



Creating a Sustainable Learning Environment for Teaching and Learning: Honouring the Legacy of Sechaba Mahlomaholo

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ABSTRACT

Using literature from his own works and underpinned by the Social Justice Theory, the paper presented and discussed Sechaba Mahlomaholo creation of sustainable environment for teaching and learning by the marginalised at all levels of education. While Sechaba focused on the marginalised his work did not specifically make specific reference to creating a sustainable teaching and learning for students with disabilities in the context of higher education, who also belong to the category of the marginal however due to impairment related disadvantaged, their learning needs are different and unique from the other marginalised, warranting a specific focus on creating a sustainable teaching and learning environment specifically designed for them as ‘special’ category. The aim of the present paper was to therefore to present Sechaba’s work in terms of working towards achieving and attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of providing quality education to all and lifelong learning and also provide further discussion of creation of sustainable teaching and learning for students with disabilities in the context of South African higher education, working towards also achieving SDG5 related specifically to persons with disabilities. The purpose of so doing was to honor Sechaba and also extend his legacy to include students with disabilities in his work of creating sustainable teaching and learning for a ‘special’ marginal social group, which his seminal work had overlooked.

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Publication History

Received:

4th October, 2024

Accepted:

15th April, 2025

Published online:

13th May, 2025

Keywords: *Social Justice Theory, Students with Disabilities, Higher Education, Teaching and Learning*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals,¹ has become a topical issue broadly globally and most countries in the both the Global North and South, through their different sectors are making effort to work towards attaining them as evidenced by research that is being carried out in different sectors, including education. Sustainable Development Goals (SGD) draw from the broad global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) developed in September 2000 at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York, and meant for poverty reduction through education in the whole world by 2030. They were adopted by the 189 member countries and in March 2015, the UN General

¹ United Nations, *World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution, A/RES/65/5* (New York: United Nations, 2010).

Assembly agreed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which has 169 related targets to assist with measuring achievement of the specific goals. Eight broad Sustainable Development Goals are related to education and achievement of MDG 2, which purports to achieve universal primary education in fifteen years' time.

Further commitments were made in 2017 at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Incheon, South Korea about the SDG 4 in particular, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities, and it seek to MDG 2, which in turn aims at providing quality education to all globally and to promote life-long learning opportunities. Scholars such amongst others, Nhamo, Nhemachena and Nhamo and also, Nhamo and Mjimba², have explicated in detail on the goals of the MDG broadly and the SDG specifically, contributing to the contemporary debates and discourses to centre around working towards achievement of MDG and SDG in the way of practice, policy and research. By way of creating sustainable environment for teaching and learning for the marginalised, it could be argued that Sechaba Mahlomaholo's work was also aligned with MDG 2, broadly and coming from the perspective of also including the marginalised, who have always been excluded in accessing education broadly and in teaching and learning specifically, his work sought to address and achieve the SDG4 in particular.

The paper starts by locating Sechaba Mahlomaholo's work within the present discourse and current debate in terms of seeking to address the Millenium Development Goals (MD) broadly and Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), more specifically SGD4. The problem in Sechaba's work was identified, after which two guiding questions meant to guide the study towards its aim and purpose followed. Then followed the theoretical framework, which is Social Justice, the desktop literature review method was provided as the methodology that was used to carry out the study. The results of the study that explicated on Sechaba 'work was provided followed by the discussion using the theory that underpinned the study. The extension on creating a sustainable environment for teaching students with disabilities that the author provided to extend Sechaba's work, and his legacy was presented, and the loose ends were tied in conclusion.

