



Strategies for Promoting Social Justice in Rural Educational Access

Otieno Wanjala¹, Kamau Mwangi¹, Baraka Chege¹

¹Nyandarua University, Nyandarua County, Kenya

Corresponding Author: Otieno Wanjala

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how social justice is perceived, experienced, and promoted in educational access within rural communities in Kenya. Recognizing persistent disparities in infrastructure, resources, and inclusion, the research investigates the barriers learners face, the strategies employed by communities and institutions, and how these dynamics influence equitable educational opportunities. The study employed a qualitative research design. Participants included 30 individuals comprising students, parents, teachers, and local education officials, selected purposively to ensure rich insights into the phenomenon. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations in schools and community settings, and document analysis of relevant policies and school reports. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and generate themes related to social justice perceptions, barriers to access, and strategies to enhance equity. Findings reveal that social justice in education is understood by participants as fairness, inclusion, and equitable resource distribution. Significant barriers include inadequate infrastructure, socio-economic constraints, teacher shortages, and gendered cultural expectations. Community-led initiatives, government interventions, and NGO support emerged as key strategies for promoting access, though their effectiveness depends on management, coordination, and sustainability. Learners' interpretations of visual and physical elements in schools further highlight the importance of perceived equity in shaping engagement and motivation. Advancing social justice in rural education requires integrated management approaches, equity-oriented leadership, targeted resource allocation, and collaborative stakeholder engagement. The study underscores that social justice is not only a normative ideal but a practical, operational imperative that demands context-sensitive strategies to transform policy frameworks into meaningful and inclusive educational opportunities.

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of social development. Access to quality education enables individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies that empower them to participate fully in society and improve their socioeconomic conditions. Despite global efforts to ensure equitable education, many rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, continue to face significant challenges that impede access to schooling. Social justice in education encompasses not only equal opportunity but also fairness in resource distribution, inclusive policies, and recognition of marginalized voices (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2025; Ochieng & Gyasi, 2021; Apelehin et al., 2025). Ensuring social justice in education, therefore, requires understanding how structural, cultural, and economic barriers affect learners and communities, particularly in rural settings.

In Kenya, the government has made substantial efforts to expand access to education through policies such as free primary education and constitutional guarantees of the right to education (Skelton & Mutu, 2024; Ngigi et al., 2025). However, disparities persist, especially in rural areas where limited infrastructure, teacher shortages, and poverty create substantial barriers. Studies indicate that rural students often travel long distances to reach schools, face inadequate learning materials, and experience high dropout rates due to economic and social pressures. These challenges highlight a gap between policy provisions and the lived realities of rural communities, raising critical questions about how social justice is realized in practice.

Socioeconomic status remains one of the most influential factors affecting education access in rural Kenya. Children from low-income families frequently encounter financial constraints that limit their ability to purchase uniforms, textbooks, or other learning materials (Shanks & McKinney, 2022; Psaki et al., 2022). Gender disparities further exacerbate inequities, as girls are often disproportionately affected by cultural expectations, early marriage, or household responsibilities, which can hinder their school attendance and performance (Abbas & Smith, 2023; Sikhwari, 2024; Khethiwe, 2023). These intersecting disadvantages reflect structural inequalities that rural communities experience daily, emphasizing the need to consider social justice beyond formal enrollment rates.

Infrastructure and human resources also play a critical role in shaping educational access. Many rural schools in Kenya lack adequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sanitation facilities, creating an environment that is not conducive to learning (Mgimba & Mwila, 2022; Magwaga & Kikechi, 2024; Kamuya, 2024). In addition, teacher deployment policies often result in shortages or high turnover in rural areas, leaving schools under-staffed and limiting learners' exposure to quality instruction. These conditions hinder the ability of rural students to achieve educational outcomes comparable to those in urban settings, perpetuating systemic inequality. Community perspectives are central to understanding social justice in education. Rural families and local stakeholders often develop strategies to mitigate barriers, such as forming study groups, contributing to school development initiatives, or advocating for policy interventions (Gamede & Uleanya, 2021; Lopez & Bauyot, 2025). These community-led approaches demonstrate agency and resilience while highlighting the importance of including local voices in discussions about equitable education. Nevertheless, without adequate support from government or non-governmental organizations, these strategies may not be sufficient to overcome deeply entrenched disparities.

