



## Promoting Empathy and Inclusiveness of Vulnerable Learners in Rural Learning Ecologies

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### ABSTRACT

Hatred and prejudice can significantly harm vulnerable learners who often face socio-economic and cultural challenges in rural learning environments. This needs to be addressed using collaboration efforts to promote education, empathy and inclusive values as well as by challenging and eliminating the underlying hatred and prejudices that fuel it. Thus, this paper explored John Dewey's educational philosophy, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and its potential to reduce hatred and prejudice in education through transformative learning ecologies. The study utilised secondary data from various digital resources to understand the issue of hatred and prejudice in rural learning ecologies. The study adopted the hermeneutic interpretative technique to understand the data, noting assumptions, codes, patterns, and themes. The findings indicate that incorporating Dewey's vision into SoTL can foster inclusive learning environments, particularly for rural students, promoting tolerance and acceptance. This approach encourages students to challenge discrimination, understand diverse perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive society, thereby fostering a more caring and respectful environment. Investments in infrastructure, professional development, curriculum updates, partnerships and community involvement are essential to fostering empathy, critical thinking, and the rejection of hatred and prejudice. The paper concluded that building bridges of understanding, fostering dialogue, and promoting respect and acceptance are crucial in countering hate and creating a more compassionate and inclusive society. This research recommended that educators should continuously improve their teaching strategies through research, collaboration and sharing best practices, and should respect vulnerable rural learners by creating a safe learning environment. An empirical study needs to be conducted to understand and minimise the impact of hatred and prejudice.

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### INTRODUCTION

Many vulnerable learners experience social exclusion and prejudice in rural learning ecologies, which prevents them from accessing opportunities for high-quality education. Anisuzzaman and Smith and Walker assert that regrettably, hatred and prejudice exist among vulnerable learners in rural ecologies, just as they might in any other environment.<sup>1</sup> Learners who are vulnerable in these marginalised racial or ethnic groups typically come from deprived socioeconomic circumstances, which makes them prone to prejudice and discrimination. Their general well-being, growth, and results in life have been severely and permanently harmed by this. According

<sup>1</sup> A. T. M. Anisuzzaman, "Human Psychology of Hatred, Prejudice and Aggression," *Journal of Humanities And Social Science* 26, no. 3 (2021): 12–23; Susan Smith and David Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, October 9, 2022, 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2022.2132981>.

to Shawa, prejudice and hatred can have a negative psychological and emotional impact on learners who are already mentally and emotionally vulnerable, which can result in unpleasant emotions like anxiety disorders, and depression.<sup>2</sup> If a child experiences hate, their mental and emotional health may suffer from social isolation and loneliness, which can affect their academic performance and lessen their chances of graduating from high school. According to this study, prejudice and hatred have a negative impact on young learners; hence, it is important to address this issue in rural areas. Based on a study by Stojiljković et al., measures to eliminate prejudice and hatred should be customised to the individual needs and dynamics of each rural community.<sup>3</sup> To reduce this in rural ecologies, this study examined John Dewey's vision for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).<sup>4</sup>

Interesting is the fact that hatred and prejudice are learnt behaviours impacted by a variety of factors, such as societal views, cultural norms, family beliefs, media influence and individual experiences.<sup>5</sup> As stated by Stojiljković et al., behaviours are moulded and reinforced by a variety of environmental, social, and individual influences rather than being innate.<sup>6</sup> This entails that behaviour that can be learnt, can be unlearned. Given that prejudice and hatred are behaviours learnt, they can be addressed and reduced through promoting tolerance and inclusivity and raising knowledge of the issue. For Shawa, developing an equal society requires emphasising empathy and providing inclusive education.<sup>7</sup> This is particularly crucial in rural learning ecologies where vulnerable learners frequently confront unique challenges. Rural learning environments have a difficult time promoting empathy and inclusivity for vulnerable learners, but closing this discrepancy is crucial for ensuring equitable access to education and creating a positive learning environment. This study sought to fill the knowledge gap by highlighting John Dewey's vision for the SoTL emphasising the development of inclusive learning environments. To effectively address and battle these issues in rural learning ecology, it is crucial to comprehend these concepts. The researchers held that education, through John Dewey's perspective, plays a key role in confronting and reforming these behaviours by fostering empathy, encouraging critical thinking and cultivating inclusive values among vulnerable rural learners and their peers. This study examined the educational practices that can support the implementation of inclusive education and practises that foster empathy in rural learning ecologies, to foster a society where hatred and prejudice are less prevalent.

Due to the absence of cultural diversity, learners from different cultural backgrounds typically feel lonely and rejected in rural areas.<sup>8</sup> Economic inequality possibilities exacerbate these issues. These circumstances could arise if learners are raised in isolated areas with limited access to other communities and their customs, restricting their exposure to people from various backgrounds. Geographic isolation, which is mostly to blame for this may also be the cause of stereotypes and misunderstandings about other cultures. Significant socioeconomic barriers may make it difficult for pupils to communicate with others from different socioeconomic backgrounds, which may lead to hatred and prejudices. Rural learning ecologies have been shown to have an inadequate capacity for promoting cultural sensitivity and tolerance in schools.<sup>9</sup> According to the literature, educators should receive training in inclusive classroom design using Dewey's SoTL vision, advocating and prioritising the creation of inclusive learning environments. The purpose of this study was to provide valuable insights into the role of empathy and inclusive education in rural learning ecologies and offer practical recommendations for improving educational practices in these settings. The objective of this study is: To investigate the significance of John Dewey's SoTL in rural learning ecologies, with a focus on how empathy and inclusive education play a role in these rural contexts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### John Dewey's Educational Philosophy Vision on Vulnerable Rural Learners

This study used John Dewey's SoTL vision to ascertain how education plays a significant role in eliminating hatred and prejudice among vulnerable learners. Education is still greatly influenced by the ideas of renowned American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey (1859–1952). Solhaug and Osler state that Dewey believed education should be a democratic, transformative process that gives people the tools

<sup>2</sup> L. B. Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity," *CEPS Journal* 10, no. 1 (2020): 191–208.

