

**Investigating challenges of access to education for learners
with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved of as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Education, at the National University of Lesotho, for the award of the degree of Master in Education.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFB	American Foundation of the Blind
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LGCSE	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education
LNFOOD	Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of Disabled
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LVI	Learners with Visual Impairment
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SEU	Special Education Unit
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

APPENDICES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho. It is a qualitative case study underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. The study employed social model of disability as a lens to guide the investigation. Fourteen participants: ten learners with visual impairment and four teachers in one primary school were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Data were analyzed through the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and the results were presented in accordance to the themes generated from direct quotes. The findings reveal that inclusive education for learners with visual impairment is restricted by barriers including: inadequate teaching and learning material, teachers' workload, inappropriate teaching methods and inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education. The findings also showed that learners with visual impairment experienced bullying as well as psychosocial challenges in inclusive schools. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made to improve the education of learners with visual impairment in regular schools: appropriate teaching and learning materials should be available in all primary schools, training workshops for teachers should be held regularly, more teachers should be recruited and there should be inclusive schools at district level in the entire country.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem. It presents the aims and objectives as well as the research questions the study seeks to answer. The chapter also gives a brief explanation of the theoretical framework guiding the study and highlights the research methods and methodology adopted for the study. Finally, the envisaged contribution the study makes will be described as well as an outline of how the chapters are divided.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since the proclamation “Everyone has right to education”, in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), countries around the world have made significant strides to make education accessible to their citizens. Access to education was reinforced by Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action adopted by the global communities in which they agreed to make inclusive education a standard form of education for students with disabilities (Ainscow, Slee and Best, 2019). Additionally, UNESCO (2004) describes education as a right to every individual regardless of colour, creed or any form of differences in physical appearance or nationality. This study explores how Lesotho has made efforts to remove challenges to the inclusion of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools.

Visual impairment is an umbrella term for all categories of sight loss, namely: low vision, partial sight, legal blindness and total blindness (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities, 2012). It is an inability to process visual information because of absence or deficiency of a specific structure or physiological function of the eye (Bornman and Rose, 2015:182). Blindness and low vision are together the world’s second most common impairments after hearing loss (Luque, Brandao, Kira and Brandao (2018:1). Ruzickova (2016) points out that vision is the most effective tool for obtaining information about the world. According to Derge, Shibru, Mulugeta and Dagnachew (2017), visual system is one of our foremost sensory systems that integrates information between individuals and the external environments. Darge et al. (2017:1) estimate that 75-90% of learning in the classroom comes to the students either wholly or partially receiving stimulus via the visual pathway. As a result, much of a child’s learning is typically done through the sense of sight, which is called incidental learning (Villa and Thousand, 2005).

Therefore, limited ability to learn incidentally affects the way in which learners with visual impairment form concepts and develop schema or framework for understanding new ideas and vocabulary that provides essential foundation skills for comprehension and abstract reasoning (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). To this end, visual loss impacts education prospects by affecting learners' range and variety of experiences, ability to get about and ability to control the environment and self in relation to it (Agesa, 2014).

Due to these restrictions, learners with visual impairment do not only experience developmental delay which contributes to slowness in building concepts in addition to other milestones, but also difficulties in acquisition of object permanence of concepts, as well as the ability to use and respond to non-verbal communication acts (Gilford and Graham, 1992). Additionally, visual impairment has a negative impact on learning and everyday living as it restricts students from observing and using visual information to interpret various learning situations happening in the environment (Webster and Roe, 1998). Visual impairment does not affect the learner's school performance only, but also other functions such as ability to safely participate in sports (Darge et al. 2017). So, poor performance at school may affect the child's self-confidence and their future careers. It has considerable social, psychological and economic implications for learners with visual impairment and their care givers (Darge et al. 2017:1).

Therefore, visual loss at any level leads to functional impairments, limiting and restricting the individuals' participation and performance in the daily activities, interferes with their independence, and quality of life (Silva, Nobre, Carvalho and Momtilha, 2014). To this end, visual impairment can seriously hinder a student's motivation to engage in learning tasks due to limited ability to learn by imitation, observation, and also by difficulties in giving meaning to objects, concepts and ideas (Pinquart and Pfeiffer, 2012). Although Korir (2015) states that students with visual impairment have problems making friends, inclusive education requires a certain level of social skills as they must develop working relationship to learn with peers without disabilities in the mainstream (Nel, Nel and Hugo, 2014).

1.2.1 Access to Education for Learners with Visual Impairment

Different studies on access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary level indicate that access to education for these learners continues to be a challenge globally. Alves, Haegele and Duarte (2018) state that although the Brazilian Law, (Law 13.146/15) on the Inclusion

of Persons with Disabilities, mandates inclusion of all children with disabilities in the general education system, there are major barriers in the Brazilian general education system to include children with disabilities (Alves, Haegele and Duarte, 2018). For instance, the study conducted by Alves and Duarte (2014) in Brazil examining inclusion of learners with visual impairment in physical education classes reveals that students with visual impairment are excluded from participating in physical education activities due to lack of adequate and adapted materials. In Australia, Whitburn (2014) conducted a qualitative study where five students with visual impairment were selected to participate in mainstream schools. The findings reveal that the students were treated unfairly and the treatment amounted to exclusion.

Alhammedi (2016) explored the relationship between Federal Law No (29) of 2006 in the United Arab Emirates concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in accessing higher education institutions, and the study revealed that learners with visual impairment faced challenges such as: inaccessible academic curriculum, inaccessible assistive technology devices and inaccessible educational environment.

Similarly, several studies recounting challenges faced by learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools have been conducted in Africa. A qualitative study by Dakwa (2014) engaged 30 teachers and 40 pupils with visual impairment at primary level in Zimbabwe. The findings reveal that inclusion of learners with visual impairment is not successful due to lack of materials and trained human resource to support the learners at primary school levels. The findings further show that, apart from the challenge of teachers who lack training, the learners' right to participate in sports and other school activities is also denied (Dakwa, 2014). On the other hand, a qualitative study by Madungwe (2018) on opportunity to learn Mathematics for learners with visual impairment at secondary schools in Zimbabwe reveals that learners with visual impairment are not accorded adequate opportunities to learn Mathematics at secondary level. The reasons for this deficit include: inaccessible curriculum, inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education, inappropriate methods of teaching used by teachers and lack of teaching and learning material to support the education of visually impaired learners.

Kiomoka (2014) investigated the challenges learners with visual impairment faced in inclusive primary schools in Tanzania and found that there were challenges for learners with visual impairment to access primary education equitably. The challenges included insufficient teaching

and learning resources, shortage of trained teachers, unfavourable physical environment and incidents of stigmatization (Kiomoka, 2014).

In Nigeria, Okonkwo, Fajonyomi, Omotosho, and Olawuyi (2017) investigated challenges related to counselling needs and coping strategies of learners with visual impairment in regular secondary schools. They found that students with visual impairment face challenges such as inability to access modern technologies, inappropriate teaching methods and non-availability of special curriculum (Okonkwo et al. 2017). Furthermore, Omede (2015) studied the challenges of educating the visually impaired in Nigeria and found that providing integration and equal higher educational opportunities for learners with visual impairment in that country was sometimes controversial due to environmental degradation, architectural barriers, negative attitude of the public, inadequate materials or equipment, cost of education and high cost of materials invoiced for effective teaching and learning, especially where a lot of educational materials for learners with visual impairment are not manufactured locally.

In Botswana, learners with visual impairment also face challenges to access education in mainstream schools in this country. A qualitative study by Habulezi, Batsalelwang and Malatsi (2017) tried to determine factors influencing performance of learners with visual impairment in science subjects at senior secondary schools and the study similarly found that shortage of human and material resources, teaching methods and teacher and learners' attitudes are the main factors influencing academic performance of learners with visual impairment in Botswana (Habulezi et al. 2017).

Generally, the studies reveal that apart from being neglected by teachers, learners with visual impairment were caught up with time in class as they need more time for instruction and for doing their assignments and the classroom context hardly provides for such diversity (Kirir, 2015). In this regard, if there are no concessions given to learners with visual impairment to catch up for delays resulting from their impairments, the education is not inclusive. Gronlund, Lim and Larsson (2010) points out that one of the challenges that discourages learners with visual impairment from continuing with their studies is lack of teaching and learning methods to help them learn better. Challenges range from poor setup of classrooms, seating arrangements, proximity of students to instructional objects, material and resources, usage of assistive technology devices and physical presence in classroom during instruction, irregular implementation of required accommodations

and modifications for students, and inconsistent and adequate teacher support to students with visual impairments (Johnson-Jones, 2017:112).

1.2.2 Access to Education for Learners with Disabilities in Lesotho

As guided by ratified International protocols and Conventions, the government of Lesotho made a commitment to provide quality and relevant education to all the citizens of Lesotho (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). In line with this commitment, the government through the Ministry of Education and Training established various policies with the intention to promote access to quality and inclusive education to all Basotho children regardless of their differences. The legal and policy framework supporting inclusive education in Lesotho include Education Act (2010), Education Sector Plan of 2016-2026 and Inclusive Education Policy (2018).

In part II, Section 4. (2),(b), of the Education Act of (2010), the Ministry of Education and Training further makes a commitment that it will ensure that a learner with special educational needs is given the special treatment, education and care required by his or her condition (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2010). The inclusive education policy of (2018) states its aim as ensuring that all learners with special educational needs participate in the Lesotho school system that prepares them to function and live independently in the society and contribute positively in both social and economic development, but is not specific on how learners with visual impairment will be supported in regular schools in order for them to develop holistically.

Independent research in Lesotho suggests that access to education for students with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment, is generally a problem despite the country having dedicated most of its resources to the basic education level. For example, Shelile and Hlalele, (2014) conducted a qualitative study involving ten primary schools, teachers and interviewed one assistant inspector from the Special Education Unit (SEU). The study found that the majority of teachers in Lesotho did not receive training for inclusive education, hence most do not have the necessary skills and knowledge required for inclusive classrooms. Teachers who have received training were not followed to assess implementation challenges in the field because the Special Education Unit is under-resourced. The findings further show that, in this situation, not only do schools lack the necessary resources to support learning in inclusive schools, but the government at large fails to implement disability policy issues (Shelile and Hlalele, 2014).

A quantitative study by Chataika, Mckenzie Swart and Lyner-Cleophas (2012) which covered six African countries on investigating access to education in Africa found that although access to primary level in Lesotho was promoted by the policy statement (1989), policy implementation still remains a challenge. Chataika et al. (2012) further indicate that limited resources such as insufficient teacher training, inadequate teacher support and lack of accountability and monitoring, have been some of the barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education and training in Lesotho. Similarly, Johnstone and Chapman (2009) did a qualitative research on the problems relating to continuous professional development by engaging eight teachers from one school. The study revealed that, although the Ministry of Education and Training had chosen 10 primary schools to pilot inclusive education in Lesotho in 1991, this project did not work effectively because the Ministry was under-resourced hence failed to make follow up observations in pilot schools, which led the inclusive initiative to crumble due to poor support, scarce resources and lack of rewards to schools and teachers practicing in inclusive education (Johnstone and Chapman, 2009).

Although the studies cited above are not specific to the challenges encountered by learners with visual impairment at primary level in Lesotho, they indicate that inclusive education in the country is a failing exercise. There are barriers restricting inclusion of learners with disabilities in the mainstream schools and unless they are addressed, inclusive education cannot benefit LSEN. However, there are four studies which focused on access to education for learners with visual impairment. A study conducted by Mosia and Phasha (2017) on access to higher education for students with disabilities in Lesotho found that learners with visual impairment were faced with different challenges that restrict them from accessing higher education in one university. The challenges limited the students' choice of programmes due to poor administration of concession, lack of educational resources, inflexible teaching methods and curricular. The findings further show that these students are also excluded from the social and extracurricular activities performed in this institution.

Mosia (2014) used a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data concerning the threats to inclusive education in Lesotho, where 39 participants were interviewed. The findings show that, though efforts were made to support Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) in both special and mainstream schools, the support may not result in successful academic and social

development for LSEN. The findings further indicate that there is lack of understanding by teachers and educationists about what constitutes inclusive education, as well as inadequate resources for inclusive education to succeed in Lesotho.

Macheli (2008) used a mixed methods approach to investigate challenges encountered by learners with visual impairment in mainstream primary schools in Lesotho. The sample was selected purposively in which all 28 learners with visual impairment from five inclusive grades or classes (Grade 3-7) and 12 teachers of learners with visual impairment were interviewed to collect data. The findings reveal that there is lack of teaching and learning resources and teachers are unskilled in the field of teaching learners with visual impairment. As a result, individual needs of learners with visual impairments are ignored.

The final study is the qualitative one conducted by Matlosa and Matobo (2007) whereby their main focus was on the social inclusion and exclusion of learners with visual and hearing impairment in two Institutions of Higher Learning. Although this study focused on education of learners at Higher Learning Institutions, the researchers raised an argument on education of learners with visual impairment in general from primary level up to tertiary level. The findings revealed that efforts for integration of students with visual impairment at primary level in Lesotho was very low due to inadequate resources and lack of trained teachers on how to handle learners with visual impairment, as well as inappropriate methods of teaching identified as major barriers restricting learners with visual impairment from accessing education.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the Constitution of Lesotho (Chapter III, Section 28) provides education as a Direct Principle of State Policy, and not as a justiciable right, the government of Lesotho has recently pledged to provide access to inclusive quality education which is equitable to all learners (Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy, 2018). The recent Inclusive Education Policy is an enabling policy to the Education Act of (2010) that legislates provision of quality education to all learners including Learners with Special educational Needs (LSEN). The Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy of (2018) is one of the deliverables of the Education Sector Plan of 2016-2026 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2016).

Although there have been several international and national pronouncements like Education for All Convention of 1991, UNICEF (2000) and Universal Primary Education of (2001), learners with visual impairment continue to face challenges which bar them from acquiring the opportunities for full social life, including education among others (Wilson, 2016). Similarly, Chataika et al. (2012) confirm that Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates that people with disabilities should have full rights to education in inclusive settings. However, ensuring that educational policies and settings are signed to meet this criterion seems challenging to African countries that have ratified this convention. Mosia (2014) indicates that although many policies have been established to promote inclusive education in Lesotho, the problem arises when it comes to the implementation. There is currently no study that looks at challenges experienced by learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho. It is an irrefutable fact that learners with visual impairment need support to stimulate their learning and compensate for the lost sight which is the most used sense in learning.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Aim and Objectives

1.4.1.1 Aim

The aim of the study is to explore challenges faced by learners with visual impairment at primary school level.

1.4.1.2 Objectives

From the broad aim, the following objectives will be addressed:

1. To describe the way teachers perceive their support to learners with visual impairment at primary schools.
2. To explain ways in which teachers perceive their training needs to effectively teach learners with visual impairment.
3. To explore how learners with visual impairment view their access to education.
4. To suggest ways in which learners with visual impairment can best be supported to learn at primary schools in Lesotho.

1.4.2 Research Questions

Research questions are framed as follows:

- a) How do teachers perceive their support to learners with visual impairment at primary schools?
- b) To what extent do teachers view their training needs for supporting learners with visual impairment?
- c) How do learners with visual impairment view their access to education?
- d) Which strategies can be employed to support learners with visual impairment to learn better at primary schools in Lesotho?

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned under the social model of disability which was developed in reaction to the limitation of the medical model of disability (D'Alessio, 2011), and to fight established social practices whereby people with impairments were ill-treated and regarded as inferior (Barnes, 2013). According to Retief and Let'sosa (2018), the medical model of disability locates barriers to learning within an individual, which require treatment or care to fix the disability in order to help a learner to adapt and learn to function despite the disability (Goering, 2015). Failure in education results from a defect in a bodily system and as such, is inherently abnormal and pathological (Retief and Let'sosa, 2018). As a result, persons with disabilities are expected to avail themselves of the variety of services offered to them and to spend time in the role of patient or learner being helped by trained professionals (Retief and Let'sosa, 2018).

However, the social model of disability argues that disability is something imposed on persons with disabilities by the way they are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society (Anastasiou and Kauffman, 2013). From this point of view, disability is a socially constructed disadvantage, which is, in a very real sense, imposed on people with disabilities, constituting a particular form of social oppression (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). It is lack of participation for people with disabilities that influenced the development of the social model of disability, which promotes their right to live independently, work and influence decisions that affect their lives (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002). So, the social model of disability is preferred in this study as it sets out to explore barriers (environmental, pedagogic and attitudinal) (Traustadottir, 2009) that exclude learners with visual impairment in Lesotho from accessing education at primary level equitably.

1.6 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This section presents a brief description of the research methods and methodology used to investigate the problem stated. First it explains the research paradigm, approach, design and how data were gathered and analyzed.

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

The study adopts the interpretivist paradigm because it allows researchers to view the world through the perception and experiences of the participants and use those experiences to construct and interpret their understanding from data gathered (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). Creswell (2014) explains interpretivist paradigm as the individuals' effort to understand the world they live in, and appreciate that they develop personal meanings to the world ending in not one but a complexity of views. Interpretivist emphasizes the understanding of the individuals and their interpretation of the world around them (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). According to this paradigm, reality is socially constructed hence the use of the word constructivist as knowledge is constructed by participants as they engage with life (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

Moreover, Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that in this paradigm, theory does not precede research but follows it so that it is grounded on the data gathered by the research act. Thus, when following this paradigm, data are gathered and analyzed in a manner consistent with grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to build rich local understanding of life-world experiences of both learners with visual impairment as well as their teachers and of the cultures of the classrooms and the schools at primary level in Lesotho (Taylor and Medina, 2013). According to Yanow and Schwartz (2011), interpretivist researchers discover reality through participants' views, their own background and experiences.

1.6.2 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data regarding challenges encountered in providing access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary level in Lesotho. Punch (2013) describes qualitative research as a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meanings from these data that help us to understand social life through the study of the targeted population or place. It is the observation and the interpretation of the people's perceptions of different events, and it takes the snapshot of the people's perception in a natural setting (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and Mckibbin,

2015). According to Mohajan (2018:3), qualitative approach is used to explore the behaviour, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people, and what lies at the core of their lives.

The researcher is interested in using this approach because qualitative approach is used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspectives, most often from participants' viewpoint (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2016:2). Also, qualitative approach was preferred as it enabled the researcher gain insights into people's feelings and thoughts, which provided the basis for a future stand (Sutton and Austin, 2015). The approach was suitable for this study as it gave the researcher an opportunity not only to observe the behaviour of the participants in a natural setting, but also get information directly from the sources.

1.6.3 Research Design

This study adopted case study design to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life situation (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh, 2011:1). A case study can also be described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables (Heale and Twycross, 2018:1). On the other hand, research design is a plan that describes the conditions and procedures for collecting and analyzing data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). According to Akhtar (2016:2), a research design can be considered as the structure of research; it is the glue that holds all of the elements in a research project together. Peniel (2016:2) describes it as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation purporting to answer research questions and control variance. Peniel further states that it is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research questions.