A lot of research in different disciplines is being conducted to explore how different SDG goals of the 17 established one and how can be attained in relations to different topics in different fields. The works of Chinanza and Yassim used the desktop literature review to explore works that make a contribution to the attainment of different SDGs.³ They obtained 36 outstanding empirical and conceptual research that are both qualitative and quantitative which have already been done to align and achieve SDGs.⁴ Amongst the 36 publications different scholars looked at attainment of SDGs, in respect of among other things as policy,⁵ indigeneous knowledge,⁶ job creation⁷ and teaching and

² Olga L Kupika et al., "Impacts of Climate Change and Climate Variability on Wildlife Resources in Southern Africa: Experience from Selected Protected Areas in Zimbabwe," *Selected Studies in Biodiversity*, 2017, 1–23.

³ Chinaza Uleanya and Kathija Yassim, "Quality Education versus Sustainable Development and Sustainability in South Africa: Scholarly Perceptions," *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, February 25, 2025, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2025.2470763>.

⁴ Uleanya and Yassim, "Quality Education versus Sustainable Development and Sustainability in South Africa: Scholarly Perceptions."

⁵ Precious Sihlangu and Kola O. Odeku Sihlangu and Kola O. Odeku, "Assessing Land Redistribution Using Transformative Interventions to Combat Poverty and Foster Development in South Africa," *African Journal of Development Studies (Formerly AFFRIKA Journal of Politics, Economics and Society)* 11, no. 4 (December 31, 2021): 73–93, <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2021/v11n4a4>.

⁶ M A Masoga, "MUSIC KNOWS NO Nomusa Zimu-Biyela, "Using the School Environmental Education Programme (SEEP) to Decolonise the Curriculum: Lessons from Ufasimba Primary School in South Africa," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 42–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2019.1614468>.

⁶ Ilze Grobbelaar-du Plessis and Jehoshaphat John Njau, "Payday: Business as Usual or a New Dawn Rising for Persons with Disabilities in the Workplaces as Usual or a New Dawn Rising for Persons with Disabilities in the Workplace," *De Jure* 52, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17159/2225-7160/2019/v52a17>. Boundaries: The Case of MME Rangwato Magoro," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 25, no. 1 (November 2, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.25159/1016-8427/544>.

⁷ Mokgadi J Ngoepe-Ntsoane, "A Systemic Review of the Socio-Economic Status Using Participating Rapid Appraisal: Case Study of Ikageleng Community in North-West Province," *Journal of Public Administration* 54, no. 4–1 (2019): 822–39.

learning specific subjects.⁸ Of interest is the work that focuses on teaching and learning as Sechaba's work that also focused in the same area in relation to SGD 4, which is about seeking to provide quality education and long-life learning. It could be argued that Sechaba work was located in the contemporary scholarship, in the present debates and discourses which continue to seek the achievement of SDG4, in the way of creating sustainable teaching and learning environments.

Sechaba's work stands out that in that he looked at creating sustainable teaching and learning for the marginal all levels of education, implying he understood the interconnectedness of all levels of education and the need to provide quality education and lifelong learning at all levels. It could be argued that Sechaba's work is not presented in isolation but as located amongst the current on-going debates in the discourse of creating sustainable environments in different practices and structures, broadly to achieve SDGs goals internationally and locally, and more importantly the SDG4, as argued that it's through provision of quality education and life-long learning that poverty can be reduced globally. His idea is unique in that he focused on creating sustainable environments for teaching and learning, especially for students from disadvantaged social contexts, who have always been marginalised, and continue to be marginalised in the education sector, despite the numerous efforts that are being done to include them more specifically in the South African context. Thus, most importantly is that his focus is on the disadvantaged students, who also need to be included in teaching and learning for social justice and transformation, equity and inclusion of all diversity in the South African higher education.