<sup>3</sup> Snežana Stojiljković, Gordana Djigić, and Blagica Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 69 (December 2012): 960–66, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.021>.

<sup>4</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Kappa Delta Pi: International Honour Society in Education, 1938).

<sup>5</sup> Trond Solhaug and Audrey Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 89–110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1357768>.

<sup>6</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

<sup>7</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>8</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>9</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

they need to participate meaningfully in society.<sup>10</sup> His "*progressive education*" philosophy gave a lot of weight to democratic values, the integration of knowledge and activity, and experiential learning. Dewey's "*social learning*" concept, which held that schools should mirror social situations and that vulnerable rural learners learn best in actual social contexts, is another example of how he influenced education.<sup>11</sup> His beliefs affected education in a distinct location because he thought that all vulnerable rural learners were unique learners. The study argues that because of its emphasis on experiential learning, integration of knowledge and action, democratic values, and learner-centred approaches, it still offers valuable insights for educators working to develop meaningful, inclusive and socially responsible learning experiences for vulnerable rural learners in rural learning ecologies. It is argued that an understanding of how to meet the needs of vulnerable rural learners can be gained through studying John Dewey's educational theory through which educators address each person's particular needs along with democratic principles and experiential learning. Although he did not particularly concentrate on rural education, his ideas can be used to benefit vulnerable learners in rural learning ecologies. Dewey begins by highlighting the importance of experiential learning or learning via personal experience.<sup>12</sup> He contends that instruction needs to be grounded in reality so that vulnerable rural learners can engage with their environment and apply what they have learned to meaningful tasks.<sup>13</sup> According to Solhaug and Osler, by making the connection between learning and practical experiences, vulnerable rural learners may develop a stronger understanding of topics and useful skills for living in hostile and prejudiced environments.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, vulnerable rural learners will be more equipped to think critically and find solutions when faced with hatred and prejudice at school. The capacity to think critically, analyse information or situations, and solve problems is essential in today's complicated and fast-changing environment. Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning and the integration of knowledge and action, according to the studies, is in line with the need for vulnerable rural learners to adapt to and critically consider how to deal with hatred and prejudice in rural learning ecologies in the twenty-first century.

Second, Dewey rejects the notion that education is the passive collection of diverse data, however, Smith and Walker assert that it promotes the synthesis of knowledge and action, emphasising the use of information to solve practical problems individuals face.<sup>15</sup> When implemented in rural learning ecologies, this technique promotes critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the development of transferable skills. To be relevant today, Dewey's vision of SoTL emphasises democratic values and the growth of inclusive communities necessitates that rural learning ecologies instil in students through the teaching and learning process. Given the rising recognition of the value of diversity in rural learning ecologies and the need to counteract systematic injustices (hatred and prejudice), Dewey's philosophy provides the appropriate framework for creating educational environments that tolerate and promote difference. For vulnerable learners to learn effectively and for rural learning ecologies to promote empathy and inclusivity of vulnerable learners, this technique must be used.

Third, Dewey believed that education should support democratic values and prepare learners to participate actively in a democratic society.<sup>16</sup> According to Park and Bahia, Dewey viewed educational institutions as miniature representations of democratic societies where learners were taught to respect opposing viewpoints, take part in collaborative decision-making, and develop a sense of civic responsibility.<sup>17</sup> The researchers believe that through fostering inclusive discourse and democratic principles, educators in rural learning ecologies can enhance the justice and equity of rural populations. In a society that is becoming more interconnected, Levy et al. assert that education is essential for preparing vulnerable rural learners to be global citizens.<sup>18</sup> As a result, inclusivity and empathy are crucial components of global citizenship education because they enable individuals to notice and address problems they face like poverty and injustice. The study

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<sup>10</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>11</sup> Anisuzzaman, "Human Psychology of Hatred, Prejudice and Aggression"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>12</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>13</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>14</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>15</sup> Augustine S J Park and Jasmeet Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 59, no. 2 (2022): 138–55; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>16</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>17</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

<sup>18</sup> Sheri R Levy, Ashley Lytle, and Jamie Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis," *Journal of Social Issues* 78, no. 4 (2022): 743–68.

concluded that Dewey's vision for SoTL should be used to enable vulnerable rural learners to understand their roles as responsible members of local and global communities through teaching and learning, despite facing the challenges.

The fourth and final argument made by Smith and Walker is the significance of considering the special interests, requirements, and experiences of vulnerable rural learners while those learners are studying.<sup>19</sup> Solhaug and Osler claim that Dewey is in favour of a learner-centred approach that takes into account learners' varied experiences and abilities.<sup>20</sup> To help vulnerable rural learners improve their knowledge through direct experience and active inquiry, the study argues that training should be tailored to their developmental stages. According to Park and Bahia, to encourage empathy and inclusion in the classroom gives marginalized and underprivileged students who have previously faced discrimination and exclusion more strength.<sup>21</sup> This is critical in achieving empathy and inclusiveness in rural learning ecologies. It is critical to create an equal playing field and provide fair opportunities that advance their different viewpoints, address systemic issues, and advance social justice through teaching and learning for all learners.