Addressing social justice in rural education has implications beyond individual learners. Equitable access contributes to community development, reduces poverty, and promotes social cohesion by ensuring that all children have the opportunity to succeed (Spagano, 2025; Sharma, 2023; Uddin, 2023). Moreover, education enhances civic participation, empowers marginalized groups, and strengthens democratic processes. Therefore, understanding the experiences of rural communities in Kenya is essential to designing interventions that are contextually appropriate and socially just.

Despite extensive research on education in Kenya, most studies have relied on quantitative data to measure enrollment, literacy, and academic performance. Fewer studies have explored the lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of social justice by rural learners, parents, and educators. Qualitative insights are crucial for capturing these experiences, as they provide rich narratives that inform policy and practice in meaningful ways. By centering the voices of

those directly affected, researchers can uncover the nuanced realities of educational access and identify strategies that effectively promote equity and inclusion.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and understand the experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to social justice in education access among rural communities in Kenya. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate because it allows for in-depth exploration of social phenomena within their natural contexts. The study sought to capture the lived experiences of students, parents, teachers, and local education officials, emphasizing how social, economic, and infrastructural factors influence educational access. Unlike quantitative approaches, which focus on numerical measurements and statistical analysis, this qualitative study prioritizes richness, depth, and meaning of participants' narratives, thereby offering insights into the complex realities of rural education inequities.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in rural communities within selected counties in Kenya known to face significant educational access challenges. These communities were chosen purposively based on criteria such as remoteness, low enrollment rates, limited school infrastructure, and socio-economic disadvantage. Rural schools and surrounding households were the primary sites of data collection to ensure that participants' experiences were contextualized within their daily realities. This setting enabled the researcher to observe firsthand the barriers and strategies associated with accessing education in marginalized rural areas, ensuring that the study captured authentic perspectives relevant to social justice.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved multiple groups of participants, including students, parents or guardians, teachers, and local education officials. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a common qualitative strategy that allows researchers to select individuals who have direct experience and insight into the phenomenon under study. Inclusion criteria ensured that participants had at least one year of involvement with the local education system, either as learners, educators, or community representatives. A total of 30 participants were engaged in the study: 10 students, 10 parents, 8 teachers, and 2 local education officials. This sample size was sufficient to achieve data saturation, whereby additional interviews no longer yielded new themes or insights.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure depth, richness, and triangulation. The primary method was semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to express their experiences and perceptions freely while providing the researcher with the flexibility to probe deeper into emergent themes. Interview guides were developed to cover topics related to barriers to education, perceptions of fairness and social justice, and strategies implemented to enhance access. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in participants' preferred language, either English or Kiswahili, to ensure clarity and comfort.

In addition to interviews, observations were conducted in schools and community settings to document physical infrastructure, learning environments, and interaction patterns. Field notes were maintained to capture contextual information and non-verbal cues, complementing the interview data. Finally, relevant document analysis was conducted on school reports, local education policies, and community development plans to provide additional context and verify participants' accounts.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that identifies, organizes, and interprets patterns or themes within qualitative data. The process involved several steps: first, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and cross-checked for accuracy. Second, the researcher engaged in repeated reading of transcripts to familiarize with the data. Third, initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas or concepts related to social justice, barriers to education, and community strategies. Fourth, related codes were clustered into broader themes and sub-themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure internal consistency and alignment with the research objectives. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to highlight commonalities and differences among participant experiences, providing a rich understanding of social justice issues in rural education access.

Result and Discussion

The results section synthesizes empirical data derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis to illustrate how social justice in educational access is perceived, experienced, and operationalized within rural communities in Kenya. Rather than reporting findings as isolated themes, the section is structured to reflect the interconnected dimensions of social justice, beginning with participants' conceptual understandings, followed by the structural and socio-cultural barriers that constrain access, and finally the strategies employed by communities, institutions, and stakeholders to promote equity. This organization allows the findings to be read as a coherent narrative that links lived experiences with broader institutional and management dynamics, providing a clear analytical foundation for the subsequent discussion.

