenient for the researcher who resides in the same District and would thus make accessibility to the research sites easy and more regular. The two sub-districts are according to the Department, the most rural in the Districts characterised by far-flung, border rural communities and schools. The Department thus assisted the researcher with contacting the sub-district/circuit managers and the principals, educators and SBGs in the respective schools who then gave access to the learners. The study is expected to include at least 150- 200 learners from the identified schools (02 primary and 02 high schools, with an estimate of 25 - 30 in each group/grade). The selection is informed by the study's focus which is girl children. It will however, albeit limitedly so, include boy children. The selection will be according to grades – learners in lower grades and higher grades to enrich and diversify data.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The co-researchers are constituted as follows; The data generation techniques are; The data generation process is expected to take at least between two and three months (March to June 2018) considering that schools close for longer duration in June – hence it should be wrapped up prior June school holidays. Also considering that in order for the research to have less disruption of school time-table and so forth, Life Orientation classes/period (35min) per day, per grade, over 03days in a week have been identified and will be used for the interviews, individual and group as well as photo-voice and observations by the primary researcher. 1st group (Departmental Practitioners): Provincial Department of Education (Two officials in each of the Directorates on Rural Education and Gender respectively), Two officials in the Nkangala District Office, School Principals at each of the four schools, One HOD and One Teacher in Life Orientation at the selected schools. 2nd group (Learners and Community Stakeholders): Girl children selected in various grades in selected schools. This group is for this study, the primary co-researchers so as to ensure the inclusion of the often silenced voices, thus situating “girl children’s agency”, a Bourdieuan perspective. Added to this team would be parents, two members of the SGB and One representative, a gender activist from an NGO or CBO that engages or interacts with girl children in the selected schools and communities. Then lastly, will be two representatives of the Traditional Local Authority (TLA). Describe the participant’s actual role in the study.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

With the new knowledge that the study anticipates will be generated through the engagements and interactions emanating from this research, it is expected that it will be used to benefit improved education policy and practice intervention and thus benefit generations of girl children in rural areas with regard to access to sustainable learning. It is however important to emphasise that there will be no payments/remuneration of any kind for all groups of co-researchers in this study as this is an academic undertaking with no financial benefits.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL RISKS TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

As outlined in the accompanying consent form, we do not anticipate anything bad to happen as the children will be in their safe school environment. The potential risks could only be if in the talks, story-telling and photos sharing that the child comes across something that evokes a traumatic experience that she might have been exposed to and thus need counselling and support. To that regard the local NGO counsellors and the government social workers have been informed (to be on the alert to provide their services) should the need arise. However, it will be a daily checking point for the researcher to check if all those co-researchers are in good health (so that any sick child) can be attended through informing parents and educators and

referred to the right authorities (including medical attention in the local clinic). All necessary precautions of making sure the children do not hurt/harm themselves in their interactions will be safeguarded.

WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The study is bound by the University's code of ethics which commits to confidentiality of co-researchers. Therefore, no one will know the identity of co-researchers though the information gathered would be shared as an outcome of the study. However as this is an academic study, the names, ages and gender will be attained from the respective schools. So it will be known that which schools and what grades participated though not individual children. It therefore means that learners' names will not be recorded next to their responses; the responses will be captured as general and thus no one will be able to connect the learners to their answers give. As an added confidentiality feature, learners will be asked to give themselves pseudo-names (of colours, pets, fruits, etc) anything that they best identify with and change those at any point in the study if they so wish. Those will only be known to the primary researcher. However, note that only the data generated will (might) be used in publications such as journal articles, or other research reporting methods such as research workshops and conference proceedings which the researcher might wish to take part in. Only the researcher and the study leader (the primary researcher's supervisor/s) will have access to the data (the photos, pictures, stories, and all other transcripts) and thus can assure that those will be kept confidential as per University's code of conduct (research ethics). The members of the Research Ethics Committee might if necessary also have access to these. However even in those research reporting forums and platforms learners and all other co-researchers will not be identifiable. While every effort will be made by myself as the primary researcher to ensure that learners and all other groups of co-researchers will not be connected to the information that was shared during the focus groups for example, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all co-researchers to do so. For this reason I would advise each of the co-researchers not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group and rather opt to share that in privacy with myself. Lastly, please be informed that identified co-researchers will be part of this research study at own free will. Which means, even if parents/guardians (in the case of minors) allows and gives permission for them to participate, the learners can at their own accord choose not to participate and will not be punished in anyway whatsoever, you choice will be respected. All co-researchers can also decide to withdraw their participation at any given time and will not be punished in anyway.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of the answers provided (all pictures, photos, and other transcripts will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at her home office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After the stipulated (05) years, these documents will be shredded and disposed to ensure that no one can reuse them. Indicate how information will be destroyed.