To develop compassionate people, build inclusive communities, combat discrimination, and enable vulnerable rural learners to participate actively in society, Dewey's advocacy for empathy and inclusion in education is crucial because it creates a conducive teaching and learning environment.<sup>22</sup> Giving attention to SoTL makes education play a significant role in assisting vulnerable rural learners to live in a society that is more understanding, equal, and peaceful. This could lead to improved academic achievement for vulnerable rural learners if successfully implemented throughout the educational system. Boyte's study was analysed, and it was shown that schools that prioritise diversity and empathy perform better than those that just focus on academics.<sup>23</sup> To develop compassionate people, build inclusive communities, combat discrimination, and enable vulnerable rural learners to participate actively in society, Dewey's advocacy for empathy and inclusion in education is crucial because it creates a conducive teaching and learning environment.<sup>24</sup> It has been confirmed that regardless of their differences, learners are more likely to collaborate by contributing to conversations and asking questions when they feel safe and supported in the classroom. This involvement can lead to improved educational outcomes since vulnerable rural learners are actively learning new material in a setting that fosters empathy and inclusivity.

### **Impact of Prejudice and Hatred on Rural Communities and Learners**

Hatred and prejudice have a significant and wide-ranging influence on rural students and communities. Levy et al. claim that hateful and prejudiced thoughts and actions can hurt a variety of dimensions of a person's well-being and community cohesion.<sup>25</sup> Studies by Boyte, Smith and Walker, and Park and Bahia demonstrate that hatred and prejudice among rural vulnerable learners; (i) negatively affect emotional and psychological well-being, (ii) hinder academic performance and limit educational opportunities for vulnerable individuals, (iii) undermine positive social interactions and community cohesion, (iv) pose some physical threats and jeopardise people's safety, and (v) perpetuate social inequalities.<sup>26</sup> It is important to take proactive steps that encourage empathy, inclusion, and education to combat the effects of hatred and prejudice. Rural ecologies should strive to create safer, more inclusive teaching and learning environments where the learners have equal opportunity to develop and positively contribute to life by fostering awareness, embracing inclusion and confronting discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. The researchers suggest that educators have to raise awareness, offer anti-bias education, and facilitate discussions that reduce hatred and prejudiced behaviours. According to

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<sup>19</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>20</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>21</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

<sup>22</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective"; Charles E Glassick, Mary Taylor Huber, and Gene I Maeroff, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* (John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Harry C Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency," *Education and Culture* 33, no. 2 (2017): 13–47.

<sup>24</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective"; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate*.

<sup>25</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>26</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

Solhaug and Osler, rural ecologies should promote a culture of respect, empathy, and inclusivity by addressing hatred and prejudice directly, encouraging vulnerable rural learners to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.<sup>27</sup>

The study highlighted the need to address these issues through inclusive education that promotes empathy and compassion. Boyte defines empathy as the capacity to comprehend and relate to the sentiments of others.<sup>28</sup> Vulnerable learners who learn empathy grow to be more accepting and tolerant of differences, which lowers the frequency of hatred and prejudice.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, educators should establish a secure and inclusive learning environment that encourages compassion and solidarity among vulnerable rural learners by adding empathy-building activities into teaching and learning. This study made it clear that any educational system should be built on inclusive education in rural learning ecologies to promote empathy and compassion in learners. Anisuzzaman, and Baume and Popovic argue that rural educators may address hate prejudice among vulnerable rural learners by utilising Dewey's ideas and incorporating empathy-building practices into their teaching and learning.<sup>30</sup> It is critical to create an educational environment where each learner feels appreciated, respected, and supported throughout their academic journey. To implement inclusive education and practices that foster empathy in rural settings, it is crucial to investigate workable implementation options. The study concludes that by doing this, progress is made towards a society where hatred and prejudice are reduced and every learner has the chance to succeed academically and socially in life.

Furthermore, one must understand the complexity of hatred and prejudice, its impacts, and practical solutions as suggested by Dewey to formulate focused and evidence-based techniques to address this global public challenge. Through the implementation of preventive measures and providing support during the teaching and learning process, it was found that it is possible to lessen the effects of hatred and prejudice and assist vulnerable rural learners to live healthier lives and receive quality education.<sup>31</sup> In Dewey's opinion, education should be a transforming process that enables students to reach their full potential and participate actively in a democratic society, regardless of cultural differences, social inequities, or geographic isolation. For instance, consider a school in a metropolitan region where students from different cultural backgrounds mix and the cities are typically cosmopolitan. They are invited to share personal tales and experiences while being taught using the same curriculum that is designed to emphasise empathy and cross-cultural understanding. The method neutralises preconceptions about hatred and prejudice and promotes open discussion among learners. Thus, learning about their different cultural experiences encourages the growth of respect for variety and the difficulties cultural experiences experienced by others. This strategy eliminates prejudice, crosses cultural divides, promotes inclusivity, and creates a peaceful workplace. Dewey emphasised the value of practical education in his suggested methods, where vulnerable rural learners interact with social issues and real-world challenges.<sup>32</sup> To establish a society where hatred and prejudice are lessened and all learners have an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education in rural learning ecologies, this study suggests that those practical approaches might assist in implementing inclusive education and empathy-building practises in rural contexts. Every rural learning ecology must make sure this has been achieved through the teaching and learning process, thus promoting empathy and inclusiveness among learners in rural communities.

Dewey's ideas on SoTL, a systematic study of teaching and learning practise, can also be applied to the problematic problem of hate prejudice to improve educational practises that can support the implementation of inclusive education and empathy-building practices in the rural context, levelling towards a society where hate prejudice is lessened. Boyte asserts that educators must use evidence-based techniques to develop inclusive educational experiences for vulnerable rural learners by adopting Dewey's vision for SoTL.<sup>33</sup> This can be accomplished by educators in rural ecologies reflecting on their teaching methods, evaluating the learning outcomes of their learners, and adapting to pedagogical practices that meet several standards. The study suggests that by doing this, rural learning ecologies can contribute to a rural community where hatred and prejudice are reduced and all learners have the chance to succeed academically and socially in life. Rural ecologies need to

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<sup>27</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>28</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

<sup>29</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>30</sup> Anisuzzaman, "Human Psychology of Hatred, Prejudice and Aggression"; David Baume and Celia Popovic, *Advancing Practice in Academic Development* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Anisuzzaman, "Human Psychology of Hatred, Prejudice and Aggression"; Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>32</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

<sup>33</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

achieve this through the teaching and learning processes that promote empathy and inclusiveness among learners utilising Dewey's vision on SoTL activities.