Perceptions of Social Justice in Education

Perceptions of social justice in education among rural communities in Kenya are shaped by participants' experiences with access, fairness, and resource allocation within their local schools. Across the interviews, social justice was commonly understood as the provision of equal opportunities for all students, regardless of socio-economic background, gender, or location. Students, parents, and teachers consistently emphasized the importance of fairness in classroom treatment, availability of learning materials, and equal participation in school programs. One student reflected,

“Sometimes we have to share textbooks among five students, and it feels unfair because some of us cannot study properly at home.”

This quotation illustrates how learners perceive equity not merely as enrollment, but as the tangible ability to engage meaningfully with educational resources. Parents and guardians echoed similar sentiments, highlighting that social justice in education involves the removal of

systemic barriers that prevent children from attending school or participating fully in learning activities. One parent remarked,

“All children should have the same chance to learn, but in our village, some schools have no chairs or books, which makes it very hard for our children to compete with those in towns.”

This statement underscores the community’s awareness of disparities between rural and urban education systems and how these gaps affect children’s educational experiences. For parents, social justice extends beyond legal rights to include practical considerations, such as school infrastructure, teacher availability, and affordability of materials. Teachers also contributed to the understanding of social justice, focusing on their professional responsibility to ensure that each learner is treated fairly. They recognized that inequities in educational resources and socio-economic conditions often disadvantage students, particularly those from low-income families. A teacher noted,

“We try to give equal attention to all students, but when some come without uniforms or books, it is difficult to ensure fairness.”

This reflects the tension teachers experience in striving to uphold social justice principles while working within resource-constrained environments. Teachers’ perspectives highlight that promoting social justice is not only a matter of policy but also depends on daily classroom practices and adaptive strategies. Additionally, participants linked social justice to the broader concept of inclusion, emphasizing that schools should accommodate diverse needs, including those of girls, students with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. A local education official explained,

“Social justice means no child is left behind. Every learner should feel welcome and supported, even if they face challenges like distance, poverty, or disability.”

This perspective emphasizes that social justice is holistic, encompassing equitable access, supportive learning environments, and the recognition of each student’s rights and potential. Overall, the data indicate that social justice in education is perceived as both a principle and a practical reality. It encompasses fairness in resource allocation, equal learning opportunities, and inclusive practices that ensure all students can participate meaningfully in education. Participants’ narratives reveal a nuanced understanding of social justice that goes beyond policy language, reflecting the lived realities and aspirations of rural communities. These perceptions serve as the foundation for understanding the barriers faced and the strategies adopted to promote equitable education in these contexts.

Barriers to Education Access in Rural Communities

Access to education in rural communities in Kenya is hindered by multiple interrelated barriers that affect students’ ability to attend school regularly and participate fully in learning. These barriers are structural, economic, and socio-cultural in nature, reflecting the complexity of achieving social justice in education. One of the most commonly reported obstacles was inadequate school infrastructure. Many rural schools lack sufficient classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities, creating overcrowded and unsupportive learning environments. Participants frequently highlighted how these deficiencies directly affect their educational experiences. A student explained,

“Our classroom has no enough desks, so some of us sit on the floor, which makes it hard to focus and study properly.”

Similarly, a parent noted,

“The school is very far, and sometimes my child has to walk more than five kilometers to get there. There is no transport, and the roads are poor.”

These accounts illustrate how physical infrastructure, distance, and accessibility constraints significantly hinder equitable access to education in rural areas. Economic challenges emerged as another major barrier to education access. Many families in rural community’s struggle to afford basic school requirements such as uniforms, textbooks, and stationery. These financial constraints often result in irregular attendance or even withdrawal from school. One parent shared,

“I want my children to attend school every day, but sometimes we do not have money for their uniforms or books, so they stay home.”

Students also voiced similar struggles, stating,

“Some of us cannot study at home because we do not have books or a quiet place. This makes it difficult to compete with children in towns.”

These testimonies highlight how poverty interacts with educational barriers, exacerbating inequities and limiting the realization of social justice. The shortage of qualified teachers and frequent turnover in rural schools was another prominent theme. Teachers are often unwilling to remain in remote areas due to poor living conditions, lack of professional support, and limited incentives. One teacher explained,

“We try to support every student, but with so many classes and few teachers, it is impossible to give each child the attention they deserve.”