While Sechaba's work is making a significant contribution to the discourse that is already going and specifically contributing in terms of the SDG 4, which is specifically focused on provision of quality education to all and lifelong learning, Gobbel-du Plessis and Njau's, looked at achievement of SDG 5, which considers the inclusions persons with disabilities.⁹ The area of disability research and SDG 5 research is often under-researched in contemporary discourses and in educational scholarships and debates. The author's contribution to Sechaba's work seeks to look at the gap on disability and the SDG5, which Sechaba had not focused on by the time of his untimely death. It is in this way that the author seeks to continue his legacy and an influence at all levels of education, that will live long after his death globally and more specifically in the context of South Africa

Sechaba's works on creating a sustainable environment for teaching and learning addresses the SDG 4, which seeks to provide quality education to all. Outstanding is the focus on disadvantaged students and the marginalised. While his work focused on the marginalised, none of his work focusses on students with disabilities specifically, who though they also belong to the marginalised social group, their learning needs are different and creating a sustainable learning and teaching environment that is specifically focused on them is a necessity. In other work, the problem is Sechaba's work is that it over-glossed the most marginal in the category of the marginalised and in consequence does not address SDG5. It is in that regard that Sechaba Mahomaholo's work, which addresses the issue of creating sustainable learning environments, had a gap that the present study located itself in the niche and sought to address the gap that was not addressed by Sechaba's work. The following research questions guided the study.

- a. How does Sechaba Mahomaholo's work on creating sustainable learning environments for teaching and learning of the marginalised in all levels of education in the South African context, contribute to providing quality education to all as expected in SDG 4?
- b. How can his work on creation of sustainable environment for teaching and learning be extended to include students with disabilities in higher education in South African higher education?

⁸ Nomusa Zimu-Biyela, "Using the School Environmental Education Programme (SEEP) to Decolonise the Curriculum: Lessons from Ufasimba Primary School in South Africa," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 42–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2019.1614468>.

⁹ Ilze Grobbelaar-du Plessis and Jehoshaphat John Njau, "Payday: Business Payday: Business as Usual or a New Dawn Rising for Persons with Disabilities in the Workplaces as Usual or a New Dawn Rising for Persons with Disabilities in the Workplace," *De Jure* 52, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.17159/2225-7160/2019/v52a17>.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Justice Theory

Social justice theory is about affording equality to all members of society and providing them all privileges and rights they deserve. It refers to fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations of society to all people, despite race or ethnicity, age, gender, ability status, sexual orientation, and religious or spiritual background.¹⁰ Social justice theory is informed by fundamental principles and values of inclusion, collaboration, cooperation, equal access, and equal opportunity, which are the same principles and values that inform a democratic and egalitarian society.¹¹ In essence, as it is argued that social justice is meant to provide fair and equitable distribution of resources, access to social amenities and facilities privileging everyone at equal levels, it implies that if social justice is prevailing, all diverse learners and students should have access to resources that will enable them learning.

The theoretical tool drawn from the Social Justice Theory to inform understanding the creation of sustainable environments for learning is inclusive in its diversity, where not only a particular social group is included but all diverse categories of learners and students. Sapon-Shevin argued that: “Inclusion is not about disability.... Inclusion is about social justice...embracing inclusion as a model of social justice, we can create a world fit for all of us”.¹² From Sapon-Shevin’s statement on inclusion, it implies that social justice as it relates to inclusion, it is when the a sustainable world should be created for everyone, to have equal access and fully benefit to all services, support, and learning provided in the specific context or in an environment.¹³ It is in this respect that the tool of inclusion of all diverse learners and students would illuminate how Sechaba’s SuLE informs social justice to all, including the previously marginalised, so as to achieve the goal of providing quality education to all as expected in SGD4.

METHODOLOGY

A desktop literature review was used as a methodological approach relevant to source data for Sechaba Mahlomaholo work on creation of sustainable learning environments (the SUPLE project scholarship). The online databases, which include ProQuest, EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, PsycInfo, SAGE, SpringerLINK and Taylor and Francis Online, were used in the search process for relevant literature, including published books, journal articles, online sources and book chapters. The terms Sechaba Mahlomaholo, creating sustainable environment, SuLE, social justice, and their combinations were used as search term, to find literature on the named scholars’ works on creating sustainable environment for learning from the database on the specific engines.