### **The SoTL in Addressing Hatred and Prejudice**

"Scholarship of teaching and learning" (SoTL), as defined by Levy et al., is the methodical investigation of a teaching and learning challenge that is shared for review, dissemination, and possibly the suggestion of some action that influences what is done in the classroom.<sup>34</sup> According to Shawa, SoTL helps provide an empirical foundation for classroom teaching practice in the field of education.<sup>35</sup> Research findings frequently demonstrate strong external validity, which enables them to be transferred to additional, comparable rural settings and classrooms.<sup>36</sup> SoTL focuses on the systematic research, reflection, and dissemination of knowledge regarding teaching and learning in order to enhance effective educational experiences and outcomes. It involves rigorous inquiry, evidence-based practises, and the use of scientific strategies to increase teaching effectiveness and learner success.

According to Ross and Fenton, SoTL also includes an in-depth investigation into teaching methods.<sup>37</sup> The approach obliges teachers to evaluate their practices, their learners' learning outcomes and the effects of their instructional strategies. Teachers should experiment with new ideas on how to deal with hatred and prejudice, assess their strengths and areas for improvement, and engage in reflective practice to add to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning.<sup>38</sup> Ross and Fenton contend that teachers should keep an eye on the academic progress of their vulnerable rural learners to pinpoint areas for development and be required to gather and examine data to evaluate the efficacy of their instructional strategies.<sup>39</sup> A variety of techniques, including classroom observations, learner comments, test results, and educational research, can be used to find evidence of hatred and prejudice. Through networking events and seminars, SoTL should promote collaboration within organisations, between disciplines, and in other ways in different communities. It is argued that SoTL invites different rural ecologies to practice working together to improve instruction and learning strategies that reduce hatred and prejudice.

As stated by Dewey, SoTL encourages educators to critically examine their preconceived notions and prejudices about vulnerable rural students. According to Shawa, educators' reactions to topics like hatred and prejudice in front of learners have an impact on how those learners perceive those issues.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, educators must conduct study and analysis to understand how hatred and prejudices affect lesson plans, curriculum design, and relationships of rural learners with other learners. To help establish more inclusive and impartial teaching and learning environments in these rural ecologies, educators can recognise and address these biases in the classroom through lesson observations and staff development activities. As a result, rural learning ecologies must encourage the creation of evidence-based teaching and learning methods that promote diversity and fight hatred and prejudice in rural learning ecologies. Educators can learn which language to use in the teaching and learning process that will most successfully combat hatred and prejudice, and increase empathy through staff development programmes, research, and inclusive education.<sup>41</sup> For instance, they could investigate the effects of diverse texts, inclusive language, and inclusive assessment procedures on the academic performance and multicultural attitudes of vulnerable rural learners. It is argued that SoTL encourages an educational environment that is open to innovation and continuous improvement, which ultimately helps both teachers and vulnerable students to socially and academically adjust in rural learning ecologies.

Additionally, SoTL supports educators in creating teaching and learning ecologies where individuals may speak openly about hatred and prejudice.<sup>42</sup> Educators can research techniques for creating respectful conversation, promoting attentive listening, and nurturing good behaviour in learners. According to Ross and Fenton, SoTL can help establish teaching and learning ecologies where learners may discuss hatred and prejudice openly.<sup>43</sup> When educators work on research that examines how dialogue-facilitating influences minimising hatred and prejudice among vulnerable rural learners, they can achieve this through teaching and

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<sup>34</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>35</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>36</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>37</sup> W. Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning," in *Critical Reflection on Research in Teaching and Learning* (Brill, 2020), 1–11.

<sup>38</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

<sup>39</sup> Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning."

<sup>40</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>41</sup> Thomas M Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 29, no. 3 (1993): 369–400.

<sup>42</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>43</sup> Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning."

learning utilising Dewey's ideas. Educators must think about ways to promote healthy conversation, active listening, and a teaching and learning environment where different points of perspective are appreciated and understood by different learners while they take part in such activities. As they research inclusive curriculum design, educators may discover methods to communicate other points of view, fight hatred and prejudice, and promote an understanding of many cultures, identities, and experiences.<sup>44</sup> If done properly, this can help eliminate hatred and prejudice promoting an acceptable and sympathetic teaching and learning environment in rural learning ecologies.

One of the tenets of SoTL is to create teaching strategies based on empirical research that encourage inclusivity and counteract prejudice and hatred.<sup>45</sup> According to Ross and Fenton, educators need to participate in SoTL research to comprehend how well various pedagogical approaches eliminate bias and foster empathy.<sup>46</sup> For instance, while teaching hatred and prejudice, they must examine the effects of inclusive teaching tactics such as varied readings, inclusive language, and inclusive assessment methods, on learners' learning outcomes and attitudes toward diversity. SoTL research studies how well teaching and learning methods help vulnerable rural learners develop empathy and perspective-taking. Shawa argues that educators must investigate the effects of exercises like role-playing, case studies, or community participation on cultivating empathy, understanding, and respect for others while they conduct their research.<sup>47</sup> Learning how to include such strategies in their education may assist in reducing hatred and prejudice by promoting empathy and inspiring vulnerable rural learners to approach issues from a range of perspectives. The researchers claim that by using these practices, educators are better equipped to make informed decisions about their teaching strategies and alter their approaches to better support learner learning.