WILL THERE BE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Kindly be informed that the study is an academic undertaking as a requirement to the fulfilment of my studies with the University of Free State. There will be no reimbursement, remuneration or any payment whatsoever to all co-researchers including the primary researcher. Therefore participation in this study is voluntary, with no financial or any other gain to those that have contributed.

HOW WILL THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (AND THE RELEVANT SUB-DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact me Tebogo Matoane on 079 169 1555 (tmatoane@yahoo.com) or the Faculty of Education at the University of Free State on (051 401 9111). The findings will be accessible upon completion of the study and you will be duly notified in the post-research phase as there will be at the time, a clear indication of when the research report will be made available. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof. D. Hlalele at 083 379 9328 (hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).]

Yours sincerely

TEBOGO MATOANE

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Faculty of Education

26-Jul-2018

Dear Miss Tebogo Matoane

Ethics Clearance: **GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES: A BOURDIEUIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE ANALYSIS**

Principal Investigator: Miss Tebogo Matoane

Department: School of Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/0064**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
Office of the Dean: Education
T: +27 (0)51 401 3777 | F: +27 (0)86 546 1113 | E: MokheleML@ufs.ac.za
Winkie Direko Building | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa
www.ufs.ac.za



APPENDIX C: RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION BOOKLET AND CONSENT FORM



RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

(January – March) Pre-planning phase (April - June 2018) for data generation

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Girl children's access to sustainable learning in ecologies: a Bourdieuan policy and practice analysis

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Tebogo Matoane

Student number

2000038469

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Policy and Management

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Prof D Hlalele

083 379 9328

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to propose a framework for girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies from a Bourdieuan policy and practice perspective. The main aim being to critically analyse and explore varied ways with which the Bourdieuan theory of

practice could serve to provide insight into practice and policy issues with respect to girl children's access to sustainable rural learning ecologies.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am a University of Free State PHD student and as a requirement for my successful completion of my studies it is expected that I undertake a research project. I am a gender activist with a long history of activism in the women's empowerment and gender equality sector. I am a qualified educator who is passionate about rural education and rural development in general. It is this combination of being an educator and a gender activist that I took interest in focusing on rural girl children for this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *UFS-HSD 2018/0064*

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

All participants in the study are referred to as co-researchers. You have been requested to take part in this study is because you are part of the groups of co-researchers that have a direct or indirect interest on issues pertaining to girl children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies. You are either (an educator, department's official in the areas of gender and/or rural education, parent, an activist organisation in the communities under study or traditional or civic leader). The study anticipates to tap onto your voice and experiences specifically with regard to sustainable learning in rural ecologies (schools, families, communities in rural areas) which we are of the view that it will be of value to the research study. These voices and experiences will enable a more better and depth understanding of the (challenges/problems) if any and suggestions/recommendations by those directly and indirectly affected such as yourselves (educators, parents, civic leaders in the rural ecologies under study) on how to change or improve the situation.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The co-researchers are constituted as follows; 1st group (Departmental Practitioners): Provincial Department of Education (Two officials in each of the Directorates on Rural Education and Gender respectively), Two officials in the Nkangala District Office, School Principals at each of the four schools, One HOD and One Teacher in Life Orientation at the selected schools. 2nd group (Learners and Community Stakeholders): Girl children selected in various grades in selected schools. This group is for this study, the primary co-researchers so as to ensure the inclusion of the often silenced voices, thus situating “girl children’s agency”, a Bourdieuan perspective. Added to this team would be parents, two members of the SGB and One representative, a gender activist from an NGO or CBO that engages or interacts with girl children in the selected schools and communities. Then lastly, will be two representatives of the Traditional Local Authority (TLA). You are amongst the 1st or 2nd group of co-researchers, the Department’s practitioners or Community stakeholders. The data generation process is expected to take at least between two and three months (March to June 2018) considering that schools close for longer duration in June – hence it should be wrapped up prior June school holidays. Also considering that in order for the research to have less disruption of school time-table and so forth, for educators our interviews and related interactions will take place only after-school and will take-up an hour (3hrs in a week) as agreed to during initial pre-planning phase. For the other co-researchers, the interviews and focus groups will take place at identified convenient times (take-up two hours twice a week) over the period of three months. The engagements and interactions will take form of individual and group interviews; focus groups, and story-telling.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Be informed that you will be part of this research study at your own free will. Which means, even if you allow and be given permission to participate by relevant structures or seniors, you can at your own accord choose not to participate and you will not be punished in anyway whatsoever, your choice will be respected. You can also decide to withdraw your participation at any given time and you will not be punished in anyway. Statement that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

With the new knowledge that the study anticipates will be generated through the engagements and interactions emanating from this research, it is expected that it will be used to benefit improved education policy and practice interventions and thus benefit generations of girl children in rural areas with regard to access to sustainable learning. It is however important to emphasise that there will be no payments/remuneration of any kind for all groups of co-researchers in this study as this is an academic undertaking with no financial benefits.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