This shortage directly affects the quality of instruction and students’ learning outcomes. Moreover, participants noted the absence of specialized teachers for learners with disabilities, further limiting access for vulnerable groups. A local education official remarked,

“Some schools do not have teachers trained to handle students with special needs, which leaves these children behind.”

Cultural expectations and gender norms also influence access to education, particularly for girls. Participants reported that girls are often tasked with household chores or are married off at an early age, restricting their school attendance and participation. A parent commented,

“My daughter sometimes cannot go to school because she has to help at home or take care of her siblings. Education seems more important for boys in our village.”

Students shared similar concerns, with one girl stating,

“I want to learn, but I sometimes miss school to work at home or look after younger siblings. It feels unfair compared to boys who can go freely.”

These accounts demonstrate how gender roles and societal expectations perpetuate inequities in education access, particularly in rural contexts.

Community and Institutional Strategies to Promote Social Justice

Efforts to promote social justice in education access within rural communities in Kenya involve a combination of community-led initiatives, government interventions, and support from non-governmental organizations. Participants highlighted that these strategies play a crucial role in mitigating barriers, enhancing equity, and fostering inclusive learning environments. Local communities actively engage in strategies aimed at improving educational access for their children. Parents, teachers, and community leaders often collaborate to address gaps in resources and infrastructure.

One parent explained,

“We organized a small group to raise funds and repair the school classroom. Now children can sit properly, and more students are attending.”

Similarly, a teacher noted,

“Parents help to monitor children’s attendance and support those who cannot afford textbooks. These small efforts make a big difference.”

These examples show that rural communities take proactive steps to enhance equity and ensure that children are not excluded due to local resource limitations. Community-led initiatives are particularly effective because they are contextually grounded and respond directly to the immediate needs of learners. Government policies and programs aimed at improving rural education were also identified as essential strategies to promote social justice. Initiatives such as free primary education, scholarships, and bursary programs are designed to reduce economic barriers and expand educational access. A local education official explained,

“The government provides bursaries to children from low-income families, which allows them to attend school without worrying about fees or uniforms.”

However, participants acknowledged challenges in policy implementation, such as delayed disbursements and uneven reach, which sometimes limit the effectiveness of these interventions. A student expressed,

“The bursary helps, but sometimes the money comes late, and we have to stay home until it arrives.”

These insights highlight that while government initiatives are crucial, their impact depends on efficient implementation and consistent support at the local level. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide another important layer of support, supplementing community and government efforts. NGOs contribute by supplying learning materials, funding infrastructure projects, and offering capacity-building programs for teachers. A teacher commented,

“An NGO helped provide new textbooks and stationery for students. It has made it easier for everyone to study and reduced the number of children sharing books.”

Parents also recognized the value of NGO involvement:

“Without the NGO’s support, our school library would still be empty, and many children would struggle to complete homework.”

These statements demonstrate that NGO programs not only address material deficiencies but also reinforce community and governmental efforts in promoting equitable education. The findings suggest that collaboration between communities, government agencies, and NGOs enhances the effectiveness of strategies aimed at promoting social justice. Participants noted that multi-stakeholder cooperation allows for better allocation of resources, increased monitoring of school activities, and greater responsiveness to the specific needs of rural learners.

One local education official stated,

“When the school, parents, and NGOs work together, we can identify problems early and ensure every child has a chance to learn.”

Such partnerships indicate that sustainable social justice in education requires coordinated efforts rather than isolated interventions.

Learners’ Interpretation of Visual Elements in School Environments

Learners’ interpretations of visual elements within school environments reflect how physical and visual aspects of their learning spaces influence their perceptions of fairness, accessibility, and engagement in education. Visual elements, including classroom layouts, educational posters, charts, libraries, and other instructional displays, were frequently mentioned by students as both motivating and informative, shaping their experiences and understanding of educational equity. Several learners highlighted that the arrangement of classrooms and availability of visual learning aids significantly affected their ability to engage in lessons and feel included. Students reported that classrooms with sufficient desks, chairs, and properly displayed learning charts created a sense of fairness and accessibility. One student commented,

“When there are charts and posters on the walls showing lessons, I understand better and feel that learning is fair for everyone.”