It is important to share study findings so that people become aware of the advantages and disadvantages of their choices. Levy et al. emphasise that SoTL focuses on the need to disseminate results and insights to help the larger educational community comprehend the issue they are facing.<sup>48</sup> A study by Stojiljković et al. encourages educators to share their work in teaching and learning through a variety of channels, including publications, workshops, and online platforms.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the distribution of SoTL research on hatred and prejudice enables other educators and vulnerable rural learners to gain information and experiences, support the spread of effective teaching methods and boost the general quality of education in rural learning ecologies. The researchers argue that disseminating information helps educators be specific in continuously modifying their pedagogical strategies, adopting new proposed teaching and learning methodologies, and adjusting to shifting learner demands and educational situations.

The study concludes with the case that research on teaching and learning serves as a bridge between theory and practice in educational institutions. Participating in the SoTL allows educators to actively contribute to reducing hatred and prejudice in the teaching and learning environment. Through research, critical reflection, evidence-based practises, and teamwork, SoTL prepares educators to create inclusive, compassionate learning environments that promote respect, tolerance, and the rejection of hatred and prejudice. Hatred and prejudice in educational settings can be significantly reduced with the use of SoTL in the learning and teaching in rural learning ecologies domain.

## METHODOLOGY

This study accessed secondary data from various digital resources, including Internet databases, search engines, and scholarly publications. The researchers ensured the information was legitimate, authoritative, and up-to-date, utilising databases from various universities, libraries, and research centres. There were numerous academic papers, research articles, and other significant items available on these platforms. The researchers studied the collected data and found patterns, trends, and links to build a firm understanding of the research issue and provide the answers to the study's research purpose.

The researchers carefully selected and analyzed secondary literature to inform their research questions and contribute to existing knowledge. They searched academic databases, library catalogues, and specialised repositories using keywords related to the study's goal. For example, "scholarship of teaching and learning," "hatred and prejudice," "rural learning ecologies," "vulnerable rural learner," and "need for empathy and inclusiveness" were among the search themes and key phrases used in both searches. The study included an inclusive definition of "vulnerable learner" in both urban and rural settings. The integrity and quality of the

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<sup>44</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

<sup>45</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>46</sup> Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning."

<sup>47</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>48</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>49</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

sources were assessed, and articles with insufficient quality were eliminated. Concept mapping was used to organise and summarise the data.

They critically evaluated the evidence provided, interpreted the data in light of the aim of the study, and examined the implications of the findings while taking into account the literature's strengths and weaknesses. To understand Dewey's SoTL principles in the context of addressing hatred and prejudice in rural learning ecologies, the study adopted the hermeneutic interpretative technique. The researchers were able to fully understand the examined data using this technique, noting assumptions, codes, patterns, and themes that were crucial to the study. To ensure the validity and authenticity of the study, the approach required the researchers to discuss, posit, interpret, develop a framework, and transparently publish their findings. The researchers had to comprehend the data from many angles, engage in dialogue and inquiry with the text, and adjust the interpretation as necessary during this process. Dewey's writings were examined, and it was thought that his philosophy might be used to address hatred and prejudice. It was an iterative process, and the results that were presented were transparent and clear, explaining the process and bringing out the transformative opportunities that exist within rural learning ecologies. Suitable citations and references were used to recognize the sources used.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **Education is Crucial in Fostering Empathy and Inclusivity in Rural Learning Ecologies.**

Findings from the review studies demonstrate that education is crucial for life as a social process of continual development and as a way to reconstruct one's own experience, especially for the weaker rural students. Anisuzzaman, and Smith and Walker believe that education should be viewed as a process of living itself rather than as a way to prepare for a future existence.<sup>50</sup> A learner's ecological experience is influenced by their interactions with their surroundings since rural ecologies serve as an agent for social change and educational advancement as well as an early stage of community life. The study believes that incorporating Dewey's concepts into education is crucial for promoting inclusive rural communities, critical thinking, and empathy.

Studies by Smith and Walker and Solhaug and Osler indicate that education lays the groundwork for the growth of empathy, or the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others.<sup>51</sup> According to Park and Bahia, a broad and inclusive curriculum can allow educators to expose vulnerable learners to a variety of perspectives, experiences, and cultures throughout the teaching and learning process.<sup>52</sup> The exposure helps vulnerable rural learners develop their empathy skills, their understanding of others, and their appreciation of variety in their communities. Additionally, by establishing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that promotes feelings of compassion, generosity and respect, vulnerable learners can practise empathy in their interpersonal interactions.<sup>53</sup>

According to Boyte, education is regarded as a powerful tool for creating inclusive, equitable and varied communities.<sup>54</sup> Inclusion in education, as stated by Smith and Walker, can go beyond merely noticing differences and strives to foster a climate in which everyone feels valued, welcomed, and empowered.<sup>55</sup> This can be accomplished through promoting inclusive policies, curricula, and educational approaches that actively battle stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices. As a result, this study asserts that educators can encourage inclusion by including a variety of perspectives, experiences, and views in the classroom, encouraging collaborative learning, and encouraging empathy, respect, and understanding among rural learners.<sup>56</sup>

Dewey argues that education creates a forum for respectful conversation, unrestricted debate, and idea sharing.<sup>57</sup> Thus, education promotes the abilities necessary for effective communication and collaboration to reduce hatred and prejudice by encouraging vulnerable rural learners to express their opinions, pay close attention to others, and participate in insightful discussions during the teaching and learning process. Rural

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<sup>50</sup> Anisuzzaman, "Human Psychology of Hatred, Prejudice and Aggression"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>51</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>52</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

<sup>53</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>54</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

<sup>55</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>56</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity."