The Selection Criteria of Relevant Literature

The selection criteria used included all the journal articles, books, online resources, reports published by Sechaba Mahlomaholo, and those in which he core-authored with other authors. Selection criteria also included works on Social Justice Theory. The search terms and their combination yielded a number of journal articles, books, and online sole authored publications by Sechaba Mahlomaholo and his core-authors. Duplicates were deleted and publications that remained were used for review, and the relevant theoretical concepts from Social Justice Theory were selected and used to critique the scholarship by the said scholar.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria used was used to select literature on Sechaba Mahomaholo’s work on creation of Sustainable Learning Environments (SuLE). Articles selected were from 2010 to date. Literature that was published before that period was discarded. Core-authored work was also selected if it had Sechaba Mahlomaholo’s name. Literature that was not focused on

¹⁰ Catherine Gabelica et al., “The Effect of Team Feedback and Guided Reflexivity on Team Performance Change,” *Learning and Instruction* 34 (2014): 86–96.

¹¹ Derald Wing Sue, “Multidimensional Facets of Cultural Competence,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 29, no. 6 (2001): 790–821.

¹² Mara Sapon-Shevin, “Inclusion as If We Meant It: A Social Justice Perspective.,” *Revista de Investigación En Educación* 11, no. 3 (2013). p. 26, 28

¹³ Sapon-Shevin, “Inclusion as If We Meant It: A Social Justice Perspective.”

SuLE was removed even if it was Sechaba's. This yielded 67 articles authored and core-authored with Sechaba Mahlomaholo which remained. The author read the abstracts for relevance for SuLE and further removed 41 that were not most relevant to the phenomena, though authored by Sechaba Mahlomaholo. The screening left 26 papers as relevant and eligible for the review for review. The sources were then retrieved and ordered according to the year of publication, summary of content and context. They were kept as spreadsheets.

To analyse data, the thematic analysis was used. Selected papers were read over and again for codes, categories and themes. The codes were given meaning and developed into minor themes which were abstracted to major themes. Emerging from data were themes on Sechaba Mahlomaholo's ideas on creation of sustainable environment in early childhood, basic education and in higher education, Sechaba Mahlomaholo's idea on creating a sustainable environment for an inclusive curriculum, Sechaba Mahlomaholo's ideas on rural context, and creating a sustainable learning environment during unstable times. The themes were then discussed from the Social Justice Theory perspective, for the author to appraise his work and use it as baseline to extend the idea of SuLE, to include students with disabilities in the South African context of higher education.

DISCUSSION

Sechaba and Creation of Sustainable Learning Environments

Without problematising the definition, the term sustainability refers to maintaining the present and continuing the same into the future for a long period of time. In other words, it means enduring and upholding among other things, issues, practices, cultures and tradition for long. In Sechaba's idea, creating SuLE, refers to making a conducive environment and a learning context, in which all learners are enabled to exploit their potentialities, to attain the fullest of their capabilities through learning, and they become capable citizens who can positively contribute to the social and economic need of their localities and countries at large.¹⁴

As it draws from United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals,¹⁵ creation of sustainable learning environments, is about educational contexts which advance and maintain the agenda for equality, equity, social justice, genuine self-expression and inclusion of all diversity, for the betterment of the future.¹⁶ The term sustainability reflects and accompanies Sechaba's work project of SuLE, which shows that he was concerned about conducive learning environments that lasted for a future. SuLe is a project that Sechaba was known for in his career as an academic and a leader in academia in South Africa and internationally, until his untimely death. It could be argued that Sechaba's SuLE project was meant for social justice and reparation.

Creation of Sustainable Learning Environment at all Levels

Sechaba's looked at different levels in which creation of sustainable learning environments was necessary, starting right from early childhood.¹⁷ With other core authors, their emphasis is on enhancing teacher education for early childhood education. It could be argued that Mahlomaholo and colleagues understood the importance of training teachers and having qualified teachers for teaching learners at early childhood stage was the way in which creating a sustainable learning environment could be achieved. Their focus was not only in the South African context but also in the broader

¹⁴ Molaodi Tshelane and Sechaba Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments for Professional Curriculum Leadership through Information and Communication Technologies," *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement Supérieur En Afrique* 13, no. 1–2 (2015): 193–212.