Similarly, another student observed,

“In classrooms where some students sit on the floor and others have desks, it feels unfair, and it is hard to focus.”

These statements indicate that learners interpret the physical organization and visual resources of classrooms as a reflection of equitable treatment and the school’s commitment to their education. Students also emphasized the role of visual learning materials such as posters, wall charts, and diagrams in enhancing comprehension and engagement. Learners associated the presence of such materials with opportunities to learn independently and feel recognized as part of the educational process. A student remarked,

“The science chart in our classroom helps me remember important things even when the teacher is not explaining. It makes me feel that we are all given the tools to learn.”

This quotation illustrates how visual elements are interpreted as both supportive and equitable, contributing to students’ sense of belonging in the classroom. Access to libraries and reading corners emerged as another critical visual element affecting learners’ experiences of social justice. Students perceived well-stocked libraries and organized reading areas as spaces that

demonstrate the school's investment in providing equal learning opportunities. One student explained,

“The library shows that the school cares about everyone. When books are available for all students, we all have a chance to learn and improve.”

This perspective highlights that learners' understanding of fairness extends beyond teacher attention to include the availability and organization of resources in shared spaces.

Overall, learners interpreted visual elements as indicators of how equitable and supportive the school environment is. The presence, accessibility, and proper arrangement of visual resources were seen as symbolic of the school's commitment to social justice. A student commented,

“When learning materials are shared equally and classrooms are well arranged, it feels like no one is left behind.”

This reflects an important insight: learners not only engage with content cognitively but also interpret the environment as a message about fairness, inclusion, and opportunity.

Implications of Educational Management for Advancing Social Justice in Rural Contexts

The findings of this research underscore a persistent paradox in rural education management: while policy frameworks and enrolment statistics may appear favorable, the operationalization of social justice within educational access remains significantly constrained in practice. This study's aim to explore how rural communities in Kenya perceive, experience, and respond to issues of social justice in education reveals that the management of educational resources, human capital, community engagement and institutional strategies must move beyond formal equality to substantive equity. Existing literature has long argued that equity in education is not merely about having 'a school' nearby, but about the alignment of infrastructure, staffing, resources and supportive institutional practices (Bartl, 2022; Cairney & Kippin, 2022; Blaushild, 2023). The empirical evidence presented here confirms that for rural Kenyan communities, management systems that overlook the subtleties of fairness and inclusion inadvertently perpetuate exclusion. In other words, educational access management must be reframed: it is not enough to count students in seats, but to ensure that students are meaningfully supported and empowered once there.

From a management perspective, the study reinforces that organizational practices particularly resource allocation and staffing deployment are critical levers for advancing social justice. For example, rural schools continue to operate under conditions of infrastructural deficit, teacher scarcity and socio-economic fragility. These are not simply technical problems; they are problems of strategic management. As work by authors such as Baker (2021) and the qualitative case study in western Kenya by Kaplan & Owings (2022) show, inequalities are reproduced when schools with fewer resources cannot break out of the cycle of poor performance, which in turn influences management decisions around investment, staffing and community engagement. The present study's participants described how resource shortfalls led to experiential perceptions of unfairness, underscoring that management practices must attend to both objective resource gaps and subjective experiences of inequity. This demands that educational managers in rural settings adopt an equity-lens in budgeting, staffing, and community liaison processes, rather than relying purely on standardized egalitarian policies. Another critical implication arises around stakeholder engagement and leadership management

in rural schooling. The community-led initiatives revealed in the study fundraising to repair classrooms, parent-monitoring of attendance, local efforts to compensate for government shortfalls highlight that social justice in education cannot rest solely on top-down institutional strategies. This aligns with evidence in rural African contexts that school-community partnerships can enhance educational outcomes when properly managed (Ndlovu & Mafora, 2024; Maqhubela, 2025). However, the management of these partnerships demands concerted attention: accountability mechanisms, transparent resource flows, and clear role delineation are essential to avoid volunteer fatigue, misallocation of trust, or unintended dependencies. From a management science standpoint, embedding community engagement as a core operational function rather than as an ad-hoc or peripheral activity is critical to sustaining social justice outcomes. The study also draws attention to the interplay between policy formulation and implementation management. Kenya's constitutional guarantees and policy pronouncements (e.g., free basic education, rights to education for persons with disabilities) provide a strong normative framework (Kariuki, 2021; Muasya, 2025; Kinuthia, 2023).