<sup>57</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

learners can learn about many different ways of expressing themselves, question presumptions, and gain a greater knowledge of topics relating to hatred and prejudice through conversations. This study recommends the development of a culture of courteous and inviting communication to build relationships between individuals of different origins and experiences, foster empathy, and minimise hatred and prejudices.<sup>58</sup>

Hate prejudices and discriminatory practices must be addressed in education.<sup>59</sup> For educators to confront and disprove prejudices through teaching and learning, it is necessary to incorporate accurate and different images of people from many cultures into curriculum materials, textbooks, and class discussions. A study by Chidakwa found that by examining both historical and contemporary injustices, vulnerable rural learners can gain a critical understanding of social imbalances among themselves and struggle to create a more just and inclusive society.<sup>60</sup> It is argued that education gives vulnerable rural learners the knowledge and abilities they need to combat biases rooted in hatred and prejudice and achieve equality.

The development of critical thinking abilities, which entails analysing, evaluating, and synthesising data in complicated situations, is primarily a function of education.<sup>61</sup> According to Alexander, educators in rural learning ecologies can help vulnerable rural learners acquire a questioning mentality and the capacity to critically assess circumstances involving bias and hatred by fostering their curiosity, creativity, and independence.<sup>62</sup> This enables vulnerable rural learners to think critically, test presumptions, take into account a variety of viewpoints, and form well-founded judgements about the current complex situation. The study asserts that the ability to think critically is crucial for dealing with issues of hatred and prejudice as well as for making informed decisions both as individuals and as contributing members of society.

Solhaug and Osler believe that to promote social justice, it is necessary to guarantee that all people, regardless of financial status, ethnic background, gender, or other characteristics, have fair access to high-quality education.<sup>63</sup> According to studies, people should have access to affordable, inclusive, and discrimination-free education to realise their full potential and contribute to society.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, by tackling barriers to education like poverty, prejudice, and cultural bias, nations can progress towards greater fairness. The study posits that educating learners about prejudice, stereotypes, and biases that promote inequality and injustice is crucial. The promotion of inclusive curricula, a diversity of opinions, and critical thinking can help educators develop empathy and understanding in learners while also eradicating discriminatory mindsets. This study concludes that education inspires people to struggle against oppressive systems, social norms, and societal change.

### **Educators are Crucial in Promoting Empathy and Inclusive Education in Rural Learning Ecologies**

According to Solhaug and Osler, educators have a special chance to mould the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of vulnerable rural learners.<sup>65</sup> They contribute to reducing prejudice and hatred and fostering a more egalitarian and peaceful society by acknowledging their role as educators and actively promoting tolerance, empathy, and respect through the teaching and learning of a curriculum. According to Smith and Walker's study, educators significantly impact the amount of hatred and prejudice in society by building inclusive and respectful teaching and learning environments in their approaches to both teaching and learning.<sup>66</sup> Thus, educators may greatly minimise hatred and prejudice by promoting courteous and accepting learning environments. According to Knoll, educators can influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of vulnerable rural learners by encouraging collaborative learning activities in which learners come together in groups to solve problems, have discussions, and finish projects.<sup>67</sup> This gives vulnerable rural learners the chance to interact meaningfully, exchange viewpoints, and work together on real projects. This study suggests that this promotes a welcoming, inclusive learning atmosphere that encourages teamwork and nurtures social skills that can lessen prejudice and hatred.

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<sup>58</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

<sup>59</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics."

<sup>60</sup> N. Chidakwa, "An Asset-Based Approach to Mitigating Learner Multiple Vulnerabilities in Zimbabwean Rural Learning Ecologies" (University of KwaZulu Natal, 2020), <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/19225>.

<sup>61</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>62</sup> Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics."

<sup>63</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>64</sup> Michael Knoll, "John Dewey as Administrator: The Inglorious End of the Laboratory School in Chicago," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 47, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 203–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.936045>; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>65</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>66</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>67</sup> Knoll, "John Dewey as Administrator: The Inglorious End of the Laboratory School in Chicago."

This can be accomplished by using a project-based learning strategy that has learners of various skill levels, educational backgrounds and interests work together on group projects. Stojiljković et al. suggest that projects addressing hatred and prejudice problems encourage respect for varied abilities and perspectives from members' contributions since they involve communication, cooperation, and distinctive contributions from each of them.<sup>68</sup> It is argued that in addition to developing great teamwork and problem-solving abilities, vulnerable learners who work closely together can create genuine bonds that lessen potential hatred and prejudice. Therefore, inclusivity in the classroom fosters social skills that encourage acceptance, respect, and cohesion among the learners.

The implementation of inclusive classroom practices that value variety, promote tolerance, and provide all learners with a sense of belonging is another responsibility of educators.<sup>69</sup> Solhaug and Osler emphasised that this necessitates providing explicit norms for behaviour, language, and relationships in addition to modelling inclusive views.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, by creating a safe and supportive environment, educators can assist vulnerable rural learners in developing healthy relationships and fostering open communication. A study by Boyte demonstrated how some essential reflection exercises might foster metacognition and self-awareness throughout the learning process.<sup>71</sup> This was accomplished by enticing vulnerable rural learners to consider their goals, objectives, and methods of learning. The study proposed that the exercises can assist learners to identify their thought processes and develop methods for continual improvement in the struggle against hatred and prejudice as they are guided by the educator in considering how their experiences relate to larger concepts or real-world contexts.