¹⁵ United Nations, *World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution, A/RES/65/5*.

¹⁶ Sechaba Mahlomaholo, "Naivety of Empiricism versus Complexity of Bricolage in Creating Sustainable Learning Environments," in *ICERI2013 Proceedings* (IATED, 2013), 4690–99; Tshelane and Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments for Professional Curriculum Leadership through Information and Communication Technologies."

¹⁷ Tshelane and Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments for Professional Curriculum Leadership through Information and Communication Technologies"; Bekithemba Dube et al., "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments in the Era of the Posthuman: Towards Borderless Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Studies Research* 5, no. 1 (2023): i–x.

African context as Kenya and the global context as Sweden.¹⁸ It could be argued that Mahlomaholo and colleagues understood the importance of learning from each other and making comparisons of teacher education of early childhood programmes. Comparison and learning from each other could go a long way in improving teacher education, hence the sustainability of the whole programme in all countries.

Sechaba's SuLE projected has also been projected to basic education, in which one of the foci was understanding the underlying reasons why African learners were not able to take up the first 20 position at Matric levels in the Northwest region.¹⁹ Sechaba's argument was that the underlying reasons for that there was still the influence of the past regime which African learners' ways of knowing were not included in the curriculum at large and teaching and learning.²⁰ In that context, he proposed how the sustainable learning environments for social justice could be created in schools, by applying Yosso's idea of including the 'community cultural wealth' to inform teaching and learning, so that even the African learners' ways of knowing are considered, to assist their learning.²¹ It could be argued that Sechaba's SuLE influence the culturally-responsive teaching strategies, which have been found to be useful in terms of including the previously marginalised learners in learning, like their privileged counterparts.

Sechaba's SuLE projected further extended to higher education. It is argued that higher education is the context in which the SDG could be achieved.²² Sechaba has not missed this when his focus of creating sustainable learning environment considered the context of higher education levels. He brought into light that sustainable learning environments could be created for socially inclusive research²³ and engagement.²⁴ Knowledge building in higher education is through research and engagement by scholars. Sechaba's work is thus important in influencing a socially inclusive research and engagement for effective knowledge production.

In this focus on all levels of education, Sechaba has not overlooked the issue of curriculum, which is the backbone of all learning. Curriculum is looked at in the context of transformation and decolonisation, an issue which is topical more especially in the South African context of higher education, where decolonisation of the curriculum to cater for all diversity is the concern of decolonial scholars. With Qhosola, Sechaba provides the idea of an inclusive transformed curriculum through creation of sustainable learning environment in higher education context.²⁵ Furthermore, Sechaba and colleagues have provided a plan for curriculum leadership through Information and ICT.²⁶ It could be

¹⁸ Sechaba M G Mahlomaholo and Makeresemese R Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Early Childhood Learning Environments for Emergency Situations: The Case of Sweden, Kenya and South Africa," in *Global Perspectives on Educational Innovations for Emergency Situations* (Springer International Publishing Cham, 2022), 25–34.

¹⁹ Sechaba M G Mahlomaholo, "Early School Leavers and Sustainable Learning Environments in Rural Contexts," *Perspectives in Education* 30, no. 1 (2012): 101–10.

²⁰ Mahlomaholo, "Early School Leavers and Sustainable Learning Environments in Rural Contexts."

²¹ Tara J., and Rebeca Burciaga Yosso, "Reclaiming Our Histories, Recovering Community Cultural Wealth.," *Center for Critical Race Studies at UCLA Research Brief* 5 (2016): 1–4.