We do not anticipate any risks as all interactions and engagements will take place in safe school environments for educators and for community stakeholders. The potential risks could only be if in the talks, story-telling and photos sharing that the co-researchers in their sharing perhaps evokes traumatic experience that s/he might have been exposed to and thus need counselling and support. To that regard the local NGO counsellors and the government social workers have been informed (to be on the alert to provide their services) should the need arise. However, it will be a daily checking point for the researcher to check if all those co-researchers are in good spirits or can be referred to the right authorities (including medical attention in the local clinic). All necessary precautions of making sure (through initial pre-planning phase) that allocated times for all co-researchers are convenient and suits their schedule. More precisely, the days and times were suggested by the co-researchers themselves.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The study is bound by the University's code of ethics which commits to confidentiality of co-researchers. Therefore no one will know the identity of co-researchers though the information gathered would be shared as an outcome of the study. However as this is an academic study, the names, ages and gender will be attained from the respective schools. So it will be known that which schools and what grades participated though not individuals. Explain the extent; if any, to which confidentiality of information will be maintained, e.g. your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that

other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group and instead consider sharing with myself as the primary researcher privately. In that way you will be assured that the information will be held in confidence as I am bound by the University's ethics of which confidentiality and anonymity are mandatory.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of the answers provided (all pictures, photos, and other transcripts will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at her home office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After the stipulated (05) years, these documents will be shredded and disposed to ensure that no one can re-use them.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Kindly be informed that the study is an academic undertaking as a requirement to the fulfilment of my studies with the University of Free State. There will be no reimbursement, remuneration or any payment whatsoever to all co-researchers including the primary researcher. Therefore participation in this study is voluntary, with no financial or any other gain to those that have contributed. Describe any payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact me Tebogo Matoane on 079 169 1555 (tmatoane@yahoo.com) or the Faculty of Education at the University of Free State on (051 401 9111). The findings will be accessible upon completion of the study and you will be duly notified in the post-research phase as there will be at the time, a clear indication of when the research report will be made available. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof. D. Hlalele 083 379 9328 (hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za).]

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):

Signature of Researcher: Tebogo Matoane

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER, MDOE, NKANGALA DISTRICT



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No. 5, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: 013 798 5521/115 Toll Free Line: 0800 203 115

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Departament van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Uyondzo

TO: THE PRINCIPAL: LITHO SECONDARY SCHOOL (DJSMLM)
KHOBONGWANE PRIMARY SCHOOL (DJSMLM)
MPHUMELOMUHLE SECONDARY SCHOOL (THLM)
MANGADISA PRIMARY SCHOOL (THLM)

FROM: MR JJ MABENA
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DATE: 05 DECEMBER 2017

SUBJECT: PHD STUDENT RESEARCH: TBOGO MATOANE, STUDENT NO. 2000038469

PURPOSE:

To grant Ms Tebogo Matoane, student No. 2000038469 permission to conduct her PHD research in your schools.

SUMMARY:

Tebogo Matoane, a registered PHD student with the University of Free State (UFS) STUDENT NUMBER 2000038469 is conducting her research title: Girl Children's access to sustainable learning in rural ecologies: a Bourdieuan analysis.

To that regard, the Nkangala District Municipality, in particular the Dr JS Moroka and Thembisile Hani Local Municipalities have been identified as the study's jurisdiction.

In view of that, your schools have been identified as research sites. Permission is therefore duly granted to the afore-mentioned student. She is expected to constantly visit the schools over a period of 03 months with preliminary planning phases that entails introductions and initial consultative forums and meetings (January – March 2018) and (April – June 2018) for data generation.

The study will thus seek the engagement and interaction with the circuit managers concerned, educators, school principals and learners (both boy and girl) learners in the identified schools, SGB members and local traditional authorities in the respective communities.

The Department views such an intervention as important contributions to enhancing educational policies and practices.

We therefore request your kind cooperation and assistance in this regard.


JJ MABENA
DISTRICT MANAGER

05.12.2017

DATE



be of value to the research. Their voices and experiences will make those that are in education to better understand the (challenges/problems) if any and suggestions/recommendations by the children themselves how to change or improve the situation.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

Identify yourself and explain who you work for and/or why you are doing the project.

I am a registered student of the University of Free State and this study is an academic undertaking pursuant to the degree (PHD) in Education specializing in Philosophy and Policy Studies in Education.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *UFS-HSD 2018/0064*

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR CHILD IN THIS STUDY?

Your child in this is a co-researcher which means she will together with the researcher talk about (share) her knowledge, daily experiences to suggest/recommend how and what those people in education (teachers, policy-makers, etc) should improve/change the way of doing things (policy and practice) to make sure girl children in rural areas also benefits/enjoys education (going to school). We will share through talking (interviews), story-telling, taking photos and sharing those with others. The researcher will also study some aspects through just looking at the children interacting with their environment (observations) which she will also share with the children.