To promote understanding, challenge preconceptions, and foster empathy in their learners, educators must deliberately seek out and incorporate other perspectives, noises, and resources into their classes that can lessen hatred and prejudice in the rural learning ecology they teach. According to Alexander, incorporating multicultural content, inviting visitors from many backgrounds to speak, and choosing inclusive and representative resources can all contribute to reducing prejudice and hatred in rural learning environments.<sup>72</sup> This enables instructors to expose vulnerable rural learners to a range of perspectives about hatred and prejudices, assisting them in developing their understanding and overcoming misconceptions. Such initiatives encourage cooperative learning scenarios where vulnerable rural learners collaborate with others to address issues, exchange ideas, and finish tasks, providing them the chance to clarify whatever they do not understand. The researchers believe that fostering a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that promotes social skills and encourages collaboration gives vulnerable rural learners the chance to cooperate on problems that directly affect them and engage in meaningful discussion.

Additionally, Smith and Walker suggest that educators might support the development of critical thinking skills in vulnerable rural learners by encouraging them to question assumptions, assess information critically, and apply evidence-based reasoning anytime they encounter a complex scenario.<sup>73</sup> As a result, instructors can teach learners how to evaluate sources, spot biases, and consider opposing viewpoints. In order to help vulnerable rural learners evaluate their own beliefs and comprehend the complexity of issues involving hate and discrimination, educators should foster critical thinking among them, according to Knoll.<sup>74</sup> An encouragement of vulnerable rural learners to research subjects, pose questions, and consider many viewpoints as they study, promotes inquiry-based learning. These activities and assignments can be created by educators to encourage independent inquiry, problem-solving, and critical thinking. With the help of these exercises, vulnerable rural learners learn how to ask questions, acquire information, and draw conclusions about the discrimination they encounter.

According to Ross and Fenton, inclusive learning environments must be developed to ensure equity, reverence, and full engagement of all learners, advise Smith and Walker advise that it must be ensured that everyone is aware of these expectations at the commencement of a course or learning experience.<sup>75</sup> They further advise that there should be a celebration of diversity in all of its forms, including differences in culture, race, language, social standing, and cognitive capacity. The educators must incorporate a variety of perspectives and

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<sup>68</sup> Stojiljković, Djigić, and Zlatković, "Empathy and Teachers' Roles."

<sup>69</sup> Knoll, "John Dewey as Administrator: The Inglorious End of the Laboratory School in Chicago."

<sup>70</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>71</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

<sup>72</sup> Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics."

<sup>73</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>74</sup> Knoll, "John Dewey as Administrator: The Inglorious End of the Laboratory School in Chicago."

<sup>75</sup> Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

experiences in the classes, readings, and debates to foster a deeper understanding of the subject. These can be accomplished by creating a warm, encouraging, and inclusive learning environment or classroom.<sup>76</sup> In addition, Boyte posits that the educator must promote cooperation and respectful dialogue among vulnerable rural learners.<sup>77</sup> These give vulnerable rural learners the chance to express their experiences and viewpoints. To increase relevance and engagement, educators achieve this by connecting the curriculum to actual circumstances. To show how to address the issue of hatred and prejudice, educators combine current complex issues, case studies, and examples from other disciplines in their teaching and learning. The vulnerable rural learners may understand the practical applications and ramifications of what they are studying.

### **Showcasing Initiatives Promote Empathy and Inclusion in Rural Learning Ecologies**

Numerous programmes promote empathy and openness in a variety of educational settings. The projects emphasise the value of empathy and inclusivity in education. Findings demonstrate that when educators implement social and emotional learning, restorative practices, anti-bullying campaigns, and cultural exchange programmes in the teaching and learning environment, empathy is fostered. This is achieved by exposing learners to a variety of experiences, fostering understanding of community differences and challenges, and motivating active participation in bringing about positive change.<sup>78</sup> By putting such initiatives into practice, rural learning ecologies can develop nurturing, welcoming environments that encourage respect, empathy, and understanding among learners as well as a sense of belonging and social responsibility.

Levy et al. state that compassion, self-awareness, and relationship-building are some of the social and psychological skills that these learning programmes aim to assist vulnerable rural learners in acquiring, to lessen hatred and prejudice in their communities.<sup>79</sup> According to studies, these programs' exercises and specific instruction help vulnerable learners develop healthy connections, demonstrate empathy for others, and understand and control their emotions.<sup>80</sup> Activities in these initiative programmes concentrate on the social and emotional makeup of the most vulnerable learners, fostering empathy, reducing prejudice, and promoting social inclusion by creating warm and supportive learning environments. A rural learning ecology where learners acquire and develop critical skills that enable them to be accountable and compassionate in society in addition to gaining academic knowledge is created by these principles, it could be argued and aligns with Dewey's philosophy of community engagement, experimental learning, holistic growth, and ethical development.<sup>81</sup> They positively enhance empathy and reduce hatred and prejudice among vulnerable learners in rural learning ecologies by introducing them into the teaching and learning context.

Additionally, restorative practices are used in rural learning ecologies to strengthen and restore connections within school communities.<sup>82</sup> These strategies encourage open communication, careful listening, and empathy,<sup>83</sup> and they help vulnerable learners and others in rural learning ecologies resolve conflicts and harm. Through therapy circles, conferences, and restorative justice initiatives, people have the opportunity to realise the consequences of their behaviour, take ownership of it, and restore relationships, according to a study by Park and Bahia in Canada.<sup>84</sup> This study supports the view that such restorative practices, when used in teaching and learning, particularly in rural learning ecologies, foster feelings of community, comprehension, and responsibility in the rural learning ecologies by placing a strong emphasis on empathy. Since learners actively share perspectives, they set up a circle for conversation and experimental learning. Dewey's theory of learning via conversation and reflection is also in play in this situation as they both share experiences and viewpoints. This study argues that the development of empathy is consistent with his social learning, which involves comprehending the perspectives of others. Therefore, restorative practises in the teaching and learning ecologies can achieve Dewey's notion of education as an instrument for growth, improvement, and changing

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<sup>76</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>77</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

<sup>78</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis"; Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support"; Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>79</sup> Levy, Lytle, and Macdonald, "The Worldwide Ageism Crisis."