²² Mark Malisa and Phillippa Nhengeze, "Pan-Africanism: A Quest for Liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa," *Genealogy* 2, no. 3 (August 14, 2018): 28, <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy2030028>.

²³ Sechaba Mahlomaholo, "Design Research towards the Creation of Sustainable Postgraduate Learning Environments," in *ICERI2013 Proceedings* (IATED, 2013), 4614–23.

²⁴ S M G Mahlomaholo, D Francis, and M M Nkoane, "Creating Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments through Scholarship of Engagement.," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24, no. 3 (2010); Sechaba Mahlomaholo, "Towards Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments: Unmasking Apartheid Legacies through Scholarship of Engagement," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24, no. 3 (2010): 287–301.

²⁵ J L Van der Walt, "Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments Praxis towards Sustainable Empowering Learning Environments in South Africa, Dennis Francis, Sechaba Mahlomaholo & Milton Nkoane (Eds.): Book Review," *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship= Koers: Bulletin Vir Christelike Wetenskap* 75, no. 4 (2010): 903–4; Rosy Qhosola and Sechaba Mahlomaholo, "Inclusivity in Curriculum Transformation: Decolonisation towards the Creation of Sustainable Learning Environments," *Higher Education In*, 2019, 53.

²⁶ Tshelane and Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments for Professional Curriculum Leadership through Information and Communication Technologies"; Qhosola and Mahlomaholo, "Inclusivity in Curriculum Transformation: Decolonisation towards the Creation of Sustainable Learning Environments"; Dube et al., "Creating Sustainable Learning Environments in the Era of the Posthuman: Towards Borderless Curriculum."

argued that in the age of digitilisation, a curriculum that considers ICT could go a long way in terms of creation of a sustainable learning environment in higher education.

As have been seen that the SuLE project considers all levels of education, it could be argued that Sechaba and his colleagues understood that sustainable learning environment for effective education is attained in building block that builds from one level to the other, right from early childhood education to basic education to higher education. It helps the understanding that systems of education are porous, and at all levels of education there should be the creation of sustainable learning environments that cut across all of them. This would enable an effective education system at all levels with a good foundation, from early childhood, to basic education, and higher education will be sustainable, when built on a strong foundation.

Consideration of Rural Context and School Leavers

Little research has been conducted around school leavers, especially in the context of rural settings. Sechaba's idea of creating sustainable learning environment in respect of school leavers, in the rural context, cannot be seen for anything except for social justice and inclusion of 'the forgotten'. With Nkoane, they looked how creation of sustainable learning environment could assist post-school students who had had their study in rural learning contexts.²⁷ Looked at from the Social Justice, consideration of the rural settings and school leavers, it could be argued that Sechaba and his colleagues understood that education and learning that is sustainable, is when even school leavers, who are usually the 'forgotten' after completing their study, need to be followed up and supported, so that education plays a role that whoever has had access to education, they have contribution they make to the economy of their country and they have a living from having gone through education.

Creation of Sustainable Learning Environments during Unstable Time

Sechaba's SuLE has not only considered sustainable learning environments when the learning environments are stable but has extended to unstable situations, during time of pandemics as COVID-19, an unstable situation that affected learning globally. The Mahlomaholo's specifically focused on assessment in sustainable remote teaching and learning environments during emergency situations.²⁸ When COVID-19 presented an unstable learning environment across the world, assessment of students when they were in their homes was most difficult for most institutions of higher education in the whole world and in South Africa specifically. A sustainable learning environment that is specifically created to overcome the challenges of assessment during the pandemics as COVID-19 is important to all academics in higher education, not only in the South African context but globally, as have been experienced of the pandemic that affected the whole world. It should also be understood that pandemics vary, and unstable times could also include other different pandemics such floods, volcanoes and other sickness and diseases. However, when the issue of assessment has been considered prior, and sustainable learning environments are created in preparation for unstable times, higher education as a system largely, institutions of higher education and academics, will manage assessments even during unstable times.