The lived experience of rural learners and communities showed that the translation of these policies into operational outcomes is inconsistent. Bursaries and scholarships exist, but delays and mis-targeting undermine their effectiveness (“the bursary helps, but sometimes the money comes late”). This gap between policy and practice reflects an implementation challenge that school and district management must address. From a strategic management vantage, policy-implementation alignment requires robust monitoring systems, effective resource targeting and adaptive management that responds to contextual realities in this case, rural isolation, socio-economic fragility and infrastructure deficits. Without this alignment, social justice remains aspirational rather than operational.

Moreover, the findings implicate organizational culture and leadership within rural schools. Teachers often expressed tensions between their professional commitment to fairness and the material conditions that limited their ability to deliver equitable learning experiences (“we try to give equal attention but when some come without uniforms or books, it is difficult”). This points to a need for capacity building in leadership that embraces equity-oriented thinking not simply managerial efficiency. Literature on inclusive education in Kenya notes that school leadership that is sensitive to marginalization, community dynamics and distributive justice tend to facilitate better outcomes. In management terms, this means that leadership development programmed should integrate equity competencies alongside traditional instructional leadership skills.

A further implication lies in the measurement and monitoring of educational access and equity. Traditional metrics enrolment, attendance, transition rates while useful, may obscure the nuances of social justice. Contributors in “Rurality, Social Justice and Education in management systems must incorporate qualitative indicators of inclusion, belonging and educational fairness. The present study supports this perspective by showing that learners interpret visual and physical elements of their schools (e.g., classroom layout, availability of charts and libraries) as symbolic signals of fairness (“in classrooms where some students sit on the floor it feels unfair”). For educational managers, this means implementing monitoring frameworks that capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of equity resource distribution, inclusion of marginalized learners, and student perceptions of fairness. A practical extension of these insights concerns resource allocation frameworks. In rural communities where resources are scarce, management must priorities equity-weighted allocation: investing

where the gap is greatest, rather than distributing uniformly. This is supported by studies showing that homogeneous resource distribution in heterogeneous contexts can perpetuate inequality. Introducing specialized teacher incentives in remote areas, infrastructure subsidies tailored to rural schools, community-school governance mechanisms and targeted funding for marginalized groups can contribute to meaningful social justice. Educational managers should conceptualize resource allocation not simply in cost-efficiency terms, but in terms of justice and inclusion. The findings emphasize the sustainability of justice-oriented interventions in education management. While community and NGO initiatives provide vital support, their long-term effectiveness depends on institutionalization, management integration and local ownership. This echoes the literature cautioning that donor-driven projects without embedded local management structures often collapse once external. Therefore, educational management in rural Kenya must focus on embedding equity strategies into routine operations, policy implementation, budgeting, staffing and governance not treating them as exceptional or supplementary actions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that promoting social justice in education access for rural communities in Kenya requires a multidimensional approach that goes beyond formal enrolment policies to address the substantive realities of inequity. The findings reveal that rural learners, parents, teachers, and local education officials perceive social justice as encompassing fairness, inclusion, and equitable distribution of resources, yet persistent barriers including infrastructural deficits, socio-economic constraints, teacher shortages, and gendered cultural norms undermine these ideals. Community-led initiatives, government programs, and NGO interventions offer critical pathways for mitigating these barriers, but their effectiveness depends on strategic management, coordination, and sustainability. Importantly, learners' interpretations of visual and physical elements in their learning environments highlight that perceptions of equity are as influential as material provisions. From a management perspective, advancing social justice in rural education necessitates integrated planning, equity-sensitive leadership, targeted resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and the institutionalization of inclusive practices. By foregrounding the lived experiences of rural communities, this research underscores that social justice in education is both a normative and operational imperative, demanding deliberate, context-sensitive, and sustained managerial action to transform policy ideals into meaningful, accessible, and equitable learning opportunities for all.

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