CAN ANYTHING BAD HAPPEN TO YOUR CHILD?

We do not anticipate anything bad to happen as the children will be in their safe school environment. The only risks could only be if in the talks, story-telling and photos, the child comes across something that evokes a traumatic experience that she might have been exposed to and thus need counselling and support. To that regard the local NGO counsellors and the government social workers have been informed (to be on the alert to provide their services) should the need arise. se simple terms to explain any possible risks to the child. State if something might be painful or scary to the child. However, it will be a daily checking point for the researcher to check if all those co-researchers are in good health (so that any sick child) can be referred to the right authorities (including medical attention in the local clinic). All

necessary precautions of making sure the children do not hurt/harm themselves in their interaction will be safeguarded.

CAN ANYTHING GOOD HAPPEN TO YOUR CHILD?

With the new knowledge that will be generated through the engagements and interactions emanating from this research, it is anticipated that it will be used to benefit improved education policy and practice intervention and thus benefit generations of girl children in rural areas with regard to access to sustainable learning.

WILL ANYONE KNOW YOUR CHILD IS PART OF THE STUDY?

The study is bound by the University's code of ethics which commits to confidentiality of co-researchers. Therefore no one will know the identity of co-researchers though the information gathered would be shared as an outcome of the study. However as this is an academic study, the names, ages and gender will be attained from the respective schools. So it will be known that which schools and what grades participated though not individual children.

WHO CAN YOU TALK TO ABOUT THE STUDY?

Should you require any further information or clarity pertaining to the research study, you are most welcome to contact myself as the Primary researcher (Tebogo Matoane on 079 169 1555) or my Supervisor (Prof Hlalele on 083 379 9328), the Department of Education in the Nkangala Region (Ms S Phaleng on 0823489963) or the (Regional Director: Nkangala District Department of Education, Mr JJ Mabena on 013 947 1500).

WHAT IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO DO THIS?

Lastly, please be informed that you will be part of this research study at your own free will. Which means, even if your parents/guardians allows and gives permission for you to participate, you can at your own accord choose not to participate and you will not be punished in anyway whatsoever, your choice will be respected. You can also decide to withdraw your participation at any given time and you will not be punished in anyway.

PLEASE RETURN

Name of child: _____

Name of Parent:

- Do you understand this research study and are you willing to let your child take part in it? Yes No
- Has the researcher answered all your questions? Yes No
- Do you understand that you can withdraw from the study at any time? Yes No
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my child's participation Yes No

Signature of Parent

Date

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH CONSTITUTION: GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING ECOLOGIES: A BOURDIEUIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE ANALYSIS.

(1) Non-judgmental and fair collaboration: In all our sessions, all ideas, opinions and views, however different from one's own, must be respected. We will seek to promote and preserve honesty, discipline, respect and dignity in for each other in all our interactions. We bind ourselves to respectfully and sensitively give constructive feedback.

(2) Solidarity and unity: All humanity, without exception, is sacred, connected, interdependent and interrelated in a shared common journey. We are unified in support of our journey of discovery in this study.

(3) Mutual trust and non-discrimination: Everyone has the capability to understand and create their own realities. We trust each co-researcher will do this and still remain an integral part of the research team. This mutual trust is built on non-discrimination irrespective of class, race, age or background.

(4) Genuine respect: This trust and respect takes concerted time, patience and perseverance, which we are prepared to give.

5) Equality: All are considered equal, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states. We are equal team members.

(6) Transparency: Is important to our collaboration; therefore, we must make our agendas, interests and goals explicit.

(7) Active involvement and participation: Collaborative partnerships means all of us must take ownership of the research process from beginning to end which we all commit to. It also necessitates emotional as well as intellectual involvement. This involvement goes beyond a detached working relationship to one of personal shared emotionality and connectivity. We will be empathetic to the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of our co-researchers.

Adapted from: Hawkins, 2015:471

APPENDIX G: CERTIFICATE FROM EDITOR

590 Miami Road
Hibberdene
KZN
4220

PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES



Brian Naidoo (BA Hons English; BA Hons TESOL; BEd;
BA- English major; Univ. Dip. In Ed.[English special]; UCT Cert.in
Legal and Business Writing; UCT Cert. in Copy-Editing)

**SPECIALISING IN THE LANGUAGE EDITING OF THESES, DISSERTATIONS,
JOURNAL ARTICLES, PROPOSALS, POLICIES AND PUBLICATIONS.**

CERTIFICATE FOR LANGUAGE EDITING

Doctoral Thesis

TEBOGO MATOANE

University of the Free State

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate confirms that the above-mentioned student submitted her draft doctoral thesis to me for language-editing, including the correcting of in-text citations and the list of references. This was duly edited by me and sent back to the student for corrections/revisions. I make no claim as to the accuracy of the research content. The text, as edited by me, is grammatically correct. After my language editing, the author has the option to accept or reject suggestions/changes prior to submission to the supervisor for checking of the content and for plagiarism.