Creation of Sustainable Learning Environment and Social Justice Theory

From the Social Justice Theory perspective Sechaba's project of SuLE could be understood as influencing the inclusion of all diverse learners and students at all learning levels, to access learning and success. This could not be explained as a sustainable project, that has enabled and will continue to influence for a long time, the achievement of social justice for all, more especially those who have been previously marginalised and excluded from education largely and access to learning in the South African context. Sechaba's work on SuLE, which he solely authored and core authored with other authors, including his wife, cannot be separated from social justice, more specifically inclusion of all

²⁷ Sechaba Mahlomaholo and Milton M Nkoane, "Sustainable Rural Learning Ecologies: Border Crossing," n.d.

²⁸ Mahlomaholo and Mahlomaholo, "Creating Sustainable Early Childhood Learning Environments for Emergency Situations: The Case of Sweden, Kenya and South Africa."

diversity in learning. Through creation of sustainable learning environments for all at all levels of education. Sechaba's and his colleagues' argument has always been that there is a relationship between creation of sustainable learning environments and social justice.²⁹ It could be argued that SuLE and social justice are embedded into each other and are a sustainable connection and cannot be separated. It could be argued then that by virtue of its sustainability, the SuLE project can be used effectively to achieve the United Nations' SDG, more especially in terms of SGD5, which is about provision of quality education to all. With quality education provided to all, at all levels of education, it can influence the effective implementation of policies of inclusion largely and inclusive education policies, which in turn will enable equality, equity, social justice and inclusion of all diversity in education and learning, to the extent that unemployment and poverty could be addressed more specifically in the South African context, in Africa and the wider Global South.

Extending Sechaba' Legacy to Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

From Using Sechaba's ideas as a foundation and baseline, creation of a sustainable learning environment for students with disabilities, would involve allowing for agency in the classroom context. As explained by Giddens, agency could be constrained or enabled by the structure.³⁰ He further argued that the social actors are capable of resisting the determining power of the structure through their "knowledgeability".³¹ This implies that when they are not constrained by the structure, which in this case is the learning environment, students with disabilities themselves can bring change to what is limiting them in their learning.

Also explaining the exclusion of the oppressed, Ndlovu argued the social actors who are oppressed can bring about change by using their agency.³² This suggests that students with disabilities such as the excluded social group, can use an agency to create a sustainable learning environment for themselves. The oppressed can exercise agency if they are conscious and aware that they are oppressed, Ndlovu further explained.³³ In essence, with consciousness and awareness, the oppressed can use their agency to sidestep oppression imposed by the structure. With specific reference to women, Adjei, argued that for them to be empowered, agency is necessary, because they are instrumental and powerful to make change for their own welfare.³⁴ It can be argued that it is the same with students with disabilities in South African higher education, the fact that they managed to reach that level of education, it suggests that they can use their agency, to be involved in creating a sustainable learning environment for themselves.

Students with disabilities are excluded in a number of ways to access learning in the South African context of higher education. The exclusion, among other things, as given by the scholars in the field, include lack of knowledge on teaching varied disabilities and use of inappropriate and irrelevant assistive devices.³⁵ Intervention that has been made is mealie-piece solutions that have not been and are not sustainable. With an agency that is informed by awareness and consciousness, by students themselves, they can speak against the learning environment that is exclusive and propose a

²⁹ Mahlomaholo, "Early School Leavers and Sustainable Learning Environments in Rural Contexts"; Sechaba M G Mahlomaholo, Milton M Molebatsi, and Dennis Francis, "Social Justice for and through Sustainable Learning Environments," *Journal for New Generation Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2012): 1–2; Sechaba Mahlomaholo, Milton Nkoane, and John Ambrosio, "Sustainable Learning Environments and Social Justice Comment," *TD: The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 9, no. 3 (2013): V–XIII.