So, case study design was preferred in this study as both learners with visual impairment and their teachers were given an opportunity to express their experiences regarding their education in mainstream classrooms at one primary school. The researcher had an opportunity to explain and describe events as they occurred in reality (Yin, 2014). Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018) indicate that case study design enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context.

1.6.4 Participants Selection

The study adopted non-probability sampling to select participants who provided rich information for its context. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select one primary school and learners with visual impairment, as well as their teachers to participate in the study. Through purposive sampling a researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who have the most critical information by virtue of knowledge and experience (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016:2). Etikan et al. (2016:2) further indicate that purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources. This involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). As a result, data was collected from ten learners with visual impairment, five from Grade 3 and another five from Grade 4, as well as their teachers. Two teachers from Grade 3 and another two from Grade 4 were interviewed.

1.6.5 Data Collection

Learners with visual impairment and their teachers at one primary school in the country were the source of information, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews in order to get in-depth information from participants by answering open-ended questions (Jamshed, 2014). This study used interview guides (schematic presentation of questions or topics) which normally serve the useful purpose of exploring many respondents more systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action (Jamshed, 2014:1). Teachers of learners with visual impairment from the chosen inclusive primary school were given chance to share their experiences and challenges encountered while teaching learners with visual impairment in the same classroom with sighted learners. Semi-structured interviews helped me gather information from key informants' personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs related to the topic of interest (De Jonckheere and Vaughn, 2019:2). As there are two official languages in Lesotho, participants were allowed to express themselves in both Sesotho and English.

Secondly, observation was done in classrooms during teaching and learning processes to explore how teachers include learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms, as well as the support provided to these learners so that they too can maximize their potential in classroom situation. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) explain observation method as a tool for data collection

that involves the planned watching, recording and analysis of observed behaviour in a natural setting. So, in this study, two observations were done per class, while the researcher used a checklist of issues such as resources used, seating arrangements, class participation for learners with visual impairment etc. These enabled the researcher to understand how both learners with visual impairment and their teachers explain and make sense of important events in their lives (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014).

1.6.6 Data Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) describe qualitative data analysis as a primarily inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. The most important part of data analysis was expressing the truth as viewed by participants (Sutton and Austin, 2015). Therefore, data analysis for this study was done right at the beginning of data collection through writing summaries of what had been collected and making comments on issues in data as well as after collection of all data, as it was their voices that the researcher tried to hear, so that they could be interpreted and reported on for others to read and learn from (Sutton and Austin, 2015).

This study used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as an approach to interpret and analyze qualitative data. As a psychological qualitative research design, IPA is used to understand participants' subjective realities through personal interpretations of their lived experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018:1). As a result, IPA involves a detailed examination of participants' life world, their experiences of a particular phenomenon, how they make sense of these experiences and the meanings they attach to them (Smith and Osborn, 2015). Therefore, this approach enabled the researcher to analyze in detail how participants perceive and make sense of things which are happening to them (Smith and Osborn, 2015). Also, the use of IPA approach helped the researcher to develop an understanding of the background and the inner world of participants, which are grounded and are yet to be established beyond their understanding, sense, perspective and conceptualization (Dos Santos, 2019:4).

The following procedures were followed in analyzing qualitative data. Interviews were transcribed carefully, and read and re-read along with all the field notes while comments were made on the left side of the margin of the interview scripts on issues derived from the collected data. Re-reading of the field notes helped the researcher to identify the emerging themes expressed by the

participants regarding their experiences. Emerging themes were written on the right side of the margin of the scripts and were also highlighted. When themes were identified, they were classified according to their similarities and differences. That is coding (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings and De Eyto, 2018).

1.6.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit and Beck, 2014). It is a transparency which the researcher shows in data analysis and has four concepts which are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Shaw, 2010). Therefore, the researcher applied these concepts during data collection and analysis. Credibility was employed in order to provide the research findings that represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Anney, 2014:5).

Moreover, the researcher allowed transferability to occur in this study by describing the contexts or events or situations in the study in such a way that the findings can be applicable to other contexts or circumstances. As Moser and Korstjens (2018:4) opine, the researcher's responsibility is to provide a thick description of the participants and research process, to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable to their own setting. According to Polit and Beck (2012), transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups. In addition, a safe and trusting relationship that allowed subjects to give information freely while gathering data through interviews was created. So, the participants were given an opportunity to evaluate the findings, interpretations and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Cohen, Manion and Marrison, 2011). Lastly, the findings were based on the participants' responses rather than the bias or personal opinions of the researcher to promote confirmability. Polit and Beck (2012) point out that confirmability of the findings means that the data accurately represent the information participants provided and the interpretations of those data are not invented by the inquirer.

1.6.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics generally, are beliefs about what is right or wrong from a moral perspective, while research ethics are focused on what is morally proper or improper when engaged with participants or when accessing archival data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:129). As an ethical principle, participants were given an opportunity to participate voluntarily and written consent was sought. Permission was signed before starting each interview. To achieve this, the researcher disclosed all relevant information including the possible risks of participation, especially issues around what would happen to the data obtained (Baines and Taylor, 2013).

Privacy of participants would be protected through confidentiality and anonymity which protect subjects from being identified from information that has been gathered (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:133). The researcher used pseudonyms to give anonymity to a person, group or place to avoid identifying the ethnic or cultural background of the respondents (Akaranga and Makau, 2016).

1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The ultimate vision for inclusive education system is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their peers (European Agency, 2015). As a result, this study is vital to all stakeholders in the Ministry of Education and Training as the findings can persuade the policy makers to reflect on the effectiveness of current policies that prescribe support to accommodate diversity of learners' needs, and also to guide future work to develop criteria and guidelines for programmes of initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development (European Agency, 2015).

Moreover, this study should help curriculum designers to develop the curriculum that addresses holistic needs of a child with visual impairment which are flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and to stimulate teachers to seek solutions that can be matched with the needs, abilities and learning styles of each and every pupil (United Nations, 2009).

1.8 DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

Access to education: is a way of transforming the physical, curricular and management style of mainstream education to allow all learners to benefit from the education provision that is diversified (Nkoane, 2009:16). It involves addressing various dimensions of education

support such as physical access to buildings, overcoming curricular and attitudinal barriers (Hadjikakou, Polycarpou and Hadjilia, 2010:404). Access to education serves the right of learners with disabilities to education and efforts to facilitate attainment of their maximum potential (United Nations, 1948).

Disability: is an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and various barriers (such as attitudinal and environmental barriers) that hinder their full and active participation in society on an equal basis with others (UN, 2006).

Impairment: is an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss of physiological or psychological function (Goering, 2015).

Visual impairment: is an umbrella term encompassing all degrees of sight loss, namely: low vision, partial sight, legal blindness and total blindness (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disability, 2012). It is inability to process visual information because of absence or deficiency of a specific structure or physiological function of the eye (Bornman and Rose, 2015:182). Naipal and Rampersad (2018:1) describe visual impairment as a condition of reduced visual performance that cannot be remedied by refractive correction, surgery or medical methods. It results in functional limitations of the visual system that may be characterized by irreversible vision loss, restricted visual field and decreased contrast sensitivity, increased sensitivity to glare as well as decreased ability to perform activities of daily living such as reading and writing.

1.9 PRELIMINARY OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One: describes the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem. The chapter also presents the aims and objectives as well as the research questions the study seeks to answer. It also discusses the theoretical framework guiding the study and highlights research methods and methodology adopted. Finally, measures to ensure trustworthiness, ethical considerations as well as the contribution the study makes and definition of key terms are discussed.

Chapter Two: discusses literature on access to education for learners with visual impairment globally, and ends with how access to education is facilitated at primary schools in Lesotho. The chapter also presents the model the study adopted which is a social model of disability.

Chapter Three: describes the research methods and methodology adopted for the study.

Chapter Four: presents the findings of the study.

Chapter Five: covers a discussion of the research findings against the literature. It also presents concluding remarks, limitations of the study and recommendations.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

This chapter focused on the policies that influence access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools, both internationally and in Lesotho. It discussed access to primary education as well as highlighting the barriers restricting this access to happen. The initiating for further research was indicated, followed by stating the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the research questions. Then the social model of disability was described as the theoretical framework of the study. The study then explained the research method and methodology, which is a qualitative case study. The instruments also used for data collection and analysis were explained, followed by the description of trustworthiness and ethical considerations advocated in collecting and analyzing data. The contribution that the study provides in the field was also discussed. Finally, the definition of the key terms was provided, followed by the outline of chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLAINING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Access to education is at the Centre of inclusive education. The sustainable development agenda speaks of an inclusive and equitable quality education. An attempt is made to reconcile the meaning of access to education and inclusive education so that the two can be understood to be synonymous. The study is framed within the social model of disability which puts the focus away from a learner's deficiencies to structural challenges that act as barriers to learning and development. The chapter ends with a critical look as inclusive education for learners with visual impairment is managed globally with a focus on the practices for improving access to education in Lesotho.

2.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCESS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Access to education and inclusive education are one thing expressed differently. In the contemporary world, technological transformations have expanded access opportunities to information, communication and education for people with disabilities (Bruno and Nascimento, 2019:1). As a result, access to education is a way of transforming the physical, curricula and management style of mainstream education to allow all students to benefit from diversified provision of education (Nkoane, 2009:16). Access is associated with ensuring equity, which is a principle that promotes differential treatment of students, as students with disabilities are amongst the social groups identified as having greater needs than others, and therefore requiring greater support and resources (Savage, Sellar and Gorur, 2013:162). So creating access to education for vulnerable students, including those with visual impairment, serves their right to education and efforts to facilitate attainment of their maximum potential (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1990), access is a means to empower people with disabilities to be independent and self-sufficient, and to enhance their full integration into mainstream society. As indicated by Hadjikakou, Polycarpou and Hadjilia (2010:404), access to education involves addressing various dimensions of education support, such as, physical access to buildings, overcoming curricular and attitudinal barriers. Therefore, access to education, as proposed by Mosia and Phasha (2017:52), unpacks minute details of inclusive

education processes which ensure that students' needs are addressed and learning opportunities are improved.

On the other hand, the concept and philosophy of inclusive education gained international attention when the United Nations promoted the idea of Education for All at the World Conference on Education for All in Thailand in 1990 (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah and Nyarko, 2018:1). In 1994, the World Conference on Special Needs Education was held in Salamanca Spain by more than 300 representatives to further their commitment to Education for All, whereby the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education was drawn together with the Draft Framework for Action. The Statement proclaims five principles that reflect the right in respect of education for learners with disabilities in which principle (4) ensures that learners with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting those needs. Principle (5) proceeds that regular schools adapting inclusive orientation is the most effective means of combating the discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building inclusive society, and achieving education for all (UNESCO, 1994). Asamoah et al. (2018:1) indicate that a policy statement on inclusive education emanating from the 1994 Salamanca Conference in Spain challenged all nations, schools and educators to provide effective education for all students including those with special needs.

Inclusive education as a process seeking to address individual needs of students with disabilities, and create opportunities for them to access education (Mosia and Phasha, 2017:48), has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equality, justice and quality education for all children, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability and other characteristics (Mboshi, 2018:2). According to UNESCO (2005), education should allow children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities. As a result, inclusive education is a great strategy that strives to promote quality education for all. Furthermore, education for all is also reinforced by the Sustainable Development Goals in which goal (4) intends to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all, and target (4.7) plans to ensure that by 2030 all learners should have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including education among others (UN, 2015).

The aim of inclusive education is not only to transform schools to accommodate students with diverse needs into mainstream schools, but also to depart from fixing the students in the school by providing appropriate materials so as to facilitate learning for all students (Mosia and Phasha, 2017). According to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006), inclusive education brings a dual opportunity by not aiming at achieving high quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities but also the development of equitable inclusive education systems with the provision of supporting the individual needs of all students, including children with disabilities. As a result, inclusive education came as a rescue mission in the actualization of educational psycho-social services for persons with visual impairment (Mboshi, 2018:2). Mboshi concludes that full inclusion includes: placement in the neighbourhood schools, zero rejection philosophy, no special classes or schools, co-operative teaching and special education support given to regular education.

2.3 THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The social model of disability is seen as a shift away from the medical model which promoted exclusion of learners with disability from education. According to the medical model, disability resides within an individual, and people with disabilities are expected to spend the rest of their lives in the role of patient and learners being helped by trained professionals (Ratief and Let'sosa, 2018:2-3). Based on the view that all learning problems are the results of some organic disorder or disease, the medical model assumes that a comprehensive diagnosis of physical, neurological or biological disorders should precede intervention in educational settings (Massoumeh and Leila, 2012:2). The authors further indicate that medical model focuses on the child's condition, seeing the problem within the child, trying to find a way of treating a child to fit in with his environment. According to the medical model, the problem of disability is located with the individual. Thus, a person is disabled due to his individual impairments and therefore requires medical interventions to provide him with the skills to adapt to the society (Mssoumeh and Leila, 2012:2).

MacArthur (2009:15) states that people working in the education system who use the medical model, view the challenges faced by students with disabilities as coming from their impairments rather than from inadequacies in the classroom or school. The purpose of education for students with disabilities as proposed by the medical model is therefore considered to be remediation. That is, fixing or changing students to make them more normal. MacArthur (2009:15) points out that

this kind of thinking has meant that all over the world, children with disabilities and young people have been categorized and labelled according to the type or severity of their disability and separated from non-disabled students so that they can have specialized teaching. MacArthur proceeds that this approach has removed students with disabilities from regular education in neighbourhood schools and has meant that these regular schools have not been required to change in order to meet the needs of all students in their local community.

Disability activists and scholars proposed the social model of disability which makes a sharp distinction between impairment and disability. The social model describes impairment as lack of all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb while disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairment and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities (Goering, 2015:2). The social model of disability promotes the right of persons with disabilities to live independently, work and influence decisions that affect their lives (Shakespeare, 2013).

It is a model that advocates identifying barriers and developing solutions and promotes respect for human dignity irrespective of disability status (Rieser, 2011). Based on this principle, the social model is meant to be empowering and developmental. It therefore seeks to support disability and make it an indispensable part of society because disability in this model is perceived as a social creation that requires social intervention and solution (Tugli, Klu, and Morwe, 2014). Tugli et al. (2014) argue that, by identifying barriers that inhibit the full participation of people with disabilities in society, the social model of disability has exerted a lot of impact and influence on developing the human rights approach to disability.

In education, the social model of disability has been influential in shaping public policy on disability matters and the education of students with disabilities (Anastasiou and Keller, 2011). In addition, the social model supports the development of inclusive education by turning attention to the ways in which regular schools can support students with disabilities to learn and have positive social relationships (MacArthur, 2009:15).

2.4 A GLOBAL VIEW ON EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

It is estimated that 19 million children globally are blind (Altaf, Kawish and Anwar, 2017). Out of these, 12 million are visually impaired due to uncorrected refractive errors, and 1.4 million are irreversibly blind for the rest of their lives, and need rehabilitation interventions for full psychological and personal development (Altaf et al. 2017:2). As special schools failed to fulfil the needs of all learners with various forms of disabilities (WHO, 2011), inclusive education has been recognized as a philosophy for attaining equality, justice and quality education for all children, especially those who have been excluded from mainstream for reasons of disability and other characteristics (Mboshi, 2018:2). Although a policy statement on inclusive education emanating from the 1994 Salamanca Conference in Spain challenged all nations, schools and educators to provide effective education for all students, including those with special needs (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah and Nyarko, 2018:1), students with visual impairment are faced with challenges of different aspects, which bar them from acquiring the opportunities for full social life, including education among others (Wilson, 2016).

2.4.1 Inclusive education in the UK

Just like other countries around the world that made strides to make education accessible to their citizens, the United Kingdom (UK) ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in June 2009 (Butlin, 2011). This means the government of the UK agreed to ensure that the education system at all levels is inclusive and geared towards supporting people with disabilities to achieve their full potential and participate equally in society (Butlin, 2011). For example, The Equality Act of 2010 took over from the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. This Act emphasizes the legal duty on education providers, employers and service providers to make responsible adjustments so that students with disabilities including learners with visual impairment can take part in education, use services and work (The Equality Act, 2010).

Despite several policies and practical initiatives that support inclusive education in the United Kingdom, learners with visual impairment continue to face challenges towards accessing education in mainstream schools. For instance, Bishop and Rhind (2011) conducted a study on factors representing barriers and enablers to participation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for students with visual impairment in the UK. The study found that first and foremost learners

with visual impairment had negative attitudes towards their impairment in addition to challenges from inadequate institutional provision, external support and others' attitudes. Similarly, Knowlton (2010:48) supports that attitudes of the community in general and those of the teachers, peers and parents have an impact on the overall development of learners with visual impairment. In addition, Perles (2010) opines that educating all children together encourages learners without disabilities to learn to accept their peers with disabilities without discriminating them. Additionally, a qualitative study by Hewett, Douglas and McLinden (2017) on developing an inclusive learning environment for students with visual impairment in Higher Education (HE) revealed that HEIs made some adjustments to enable learners with visual impairment to access education but there was lack of anticipatory adjustments which created barriers.

2.4.2 Inclusive education in Turkey

The provision of support for learners with visual impairment in Turkey is done as a matter of policy. Educational rights of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) were mentioned for the first time in 1961 in Turkey's Constitution (Enc, 2014). Based on this Constitution, the Primary Instruction and Education Law no: 222 which came into effect in 1962 indicated that schools and classes must provide accommodation for children with SEN (Eres, 2010). Article 42 of the 1982 Constitution indicates that the state shall take necessary measures to render children with special educational needs useful to the society (Nadir and Aktan, 2015).

The Turkish Disability Act, no: 5378 of (2005) emphasizes the Rights of People with Disabilities, and especially highlights the need for an inclusive educational environment for children with SEN. Article 15 of the Act states that:

The right to education of disabled people cannot be prevented for any reason. Disabled children, youngsters and adults are provided with equal education with non-disabled people and in inclusive environment, taking special conditions and differences into considerations (OZIDA, 2005).

Following these improvements in legislation, the Special Educational Needs Services Regulation of (2012), which can be interpreted as a code of practice, was also updated to highlight the education needs of students with exceptionalities and to offer clear guidelines regarding the implementation of inclusive services (Islek, 2016).