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APPENDIX H: STUDY'S TURNITIN REPORTS

The screenshot displays a Turnitin report interface. The main document text is as follows:

GIRL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE LEARNING IN RURAL ECOLOGIES: A BOURDIEUIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE ANALYSIS
by
TEBOGO MATOANE
Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Philosophiae Doctor in Education
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

At the bottom left of the document area, it says "Word Count: 120267".

On the right side, there is a "Match Overview" panel showing a total match rate of **10%**. Below this, a list of sources is provided:

Rank	Source	Match Rate
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7	Sarah Payne, "Construc... Publication	<1%

The interface also includes a taskbar at the bottom with various application icons and a system tray showing the time as 09:33 PM on 2019/06/29. The Acer logo is visible at the bottom center of the monitor.

APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPTS

Ke ya ikgethela gore ke tsoga ke ye go kga metse goba ke robala ke wa kgile. Babangwe bana le diJojo tanks rona ga re na tsona. Re gella meetse Mopomping eleng ko strateng. Ha ke robetse ke wa kgile ke tsoga ke thusana le Nkoko go lokisetsa bo-nnake, ke besa stofo ke be ke bea meetse a go tlhapa, ke ba tshelle, ba tlhapa, ba ja motogo e be le nna ke itukisetsa go ya sekolong. O mongwe osala le Nkoko ba bangwe ke tsamaisana le bona go ya sekolong ba ko Grade 3 le 5. Ke tlamehile ke siye ntlo eleskono ke tlhatswitse dikotlolo ke koropile. Ke besa stofo ka gore electricity ya tura. Go betere ha ke bea meetse ka stofo ka gore electricity ya tura. Nkoko o tsoga apeye motogo gore re tsamaye re jele. Go betere matsatsi a ka gore metse ke wa kga kgaufinyana. Mopomping ya mo kgauswi. Kgale ne re wa kga kgole re tsamaya re waphusha ka diKaribane. Ha e le marega go nna bothatha ka gore goba lefifi thatha go nna betere go robala ke kgile metse. Le electricity sentse ethusitse le ga re sa rwalla dikgong ke tsa go bidisa meetse a go tlhapa fela.

Ke tsena sekolong sentse siren e tlo lla e be ke ya ko diclasseng. Ke rata class di Natural Sciences, le English le banyana babantsi ba rata tsone. Basimane ba rata Mathematics le Accounting. Ka diBreaks ke bapala le dichomi tsa ka di games ga re bapale lebashimane ba-rofo ba rata golwa ga babapale monate. Ke sentse ke thoma ke bona Bosadi... (shy gesture) (menstruations) and Nkoko o rile ke sa bapala lebashimane gaba tshwanela go bona gore ke ko diperiods. Ke sa thoma so ga ke so ditlwaele... (discomfort gesture) and le matswele a ka anna bohloko so ga ke bapale monate. Gape ga ke ema ema ke thapisa pad thata ke tsholla thata and diPads tsa ka di tla fela. Ne ke berekisa tissue ka gore ebetere ya rekega Nkoko onthekela tse pedi. Ha difedile ke dula ke sa ye sekolong ke tshaba gore ke tla blotter ebe bantshega...bashimane ba-worse. Matsatsi a ke berekisa diPads re fiwa mo sekolong.

Ko sekolong go tshwenya ka gore diDesk tsa rona ke tsa kgale tse dingwe di a robega or dirobegile and di a shota. O ka re le rona ba ka re agela sekolo sesipila sesetshwanang le sa koLoding. Sona se na lediToilet lediToilets tse smart le diClass tsa bone di smart rona ha re na tsone. Ditoilet tsa rona di a wela di a tshosa, kganthe le metse a sokodisa. After school ke tlamehile ke phakisetse kogae ke ile go thusa Nkoko ke cleaner ntlo ka gore vroeg ke fiela fela... (silence).

After school ga ke fihla gae ke gone ke tshwanetse go cleaner skono, ga ke na nako ya go bapala ka gore after mo ke tlamehile ke dire di-Homework. Ga re na di-playgrounds le ko sekolong ga re bapale. Bashimane ga ba dire mmereko o montshi ko gae so ba ya kodiGroundeng badlale soccer. And bona gabaye diperiods ga ba na mathata a godlala. Gape Nkoko wa fokola ka after school o emela nna ke fihla ke cleaner e be ke mo fa dipilisi tsa gae le vroeg ge a fetsa go ja motogo ke montshetsa dipilisi tsa gage. Mma o bowa gae kgwedi ha efela. O fihla Friday a be a tsamaya Sunday

Transcript of narrative of grade 7s co-researchers as shared through individual and group dialogues in response to sharing a typical day including activities.