³⁰ John Mhandu and Vivian Ojong, "Covid-19 and the South African Pentecostal Landscape: Historic Shift from Offline Liturgical Practice to Online Platforms," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 34, no. 2 (January 21, 2021): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2021/v34n2a5>.

³¹ Mhandu and Ojong, "Covid-19 and the South African Pentecostal Landscape: Historic Shift from Offline Liturgical Practice to Online Platforms." 534-535

³² Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Decoloniality as the Future of Africa," *History Compass* 13, no. 10 (2015): 485–96.

³³ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Decoloniality as the Future of Africa."

³⁴ Amma Abrafi Adjei, "Analysis of Subordination Errors in Students' Writings: A Study of Selected Teacher Training Colleges in Ghana.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 8 (2015): 62–77.

³⁵ Sambulo Ndlovu, "Child Development through Ndebele Taboos: Motivation to Blend the Indigenous and the Exotic," *Inkanyiso* 12, no. 1 (2020): 36–55; Berrington Ntombela, Nomalungelo I Ngubane, and Samantha Govender, "Writing Approaches and Strategies Used by Teachers in Selected South African English First Additional Language Classrooms," *Reading & Writing-Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1–8.

way of learning that is inclusive to them. In terms of creation of sustainable learning environment, it could be argued that students with disabilities have a lived experience of disability—they know exactly what their learning needs are. With them proposing what they need for their learning, what assistive devices they require and how they should be taught, it will go a long way in creating a sustainable learning environment rather than the piecemeal solutions that had been designed for them by other people who do not have a lived experience of disability.

In terms of achievement of SDG goals and sustainable futures, it could be argued that when Sechaba's idea of creation of sustainable environment for learning has been extended to include students with disabilities in South African higher education, it also enables the achievement of specifically the SDG 4, which is specifically focused on provision of quality education to all. It is only when quality education is attained through creation of sustainable learning environments, that poverty, and unemployment could be addressed more especially in the Global South largely, in the African countries and in South Africa, specifically.

As Sechaba's SuLE project also included gender issues³⁶, influences the achievement of SDG5, which is about non-segregation of specifically women and girls in general. Thus, through Sechaba's idea of creation of sustainable learning environment, female students with disabilities in higher education in particular as a gender that is mostly segregated and discriminated against, could also have the opportunity of exercising agency, in which their voice should be heard as they speak out, in order for them to be empowered and included in learning, to access quality education. It could be argued that female students with disabilities who have made it to higher education have agency that they have used to outmanoeuvre the challenges in other levels of education, the sustainability of Sechaba's SuLE project can be used to propel them further. Thus, Sechaba's idea will continue to assist not only students with disabilities in the South African context in general but also female students with disabilities in particular, who are oppressed by way of disability and also gender. Thus, though Sechaba is no longer alive, his works in general, and more to do creating sustainable learning environments for the marginalised will ever after his life.

CONCLUSION

Appraising Sechaba's idea of creation of sustainable learning environments across all levels of education, contexts and even during pandemics, does not mean there are no limitations to his work. However, the paper has focused on the positive aspect that Sechaba Mahlomaholo contribution has made to the present scholarship in general and in terms of achieving the SDG, with specific focus of providing quality education to all diverse learners, as sustainable learning environments are created. Though he has conducted different research, teaching supervision and community engagement, most outstanding in his work is that creation of sustainable learning environments is inseparable to social justice. In the South African context, social justice is significant as the educational contexts seek to achieve it for all who had been previously marginalised and excluded. Sechaba's works on creation of sustainable learning environment as a project, makes a great influence to transformation and change in all levels of education in the South African context. His legacy will be relieved by extending his idea to include creating a sustainable environment for learning that includes students with disabilities in South African higher education, a group that has continued to be excluded despite piece meal solutions and efforts that have continued to be done. Sechaba's idea will live to influence the achievement of SDG largely and SDG4 and 5 respectively, the debate that is topical in the present scholarship and will continue to beyond the horizons of education.

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