Despite the improvements that Turkey made in legislations to support inclusion of learners with visual impairment in the regular schools, learners with visual impairment are still facing many challenges. For instance, in a study which discussed curriculum undertaken by students with visual impairments in Turkey, Islek (2016) made the distinction between the traditional academic curriculum and the concepts of Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC includes a range of disability-specific areas such as Mobility and Braille aimed at determining the balance of the curriculum experienced by individuals with visual impairment. The analysis revealed an emphasis on teaching the academic curriculum with relatively little attention given to ECC. Therefore, individuals with visual impairment were not fully prepared to be independent and encountered a number of barriers including: being dependent on others, isolation and psychological challenges in their everyday lives. In addition, the barriers concerning the teaching of ECC which were revealed include: educational policy priorities in Turkey which give little or no remit to teaching a broader curriculum, little resources are given to specialist teaching support in mainstream schools and specialist teacher training does not appear aligned to the educational context in which teachers work. Finally, the research identified other barriers to develop an individual's independence which are beyond the teaching of ECC. These include inaccessible environments and equipment, as well as inadequate accommodations and adjustments (Islek, 2016). The issue of shortage of specialist educators in Turkey was raised by Bayhan and Sipal (2011) as one of the challenges. This may not be surprising if Sakiz and Woods' (2014) argument that the principles of inclusive education in Turkey have neither always been adhered to nor implemented completely, can be taken into consideration.

2.4.3 Inclusive education in the United States of America

In the United States of America (USA), all students are entitled to a free appropriate public education under the federal laws including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities, 2012). Just like Section 504 that protects the Right of Individuals with Disabilities regardless of the nature of or severity of their disability, and mandating equal opportunity to receive programme benefits and services, the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) mandates a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities (Johnson-Jones, 2017:15-16).

However, Fast (2018) states that although in the United States of America, students with visual impairment have been included in general education classrooms since before the 1975 implementation of P.L.94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as IDEA, the academic success of students with visual impairment in the general education classrooms has not been guaranteed. Fast (2018) further indicates that the physical inclusion of students with visual impairment in general education classrooms is insufficient for academic success. Fast adds that the specialized needs of students with visual impairments, including the need to participate fully in the general education curriculum with sufficient accommodations, is restricted.

In addition, Johnson-Jones (2017) also asserts that although IDEA guarantees students with visual impairments a free and appropriate public education, these students still face many educational challenges such as leaving school without adequate skills or knowledge essential for further education, gainful employment, and independent living at home and in their communities. Johnson-Jones (2017) further indicates that learners with visual impairment do not only experience challenges such as severe shortage of qualified teachers, but also orientation and mobility specialists to provide instructions to students, which restricts access to the specialized skills these children need.

2.4.4 Inclusive Education in Australia

Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, with the aim to eliminate the barriers that exclude or marginalize learners with disabilities from accessing education, by espousing an inclusive education approach that promotes the equal and active participation of all people with disability (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler and Sharma, 2013:4). However, a qualitative study by Whitburn (2014) on the experiences of students with visual impairment, where he was an insider in the study, interviewed five students with visual impairment. The findings reveals that students with visual impairment experience unfair treatment in mainstream schools in Australia, and that appeared to have perpetuated their exclusion.

In addition, Butler, Holloway, Marriott and Goncu (2017) centred their study on understanding the graphical challenges faced by students with visual impairment. Their main focus was on the information graphics such as plots, maps, plans, charts, tables and diagrams, as they form an integral part of the student learning experience in many disciplines. The findings show that the

difficulty in accessing the graphical materials is a main barrier to many students with vision impairment, and that there were systematic problems with the current process for accessing graphics provision.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Opie (2018) on exploring the experiences of learners with visual impairment in mainstream secondary schools in Victoria was carried out. Seven learners with visual impairment were interviewed and the findings revealed that learners with visual impairment faced various challenges in mainstream schools. These include: classroom teachers who lack understanding towards vision impairment, limited extent Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) delivery and restricted access to Specialist Visiting Teachers (VTs).

However, educational support for learners with visual impairment has been identified by different researchers as a positive strategy to enhance inclusion of these learners in regular schools as it promotes participation and improves the academic performance of learners (Habulezi, Batsalelwang and Malatsi, 2017). Habulezi and Phasha (2012:6) add that support for learners with visual impairment requires adjustment, modification and adaptation of curriculum and appropriate teaching methods as well as good relationship between teachers and learners and among learners themselves in order to work cooperatively (Nasiforo, 2015; Chikukwa and Chimbwanda, 2014).

2.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REGIONALLY

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) calls for countries to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Prince, 2018:3). Most importantly, inclusive education is considered to be the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities (Hayes and Bulat, 2017). As such, it is the preferred educational setting, as specified in Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (Prince, 2018:3).

However, Mitchell (2017) and Srivastava, de Boer and Pijl (2015) assert that inclusive education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is extremely poor and remains at the “pilot project” stage across much of the region. As stated by Anderson and Mundy (2014), some researchers identify material factors as the principal obstacle to the provision of high quality, inclusive education in low-income contexts. Mehadi and Tesfaye (2010) also allude to studies which indicate that many schools in SSA are faced with serious resource constraints, including dilapidated classrooms and shortage of

desks, seats and basic materials such as chalk, blackboards and textbooks. This is because when the schools were designed, learners with disabilities were not considered, hence they are not accessible or adaptable to meet the special educational needs of such learners (Mitchell, 2016). In addition, Mitchell (2017:5) points out that the inadequacy of provision of inclusive education in SSA discourages parents from sending their children with disabilities to mainstream schools. He further indicates that sometimes household poverty is also a factor, as parents prefer to send their children with disabilities to residential facilities, as this relieves them from the burden usually associated with looking after a child with disability. In conclusion, Mitchell (2017) sees inclusive education in Africa as isolating and frustrating for learners with special needs, because the necessary support and resources for meaningful inclusion are lacking.

2.5.1 Inclusive education in Tanzania

Although Tanzania introduced the National Disability Policy in 2004, this policy failed to clearly state and provide guidelines on how inclusive education to children with disability should be implemented and monitored (Gronlund, Lim and Larsson, 2010). As a result, children with visual impairment experienced many challenges in the education sector which eliminate them from the school system (Gronlund et al. 2010). One of the challenges as suggested by Gronlund, Lim and Larsson (2010), is that the teaching methods used to teach students with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms are not conducive enough to help them learn better. As a result, these students do not perform well in their final examinations (Gronlund, Lim and Larsson, 2010).

In addition, Kiomaka (2014); Mwakyeja (2013) conducted studies to investigate challenges learners with visual impairment encountered in inclusive schools in Tanzania. The findings revealed that due to lack of training, general teachers have little knowledge about inclusive education and how it should be practised not only for students with visual impairment but for all students with special needs. Teachers did not lack commitment among themselves only, but there is also poor cooperation not only among themselves but between themselves and parents as well. Although Okongo, Ngao, Rop and Nyongesa (2015:4) note that availability of teaching and learning resources enhances the effectiveness of the school as they are the basic resources that arouse learners' interest in learning and bring about good academic performance in learners, the findings of the studies by Kiomaka (2014); Mwakyeja (2013) further indicated that learners with visual impairment experience challenges such as scarcity of teaching and learning resources,

unfavourable physical environment as well as a rigid curriculum in inclusive schools, which restricts learners with visual impairment from accessing education like able-bodied students. The findings also show that there is high rate of stigmatization against learners with visual impairment in Tanzania. Finally, the findings revealed that there is no affirmative policy on inclusive education in the country (Kiomoka, 2014; Mwakyeja, 2013).

Additionally, a longitudinal study by Fraiser (2008) on the situation of inclusive education in Tanzania confirms that teachers are not competent in sign language, the use of braille materials, tactile diagrams and maps to be able to face the challenges in inclusive teaching. Fraiser concludes that a rigid curriculum is another problem for the implementation of inclusive education in Tanzania.

2.5.2 Inclusive education in Namibia

In Namibia, the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was established in 2013 to ensure that all learners are educated in the least-restrictive education setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible (Ministry of Education, 2013). This policy was also introduced to expand access and provision to quality education, especially for educationally marginalized learners and to support learners with a wide range of individual abilities and needs in compulsory education at pre-primary, primary and secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, although the study of Sheyapo (2017) did not focus on challenges faced by learners with visual impairment at primary level, the fact is that it expands the issue concerning the challenges experienced by learners with visual impairment in Namibia. He points out that although most of the lecturers in Namibia are positive and willing to include learners with visual impairment in their classrooms, lack of awareness, skills and knowledge, lack of communication and collaboration, lack of platforms and units to address issues pertaining to the inclusion of students with visual impairments are noted as challenges (Sheyapo, 2017).

In addition, Josua (2013); Zulch (2010) confirm that learners with visual impairment are only included physically and not education-wise in Namibian mainstream schools, as these learners experience many barriers. These include: inaccessible physical environment, lack of support and training teachers, lack of cooperation not only among teachers themselves, but also between teachers and parents and community at large, negative attitudes expressed by teachers and sighted learners towards learners with visual impairment, lack of teaching and learning materials to

support inclusive education, inaccessible curriculum and lack of inclusive education policy to guide schools as well as teachers on how to implement inclusive education and support learners with visual impairment to reach their potentials effectively (Josua, 2013; Zulch, 2010)

Shumba and Moodley (2018) concludes that since the independence in 1990, Namibia has made significant progress in developing policies and legislations to address the needs of persons with disabilities. However, the critical issues that hamper the implementation process include among others the lack of a central mechanism for coordination, overlapping strategies, formulation not grounded in evidence, lack of regulations and guidelines, different disability models adopted and failure to address gender differences (Shumba and Moodley, 2018). Additionally, Najjingo (2009:45) also found that lack of instructional materials affects implementation of inclusive education negatively.

2.5.3 Inclusive education in Kenya

A study by Korir (2015) sought to establish the challenges encountered by students and teachers in integrated education programme for students with visual impairments. Two hundred participants were selected, and data was collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions and document analysis whereby data was analyzed through the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings indicate that the administration views learners with visual impairment as a burden to schools, and many times they do not meet their needs, such as providing the necessary learning materials for these learners. Also, the study indicates that teachers lack training on how to teach learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms (Korir, 2015). Likewise, a study by Agesa (2014) points out that most learners with visual impairments perform poorly academically due to lack of implementation of a differentiated curriculum, which is attributed to social, economic and, partly, cultural factors (Agesa, 2014).

In addition, the Kenya Society for the Blind (2008) confirms that the rates of attendance and completion of the formal education system for learners with visual impairment are very low. The Kenya Society for the Blind further states that this has been attributed to stigmatization, retrogressive cultural beliefs, poor attitudes and ignorance on the potential of children with visual impairment by parents. As a result, most parents do not enroll their children with visual impairment in school and a significant number of the affected children live a neglected life and are often kept away from general public (Kenya Society for the Blind, 2008).

2.5.4 Inclusive education in Zimbabwe

According to Mahanya (2016), unpreparedness and lack of skills can cause problems on the social, emotional and academic development of students with visual impairment. Mahanya indicates that although students with visual impairment in Zimbabwe are educationally included, some cases are more difficult to include. Even if inclusive curriculum is availed, due to limited resources and technology to cater for the academic needs of all students with disabilities, students with visual impairment may fail to realize their potentials. In addition, in its discoveries, the National Blind Children's Society (NBCS) (2008) reports that in Zimbabwe, students with visual impairment are marginalized to the extent that they are denied the opportunities for equal participation in inclusive educational activities as equal members. Although learners with visual impairment are included in mainstream education, they are not given an opportunity to participate fully in activities done at school in Zimbabwe (Mahanya, 2016).

Although Zimbabwe has inclusive education policies such as the Education Act of 1996 and the Zimbabwe Disabled Persons Act of 1996 which advocate for non-discrimination in the provision of education, it does not have specific policy on specific disabilities, to express how learners with a certain disability should be handled and supported to help them to learn with ease in order for them to reach their potentials. Other challenges that learners with visual impairment experience in inclusive schools include lack of materials and human resources to support learners in inclusive classrooms, and the rights of learners with visual impairments to participate in sports and other school activities are also denied (Dakwa, 2014; Chiresh, 2013). Despite all the strides taken by the Zimbabwean government, there is a need to establish the policy that will support learners with visual impairment in mainstream classrooms to an extent that those learners can benefit socially, emotionally and academically.

2.5.5 Inclusive education in Ethiopia

In line with the International Convention, Declaration, Agreements and Frameworks, the government of Ethiopia has established the human rights in its constitution in which Articles 41 and 91 allocated resources suitable to support disadvantaged people within the country. Article 41 (3) supports equal access to public funded social services including education to every citizen regardless of his disability status (Belaynesh, 2009:5). However, Negash (2017) argues that although the constitutional measures taken by the country are good steps for the benefit of all

citizens, independent researchers found that lack of specific policy supporting the right to education of persons with disabilities including learners with visual impairment, environmental inaccessibility, inflexibility of financial guidelines in schools and lack of training among teachers are identified as the major obstacles hampering access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools (Temesgen, 2018; Negash, 2017).

In conclusion, lack of clear policies, insufficient knowledge and skills among teachers, lack of resources, poor participation of parents, labeling and negative attitudes towards learners with visual impairment by their sighted counterparts and the teachers, as well as lack of teacher collaboration and exclusion of visually impaired learners from accessing inclusive education are the major factors affecting the implementation and actualization of inclusive education (Negash, 2017; Darge, Shibru, Mulugeta and Dagnachew, 2017; Omer, 2015).

2.5.6 Inclusive education in South Africa

Section 29 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa reserves the right of every child to a basic education, including adult basic education. This fundamental right to basic education is further developed in the Constitution in Section 9 (2) which commits the state to the achievement of equality, and Section 9 (3), (4) and (5) which commits the state to non-discrimination. These clauses are particularly important for protecting all learners, whether disabled or not (The Constitution of South Africa, 1996). In line with the Constitution, the Education White Paper 6 (2001) on Special Needs Education also commits the government to provide access to education to all learners who have disability and those who experience barriers to learning whether it is economic, social, language, class, behaviour or other barriers (Department of Basic Education, 2001).

Although South Africa has adopted an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers restricting effective learning for learners with disabilities in inclusive settings, the implementation of this policy is hampered by barriers such as: lack of teachers' skills and knowledge in differentiating the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs, lack of parents' participation in the education of their children in inclusive schools, inappropriate teaching strategies used by teachers in inclusive classrooms, inadequate teaching and learning materials to support the education of learners with visual impairment and inaccessible physical environment (Adewumi and Mosito, 2019; Moralle, 2016; Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde, 2012). Similarly,

Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa and Moswela (2013), point out that most teachers in inclusive classrooms rely on teacher-centred methods which do not only promote passiveness among learners but contribute to poor participation and performance as well as low education level to these learners (Penda, Ndhlovu and Kasonde-Ng'andu, 2015; Mtika, 2010). Moralle (2016) further concludes that primary teachers' failure to understand the rationale behind inclusive education in general is the main obstacle in the effective implementation of inclusive education at primary schools in South Africa.

2.6 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

2.6.1 Legal and Policy Framework

Although at the national level, the Constitution of Lesotho (1993) provides education as a Direct Principle of State Policy, and not as a justiciable right in Chapter III, Section 28, the government of Lesotho pledged to provide access to quality inclusive education which is equitable to all learners (The Kingdom of Lesotho, 2018). To put this commitment into practice, in 2010, the Ministry of Education and Training established the Education Act of (2010) with the aim of ensuring provision of quality education to all learners including Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). In 2011, the Children's Protection and Welfare Act was introduced to protect the educational rights of all learners. From there, the Education Sector Plan of (2016) as well as Inclusive Education Policy (2018) were also introduced. In Part II, Section 4. (2), (b), of the Education Act of (2010), the Ministry of Education and Training further committed itself that it will ensure that learners with special educational needs are given special treatment, education and the care required by their conditions (Ministry of Education and Training, 2010).

From there, in 2011, the government of Lesotho introduced the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (2011), with the aim of ensuring protection towards access to education for all Basotho children regardless of their disabilities. Therefore, the child's right to access education has been stated in Section 11, (1). Also, Section 13 proceeds that a child with disability has a right to education and training to help him/her to enjoy a full and decent life and achieve the greatest degree of a self-reliance and social integration.

The Education Sector Plan (2016) aimed at providing all-inclusive schools with appropriate teaching and learning materials, such as Brailed textbooks, stylus and slates, to enable learners

with visual impairment to acquire appropriate life skills and access to quality education. In addition, the Inclusive Education Policy of (2018) aimed at ensuring that all Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) participate in Lesotho's school system, that prepares them to function and live independently in the society and contribute positively to both social and economic development.

Although these policies were introduced with the aim of providing access to education for learners with disabilities in Lesotho, it is in the Education Sector Plan (2016) and the Children's Protection and Welfare (2011) where the government of Lesotho has shown a great initiative towards supporting the education of learners with disabilities including those with visual impairment in inclusive schools. In the Sector Plan (2016), the government made a commitment that it will facilitate all-inclusive schools with appropriate teaching and learning materials such as Brailed textbooks, stylus, slates and manila paper for learners with visual impairment so that they will be able to acquire appropriate life skills and access to quality education in mainstream schools.

The government of Lesotho is obliged under international and domestic law to ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from the general educational system and that children with disabilities can learn on an equal basis with able children as stated by Eriamiatoe (2013). However, there is no section in the Education Act of (2010) and the Inclusive Education Policy of (2018), stating how learners with visual impairment should be supported to help them to reach their maximum potentials in inclusive environment so that they will function and live independently in the society and contribute positively to both social and economic development as a means of promoting inclusive education in the country. In line with this, Tseeke (2016); Ralejoe (2016) support that lack of trained teachers on how to support learners with visual impairment in regular schools as well as insufficient support for inclusive education by the Ministry of education and Training are possible contributing factors hampering implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho. In connection, Mosia and Phasha (2020:4) add that the needs of learners with disabilities at secondary and tertiary level are compromised in Lesotho, as these learners have limited access to teaching and learning resources, information and communication technological resources. In addition, denying learners with visual impairments' right to study programmes of their own choice at NUL shows lack of access to education for these learners (Mosia and Phasha, 2017; Matlosa and Matobo, 2007).

Tseeke (2016) concludes that while there are several government initiatives to provide education for learners with disabilities, most learners with visual impairment still do not have access to mainstream secondary education, and that those who have access also do not perform well in their Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) Examinations, and that restricts these learners from furthering their studies to institutions of higher learning.

2.6.2 Inclusive education in Lesotho

Although the government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Education and Training, has shown a great initiative by establishing different policies with the aim of providing learners with disabilities with support to access education in inclusive schools and maximize their potentials just like learners without disabilities, inclusive education for learners with visual impairment in Lesotho has not been well researched to point out clear policy and practice challenges. There are studies which discuss inclusive education generally and such will be discussed briefly before directing my focus to the gaps in the studies highlighting the education of learners with visual impairment.