Yemihle is an orphaned, 17year old girl learner in Grade 11. She is the eldest child in the family of a grandmother, 2 younger sisters aged 9 and 12 and one elder brother aged 19 years.

Mina ngiyintandane, angina Baba no Mama. Bashona ngimcane kuna-manje ngangi- ku Grade 8 ngifika eHigh School (deep silence). UMama wayehlukene noBaba sesihlala naye kuphela uma ezoshona. Kwaqala kwashona uBaba kwasekulandela Umama. Uqale wagula kakhukulu (tears roll-up in her eyes) wa engasadli engasakwazi nokuzisukumela. NgangiLofa isikhathi esiningi eskolweni ngiyanaye eKliniki sihlala ilanga lonke ebusuku ngiphinde ngingalali ngoba ekhala ngezintlungu. Ngamanyemalanga ngihluleke ukumshiya yedwa ngoba sihlala noGogo naye a kaphilanga. Be se ngimela ukubanakekela bobabini. Ngizo cleaner, ngiyokha amanzi, ngilungisele abodade beye eskolweni bese sengiyapheka nowumdoko kuze baphuze amapilisi besengizopheka futhi emini nasebusuku ngoba kwamele badle bezokwazi ukuphuza amapilisi. Bengiyengithandaze ukuthi Umama aphilile azokwazi ukusisebenzela kodwa washona. Ngitjelwe se ashonile ukuthi yiHIV/AIDS kanjalo noBaba. Abomalume abasebenzi nabomamcane babulawa wutjwala. Angikgonii nokuya ngiyolilela kibo. Khabo Baba ukugare uphila ngepetjini kusele yena Kanti naye akaphilanga. Usele nabanye abantwana nabo abashonelwe bazali.

Sengisele ngedwa nala-bodade. Kanti vele ubhuti lo wami ongimlamayo oyahlupha. Wa failer uMatric wa yala ukubuyela eskoleni uma uMma se ka shonile. Nje mdala angikwazi ukumlwisa. Kodwa ke a kagelepi ngoba aka yenzi lutho la ekhaya kodwa ufuna ukudla, awashelwe no kumcleanela.

Ugogo aka sa kgoni, akaphilanga. Naye ngisahamba naye eKliniki bese ngalawo malanga angizi eSkolweni. Kanti kumele ngiyomholela impetjini kuncono ngoba manje batjho sebe zogola eposini. Kanti yiyo imali esizayo la ekhaya siyayidinga.

Iphinde inganele sicedwe yilaMaFood Parcel alethwa yi Social [Department of Social Development] ngaMaSocial Worker kodwa eza umakuthanda bona. UmangizoPasser kumele ngithole umsebenzi ngoba Ugogo a kaphilanga and aboDade bazobheka mina. Nyiyafisa ukuphumela ngiqede uMatric kuzoba ncono.

Kuyamela ngithole umsebenzi la eduze ngoba uyabona Mama enext door yaseKhaya naboBashonelwe bazali estradini saseKhaya mhlaumbe four of five yemizi enathibantwana kuphela. Siyahlanganisa sistoke amatamati, maOnion kanjalo bese siyahamba sithengisa lapha ezindlini kuze sithole imali yesinkwa. Manje noma ngingathola umsebenzi kude aboDade bayosala nobani (hands and shoulder gestures)? KuyangiKosa ukuthi ngisebenzele eduze nasekhaya. AboTeacher bala ubuningi buhlala kude manje abazazi lezimo zethu bayakuFailisa umauLofa. Kanti nabanye abantwana abaRite emakibo basibukela phantsi. Abanye abakulesimo sami bayekela isikolo bathandana naboBaba abadala ababathembisa imali babaPregisa babashiya manje kuncono ukuceda uyozisebenzela ngokwakho.

Transcripts of narratives of co-researchers in grades 10 – 12 sharing a typical day with all its activities.

Eish...akukho e unga kuplana kuze kudlule ukuthombiswa... vele la ukuthomba yiko okubalulekile yilo isiko lwethu ekumele silicqine ke...ufuna ungafune umele udlule khona. Uma ungathombanga awukhuli ngoba yiyo indlela yokukhulisa aberazana... happy as this year ngiyaThomba...kuhle thina siThomba uma izikole zivalile akuhluphani nesikole. Kumnandi ngoba Maqude ngapha nangapha kuyatjagalwa emidenini... (alulating and dancing). Another girl interjects and disagrees...asizikhetheli kuyahlelwa bese uyatjelwa...inkinga abanye uma beqeda ukuthomba abasabuyi la eskolweni...batjo bona bakhulile bafazi...akudluli isikhathi sebazithwele...siyazi abaningi abayothomba bahambela safuthi...