<sup>80</sup> Ross and N. E. Fenton, "Critical Reflection on Research on Teaching and Learning"; Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>81</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

<sup>82</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>83</sup> Boyte, "John Dewey and Citizen Politics: How Democracy Can Survive Artificial Intelligence and the Credo of Efficiency."

<sup>84</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

disputes into good chances for growth. This strategy embodies Dewey's idea of education as the creation of a democratic, welcoming community where learning is collaborative and real.<sup>85</sup>

The goal of anti-bullying campaigns and programmes, according to Shawa and Park and Bahia, is to create inclusive and safe environments by raising public awareness about bullying behaviours and their impacts.<sup>86</sup> Smith and Walker claim that educators can help learners develop empathy skills and foster a respectful, caring environment, which will increase empathy by motivating bystander intervention.<sup>87</sup> Anti-bullying programmes are typically a component of efforts to manage hatred and prejudice in rural school environments. These programmes frequently include learner-led initiatives, educational activities, and the adoption of procedures and norms to stop bullying. These programmes aim to create a welcoming, safe learning environment where learners may discuss bullying situations openly without worrying about retaliation.<sup>88</sup> Open communication and peer mentoring may conceivably go a long way toward preventing bullying and fostering a welcoming learning environment. Essentially, Dewey's conception of education serves as a platform for promoting engagement, empathetic growth, ethical development, and collaborative problem-solving within a democratic and inclusive rural learning ecology.

Furthermore, Solhaug and Osler note that cultural exchange programmes designed to bring together learners from other groups to discuss their customs and experiences frequently promote understanding and appreciation among learners from all backgrounds.<sup>89</sup> Typically, these programmes build bridges between communities that might otherwise be isolated from one another due to geographical location, offering them a chance to contact others. Similarly, according to Park and Bahia, the exchange of cultures makes it possible to challenge preconceptions since it fosters interpersonal connection and encourages a true understanding of various cultures rather than a superficial assumption.<sup>90</sup> The researchers believe that engaging vulnerable learners in sharing their life stories can allow them to connect emotionally and develop the feeling of empathy and respect for the challenges, struggles, and successes of their age mates. Likewise, the implementation of this idea will enable the learners to experience culture first-hand thereby appreciating its uniqueness either through dressing, food, music, or customs leading to a sense of curiosity and respect for cultural diversity. This is in line with Dewey's concept of active participation learning, which is exploratory, community-focused, holistic in its view of the world, and natural vital life skills, attitudes, and perspectives to equip individuals for meaningful involvement in a diverse and linked society. In essence, Dewey's conception of education is transformed into a tool for fostering collaborative problem-solving, active engagement, empathy, and ethical growth in a democratic and welcoming rural learning ecology.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As the study progresses, it is essential for educators to routinely assess their instructional approaches, embrace fresh, successful pedagogies that lessen prejudice and hatred, and take part in ongoing professional development. To encourage empathy and inclusiveness in rural learning ecologies, educators must adopt the principles outlined by Dewey as they navigate the complex educational landscape. The SoTL principles have provided the study with powerful tools to bring about positive change and reduce hatred and prejudice in rural learning ecologies. Education that is empathetic and inclusive is essential because it creates welcoming spaces for learning where every learner feels supported, respected, and appreciated. This may promote learner collaboration as well as comprehension in addition to lowering hatred and prejudice and encouraging a sense of belonging in the rural community they live in. The study of instructional techniques is a part of the body of knowledge regarding teaching and learning. As a result, this research suggests that;

- Educators should engage in continuous professional development and reflective practice to enhance their teaching strategies through research, collaboration, and sharing best practices.

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<sup>85</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>86</sup> Shawa, "Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Learning Theories and Reflectivity"; Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

<sup>87</sup> Smith and Walker, "Scholarship and Teaching-Focused Roles: An Exploratory Study of Academics' Experiences and Perceptions of Support."

<sup>88</sup> P. Lunga, "A Collaborative Framework for Enhancing Sustainable Learning for Learners with Disruptive Behaviour in a Rural School Context" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020), <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/19949>.

<sup>89</sup> Solhaug and Osler, "Intercultural Empathy among Norwegian Students: An Inclusive Citizenship Perspective."

<sup>90</sup> Park and Bahia, "Exploring the Experiences of Black, Indigenous and Racialized Graduate Students: The Classroom as a Space of Alterity, Hostility and Pedagogical Labour."

- Educators should demonstrate respect and understanding towards vulnerable rural learners, creating safe and encouraging learning ecologies where they feel appreciated and free to share their ideas.
- Empirical research is needed to identify effective pedagogical strategies for vulnerable rural learners in primary and secondary learning ecologies to reduce hatred and prejudice, recommending academics to conduct such studies.

## CONCLUSION

John Dewey's philosophy is a call to action for educators who want to promote variety and empathy through SoTL. Educators need to build inclusive rural learning ecologies that reduce hatred and prejudice by adopting Dewey's concepts of SoTL, encouraging empathy, promoting critical thinking, and addressing prejudices. Politicians, educators, and communities must recognise the significance of achieving John Dewey's goal of cultivating empathy and inclusiveness through the application of the SoTL curriculum in rural learning ecologies. To achieve this, it is vital to invest in infrastructures that give people access to resources and tools that are needed to promote empathy, provide opportunities for educators to grow professionally, change the curriculum that promotes empathy and inclusivity, build partnerships, and engage the community that they know the impact of hatred and prejudice. This beneficial change towards establishing healthy learning ecologies depends heavily on the role performed by rural educators in favourable rural learning ecologies. They must adopt Dewey's vision, understand the SoTL principles and research cutting-edge teaching methods that effectively use technology. As a result, they might create friendly rural learning ecologies that encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and empathy while challenging hatred and prejudice.

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