Research on inclusive education notes that the Ministry of Education and Training does not seem to differentiate between inclusive education and integration (Shelile and Hlalele, 2014). This has led to poor training of teachers in schools that support learners with disabilities (Shelile and Hlalele, 2014). Researchers seem to agree that the following are common challenges to inclusive education in Lesotho: lack of trained teachers to support inclusive education; inadequate resources which contributes to poor retention of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools; lack of motivation and support to schools and teachers practising inclusive education; inaccessible schools' environment; inaccessible curriculum to accommodate all learners in regular schools and inappropriate teaching strategies used by teachers as a result of the huge ratio of students per teacher in inclusive classrooms (LNFOD, 2016; Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart and Lyner-Cleophas, 2012; Khoaeane, 2012; Urwick and Elliott, 2010; Seotsanyana and Matheolane 2010; Johnstone and Chapman, 2009; Moloi, Morobe and Urwick, 2008). Another challenge that hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education is bullying, which includes name calling, insults, teasing and threats, and restricts the victims to participate fully in their learning due to the fear of their bullies (Lekena, 2016; Ngakane, Muthukrishna and Ngcobo, 2012). In addition, Amarat (2011) notes that teachers in public schools work in overcrowded classrooms which impact on

classroom management and make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention and motivation to learners (Marais, 2016; Muthusamy, 2015; Zwane and Malale, 2018). Qasim and Arif (2014) also add that in overcrowded classrooms, learners cannot pay attention or participate at the required level of intensity because classmates are noisy and restive.

There are few studies which focus on access to education for learners with visual impairments that have been carried out in the context of Lesotho. These include studies by Matlosa and Matobo (2007); Macheli (2008); Tseeke (2016); Ralejoe (2016), Mosia and Phasha (2017) and Ralejoe (2019). Matlosa and Matobo (2007) observe that although the National University of Lesotho admits students with visual impairments, these students are only admitted into programmes that do not require Mathematics and Statistics. They further indicate that lecturers are ignorant about the needs of students with visual impairment, hence they use teaching methods that exclude these students (Matlosa and Matobo, 2007). With regard to inclusive education at primary level, the study argues that efforts for integration of students with visual impairment at primary level are very slow in this country. There is only one resource centre for the blind in the entire country which specializes in training learners with visual impairment. However, this study did not highlight the challenges experienced by these students in the mainstream schools as well as their lives in general.

Macheli (2008) conducted a study aimed at investigating challenges encountered by learners with visual impairment in Lesotho's mainstream primary schools. The findings indicate that education is not accessible for learners with visual impairment at primary level in Lesotho due to lack of resources and unskilled teachers on how to handle learners with visual impairment in mainstream classrooms, hence teachers tend to ignore these students during teaching and learning process. Teachers complain that learners with visual impairment need a lot of time to understand the concepts taught and to finish up the assigned task. As a result, teachers pay more attention to sighted learners. Although Macheli states the various challenges faced by learners with visual impairment at primary level, the study did not indicate details of how teachers engage learners with visual impairment as well as the relationship between learners with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts. The time gap from when it was conducted also creates the need for the current study to monitor if there is any progress.

A qualitative study by Ralejoe (2016) on the perceptions of Lesotho secondary school teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities, as well as Ralejoe (2019) on teachers' views on inclusive education for visually impaired secondary school learners found out that teachers lack knowledge and skills to effectively implement inclusive education for learners with visual impairment. According to Mugambi (2012), inadequate training results in teachers who lack competence to stand in front of the learners. As a result, Igune (2009) supports the idea that training and retraining of teachers in the field of special needs education, provision of specialized equipment, recruitment of more teachers and awareness seminars may help in the inclusion of learners with visual impairment. Apart from shortage of equipment and support staff, an examination-oriented curriculum as well as hostile infrastructure impact the education of these learners negatively. Another challenge that learners with visual impairment experience, as stated by the findings of these studies, is lack of support from parents and the government.

Tseeke (2016) also conducted a qualitative study on teachers' perceptions towards the inclusion of learners with visual impairment in secondary schools whereby six teachers were selected purposively. Non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, and the findings reveal that teachers have insufficient knowledge about inclusive education for learners with visual impairment. The findings further show that there is lack of teaching and learning materials to support the education of learners with visual impairment at inclusive secondary schools.

The studies by Ralejoe (2019; 2016) as well as Tseeke (2016) have similar findings concerning the barriers restricting effective inclusive education for learners with visual impairment at inclusive secondary schools in Lesotho. This calls for further research to find out whether the challenges these learners experience at secondary differs from those encountered by learners with visual impairment at primary level.

Although Mosia and Phasha (2017); Matlosa and Matobo (2007) focused mainly on access to education for learners with disabilities at Higher Learning Institutions, they state that learners with visual impairment face various challenges in inclusive settings. A qualitative study by Mosia and Phasha (2017) indicates that one higher education institution did not use disability data to secure either the academic or social support services for students with disabilities. As a result, students with visual impairment have a limited choice of courses or programmes due to poor administration

of concessions. Not only do these students experience challenges such as lack of educational resources, inflexible teaching methods and curricular but they are also excluded from the social and extracurricular activities performed in this institution (Mosia and Phasha, 2017). Although the right to participate in extramural activities is denied, as opined by Mosia and Phasha (2017:249), Lalvini (2015) confirmed that extra curriculum activities build good rapport among learners, ending up helping one another with their schoolwork. As learning involves interplay of students' motivation, physical facilities, teaching resources and skills of teaching and curriculum adaptation (Lyons, 2012), the central concern of teachers in inclusive schools is inadequate training in delivering a full curriculum to students with a wide range of disabilities (O'Mara, Akre, Munton, Guillamon, Martin, Gibson, Liewellyn, Matthews, Conway and Cooper, 2012:82). Therefore, the only way for inclusive education to be successful is by providing teachers with continuous professional development training such as workshops, availability of teaching and learning materials including assistive devices such as audio recorders and computers with JAWS to promote effective learning (Liman and Longpoe, 2015; Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013; European Agency, 2012; Margolin, 2011; Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010).

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, literature was reviewed on access to education for learners with visual impairment in inclusive schools at primary level both internationally and regionally. The contrast has also been drawn between the medical model which promotes exclusion of learners with disabilities from education, by fixing them to fit in the education system, and the social model which shifts away from fixing these learners by supporting their participation in inclusive schools. The findings from different researchers indicate that even though the agreement was made in Salamanca Spain on making inclusive education a standard form of education for all learners regardless of their abilities or disabilities, access to education for learners with visual impairment remains a problem both internationally and regionally even today due to various barriers that interfere with its successful implementation. These obstacles include among others: lack of inclusive education policies in different countries, lack of trained teachers in inclusive schools, inaccessible schools and classrooms' environment, lack of resources and text books written in Braille, inappropriate teaching methods used by teachers and the teachers and sighted learners' negative attitudes towards learners with visual impairment. In this situation Lesotho is not exceptional as challenges

faced by learners with visual impairment globally are similar to those that are experienced by learners with visual impairment in Lesotho as well.

According to UNESCO (1994), inclusive education cannot happen unless there is restructuring of curricular, retraining and orientation of teachers and change in teaching approaches. In connection, Mboshi (2018:2) supports that full inclusion includes: placement in the neighbourhood schools, zero rejection philosophy, no special classes or schools, co-operative teaching and special education support given to regular education. In this regard, it is only by removing barriers hampering effective implementation of inclusive education can countries achieve full inclusion of learners with diverse educational needs in their education systems.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methods adopted for the study. It first looks at the research paradigm which frames data collection, analysis and interpretation, followed by a discussion of the research approach and design. Next, it discusses the criteria used to select the research site and participants. It describes data generation methods and the methods used for data analysis, followed by explanation of the means for ensuring trustworthiness of the results. Lastly, the chapter discusses ethical issues affecting the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:1) define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data to make sense of the social world (Ben-David, 2011). Creswell (2014) describes interpretivist paradigm as the individuals' effort to understand the world they live in, and the appreciation of personal meanings to the world ending in not one but a complexity of views. It aims at achieving a deep understanding of the social phenomenon under study and recognizes the importance of the participant's subjectivity as part of the process (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Wasseem, 2019).

The interpretivist paradigm is suitable for this study not only by giving the researcher an opportunity to gather information from participants in their contexts and understand their interpretation about the world around them, but also by enabling the researcher to build rich local understanding of the life-world experiences of both students with visual impairment, their teachers, and of the cultures of the school and classroom contexts (Taylor and Medina, 2013). This study does not only describe objects, humans or events but tries to also depict them in their social context (Pham, 2018:4). It explores reality through participants' views, their background and experiences (Schwartz- Shea and Yanow, 2011). Interpretivists see reality as true to participants who experience it hence the need for the study to describe how participants view access to education at primary level in Lesotho (Thanh and Thanh, 2015).

3.3 Research Approach

The current study adopted a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. Qualitative research studies people's lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as the organizational functioning, social movement, cultural phenomena and interaction between nations (Rahman,

2017:3). This means that qualitative research is not statistical and it incorporates multiple realities (Rahman, 2017:3).

Kabir (2018:3) adds that qualitative data are mostly non-numerical and usually descriptive or nominal in nature. This means that the data collected are in the form of words and sentences. Kabir (2018:3) further indicates that a qualitative approach addresses the how and why of a programme and tends to use unstructured methods of data collection to fully explore the topic. Flick (2014:542) also claims that qualitative research deals with subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events and practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images instead of numbers and statistics. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:395) describe qualitative data as a primarily inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories.

Therefore, this approach was found to be more suitable for this study as it seeks to answer questions about experiences, meaning and perspectives, especially from learners with visual impairment and their teachers' point of view (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey, 2016). This approach enabled the researcher to observe the behaviour of the participants in a natural setting and have a true representation of the life events among learners with visual impairment at primary level in Lesotho (Yin, 2011).

3.4 Research Design

The current study adopted a case study design. According to Sandelowski (2011), a case is a phenomenon which is spatially delimited with the unit studied either at one point or over a bounded period of time. A case can be of different sizes depending on the object of the case study. It can be a country, a city, a social group, a business, a family or a single individual (Karlsson, 2016:3). According to Bartlett and Vavrus (2017:2), a case is often defined as a place and researchers may use case to mean one setting, place or institution or they may use case for both the institution or place or setting and each person in it. Case study research is consistently described as a versatile form of qualitative inquiry most suitable for a comprehensive, holistic and in-depth investigation of a complex issue in context, where the boundary between the context and issue is unclear and contains many variables (Creswell, 2014).

The essential requisite for employing case study as Yin (2014) states, stems from one's motivation to illuminate understanding of complex phenomena. It can also be used to describe or explore events in the everyday contexts in which they occur (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh, 2011). So, this study adopted a case study design to focus on one school and give learners with visual impairment and their teachers an opportunity to express their experiences and thoughts regarding the education of learners with visual impairment in a mainstream primary school. The researcher had a chance to capture the daily life experiences unique to participants in the selected case.

3.5 Research Location

The researcher selected a primary school in Maseru district which caters for a large number of learners with visual impairment. This school started supporting children with visual impairment in 1974. It had 2054 learners that included 76 learners with visual impairment when data were collected. Among the learners with visual impairment, forty were blind, twenty had low vision while sixteen were long-sighted. The researcher chose the school because it is the only primary school in the entire country that is officially known to include learners with visual impairment. Also Payne and Williams (2011) proposed that the study site in qualitative research should be selected for its convenience of access. Therefore, it was the researcher's interest to choose this school to conduct the study because it was accessible and is located near the researcher's work place.

3.5.1 Participant selection

Payne and Williams (2011) state that a site of research can be selected for its convenience of access. Similarly, the chosen school, despite being the only one supporting learners with visual impairment at this level, was conveniently selected as it is located near my workplace. A purposive selection was also adopted in that this was the only school which caters for learners with visual impairments hence participants in this school were the most knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest for the study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:2) add that the purposive selection of participants is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources. As a result, I set out to find people who could and were willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Etikan et al. 2016) hence selection of the school.

Ten out of 76 learners with visual impairment from Grade 3 up to Grade 7 were purposively selected for this study. Focus was on learners aged nine years and above whom the study assumed could better express themselves and share challenges experienced from their first encounter with being in an inclusive environment. Four teachers out of 31 from Grades 3 and 4 were selected purposively and this was to align the views of teachers with those of the learners who participated in the study. The following table presents the learners who participated in the study.

Table 3.1

Names	F	M	Age	District	Grade	Disability
LP1	-	1	12	Thaba-Tseka	4	Total Blindness
LP2	1	-	15	Butha-Buthe	4	Total Blindness
LP3	1	-	14	Quthing	4	Low Vision
LP4	1	-	14	Mokhotlong	4	Total Blindness
LP5	1	-	18	Maseru	4	Multi disabilities (visual, speech and physical impairments)
LP6	-	1	12	Maseru	3	Total Blindness
LP7	1	-	14	Leribe	3	Low Vision
LP8	1	-	10	Mohale's Hoek	3	Total Blindness
LP9	-	1	14	Leribe	3	Total Blindness
LP10	-	1	14	Maseru	3	Low Vision
TOTAL	6	4				

Table 3.2 presents the information on teachers of learners with visual impairment at the participating primary school. The information includes: gender, the grades they teach and their qualifications.

Table 3.2

Names	F	M	Grades Taught	Qualification
TP1	1	-	4	Diploma in Education Primary
TP2	1	-	4	Diploma in Education Primary
TP3	1	-	3	Honours Degree in Education
TP4	1	-	3	Diploma in Education Primary
TOTAL	4	0		

3.6 DATA GENERATION METHODS

This study employed two methods of data collection namely: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Data collection started in early April 2019 and ended at the end of May 2019.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

This study adopted a semi-structured interview as the appropriate tool for data generation as it gave the researcher a chance to explore in-depth assessment of participants’ reality through a series of questions addressing the aim of the study and the probing that encouraged them to tell more (Moser and Korstjens, 2018:6). Moser and Korstjens describe an interview as an interaction

between the interviewer and the respondents based on interview questions. According to Kabir (2018:12), interviews involve asking questions and getting answers from participants in the study.

During data collection, interview guides were provided, containing open-ended questions in order to give the participants an opportunity to express experiences and feelings leading to a certain behaviour in their own words in relation to the topic under study. Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for this study as they allowed learners with visual impairment to answer open-ended questions (Jamshed, 2014). Face-to-face interaction allowed learner participants to express how they experienced their education in mainstream classrooms (Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin, 2016). Therefore, this offered the researcher the opportunity to interpret non-verbal cues through observation of body language and facial expression to enhance the researcher's understanding of what is being said and how learners with visual impairment made sense of important events in their lives (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014).

Individual interviews with learners were held in their classrooms after the school knocked off. As lower grade classes knocked off at 12:00 midday, the interviews started 12:30 and proceeded until all the interview questions were answered. There are two official languages in Lesotho namely Sesotho and English, and learners were given an opportunity to choose the one they preferred and all preferred Sesotho.

Interviews with teachers were held in their classrooms during school out as well. All interviews were audio-recorded while the researcher was also taking notes regarding the answers given by the participants. As with the learners' interviews, teachers' interviews started by 12:30 and stopped when all interview questions were answered. Both Sesotho and English were used during interviews, however, Sesotho seemed to be the more dominating language as it was used frequently by both the researcher and the respondents for clarification.

3.6.2 Observation

Observation as a data generation method is described as a systematic way of watching and listening to a phenomenon as it takes place (Flyvbjerg, 2011) especially when the researcher is interested in the behaviour of participants who are so involved in their lives that they may be unable to provide objective information about it. Paradis, O' Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera and Martinianakis (2016) opine that observation allows researchers to investigate and document what people do, and in this

study it facilitated a deep understanding of the context within which the participants interacted academically (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). In this study the researcher was a non-participant observer which involved observing the setting and the group under study without participating (Kawulich, 2012). The researcher watches the situation openly but does not participate (Elmusharaf, 2012).

In order to enhance the effectiveness of classroom observation during the teaching and learning process, the researcher provided an observation checklist of issues that she paid more attention to. According to Ojung'a, Amenya, Role and Makewa (2014:6), a checklist consists of a list of specific behaviour, characteristics or activities and a place for marking whether each is present or absent. These include: the resources used during the teaching and learning process, the methods of teaching used, sitting arrangements, support given to visually impaired learners in the classroom, time allocation for visually impaired learners to think and answer and their full engagement in classroom discussion. Then, the researcher listened and watched the behaviour presented by both learners with visual impairment and their teachers during the teaching and learning processes. Based on the checklist of issues that she drew attention to, the researcher wrote down the notes concerning the behaviour presented by the participants.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Doing qualitative research is about putting oneself in another person's shoes and seeing the world from that person's perspective (Sutton and Austin, 2015:2). Therefore, this study adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which assumes that people are self-interpreting beings; actively engaged in interpreting the events, objects and people in their lives (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014:3). IPA consists of three fundamental principles, which are phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiographic (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014:3). So, the focus of analysis this study adopted was idiographic which refers to an in-depth analysis of single cases and examining individual perspectives of study participants in their unique contexts. Larkin, Shaw and Flower (2019:8) opine that IPA is focused on idiographic analysis in people's meaning-making rather than on producing a model or theory of an underlying process. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014:3) add that the fundamental principle behind the idiographic approach is to explore every single case before reducing any general statements. Thus, data analysis in this study adopts emic (insider) and etic (interpretative, outsider) positions. According to Clarke (2009:4), the emic position enables the

researcher to hear and understand the participants' story and place his experiences at the centre of the account, while adopting the etic position involves the researcher trying to make sense of the data by bringing in his own interpretations and theoretical ideas, but using verbatim quotes to ground these interpretations in the participants' actual experiences. Clarke (2009:4) further indicates that the IPA approach is inductive in nature, allowing ideas and themes to emerge from the personal accounts rather than imposing a predetermined theory. Therefore, it encourages researchers to utilize their theoretical knowledge in inductively analyzing data (Jeong and Othman, 2016:6).

In addition, According to Chapman and Smith (2002:4), IPA studies involve a detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts and it consists of four stages. The first stage as discussed by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014:6) is multiple reading and making notes. This stage involves reading and re-reading of the transcripts as well as listening audio recording repeatedly in order to make notes concerning the observations and reflections about interview experience or any other thoughts and comments of potential significance. The second stage involves transforming comments into emergent themes. In this stage, the researcher works more with his notes, rather than with the transcripts. The third stage which is seeking relationship and clustering themes involves looking for connections between emerging themes, grouping them together according to conceptual similarities, and providing each cluster with descriptive label. Finally, the table of superordinate themes is translated into narrative account, where themes are outlined, exemplified and illustrated with verbatim extracts from the participants (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014:6; Chapman and Smith, 2002:4).