Transcripts of a group dialogue with grade 11 girl children aged 16 -18, August 06th 2018 on future plans.

Excerpts from the Traditional authorities, NGOs and SGBs

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes
Dilo le bophelo di a fetoga mo magaeng...ke mathata	Focus group discussions	Challenges with rapidly growing and evolving rural (lity)	GCASL-RECS 1
Haaa...utjwala lobu...abantwana bayaphuza ngisho naberazana baphuza kakhulu. Izidakamiswa nazo ziyinkinga la emakhaya...akulungi...	Focus group discussions and dialogues	Alcohol and drug abuse amongst rural youth	GCASL-RECS 1.1
Basetsana bona ba pele ka gore bahlakana le diSugar Daddy tja bona gona moo...ohwetje mosetsana o monnyane a sepela le le lekhehla a apere le uniform ka mokgwa wo ba sa tjabeng...	Focus group discussions	Rural shopping malls and girl children's socio-economic vulnerability	GCASL-RECS 1.2

Transcripts of data analysis tables.

Table f: 2nd group of co-researchers on evolution of rural ecologies and its impact on rural youth

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes

<p>You will have realised by now that we are three provinces in one...that on its own has serious challenges I must tell you...we are located at cross border and it is a serious challenge as even when wants to help say for instance an ID application for an orphaned girl learner who will be sitting for matric examinations...you deal with three different provinces and travel as well</p>	<p>Group dialogue</p>	<p>Cross border demarcations impact on access to rural schools</p>	<p>GCASL – REF 8</p>
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Table e: 1st group of co-researchers on cross-border rural schools

Excerpts from the Traditional authorities, NGOs and SGBs

<p>Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)</p>	<p>Source</p>	<p>Descriptive codes (code definition)</p>	<p>Codes</p>
<p>Dilo le bophelo di a fetoga mo magaeng...ke mathata</p>	<p>Focus group discussions</p>	<p>Challenges with rapidly growing and evolving rural (lity)</p>	<p>GCASL-RECS 1</p>
<p>Haaa...utjwala lobu...abantwana bayaphuza ngisho naberazana baphuza kakhulu. Izidakamiswa</p>	<p>Focus group discussions and dialogues</p>	<p>Alcohol and drug abuse amongst rural youth</p>	<p>GCASL-RECS 1.1</p>

nazo ziyinkinga la emakhaya...akulungi...			
Basetsana bona ba pele ka gore bahlakana le diSugar Daddy tja bona gona moo...ohwetje mosetsana o monnyane a sepela le le lekhehla a apere le uniform ka mokgwa wo ba sa tjabeng...	Focus group discussions	Rural shopping malls and girl children's socio-economic vulnerability	GCASL-RECS 1.2

Table 16: 2nd group of co-researchers on evolution of rural ecologies and its impact on rural youth

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes
Even parents especially mothers prefer talking to another woman if there are issues they want to raise with regard to their girl children...in as much as men prefer talking to other men...	Focus group discussions	Gendered parent-teacher relations' dynamics	GCASL-REF 4

Table 15 (d): 1st group of co-researchers on parent-teacher relations in rural schools

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes

Remember the girl children might be even wanting to report the very male teacher...I had such a case before...	Focus group discussions Individual (one on one) dialogue	Perceived gender-based violence	GCASL-REF 6.1
The male teacher was having an affair which started with unwanted sexual advances until the poor girl gave in...got pregnant.... who does she tell or is comfortable to talk with other than a woman educator...	Individual dialogue	Learner-teacher intimate relationships Issues of early pregnancy amongst rural girl children Rural Girl children's vulnerabilities in the schools Unwanted/sexual advances and misuse of authority Girl children's powerlessness	GCASL-REF 6.2

Table 15 (c): 1st group of co-researchers on girl children's vulnerabilities in rural schools

Primary unit(s) of data	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes
There are more girls than boys in classrooms but when we get to completion there are more boys	Traditional Story-telling Circles and Focus group dialogues and discussions	Rural girl children's early teenage pregnancy and drop-out associated with blesser/blessee trend	GCASL-RESH 4.3

than girls...some girls will be pregnant from these sugar-daddies (lama-Blessers wabo) (their blesser)			
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Table 13(h): Sample excerpts from raw data on school drop-outs

Primary unit(s) of data	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes
<i>As girl children we struggle with maths and science but because there are no laboratories, we better not take those...boys somehow manage we don't know why and how....</i>	Focus group discussions	Inadequate educational resources (maths and science laboratories) in rural schools	GCASL-RESH 3.1
<i>That is why most girls we choose other subjects...not maths and science</i>	Focus group discussions	Rural girl children's motivations' for subject choices	GCASL-RESH 3.3