Therefore, data analysis for this study began immediately with the available data as this helped additional data collection. Interviews were transcribed carefully, and read and re-read along with all the field notes while comments were made on the left side of the margin of the interview scripts on issues derived from the collected data. Re-reading of the field notes helped the researcher to identify the emerging themes expressed by the participants regarding their experiences. Emerging themes were written on the right side of the margin of the scripts and were also highlighted. When themes were identified, they were classified according to their similarities and differences. That is coding (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings and De Eyto, 2018). The themes were used to organize data for further analysis.

Data analysis for observation allowed the researcher to analyze notes taken during data collection together with issues in the checklist. Then, she classified similar behaviour presented by teachers in their respective classrooms during observations and grouped them together. She also looked for the similar behavior presented by learners with visual impairment and grouped them together as well. Their differences were also written separately. This helped the researcher to come up with a clear picture to say whether there is access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary level or not.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics focus on what is morally proper or improper when engaged with participants or when accessing archival data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014:129). King (2010) maintains that ethics in research refer to the way researchers carry out their studies in a morally defensible manner. The protection of human subjects, through the application of appropriate ethical principles, is important in all research studies (Arifin 2018:2). This study adopted five ethical considerations to ensure that data collection, analysis, discussion and dissemination do not infringe upon people's rights. These are informed consent, confidentiality, right to withdraw, beneficence and protection from harm.

3.8.1 Informed consent

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research. This is where participants must be fully informed about what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what consequences there could be (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018:6). This means to participate in a research study, participants need to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information and have a power or freedom of choice to decide whether to participate or decline (Arifin, 2018:2). As a result, informed consent should include the following: who the researcher is, the intention of the research, what data will be collected from participants, how it will be collected, used and reported, the risk of taking part in the research as well as the participants' right of access to their information and the right to withdraw at any point they feel like (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018:6). As the authors state, the informed consent process can be seen as the contract between the researcher and the participants.

As an ethical principle, participants were given an opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in this study. No one was forced to participate; hence the subjects made their own

decision to take part in the current study. They therefore participated voluntarily. The task of the researcher was to disclose all relevant information by explaining to the participants the purpose of the study and the methods to be used for data collection, the risks involved and that the researcher would not offer them anything for their participation as the study is only aimed at contributing to how access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary level can be improved in Lesotho (Baine and Taylor, 2013). Additionally, the researcher made it clear to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study anytime they wished. Participants' agreement to participate in this study was obtained only after a thorough explanation of the research process (Arifin, 2018).

As for the learners with visual impairment participating in this study, because they were underage to make decisions on whether to participate or not, the researcher wrote letters to their parents, asking for permission to be allowed to interview their children. Those letters explained the purpose and significance of the study. So the parents signed to agree that their children could take part and be interviewed for this study.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to separating or modifying any personal identifying information provided by participants from the data and it is maintained in qualitative studies (Coffelt, 2017:3). So, being qualitative in nature, the study used the principle of confidentiality by not revealing the participants' names and identities in the data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings. In addition, to show confidentiality in this study, all the information that the participants requested not to be disclosed was not used in this study. Pseudonyms were also assigned to conceal the identity of participants in this study (Akaranga and Makau, 2016).

Finally, the interviews transcripts as well as the audio-records were kept in a way that provides maximum protection of the participants' identities (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). They were kept in a locked drawer where nobody could access them except the researcher. All this was done to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

3.8.3 Right to withdraw

Right to withdraw is consistent with the principle of voluntary participation (Vanclay, Baines and Taylor, 2013:6). Therefore, it is the participants' right to be informed of this right in order for them to decide whether to participate or decline. Vanclay et al. (2013:6) state that it is participants' right

to know that they can withdraw at any time to take part in the study and ask for the removal of their data from the analysis, and that they should not be threatened by the researcher when they exercise this right. Therefore, in this study, right to withdraw was explained to the participants before the beginning of the interviews as well as before the participants signed the consent forms to make sure that they understood their rights when taking part in this study.

3.8.4 Beneficence

The participants were informed that because their participation was voluntary, there would be no provision of incentives from the researcher as this would conflict with the ethical issues. It was explained to them that the study aimed at nothing other than smoothing the way for better access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary level.

3.8.5 Protection from harm

The research design needs to consider the potential of harm to the participants, the researcher, the wider community and the institution (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018:7). The harm can range from physical, resource loss, emotional and reputational. Fleming and Zegwaard (2018:7) indicate that when considering the potential for harm, the approach should be in descending order, to eliminate, isolate and minimize the risk with the participants being fully informed on what the risks are.

According to Vanclay, Baines and Taylor (2013:6), it is fundamental that no harm must come to the participants as a result of their participation in a research. This means that the participants must not only be exposed to pain or danger in the course of the research, but also that there must be no adverse consequences to a person as a result of his participation (Vanclay et al. 2013:6). There was no foreseeable harm to participating in this study, but the researcher was ready to refer participants for counselling if issues discussed raised their emotions negatively.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data interpretation and the methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit and Beck, 2014). It is a transparency which the researcher shows in data analysis and consists of four concepts, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shaw, 2010). To show transparency, all these concepts were applied during data collection and analysis in the current study.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility is involved in establishing that the results of the research are believable (Moon, Brewer, Januchowsk-Hartley, Adams and Blackman, 2016). It deals with the focus of the research and refers to the confidence in how well the data address the intended focus (Polit and Beck, 2012). Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value (Moser and Karstjens, 2018:3). According to these authors, strategies to ensure credibility are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check. To establish credibility is to seek to ensure that a study measures or tests what is actually intended (Kennedy-Clark, 2012:5). Therefore, to ensure credibility in this study, the researcher used two strategies, which are prolonged engagement and triangulation, in which during interviews, the participants were asked to support their statements with examples, and follow-up questions were also asked. Additionally, as triangulation aims at enhancing the process of qualitative research by using multiple approaches, it was used by gathering data through different data collection methods, such as interview and observation (Moser and Karstjens, 2018).

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the concept of applicability and is equivalent to external validity in quantitative research (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). Generally, transferability refers to the degree to which the research can be transferred to other contexts (Polit and Beck, 2012). The responsibility of the researcher is to provide a thick description of the participants and the research process, to enable the readers to assess whether the findings are transferable to their own setting, and this is called transferability judgement (Moser and Korstjens, 2018:4). To ensure transferability, a rich account of descriptive data was provided, such as the context in which the research was carried out, its setting, selection of participants and methods used for data collection.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen and Kyngas, 2014:2). To establish dependability is to seek to ensure that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). So, the current study achieved dependability by reporting – in detail – each process in the study to the participants to enable an external researcher to repeat the inquiry and achieve similar results.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Kennedy-Clark (2012:5) describes confirmability as the degree to which the findings of the research are the results of the ideas and experiences of the participants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the research, while Hays and Singh (2012) define it as an extent to which the results of the study reflect the subjective views of the participants. In this study, confirmability is promoted by interpreting exactly what has been presented by the participants during data collection. Because confirmability is concerned with the aspect of neutrality, the interpretation of data was not based on the researcher's particular preferences and viewpoints but grounded in the data collected (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). Therefore, the researcher made a clear distinction of the actual statements and views of participants the way they presented them.

3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This is a qualitative study underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm because it sought to give the researcher an opportunity to gather information from participants in their own context and understand their interpretation of the world around them. Data were collected from one primary school in which fourteen participants were interviewed. The school and participants were selected through a mix of convenient and purposive sampling procedures. Data were analyzed through interpretative phenomenological analysis because it enables a researcher to analyze in detail how participants perceive and make sense of things which are happening around them and look at individual cases and consequently compare cases to identify similar and different themes. Finally, the ethical issues the study considered, as well as measures to ensure trustworthiness, were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study in line with the five themes generated from data analysis namely: barriers to inclusive education, learners' views concerning their education, attitudes towards inclusive education, support for learners with visual impairment and ways that can improve learners' education. The participants' words were quoted verbatim to enable readers to have first-hand interaction with participants' views. In citing excerpts from participants, a teacher participant is cited as TP and a learner participant as LP while also attaching a number up to the total number of participants per group.

4.2 BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The study identified four barriers that limit access to education for learners with visual impairment namely inadequate teaching and learning materials, teachers' workload, inappropriate teaching methods and inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education. These are elaborated upon in the sections below.

4.2.1 Inadequate teaching and learning materials

Teachers were of the view that there was lack of teaching and learning materials in the school to support the education of learners with visual impairment. For example, TP2 explains:

Although there are materials such as jot and not machine, stylus and slates that learners use for writing in Braille, there are no textbooks written in Braille. This makes teaching these learners ineffective especially when doing activities in textbooks.

TP4 comments:

I think if the school has computers that can transcribe the work of learners with visual impairment into Braille, the education of these learners would be better. As for now teaching them is a huge challenge.

TP1 argues:

There are no resources at all in this school to support learners with visual impairment, the best way we can do is to improvise to assist them, but we don't have time to prepare those materials due to the workload we have.

However, TP3 said teachers could improvise. She notes:

For the visually impaired learners to understand the concept I teach them, I provide them with concrete material for them to manipulate.

Teachers also suggested what the government should do to support learners with visual impairment effectively.

TP4 narrates:

The curriculum designers must make sure that there are enough materials that will support all learners especially those with visual impairment as their condition restricts them from acquiring information. Therefore, schools that include visually impaired learners should also be supported by the government with the resources needed by these learners to make their learning easier.

TP3 also notes:

When the textbooks are designed for sighted learners, visually impaired learners should also be taken into consideration. I mean, the textbooks written in Braille for visually impaired learners should also be produced in great numbers, rather than what is being done now.

TP3 proceeds:

You won't believe that there is only one textbook for each unit in this grade. How will these learners share one textbook from 4 streams? If things are done properly, just like the sighted learners where every child has his own textbooks, visually impaired learners should have their textbooks as well.

TP1 similarly expresses her thoughts:

I think it would be very important and helpful if every class has its own equipment so that I can take my time with my visually impaired learners, knowing their weaknesses and strengths, and with the resources I have in my class, help these learners during my spare time instead of referring them elsewhere.

TP2 also states:

The Ministry of Education through the Special Education Unit should come to us so that we can tell them what is needed for these learners; the materials and resources that can be appropriate for their learning and help us by providing us with those materials. Because we

are the ones who teach these learners, no one can think that he or she knows them better than us. Good communication between the Ministry and us can help in the improvement of the education of these learners.

Lack of teaching and learning materials was also identified during classroom observations. Although the learners had stylus and slates together with jot and not machines, there were no textbooks written in Braille. The problem of lack of textbooks was identified when learners were given activities from textbooks to read. While sighted learners read their textbooks, learners with visual impairment were seen sitting without books and listening to their sighted peers while reading. In addition, although one teacher indicated that she improvised to provide her learners with teaching aids in order for them to understand the concepts taught, teachers were not seen using teaching aids when teaching during the observations. There were no teaching aids pasted on the walls for sighted learners or concrete objects that acted as a reference during teachers' absence so that learners could either read or count on their own to remind themselves on what they did. One participant also felt that there is no consultation between the Special Education Unit of the Ministry and the school, which is the only one supporting learners with visual impairment.

This study did not measure the extent of damage to learners' academic development due to lack of reading materials.

4.2.2 Teachers' workload

Teachers felt they were overloaded and the situation restricted them from being productive as they were unable to reach each and every learner due to the huge number of learners in mainstream classrooms. TP1 comments:

In this school, we face challenges of meeting the needs of learners with visual impairment due to the large number of learners in our classrooms; sometimes we forget that we have these learners during lessons presentations.

TP4 asserts:

There are 73 learners in this classroom including 4 learners with visual impairment, it is not easy for me to monitor the behaviour of every learner as well as classroom activities at the same time.

TP3 opines:

I have 75 learners in this classroom, this is a large number to be taught by one teacher. Dealing with such number including those with visual impairment who need special attention is a lot of work.

TP2 argues:

It is not easy at all to manage an overcrowded classroom, when you are trying to help a learner with visual impairment, his or her colleagues carry on with irrelevant issues. You will leave this learner trying to discipline them, by the time you have finished, you are tired and you will never go back to that learner again.

The teacher-learner ratios were observed to be high in each class visited with the number in each classroom ranging between 70 and 80 learners. Each classroom had three to four learners with visual impairment. The school practises class teaching; all subjects are taught by one class teacher. A teacher must teach and mark the learners' work as well as give those with visual impairment the attention they need. Classroom space was so filled with desks that movement was restricted within the class.

Additionally, the large number of learners in each classroom made it hard for teachers to manage the class; learners hardly listened to teachers for a considerable period of time. With teachers in each of the classes having to shout amidst the chaos, it was hard to think how any learner grasped any information under such noise. This meant teachers had little or no time for individual attention given to learners with special education needs nor used learner-centred methods of teaching as noted below.

4.2.3 Inappropriate teaching methods

Teachers felt that the prescribed methods for inclusive education were not working in their context as TP2 narrates:

Although learner-centred methods are the best for involving learners in their learning, the overcrowded situation that we work in leaves us with no choice except to use the methods that can help us to achieve the objectives, because we have a lot of content to cover for these learners to go to the next grade. That is why I prefer using teacher-centered methods.

TP4 complains:

Learner-centred methods waste time as learners take a lot of time to finish the given task.

TP3 states:

When you give these learners work in groups for instance, instead of doing work they play.

Similarly TP1 argues:

I think learner-centred methods are appropriate and useful for learners at upper grades, as for the lower ones, they do not work.

Apart from using teacher-centred methods, teachers said that they taught all learners similarly as they were in the same classrooms. For example, TP2 narrates:

We do not teach learners with visual impairment differently from the sighted learners. The methods of teaching that we use in class are applied to all learners.

TP3 notes:

The strategies that I use to teach these learners are the same. Learners with visual impairment are my learners just like the sighted learners, so as long as I make sure that all my learners understand the concepts I teach them, I don't think there is a need to use different styles of teaching.

TP1 also indicates:

Because these learners are in the same classroom, taught by the same teacher, there is no way that I can use different methods while teaching them, after all I don't see anything wrong with teaching them in the same way as I have not seen them having the problem with the way I teach them. You won't believe that visually impaired learners are very brilliant and can excel in such a way that they can top the sighted learners.

TP4 asserts:

Teaching learners in an inclusive school means that these learners should be included in every activity that is done with the sighted learners. So, the methods of teaching that I use in my classroom apply to both learners.

Given the number of learners in each class, it was expected that teachers would use teacher-centred methods as they give them control over their class. However, they seemed not to believe that other methods such as group work, discussion and discovery would enhance the learning environment. The use of the lecture and question and answer methods of teaching limited the ability of learners

to practise any skills. They were hardly given written work, hence assessment was done orally in all classrooms. The teachers believe that learner-centred methods make them fail to cover sufficient grade-level content. Their views on teaching and learning gave the impression that they lacked skills in inclusive teaching methodologies as revealed below.

4.2.4 Inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education

Although all participants were qualified teachers, they lacked skills and knowledge on how to support learners with visual impairment. TP1 explains:

Although I hold a Diploma qualification, I did not receive any training in relation to the support of learners with visual impairment at college. Therefore, I lack skills and knowledge on how to teach learners with visual impairment.

TP4 claims:

Sometimes, I feel like I am a barrier to the success of these learners. How can I teach these learners effectively if I lack knowledge on how to support them? It is really embarrassing and demotivating.

TP2 opines:

Yes, I agree that we are trying but it is not enough, we are not giving these learners what they are expecting from us.

Conversely, one teacher was taught some skills through in-service training. TP3 therefore narrates:

Though I did not get a training on how to support learners with visual impairment in inclusive schools at the University, the skills and knowledge that I acquired from the workshops I have attended opened my eyes on how to handle these learners in regular classrooms.

Teachers lack skills and knowledge on how to break down curriculum aspects into digestible content for learners with visual impairment. TP4 notes:

The guidelines in the syllabus are general, we were not guided on how to support learners with visual impairment in order for them to grasp the content in the same way as the sighted learners.

TP3 argues:

The syllabus contains too much content which we are expected to cover, and it is not easy for us to meet the educational needs of all learners while rushing to cover the whole syllabus at the same time.

TP1 indicates:

I don't know how to adapt the content in the syllabus to suit learners with visual impairment that is why I present my lessons in the same way for all my learners.

TP2 states:

It is very difficult indeed to teach learners with visual impairment with sighted learners without appropriate training for their support.

However, three out of four participant teachers felt that they could benefit from training while one was confident with her skills.

TP4 suggests:

Workshops play an integral part for equipping many people with relevant skills and knowledge within a short period of time. Therefore, I prefer to be trained through workshops because it is impossible to return to school to be trained again, let alone that the government told us that we will no longer be paid for our qualifications. So nowadays, going to school is a waste of time and money that cannot be refunded.

TP2 notes:

I need workshops on Braille skills so that I can be able to transcribe the work for my students. The issue of referring our kids to the Centre for their work to be transcribed wastes my time. I want to do all the work for myself.

TP1 argues:

I don't need workshops at all, I would prefer to go for a six months course so that I will be taught in detail how to deal with learners with visual impairment, rather than going to the workshops without follow-ups, when I am faced with challenges and there is no one to ask for assistance.

TP3 asserts:

I don't need any training at all. The training that I got from the workshops that I have attended is enough for me. What I need is to be equipped with the materials and equipment that I can use to help learners with visual impairment in my classroom.

While teachers have different opinions on whether they need a workshop or a course of a longer duration to acquire skills to support learners with visual impairment, it is clear that they are currently ill-equipped. They lack knowledge and skills to support learners with visual impairment. Of the four teachers interviewed, only one feels confident with her skills.

4.3 LEARNERS' VIEWS CONCERNING THEIR EDUCATION

In responding to how they viewed their education, learners with visual impairment have mixed experiences of opportunities and challenges. Their views were categorized into three sub-themes namely: VI learners' views about inclusion in class, psychosocial challenges affecting their education and experience of bullying.

4.3.1 VI Learners' views about inclusion in class activities

The following are some of their views on access to education. LP9 states:

Being here does not mean that every child who cannot see is attending school because our brothers and sisters who are also visually impaired are still locked indoors because of the fear their parents have of the community members when they have children with disabilities.

LP3 points out:

Our teachers try their best to help us but we are too many in the classroom.

LP1 opines:

Sighted learners make a lot of noise during the class and that prevents us from hearing what the teacher is saying. I think if we are not as many as we are in the classroom, our teachers would be able to see who made noise and punish them.

LP8 notes:

It's like sighted learners are the only ones who are recognized and encouraged to succeed in life. For instance, do you know that in my class all sighted learners have textbooks while there are no textbooks written in Braille for us? When we are given work from the textbooks such as

reading, when sighted peers practise to learn how to read we just listen to them. How will we practice reading if we don't have Brailled textbooks? It is impossible.

LP4 states:

We are not as fast as sighted learners so sometimes the teacher gets angry when we are very slow to finish the work, especially when we are given written work.

LP6 also indicates:

Our opportunities to attend school are very slim. For example, we do not have the freedom of attending schools of our choice just like sighted peers.

Similarly, LP7 argues:

If we are treated equally with the sighted learners, there would be many schools for us too. As for now where we are still being only admitted in this school, I won't say we are fully included in the education system.

Although some learners complained that they did not participate like others, three learners were positive about their school experience. LP2 narrates:

I don't have a problem because I attend school, more especially with sighted learners. If I was not given this chance, I shouldn't be here by this time. I would have been at home with no hope for the future, hidden by my parents. But I am at school being educated with sighted learners in the same classroom and I am happy with that.

LP10 opines:

I don't have any complaint concerning my education as our teachers treat us equally with others.

Similarly, LP5 indicates:

I am satisfied with the support that is provided by both our teachers and friends.

Although some of the learners with visual impairment were happy with the support they got from their teachers and sighted learners, they complained that they were not fully included in the education system as they did not have the freedom to attend schools of their choice. They complained that while they were struggling due to lack of learning materials, their sighted peers had materials to support their learning.

4.3.2 Psychosocial challenges affecting learners' education

Studying away from their parents and guardians is a great psychosocial distress for learners with visual impairment. LP3 shares her views:

Attending school far away from my parents affects me emotionally. Seeing my classmates go home after school and I staying at the Centre makes me feel angry. Sometimes I don't want to talk with other children in the Centre. This situation is painful.

In responding to how this affects her studies, the girl replies:

No! It does not affect my studies because when I am at school I forget that I don't live with my parents. I only feel sad when I am alone; thinking about my parents, siblings and friends makes me feel that I hate living at the Centre.

LP2 also indicates:

It is very painful to attend school far away from home. I miss my parents every moment of my life when I am here. When I miss them I feel bored, but nothing I can do because I am blind, I cannot see, so there are no schools that admit learners with visual impairment in my district, if there were any I wouldn't be here. Therefore, I am here because this is the only school that we attend.

In responding to how this affects her studies LP2 opines:

It does not affect my studies because I know that when schools are closed I will visit my parents.

Eight out of ten learners with visual impairment indicated that though it is painful to stay away from their parents and guardians at their early ages, there is nothing they can do as there are no schools for visually impaired learners at district level in Lesotho. Therefore, for them to be educated just like their sighted counterparts, they have to accept the Centre as their second home especially while they were at school. However, one learner did not like the idea of staying at the Centre and this negatively affected his studies.

LP10 argues:

I don't want to stay at the Centre. I want to live with my parents and come to school just like my sighted classmates who stay with their parents and come to school in the morning. I hate to live

in the Centre. I think if I was staying with my parents, I would work even harder because I would have been happy. Staying here makes me feel always angry.

Apart from being emotionally affected, learners with visual impairment complained that their education was not fully supported at the Centre; their second home.

LP10 comments:

Here at school, some other days we are asked to put on our private clothes and pay M2. When we ask for that money from the people who take care of us at the Centre, they rebuke us, asking us why we did not ask for that money from our parents, yet we do not live with our parents and our parents do not know that we are asked to put on private and pay M2 at school.

LP1 states his complaint:

The problem is that we are not allowed to have money at the Centre, so I wonder where we would keep that money if our parents gave us. Also, our parents do not give us money because they were told not to do so. The Centre promised to take care of us but when we ask for the things that are needed at school for our learning, we are not supported.

Similarly, LP9 notes:

Although our teachers do not expel us but they too scold us when we tell them that we don't have money. They say we are part of the learners; therefore, we have to do what we are expected to do and pay for the contributions just like other learners. It is not nice to be shamed in front of other learners when we do not have money.

LP4 raises her contribution:

The problem that I have encountered due to being far away from my parents is that no one supports me with my studies. For instance, when we are asked to pay money for Charismas (the money that every learner attending a Catholic Church School is expected to pay, to improve the church services), our caretakers at the Centre did not give us that money. They told us that we should have asked for it from our parents, yet they know exactly that they don't allow us to bring money from our parents. Also when we are asked to wear our private clothes and pay M2 at school, we are not allowed to wear the private at the Centre. This is painful because if I am staying with my parents, they would have supported my education fully.

LP8 opines that:

My schoolwork is not supported at all here. Sometimes I feel like staying here is a big mistake that my parents ever made. If I was staying with my parents, I think they would work hard to support me and give me everything that is needed at school.

Similarly, LP6 claims:

You don't know how painful it is, being in the classroom with other learners putting on their private clothes while you are wearing the school uniform, yet you too wanted to wear the private, but for the fact that you do not stay with your parents, you have to obey the rules and do as you are told to. It's like we are discriminated against, as compared to the other learners, because we cannot see.

LP7 asserts:

My schoolwork is not supported in the Centre in the way that I think my parents would have done. Yes! I do not deny that when we are asked to bring staff like food when we are going to be taught how to prepare some dishes such as dessert or traditional dishes, we are given those items but when it comes to money! Iyo! It's a problem.

Though eight learners stated their dissatisfaction for not being supported at the Centre, two learners did not complain about the support they were given. For example, LP3 expressed herself that:

I don't have any problem concerning my studies as the Centre as my second home. While I am here it supports me with everything that is needed for my education.

LP2 stated her view:

I don't have a problem at all because the Centre takes good care of me and provides me with everything that is needed at school. We are even helped with our assignments at the Centre.

Although studying away from parents and guardians did not negatively affect the studies of learners with visual impairment, this situation causes a great psychosocial distress to the lives of these learners.

4.3.3. VI learners' experiences of Bullying

Apart from psychosocial distress which learners with visual impairment experienced due to studying away from their family members, these learners get teased by sighted learners sometimes, which leaves them vulnerable. LP3 narrates:

Although some of the sighted learners appreciate us, some do not treat us fairly.

LP2 complains:

Some of the sighted peers call us names and it is very painful to be called by your condition.

LP10 also states:

Sometimes when I am angry at the way some of our colleagues treat us, I ask myself whether I was born by mistake.

Similarly, LP9 indicates:

It's like being visually impaired means that you are also deaf impaired. Sighted learners are not ashamed of gossiping about you in your presence as if you don't hear.

LP7 also narrates:

I remember one day when I was going to the classroom from the toilet, I was not aware that the window was opened as they were all closed when we went out. When I passed next to that window, instead of telling me that I should be careful so that the window could not hit me, sighted learners who were playing next to that window kept quiet until that window hit me next to the eye and instead of helping me they laughed at me.

LP8 expresses herself:

Sometimes when you pass next to them, you hear them laughing, yet before you passed they were not laughing.

LP4 indicates:

I think they don't like us because the things that they do to us, they don't do to other learners.

LP1 claims:

Sometimes they hide our learning materials when we put them in our desks, when we ask who took them instead of answering, they silently return them again. Do you see that they treat us as if we are stupid?

LP6 also notes:

Sometimes they steal our learning materials such as stylus, I wonder if they do not wish us to be educated like them or what.

The teasing by the sighted learners leaves learners with visual impairment vulnerable and with lack of self-esteem as reflected by the responses shared above.

4.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

When asked to express their views on inclusion of learners with visual impairment in their school, both teachers and learners expressed positive and supportive views with only a few exceptions. For example, TP1 states:

Inclusive education is beneficial for learners with visual impairment as it enables them an opportunity to learn acceptable behaviour from their sighted peers and also to accept themselves the way they are. On the other hand, it also teaches sighted learners how to accept and respect one another regardless of their differences.

Similarly, TP3 opines:

Inclusive education gives learners with disabilities the experience of growing up together with their non-disabled age mates in an environment where diversity is a norm.

TP2 notes:

I support inclusive education rather than special education, because inclusive education paves the way for an inclusive society. In the future we will no longer exclude people with disability from participation in community activities.

TP4 opines:

Nowadays learners with visual impairment participate fully in everyday school activities with non-disabled learners unlike in the past where they were neglected, locked in the houses and kept away from general public.

On the other hand, learners with visual impairment were of the same view that being in the same school and classroom with sighted learners was something that made them feel welcome and accepted in the school community. LP3 narrates:

I like being at school with my normal friends as this makes me feel that I am accepted in the community.

LP2 indicates:

Because of this school, I have many friends and that makes me feel happy.

LP10 notes:

Before coming to this school, people in my village were afraid of me, and other children did not want to play with me. I used to stay at home, because I was also afraid of them. But after coming here, studying with everyone, I am able to play with other children at home and at school.

LP7 asserts:

Attending this school gave me a chance to learn with my peers and we have good friendships.

LP4 contributes:

My classmates help me to get my way when I got lost.

LP6 argues:

When you are blind, there are many things that you don't know, so my friends share with me information they acquire visually.

Only a few learners with visual impairment responded negatively. They argued that they did not feel comfortable around sighted learners. For example, LP1 explains:

Sighted learners make fun of us when we get lost, instead of helping us they laugh at us.

LP9 notes:

I think special schools are better, if we are all blind in the school, no one will think that he is better than others.

LP5 asserts:

I don't feel comfortable around other learners. Sometimes when they laugh, I think that they are laughing at me, and that makes me feel shy.

Generally, the participating teachers were positive with the idea of including learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools as they believe that it is not beneficial for such learners only but for the whole society as it gives everybody an opportunity to participate in mainstream activities in the community regardless of their disabilities. On the other hand, while some learners with visual impairment feel accepted and assisted, there are others who feel isolated and excluded.

4.5 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Participants' reflections on the support given to learners with visual impairment referred to three areas, namely: academic support, concessions given for learning and learners' inclusion in extramural activities.

4.5.1 Academic support

Support for learners is a collaborative exercise between teachers and transcribers at the Centre as teachers do not know Braille. TP4 notes:

Because I don't know Braille, I write their work in exercise books and send it to the Centre to be transcribed so that they can write their answer. After answering the questions their work is also transcribed into "normal" writing so that it can be easier for me to mark them.

TP1 asserts:

I always start my lessons by asking learners questions based on lessons done previously to capture my their interest, and this helps me to see if learners with visual impairment had some problems on what we did previously so that I can help them from there.

TP3 explains:

Teaching these students is challenging. I try by all means to prepare teaching aids relevant to topics I teach or bring the real objects so that when I explain the concepts taught, because the sighted learners have an opportunity to hear and see what has been explained, visually impaired learners are also given the opportunity to hear the explanation and manipulate the object they are taught about.

TP2 points out:

Every time before I start my lesson, I call visually impaired learners by their names to call for their attention. Even during the presentation of the lesson, I call them by their names, even to ask them some questions based on what I have explained to capture their attention and see if we are still together or not. There is nothing I can do to support their learning except making sure that everything I teach is explained thoroughly for them to understand as they rely on the hearing sense more than other senses for them to acquire information.

The responses demonstrate that teachers did not only ask sighted learners questions, but they did the same with learners with visual impairment. Furthermore, teachers also stated that they provided learners with visual impairment with remedial classes. For example, TP4 states:

Though I don't have time due to my workload, I try to create time to provide them with remedial classes in order to help them to be at the same level with their sighted peers.

TP2 contributes:

I provided learners with visual impairment with remedial classes. That is, after school, before they go to the Centre, I stay with them in the class for 30 minutes to talk about what we did for the day and give them chance to ask questions concerning what has been done in the classroom that they did not understand.

TP3 notes:

Remedial classes are not only important for learners but for the teachers as well because they help me to evaluate myself. During remedial classes I can see my strengths and weakness on the support that I give to my learners.

Similarly, TP1 states:

After school I spend 30 to 40 minutes with learners with visual impairment to discuss together what was done in class to see if they grasped any information and give them a chance to ask where they need clarification.

Generally, learners with visual impairment were happy with concessions and support from teachers and peers. Their views are expressed as follows:

LP3 states:

The teacher and other learners are supportive. They help me with the schoolwork. For instance, after writing whatever the teacher wants us to learn on the chalkboard, she reads it aloud so that even us, those who are unable to see what is written on the board can hear. The teacher also helps us by writing the notes in our notebooks and allows us to take those notes to the Centre where they will be written in our own writing, which is Braille so that we will be able to read them just like the sighted learners.

LP7 points out:

Our sighted classmates also support us by copying notes on our behalf from the chalkboard especially when the teacher has a lot of work to do. After that, we take our notebooks immediately to the Centre to be written in Braille.

LP4 notes:

Activities that are done in the classroom, that involve reading and writing, are taken to the Centre to be transcribed into Braille, so that we will be able to read and answer the questions. After answering the questions with Braille, our answers also have to be written with the writing that the teachers know because they do not know Braille. Then they are able to mark. Therefore, our answers are also transcribed into the teacher's handwriting at the Centre.

LP8 opines that:

Both my teacher and the sighted classmates help me with my schoolwork. Sometimes when the teacher is too busy to copy the work from the board for me, my sighted classmates dictate what is written on the chalkboard for me so that I can do the work like them.

LP1 states:

My teacher and my sighted classmates are very supportive to me. My teacher explains everything she teaches us for us to understand the concepts taught. She also reads everything written on the board and asks us to repeat it after her. Thereafter, she comes and stands next to me to hear whether I am reading or not. If she identifies that I have a problem, she helps me immediately.

LP9 asserts:

My classmates who are able to see help me by dictating words and numbers written on the board. Sometimes when we are given an assignment, if they are not in a hurry, my sighted friends help me with the assignment before they go home.

LP6 notes:

When the time is over and the teacher sees that I have not finished, she sends those who have finished outside to play so that they cannot disturb me. She did this especially during the examination period.

LP5 comments:

My teacher allows us to ask her questions anytime if we have any concerning our studies.

LP10 opines:

During the lesson, my teacher used to call my other visually impaired classmates and I by our names. I think she did this to call for our attention.

Similarly, LP2 indicates:

Sometimes after school, the teacher calls us (learners with visual impairment) and asks us questions concerning the taught lessons, and then explains for us where we did not understand.

Although teachers indicated that they were not able to support learners with visual impairment due to the high learner-teacher ratio depriving them of individual attention, when asked about the support provided to learners, they suggested ideas such as remedial work after school, drawing the attention of the learners before classes began and providing sufficient teaching aids to aid their learning. The learners were happy with support from both peers, teachers as well as staff who transcribed for them at the Centre.

4.5.2 Provision of concessions

Participants had to reflect on the type of opportunities the school gives the learners besides teachers' support in class and the following were some of their views. TP1 narrates:

Another thing that I do to help learners with visual impairment in my class is to provide them with extra time to finish their work.

TP2 notes:

I do not only provide learners with visual impairment with remedial classes, I also give them time to fish up their work, although a lot of time is wasted due to the movement from school to the Centre when their work is going to be transcribed.

TP4 points out:

These learners do not start at the same time with their sighted peers due to the fact that after being assigned the task they have to take that work to the Centre for transcribing. They need that extra time to finish the work as well.

TP3 comments:

If we cannot give these learners extra time in order for them to complete the task it can be difficult for us to see whether they are progressing or not. That is why I give them extra time to complete their work.

It is believed by all teachers that providing concessions for learners with visual impairment compensates for the lack of pace in their writing. As such, all participant teachers stated that they give concessions for the learners with visual impairment to complete their work.

4.5.3 Learners' inclusion in extracurricular activities

Both teachers and learners acknowledged the participation of all learners in extracurricular activities without restriction. Teachers expressed their views as follows:

TP1 explains:

Learners with visual impairment as I have told you are not only brilliant but also talented. According to the culture of this school, every first Friday of every month, we go for the mass and the Psalms that the school choir members sing in the church are composed by these learners (learners with visual impairment). Some of the visually impaired learners take part in sports. In athletics we pair a sighted learner with a visually impaired learner to run together, to compete with other pairs, and that does not only make visually impaired learners happier when they hear that they won but it also builds good rapport between sighted learners and visually impaired learners.

TP2 opines:

Rather than teaching them the life skills which plays an integral part in teaching them in self-realization and self-acceptance in order to help these learners not to think that they were born by mistake, and to accept themselves, I used to give them work in groups, even though not always as group work wastes time. Discussing together in their groups promotes good relationships among my learners.

TP4 notes:

We include learners with visual impairment in school activities such as sports and culture. These learners like to take part in the activities that are done here. Unlike the sighted ones, visually impaired learners volunteer to take part in all activities, they do not wait for the teacher to tell them to do things, and they perform that activity with happy faces. When the school takes the educational tour we do not leave them behind, saying because they are unable to see, it is a waste of time to go with them. No, we go with them and give them the first priority to be the first ones to enter the bus; even to get out of the bus.

TP3 comments:

First of all, we teach them to accept themselves and not think that being visually impaired means they are sick. Socially these learners are supported, as they are included in sports and other extra mural activities. For example, they are members of the school choir, some perform in cultural activities such as: Mokhibo, Litolobonya, Liphotha and Ndlamu. They are also included in the educational trips that the school takes.

Learners with visual impairment also confirm that they are not only supported educationally at their school but also socially participate in school activities.

LP5 states:

My friends help me when we are outside the classroom during lunch when I go to toilet even to stop me when I am going to the place where I could be hurt.

LP9 contributes:

My friends teach us how to do things in the right way. For example, during lunch time, I used to talk while I am eating but my sighted friends, as I have both sighted and visually impaired friends, told me not to speak while eating. Today I know that it is not good to eat and talk at the same time.

LP8 states:

During lunch time, my classmates play with me and guide me away from danger and that makes me feel that I am welcome here.

LP10 asserts:

Our teacher teaches us how to take care of ourselves and she always tell us that we have to accept ourselves so that other learners can accept us.

LP1 opines:

Because our teachers care for us, I think that is why our sighted peers care for us too and like to play with us.

LP6 expresses:

Here we do everything that is done by sighted learners like taking part in athletics. Some learners who are like me play Ndlamu.

LP4 states:

We are allowed to take part in school activities. Our visually impaired brothers and sisters are school choir members, and me too when I grow up I will join because I like music.

LP7 indicates:

Last year the school took a trip to Katse. During the preparation of that trip when we were told to tell our parents that we were going to take the trip, I did not report at the Centre. I thought that we were not included because we cannot see. I was so happy when my teacher called us (the visually impaired learners) and asked us whether we reported at the Centre that the school had a journey to Katse.

LP2 notes:

Yes we are supported socially; I am a member of Mokhibo group?

LP3 comments:

Here in school the first Friday of the month we go for mass and our teachers divided those Fridays such that if sighted learners conducted the mass this month, then next month only the visually impaired learners will be in charge.

Allowing learners with visual impairment to take part in extracurricular activities does not only build good relationship among learners but it also motivates learners with visual impairment to do better. The findings of the study suggest that learners are encouraged by teachers and accepted by peers in extracurricular activities thus attaining the pillar of inclusive education which is social inclusion.

4.6 METHODS OF IMPROVING LEARNERS' EDUCATION

The findings identified four ways in which the education of learners with visual impairment may be improved. The methods of improving access to education for the learners with visual impairment, and which are noted in the results, are the use of technology such as tape-recorders, reducing high learner-teacher ratios, enhancing teacher training for inclusion and creating more schools that cater for the needs of learners with visual impairment.