Table 13(g): Excerpts from the final lists of the 2nd Group of co-researchers: High schools' learners

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes

...amanzi ayikinga...kakhulu ematoilet...kunuzima kakhulu emantombazaneni ngoba bona konke bayahlala (loud laugh)...abafana bayasithela bemile...	Focus group discussions	Inadequate ablution facilities especially for girl children	GCASL-RESP 4.2
Sizwabethi lama Toilet womgodi ayagulisana...maybe sesiyagula nje...	Focus group dialogues	Hygienic state of ablution facilities	GCASL-RESP 4.3

Table 13(f): Excerpts of raw data on schools' infrastructure (ablution facilities)

Primary unit(s) of analysis (Direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Codes
Kanti uyasibona nesikole sethu siyazihluphekela... sidala siyacenga	Focus group discussion	Dilapidated school infrastructure	GCASL-RESP 4
Amanye ama- classrooms akuna mafestera, iminyango ayisavali	Focus group discussions	Inadequate school infrastructure	GCASL-RESP 4.1

Table 13 (e): Excerpts of raw data on school infrastructure (state of classrooms)

Primary unit/s of analysis (direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Code number/s
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angisho abazali bethu abasebenzi ngoba abafundanga	Focus group discussions	Poverty associated with parents' unemployment and non-education	GCASL-RESP 1.1
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Table 13b: Extracts of co-researchers' raw data with code definitions and numbers for CDA

Primary unit/s of analysis (direct quotes)	Source	Descriptive codes (code definition)	Code number/s
...ikinga ukuthi ubuningi bethu siyahlupheka la emakhaya	Individual (one on one) dialogues	Poverty in households	GCASL-RESP 1
Bahamba ngembesi iPutco ekuseni khakhulu babuya ebusuku, abanye ababuyi babuya ngama-weekends noma umakuphela inyanga	Focus group dialogues	Rural parents' absence due to long distance employment	GCASL-RESP 1.5
Abanye abazali basebenza kude ePitori emakhishini noma emaGadini	Focus group discussions	Some rural parents employed in menial low-paying jobs	GCASL-RESP 1.3

Table 13 (a): Extracts from co-researchers' raw data with code definitions and numbers for CDA

Sample excerpt from field observation notes: T. Matoane Date: August 04th 2018 and Time: 7am (school arrivals) – 2pm (departures)
<i>I notice upon arrival that majority of those arriving early to play are boys. I also take note of the separate play patterns (boys play alone - mostly soccer, one of the group brings a ball) and (girls prefers not to play in the mornings but stand in chats alone). Majority girl children are amongst those rushing in as the bell rings to beat gate</i>

closure (almost late). The separate/different play patters/trends happen during all the breaks.

(Interesting) after school, girls are the majority to leave and the boys again have some time to play in the school grounds. I am able to identify through physical appearance (i.e. the school uniform and shoes) those girl children that are impoverished in one way or another.

Table 12: Sample excerpts from the primary researcher's field observation notes (August 2018).

APPENDIX J: RELEVANT EXCERPT FROM THE CHARTER OF POSITIVE VALUES FOR MORAL REGENERATION

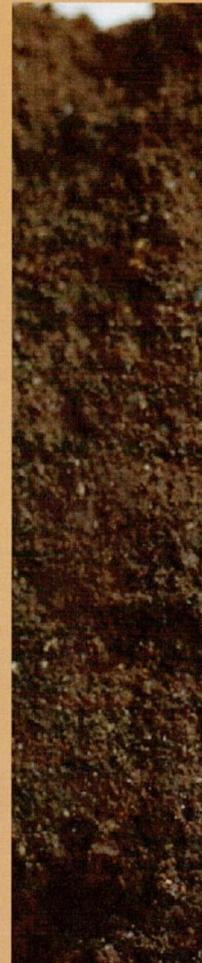
4

Enhance Sound Family and Community Values

Family and community are core socialising units that inspire and create the moral and ethical values in society.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

- Promote family values, fidelity, responsibility, respect for parents and elders, nurturing of children, support for the elderly, and the development and maintenance of the household.
- Fight against domestic violence and the neglect of family responsibilities, whether due to substance abuse, cultural belief or gender discrimination.
- Cultivate a family and communal environment that promotes a culture of care, generosity and inclusivity.
- Use resources efficiently and equitably to the benefit of all family and community members.
- Benefit others as well as ourselves through personal growth and acquisition of skills.
- Promote and harness collective responsibility among families and communities within the spirit of ubuntu.
- Promote safety nets for families.



APPENDIX K: SNAPSHOTS OF SEPARATE DIALOGUES FOR GIRLS AND BOYS CHILDREN AT THE RESERCH SITE



APPENDIX L: RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL RESEARCH SITE



APPENDIX M: DOE'S RURAL EDUCATION VISION AND MISSION PLACARD