4.6.1 Usage of audio recorders

Participants identified tape recorders as important tools that can improve learners' education. TP4 states:

I think it would be better if we are provided with tape recorders so that we can record our lesson presentations, and give learners with visual impairment those records so that they can playback at their convenient time. This will help learners with visual impairment to grasp the information they failed to acquire during lesson presentation due to different reasons including that of the noise made by other learners.

TP2 indicates:

If our lessons are recorded, that will help these learners to remind themselves of what has been done in class while they are at the Centre during weekends. The records can act as a reference to these learners as they can refer to them at their own spare time.

TP1 notes:

Through listening to the records, learners with visual impairment can pick out the points that are not clear so that they ask for more clarification when they meet the teacher.

TP3 opines:

Tape recorders can save our time as well as the learners' time, as there will be no need to write notes in the exercise books to be transcribed in to Braille or normal writing as learners can listen to the records and be well informed.

Participating teachers believe that tape records can play an integral part in improving the education of learners with visual impairment as learners can play them back when they are not busy. Tape recorders can also save time for both teachers as well as the learners as there will be no need for learners to leave the classroom to go to the Centre for their work to be transcribed.

4.6.2 Recruitment of more teachers in inclusive schools

Due to the workload teachers experienced in mainstream schools, participant teachers were of the view that recruitment of more teachers could help to overcome that challenge. TPI points out:

As I told you earlier, due to the workload we are experiencing, we are unable to support learners with visual impairment effectively. So if the government recruits more teachers in inclusive schools, we can share these learners so that every teacher has a manageable class.

TP2 comments:

More learners per classroom means more work on the teacher's side. The ratio is 1:45, but when looking at the situation now, our learners are twice above the suggested ratio per teacher. These means we are doing more than we should, and that restricts us from being productive, hence we also fail to support learners with visual impairment to meet their needs. As a result, I think if more teachers are recruited, this problem can be solved.

TP3 states:

Teaching more than 45 learners in a classroom means we are doing other teachers' work which is very difficult for us to control the behaviour of such a number, along with teaching them and marking them.

TP4 indicates:

Learners with visual impairment need special attention and it is not easy for us to support them because of the huge number of learners we teach in our classrooms. Therefore, recruitment of more teachers can rescue us from the workload we are experiencing now.

Teachers felt they were made inefficient by high learner-teacher ratios and suggested that if more teachers are recruited, they can share learners equally so that they can have manageable classes that will allow them to pay attention to the special educational needs of each learner.

4.6.3 Teacher training for inclusive education

It was noted that teachers need continuous professional development to be able to teach learners at their disposal. TP3 narrates:

Inclusive education training should start from the universities and colleges where teachers are trained on how to teach and handle learners in order to make them the responsible persons who can contribute in the mainstream activities in their communities. If inclusive education is included in their training, they will easily facilitate the education of learners with disabilities in an inclusive environment.

TP1 opines:

If teachers are empowered with skills and knowledge on how to accommodate learners with disabilities in inclusive schools at the college, they will be able to put whatever skills they were equipped with theoretically into practice to help learners with disabilities to excel in their studies.

TP4 notes:

Inclusive education training can prepare teachers to be ready to accommodate every situation they may encounter in the field, because teachers who were trained on how to support learners with disabilities at school cannot be challenged by having a learner with visual impairment in their classrooms, hence they will help those learners, just like sighted learners, without any problem.

TP2 comments:

If we were trained on how to handle learners with visual impairment at the college, we wouldn't have experienced the challenges that we are experiencing now.

The teachers participants felt that their initial teacher training had not prepared them sufficiently to be inclusive and there was inadequate in-service teacher development to support their efforts at including learners with visual impairments. Training would promote positive attitudes when teaching learners, and would ensure teachers display competence in their work.

4.6.4 Availability of inclusive schools at district level

The findings revealed that inclusive schools at district level can contribute to the improvement of education for learners with visual impairment. TP2 narrates:

It would be better if every district has at least one inclusive primary school that can accommodate all learners with disabilities in that area to reduce overcrowded classrooms in inclusive schools in one district.

TP1 indicates:

Another problem is that, when schools are closed during holidays, it takes these learners a lot of time to return to school while waiting to be collected by the government, as most of them come from vulnerable families. By the moment they arrive, they are left behind and we cannot go back to help them to catch up with others as we are expected to cover everything that appears in the syllabus. For them to be on the safe side, it would be important if inclusive schools are built in their district so that instead of coming here for primary education, they can attend school in their own district.

TP3 points out:

If every district has inclusive schools, at least a learner can have an opportunity to choose where he would like to attend school. If he attends the school he likes, he will perform well in his studies.

TP4 asserts:

Inclusive schools at district level can help parents to be part of their children's education and growth, as some of these learners can stay with their parents rather than now where they live at the Centre even if they are dissatisfied.

Attending neighbourhood schools could help learners to grow up in their own communities, cultures and beliefs. More importantly, it gives parents an opportunity to be part of their children's growth as well as their education.

4.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed some challenges and opportunities for including learners with visual impairment in regular primary schools. As outlined from themes generated from data analysis, barriers to inclusive education include: inadequate teaching and learning materials which restrict both teachers and learners with visual impairment from doing their work effectively.

Teachers' workload, which involves working with a large number of learners at once, made it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to learners with visual impairment when needed. Also, the methods that teachers employed in their respective classrooms did not promote active learners but passive ones as they did not give learners an opportunity to discover things for themselves.

Although teachers felt they lacked training on how to accommodate and handle learners with visual impairment in mainstream classrooms to help them to reach their maximum potential, they seem to have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of these learners. They work hard to meet the educational needs of these learners by supporting them academically, providing concessions for them and including them in extramural activities for them to feel welcome. To a large extent, learners as well felt supported and assisted, but studying away from their parents and guardians is a huge psychosocial distress and sometimes they get teased by sighted peers which leaves them vulnerable.

However, teachers believed that recruitment of more teachers in inclusive schools, the use of tape recorders, inclusion of inclusive education in teacher training at the colleges and universities as well as the building of inclusive primary schools at district level can help in the improvement of the education of learners with visual impairment in the country.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study based on the application of the ideas from the theoretical perspectives as discussed in chapter two and the relevant literature. The discussion uses the themes identified in the data analysis in Chapter four namely barriers to inclusive education, learners' views concerning their education, attitudes towards inclusive education, support to learners with visual impairment and methods of improving learners' education.

5.2 BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

5.2.1 Inadequate teaching and learning materials

Learning involves the interplay of students' motivation, physical facilities, teaching resources and skills of teaching and curriculum demands (Lyons, 2012). Therefore, availability of teaching and learning resources enhances the effectiveness of the school as they are the basic resources that arouse learners' interest in learning and bring about good academic performance in learners (Okongo et al. 2015:4). Although the school practices inclusive education and learners with visual impairment are taught together with sighted learners in the same classrooms, the findings revealed that there were no resources to support the education of learners with visual impairment in this school. Three teachers complained that shortage of teaching and learning materials affected their work badly. The findings concur with Mosia's (2014) research which revealed that lack of resources dedicated to inclusive education is among the other barriers restricting inclusion in Lesotho.

According to Gaotlhobogwe (2012:2), the concept of resources in educational terms is not very restrictive as it includes anything that can be used as an educational tool. Appropriate resources in education play an important role as they simplify learning. Therefore, lack of resources as revealed by the study negatively affects inclusive education and contributes to poor retention of learners with disabilities (Moloi, Morobe and Urwick, 2008). Similarly, Najjingo (2009:45) found that lack of instructional materials negatively affects inclusive education. Consistent with these findings, Adewumi and Mosito (2019:17) state that shortage of teaching and learning materials affects the inclusion of learners with SEN and slows down the pace at which teachers and learners work. This problem was also confirmed by Zulch (2010) in the study conducted in Namibia whereby he

indicated that teaching and learning materials are considered to be the main challenge in inclusive schools and especially for learners with visual impairment. Johnson-Jones (2017) also argue that lack of materials and resources in inclusive schools affects inclusive practices negatively in the regular schools.

5.2.2 Teachers' workload

The study found that teachers taught a large number of learners which almost doubles to normal teacher-learner ratio of 1:40 at primary school level. Teachers complained that due to the large number of learners in their classes, their work was not easy as they could not control the behaviour of learners. The results are similar to Amarat's (2011) study which notes that teachers in public schools work in overcrowded classrooms, and Muthusamy (2015) notes that overcrowded classrooms impact on classroom management. They are consistent with the results by Zwane and Malale (2018) who declared that the greatest barrier in inclusive schools is overloaded classrooms which had more than 40 learners per class. Similarly, Adewumi and Mosito (2019:17) argued that implementing inclusion of learners with special educational needs was time-consuming and increases teachers' workload as the majority of schools selected for inclusive education were multi-grade schools with few teachers. In connection to the findings, Qasim and Arif (2014:145) pointed out that in overcrowded classrooms, learners cannot pay attention or participate at the required level of intensity because classmates are noisy and restive. Teachers also complained that these overcrowded classrooms restricted them from meeting every learner's educational needs. In support Marais (2016:3) opined that in overcrowded classrooms less attention can be given to individual learners and that it is also difficult to motivate them.

5.2.3 Inappropriate teaching methods

Mukhopadhyay, Molosiwa and Moswela (2013) maintain that most teachers in inclusive classrooms rely on teacher-centred methods when teaching and these methods fail to cater for the diverse needs of learners, thus excluding those with disabilities. The findings of the study by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2013) corroborate the findings of the current study as the teachers relied on teacher-centred methods such as lecture method. This was also influenced by the large learner-teacher ratios observed in the school. This point has been supported by Mtika (2010) who indicates that large class sizes leave teachers with only one choice of using convenient teaching methods which require pupils to be mainly passive recipients of knowledge during lessons. Similarly,

Seotsanyana and Matheolane (2010) add that the rollout of Free Primary Education brought a large number of students per teacher resulting in teachers using inappropriate teaching strategies.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that teachers teach learners with visual impairment in the same way as their sighted peers. Although teachers did not believe that teaching learners in the same way can cause a harm, a study by Mwakyeja (2013) conducted in Tanzania maintains that teaching and meeting the needs of learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms is very difficult since most of the time teachers were using methods that are common to all learners instead of using specialized strategies that can help them to meet the specific needs of these learners. Penda, Ndhlovu and Kasonde-Ng'andu (2015) conclude that poor teaching methodologies contribute to poor participation and performance among learners with visual impairment, and that leads to low education level to these learners.

5.2.4 Inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education

Lack of training for teachers of learners with visual impairment is another obstacle revealed by the findings of the study. Although all 31 teachers at the participating school were qualified, they were not empowered with skills and knowledge on how to teach learners with visual impairment. Mugambi (2012) found out that inadequate training made teachers not confident enough with their level of training to enable them to teach learners with visual impairment. Similarly, Omer (2015) argues that insufficient knowledge and skills among teachers regarding implementation of inclusive teaching for learners with visual impairment is among the challenges that learners with visual impairment encounter in inclusive schools. The study found that there was inadequate in-service training although the school was the only one teaching learners with visual impairment at primary level. The findings confirmed the results of studies by Mosia (2014); Shelile and Hlalele (2014); Khoaeane (2012) which stated that continuous professional development for inclusive education was a challenge in Lesotho.

5.3 LEARNERS' VIEWS CONCERNING THEIR EDUCATION

5.3.1 VI learners' views about inclusion in class activities

The study found that learners felt privileged to be attending the school but were also aware that not all learners with visual impairment had the same opportunity. Lack of similar schools in their districts and communities was the major concern that was equated with the neglect of their needs. The findings showed that the right to access education for learners with visual impairment is

restricted in Lesotho if learners have to travel and stay away from their home to study. The findings concur with results from Tseeke's (2016) study which states that although children with disabilities are enrolled with their non-disabled peers in a few selected regular primary and secondary schools, there are only two such schools; and all these schools are located in Maseru district.

According to Bruno and Nascimento (2019:2), in the contemporary world, technological transformations have expanded opportunities to information, communication and education for people with disabilities. Such transformations allow people with visual impairment the access to knowledge in order to reach the highest levels of schooling, autonomy and participation in the cultural life of their community, which can be named as a digital and social inclusion process (Bruno and Nascimento, 2019:2). In line with Bruno and Nascimento (2019), Nkoane (2009:16) describes access to education as a way of transforming the physical, curricula and management styles of mainstream education to allow all students to benefit from the education provision that is diversified. In this study participants show that there were inadequate resources such as schools at district level, not enough teachers to lower the ratio, and lack of resources such as books or technology to ease support for learners. This leaves the learners with inadequate support to learn like their peers. According to Mboshi (2018:2), full inclusion includes: placement in a neighbourhood school, zero rejection philosophy, no special classrooms or schools, co-operative teaching and special education support given to regular education.

5.3.2 Psychosocial challenges affecting learners' education

Inclusive education as a process seeking to address the individual needs of students with disabilities and create opportunities for them to access education (Mosia and Phasha, 2017:48), has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equality, justice and quality education for all children. This enables access to those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability and other characteristics (Mboshi, 2018:2). However, the findings of this study revealed that learners with visual impairment are faced with various challenges concerning their inclusion in mainstream schools. Among these challenges, learners with visual impairment do not attend their neighbourhood schools in Lesotho but move from their different villages to Maseru for primary and secondary education. This leaves them without psychosocial support from their families as it was found that learners with visual impairment experienced psychosocial distress due to studying away from their parents and guardians. In addition, learners with visual impairment complained that their education was not

fully supported at the Centre as their second home because when they asked for items that were going to be used at school, they were not provided with those materials.

5.3.3 VI learners' experience of bullying

The findings of the current study showed that learners with visual impairment in inclusive schools experience the challenge of being teased by their sighted counterparts which leaves them vulnerable and with low self-esteem. Learners with visual impairment indicated that their sighted peers did not only call them names but also made fun of them. The findings concur with the results of a study by Ngakane, Muthukrishna and Ngcobo (2012) which showed that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying in Lesotho with several aspects such as name calling, insults, teasing and threats. The findings also revealed that due to being treated unfairly by the sighted learners, some learners with visual impairment do not feel comfortable around their sighted peers. In support, Lekena (2016) adds that bullying hinders the inclusive education agenda in that victims do not participate effectively due to the fear of their bullies. In connection, a study by Kiomoka (2014) indicated that discrimination can also lead to lack of confidence and demoralization with regard to learning and participation among learners with visual impairment, which may result in poor performance compared to their fellow sighted peers. Learners with visual impairment and their teachers stated that some sighted learners steal the learning materials of visually impaired learners such as stylus, which the learners use for writing.

5.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

The attitudes of the community in general and those of the teachers, peers and parents have an impact on the overall development of learners with visual impairment (Knouwds, 2010:48). According to the findings of the current study, both teachers and sighted learners in inclusive schools have positive attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairment in regular schools. These are expressed despite learners feeling ill-treated by peers in some instances. Therefore, positive attitudes towards learners with visual impairment by the society motivate these learners and contribute to positive development in every aspect of their lives (Negash, 2017:48). The author further showed that when sighted peers and teachers show positive attitudes towards visually impaired learners, these learners develop self-esteem as well as confidence hence their academic performance improves.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that inclusive education does not give learners with visual impairment an opportunity to learn acceptable behaviour from their fellow sighted peers only, but also an opportunity to grow up in the environment where diversity is a norm rather than exclusion. It helps sighted learners to learn how to accept one another regardless of their disabilities. In support, Perles (2010) pointed out that educating all children in an inclusive environment encourages sighted or learners without disabilities to learn how to accept differences and respect one another regardless of their disability.

5.5 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

5.5.1 Academic support

Providing learning support to learners with visual impairment as stated by Habulezi and Phasha (2012:7), requires adjustments, modification and adaptation to the classroom, curricular and pedagogical practices. The findings of the study revealed that though it was difficult for teachers to accommodate these learners in inclusive settings, they were academically supported by both teachers, sighted peers as well as the staff at the Centre who transcribed the learners' work.

According to the information revealed by the learners with visual impairment, sighted learners did not only help learners with visual impairment by reading and dictating what is written on the board for them to write, but also copying notes on the board on their behalf. Consistent with the findings, Chikukwa and Chimbwanda (2014) also identified that students who are blind rely on support from fellow students to succeed academically. They further indicated that peers read scripts, take notes for blind students and guide their physical movement or mobility. In addition, the study by Nasiforo (2015) conducted in Rwanda corroborates with the findings of the current study, as he indicated that due to lack of materials such as Brailled textbooks to support learners with visual impairment, these learners depend on their sighted peers to do their assignments through group discussion. Teachers also paid more attention to these learners; especially when they asked some questions, they made sure that they got answers from learners with visual impairment as well. In support to the findings, Habulezi, Batsalelwang and Malatsi (2017:11) point out that classroom support helps to increase learners' participation and academic achievement.

5.5.2 Provision of concessions

The findings of the current study reveal that teachers provide learners with visual impairment with extra time in order to support them complete their tasks in the classrooms just like their sighted

peers. The findings are in line with Mastropieri and Scruggs (2010) who supported the idea of providing extra time for learners with visual impairment, as they indicated that these learners spend more time in all activities that are done in the classrooms as compared to sighted learners. In connection to that, Moralle (2016:99) pointed out that learners with visual impairment should be provided with sufficient time to enable them to complete the given task. Participant teachers also showed that it would be of no use for them to practise inclusive education if they did not support and help learners with visual impairment to achieve their potential in inclusive schools. Therefore, teachers believed that extra time provision can compensate for the completion of the given tasks for these learners.

5.5.3 Learners' inclusion in extramural activities

Social support refers to the type of assistance or help that individuals receive or expect to receive from those who come into contact with them in any way (Papakonstantinou and Papadopoulos, 2010:2). So Papakonstantinou and Papadopoulos indicate that students with visual impairment receive or expect to receive social support from individuals in and out of the school, which consists of professionals and teachers, parents, siblings, kin and friends. Although the study by Mosia and Phasha (2017:249) revealed that learners with disabilities are excluded from the social and extracurricular activities performed in the institution where their research was based, the findings of this study revealed different results, as they indicated that learners with visual impairment in inclusive schools were not only supported academically but socially as well. According to the findings, learners with visual impairment are included in both school activities as well as in extra curriculum activities such as cultural activities, mass services, school choir, sports and athletics. Lalvani (2015) states that learners without disabilities tend to advocate for their peers with disabilities in an inclusive setting and they sometimes develop friendship and end up helping one another with schoolwork. AFB (2012) also confirmed that social integration of learners with disabilities with their peers without disabilities is of utmost importance as their interactions provide opportunities for learners' creation of relationships that would not be possible in more restrictive settings. The findings further showed that learners with visual impairment were also included in educational tours that the school took, and that these learners were given the first priority of being the first ones to enter the bus and even to get out in order to protect them from being pushed by the sighted learners.

5.6 METHODS OF IMPROVING LEARNERS' EDUCATION

5.6.1 Use of audio recorders

Audio recorders have been identified as important tools that can improve the education of learners with visual impairment in inclusive settings. In support to the findings, Adebisi, Liman and Longpoe (2015:4) indicated that audio recorders such as tape recorders allow learners to listen to the oral presentations repeatedly. They added that these tools are suitable more especially for learners who have problems processing, understanding or remembering what they heard. Moreover, participant teachers indicated that through listening to the records, learners with visual impairment can pick out the unclear points so that they could ask for more clarification when they meet the teacher. Furthermore, the findings showed that audio recorders are vital as they can save time for both teachers and learners with visual impairment as there will be no need for teachers to write notes in exercise books to be transcribed into Braille and also that learners with visual impairment will no longer leave the classroom to take their work to the Centre to be transcribed.

5.6.2 Recruitment of more teachers

The findings of this study indicated that teachers in inclusive schools experienced the challenge of high learner-teacher ratio which results in excessive teacher workload. Therefore, participant teachers were of the view that recruitment of more teachers in schools could help to overcome that challenge. The participant teachers further indicated that if more teachers were recruited, their workload would be minimized as they would divide learners in such a way that each teacher has a manageable class to enable them to pay attention to the special educational needs of each learner in their respective classrooms.

5.6.3 Teacher training for inclusive education

A central concern of teachers in inclusive schools as confirmed by O'Mara et al. (2012:82) is their lack of suitable training in delivering a full curriculum to students with a wide range of disabilities. This highlights the need for special training on how best to deliver the curriculum for students with different types and degrees of special educational needs so that lesson adaptation can be planned appropriately. According to Igune (2009:2-3), training and retraining of teachers in the field of special needs education, provision of specialized equipment, recruitment of more teachers and awareness seminars may help in the inclusion of learners with visual impairment.

Moreover, the participating teachers indicated that the problem of being unskilled on how to teach learners with visual impairment in inclusive environments can be resolved by being provided with training workshops. In support, Margolin (2011) stresses that teachers who are sufficiently equipped with skills and knowledge make more impact on the success of inclusive education initiatives. These teachers further stated that workshops play an important role in their teaching profession, especially where they did education in general, as through workshops they would be equipped with relevant skills and knowledge on how to handle learners with visual impairment. In line with this, the European Agency (2012) supports that teachers should be equipped not only with competences but also with appropriate values and beliefs to meet diverse learners' needs and develop a more equitable education system in order to implement successful inclusive practice.

Additionally, participant teachers further indicated that through workshops, they can be taught how to read and write in Braille and the use of equipment appropriate for teaching and learning of learners with visual impairment to support them. It has been realized that there were no follow-ups for the workshops that teachers were provided with previously, therefore, the participating teachers suggested that for the workshops to be successful and meaningful, they need the follow-ups so that they could be able to share their experiences and to ask their trainees questions concerning the challenging situations they may encounter in the field. Geldenhuys and Wevers (2013) conclude that the only way for inclusive education to be successful is by providing teachers with continuous training, as inclusion demands high level of teaching competences and organizational changes in order to promote effective learning (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2010:3-7).

5.6.4 Availability of inclusive schools at district level

The findings revealed that the participating school is the only school in Lesotho that admits learners with visual impairment at primary level. As a result, all learners from ten districts in the country attend this school. The findings of this study are consistent with Matlosa and Matobo (2007) who reported that there is only one resource centre for the blind in the entire country which specializes in training learners with visual impairment. In connection to this, Tseeke (2016) pointed out that children with disability are enrolled with their peers without disabilities in a few selected primary and secondary schools. The findings also showed that availability of inclusive schools at district level would not only reduce overcrowding in the participating school but would also give learners with visual impairment an opportunity to choose the school they preferred to

attend. In addition, attending neighbourhood schools would help learners to grow up in their own community, culture and beliefs and, more importantly, it gives parents an opportunity to be part of their children's growth as well as their education.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho. The study was based on four objectives. The first was to explain how teachers perceive their support to learners with visual impairment at primary schools in which the findings revealed that although the education of learners with visual impairment is faced with various challenges in inclusive schools, the positive attitudes that teachers and sighted learners have shown to these learners gave them strength to carry on with their studies even under difficult conditions.

Another challenge that has been observed was high learner-teacher ratio which contributed to teachers' workload. Although there were three to four learners with visual impairment per classroom, the total number of learners per classroom ranged between 70 and 80. It was very difficult for teachers to meet the education needs of every learner under such condition, let alone the needs of learners with visual impairment. The findings revealed that overcrowded classrooms did not only restrict teachers from supporting learners with visual impairment effectively, but also contributed to their failure to control the behaviour of learners as well as managing their classrooms. This was proven by the point that during classroom observation, learners made a lot of noise that made it difficult to hear the teachers during lessons. Apart from the irritating noise made by these learners, the classrooms were full of desks which reduced free movement in the classrooms. The findings of this study further showed that learners with visual impairment were faced with the challenge of lack of teaching and learning materials in inclusive schools to support their learning. According to the findings, there were no textbooks written in Braille as well as computers that could transcribe the work of learners with visual impairment into Braille. The lack of textbooks for learners with visual impairment was also identified during classroom observations where learners were given activities from textbooks, and those with visual impairment were seen sitting and listening to their sighted peers while reading. As a result, visually impaired learners' right to education and participation was compromised.

The second objective was to find out how teachers perceive their training needs to effectively teach learners with visual impairment. Among the challenges that learners with visual impairment experienced in inclusive schools, teachers' lack of training on how to support and accommodate these learners in inclusive setting in order for them to maximize their potential has been identified as the main barrier hampering effective inclusion of these learners in ordinary schools. The findings showed that teachers believed that lack of knowledge and skills contributed a lot to their failure to effectively accommodate learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms. Though teachers tried, their support was deficient.

The third objective was to explore how learners with visual impairment view their access to education, whereby the findings of the study revealed that access to education is still a challenge for these learners as compared to their fellow sighted counterparts in Lesotho. The findings further showed that even today, inclusive schools are found in towns and there were none at district level, and this denied the learners the right to attend their neighbourhood schools, where they would stay with their parents who would support their education fully. The findings also indicated that studying away from their parents and guardians affected the visually impaired learners emotionally, especially when they miss their parents and siblings.

Moreover, learners with visual impairment indicated that lack of textbooks written in Braille in inclusive schools is enough evidence that they were not considered in the education system when inclusive education is put into practice in Lesotho. Another challenge experienced by these learners in ordinary schools was bullying. This failure to support learners' holistic development leads to the belief that the inclusion is inadequate.

The fourth objective was to find out ways in which learners with visual impairment can best be supported to learn at primary schools in Lesotho. To support them to learn better, teachers should be trained, resources such as audio-recorders and computers installed with JAWS should be availed and schools which accommodate learners with visual impairment should be accessible in communities where these learners are. When learners still have to travel and stay away from their families to access their education, inclusion is compromised.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of this study is that its findings did not cover the challenges encountered by all learners with visual impairment in the primary schools but focused only on Grades 3 and 4.

Therefore, the findings do not reflect inclusive education at the school as a whole, but only in the concerned classes. As a qualitative study, the findings cannot also reflect the conditions of schools in the country either.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has revealed that learners with visual impairment face various obstacles that restrict them from accessing education easily. To overcome these barriers the following recommendations are drawn:

- Continuous professional training should be provided in order to empower teachers with relevant skills and knowledge to accommodate all learners in inclusive schools regardless of their differences.
- The Ministry of Education and Training should ensure that all inclusive schools have the relevant resources to support the education of all learners, especially those with disabilities.
- It is also recommended that the government should recruit more teachers in mainstream schools to solve the problem of overcrowded classrooms as well as reducing high learner-teacher ratio so that learners with visual impairment can fully be supported.
- To solve the problem of lack of inclusive schools for learners with visual impairment in the country, it is advisable that the government should built inclusive schools at district level, to give learners with visual impairment an opportunity to attend schools closer to their homes.
- There is need for research that investigates the role played by parents in the education of their children with visual impairment in inclusive schools.
- A further study can be conducted on teachers and sighted learners' attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairment in ordinary primary schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Clearance from the District Education Manager



**THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MASERU DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE
P.O. BOX 47. MASERU 100.
28810001 / 22 322 755**

17 April 2019

The Principal
St. Bernadette Primary School
Maseru 100

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: RESEARCH

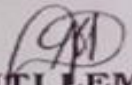
“Investigating challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho”

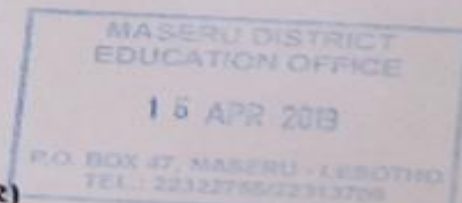
Ms. Lebohang Phethoka is a student who is conducting a research on the above stated topic. She therefore wishes to carry out a research at your School.

You are kindly requested to provide her with the information that she may require.

Thanking you in advance for your usual support.

Yours Faithfully


MPITI LEMENA (MR)
DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER (ai) - MASERU



The National University of Lesotho



P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

Faculty of Education

14st March 2019

Senior Education officer

Ministry of Education and Training

RE: Lebohang Phethoka

This letter introduces Lebohang Phethoka as a student registered in the Faculty of Education for M.Ed. in Inclusive Education. She is in the final stages of her study and has to collect data. Her topic is: “Investigating challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho”, and wishes to interview teachers in Maseru Schools.

I will be glad if she gets the support she needs to complete her study.

Yours Sincerely



Paseka A. Mosia (D.Ed.)

Senior Lecturer & HOD

Educational Foundations Department

National University of Lesotho

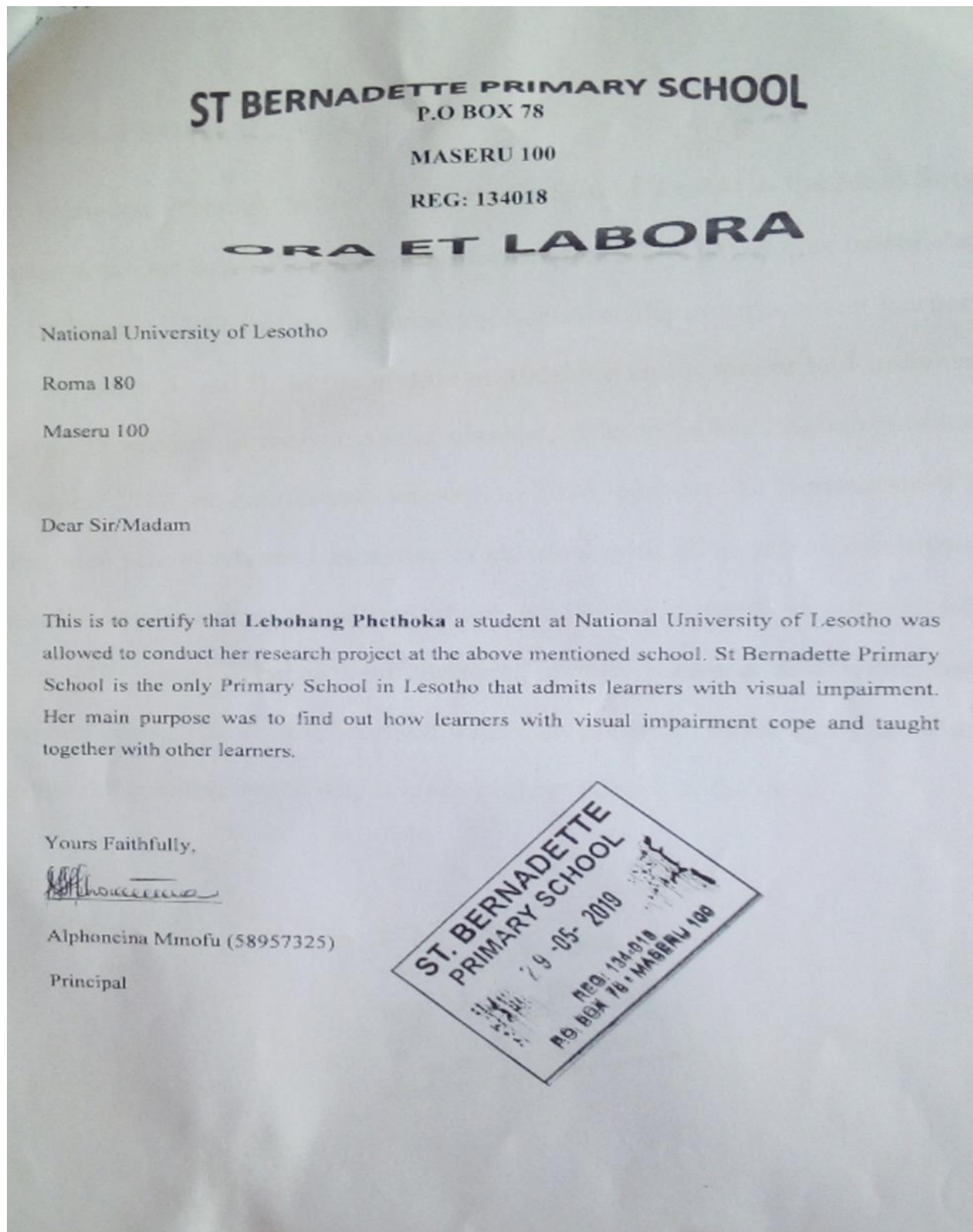
P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

Cell: +26658969867

Email: mosia296@gmail.com / pa.mosia@nul.ls

Appendix C- Permission to conduct a research in the selected primary school



Appendix D – Introduction letter

National University of Lesotho

Roma 180

Lesotho

23 April 2019

The Principal

ST. Bernadette Primary school

Maseru 100

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Permission to conduct a research project in your school

I am Lebohang Phethoka, a student at the National University of Lesotho, doing a Masters Degree in Inclusive Education. I would like to conduct a research project in your school. My topic is “**Investigating challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho**”. I have chosen this school because it is the only school in the entire country that admits learners with visual impairment at primary level.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the challenges and opportunities visually impaired learners encounter in inclusive schools/classrooms. I would like to work with ten visually impaired learners, five from Grade 3 and another five from Grade 4 and their teachers. The results of this study will benefit the researcher in fulfilling the requirements for her programme at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), your school and other schools which are interested in practising inclusive education in future. Only the researcher will have access to information that will be attained during data collection. Confidentiality will be observed and pseudonyms will be used to protect the privacy of participants.

I hope that my request will be considered positively, and am looking forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

Lebohang Emely Phethoka

58105103

leboephethoka@gmail.com

Appendix E – Parents’ consent form

Lengolo la motsoali la tumello ea ngoana ho nka karolo liphuputsong tse moamang

‘Na motsoali oa.....

Ke lumela hore ngoana oa ka a nke karolo liphuputsong tse etsuoang sekolong sa hae, tse ipapisitseng le ho tseba ka liqholotso tseo bakopanang le tsona boithutong ba bona e le bana ba phelang le bokooa ba pono, e sita le melemo eo ba e fumanang ha ba rutoa ‘moho le bana ba bonang ka sehlopheng se le seng.

Motekeno

Letsatsi.....

Appendix F - Consent form for a teacher

DATE.....

As a teacher at St. Bernadette Primary School, an inclusive school practising inclusive education for visually impaired learners, I agree to be interviewed on the study **“Investigating challenges of access to education for learners with visual impairment at primary schools in Lesotho”**.

Full name of the teacher.....

Signature.....

Cell Number.....

Appendix G - Observation checklist

Name of the school: -----, Date: -----

Name of the teacher: -----, Class/Grade: ----

Name of the observer: -----, Number of students: ----

Course/Subject: -----, Time: -----

Directions: Answer each of the following questions by putting (tick) in the YES or NO boxes

CONTENT	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Does the teacher's presentation show signs of planning and organization?			
Does the lesson engages both visually impaired learners and their sighted peers to acquire taught content equally?			
Are visually impaired learners given an opportunity to participate fully in their learning?			
Are visually impaired learners engaged in cooperative learning techniques?			
Does the teacher give learners with visual impairment enough time to think and respond to the questions?			
Are learners with VI given chance to ask questions in class?			
Does the teacher use adaptive methods?			

Are visually impaired learners provided with appropriate resources to learn effectively?			
Is the teacher creative enough to use real objects to simplify learning for VI learners?			
Is a seating well arranged to allow freedom of movement for visually impaired learners?			
How is the behaviour of visually impaired learners in the classroom? – Are they well behaved?			
Is the relationship between the teacher and learners with visual impairment good?			
Do visually impaired learners and their sighted peers have good rapport among themselves?			
Is the environment conducive enough for learning to take place for visually impaired learners?			

Appendix H – Teachers' interview questions

a) How do teachers perceive their support to learners with visual impairment at primary schools?

- Which support do you offer for learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms in order for them to reach their maximum potential?
- What do you do to promote positive attitudes towards learning for learners with visual impairment at primary level?
- Are there appropriate resources that enhance learning for learners with visual impairment to learn with ease at primary school level?
- Which barriers restrict you from supporting these students' learning thoroughly?
- Where do you think improvement is needed to enhance access to education for students with visual impairment at primary level?

b) What are training needs of teachers in mainstream primary schools that integrate learners with visual impairment?

- What is your highest qualification?
- Did you receive any form of training on how to accommodate learners with visual impairment at primary school level?
- Are there some challenges that you may encounter when teaching students with visual impairment in the same classroom with sighted learners?
- How do you overcome these challenges if there are any?
- Where do you think improvement is needed, what kind of improvement and how should teachers be trained in order to handle learners with visual impairment with care in mainstream classrooms at primary level?

Appendix I - Learners' interview questions

- a) How do learners with visual impairment view their access to education?
- Where do you come from?
 - When did you arrive at the school, and how old were you when you arrived?
 - How old are you now?
 - How often do you visit your parents/guardians and siblings?
 - How do you feel about being educated away from your parents/ guardians and siblings?
 - Are there some challenges you may experience due to being far away from your parents/guardians and siblings? If yes mention them.
 - What are your suggestions on this issue?
- b) How can learners with visual impairment be supported to learn at primary schools in Lesotho?
- How is education in mainstream primary school with sighted peers?
 - Does the school help develop your social skills?
 - How is the relationship between you and your teachers and between you and other students?
 - Are the ways in which teachers teach in class helpful to you?
 - Are you given enough time to complete assigned tasks?
 - Are there relevant materials that are used to support your learning?
 - Are you given an opportunity to take part in other school activities? Which activity do you like most?
 - Do you benefit from being educated together with sighted learners?