

**Perceptions of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with
insufficient school readiness**

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Educational
Foundations, Faculty of Education, National University of
Lesotho in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

October, 2021

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho for the award of Masters Degree in Education (M.Ed)

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DECLARATION

I declare that "**Perceptions of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Learners with Insufficient School Readiness**" is my own work and that all the sources in the text have been acknowledged and appear fully in the reference list using American Psychology Association (APA) style 7th Edition.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to God almighty for granting me the opportunity, strength and perseverance to undertake an academic study of this magnitude. To him I wish to express my sincere gratitude; *“Kea u leboha Molimo e Moholo, Boholo ba hau bo ananeloe”*, for thou is the kingdom, for ever and ever, Amen. Secondly and foremost, I deeply thank Dr Retšelisitsoe Matheolane (*“Rakhali oa Mikhane”*) for her smooth commitment and graceful involvement in supervising this study. She ensured that I cross this academic river as she took me nearer to the river bank. I really thank ‘Me Matheolane for all her directive in polishing me to shine. Her modesty, warm personality and humility are amazing and without her, this work would not have been completed *“Kea leboha Motšoeneng*. I thank you very much!!!!!!!

It is of paramount importance to express my humble thanks to my initial supervisor Mrs ‘Matsietsi Edith Sebatane for all their support and guidance throughout this piece of work. I wish to thank her for the excellent planning and organization of her time to provide me with genuine and constructive comments. The discussion sessions we had through some hard times were all invaluable. ‘M’e ‘Matsietsi indeed managed to provide with me a positive influence in this study. May God bless her.

My gratitude goes to all primary school principals who enabled me to carry out this study in their schools. I really appreciate it. How can I forget all my colleagues, Grade 1 teachers who spared the teaching time for participation in this study? Dear Grade 1 teachers I salute you all!!!!

Mrs Makanelo Moetsana at NULIS (Previous Acting Head-teacher) and the previous members of the School Board of Governors (SBG), thank you so much for your approval which enabled me to study at NUL. This work would have not been known if you did not recommend me. Thank you so much! May our GOD bless you! I would also like to say words of thanks to all my masters colleagues that we started this journey with, guys I love you, let's keep moving! I would also like to acknowledge Mr Lefa Clement Qhafutso Makau Thamae for invaluable expertise in editing and formatting this work. I am very thankful ntate, may God expand your proficiency in the world of technology. It is also a great honour for me to thank my dear parents Ntate Thabo Nyakallo Gerard Mats'ela and 'Me Nthabeleng Lelahloane Augustina T'solo Mats'epo Mats'ela for their insistence and tenacity to ensure that I acquired basic elementary education. That very first light of education they ignited in me continues to glow until this moment; I really appreciate that initiative "*Motloun*" and "*Molefe*".

Thanks also go to my siblings who sacrificed so much for me to receive academic growth and all the necessary facilities for my studies. May our good God shower his blessings upon you. I am also very grateful to the Church of Jesus, Community of the Chosen Christian Church (C4) for their divine support and prayers. I wish to express a special tribute to Bishop Shale Motlatsi Joshua and 'Mateboho Molelekeng Matabane Shale and all other Pastors and the entire congregation of the living God. I believe that anyone who has ever undertaken an academic research study at this level should understand the toll it takes on those around them. However, my husband Ntate Nkoale Adam Sepamo accompanied me through this heavy road with compassion and generosity of spirit that amazed and inspired me. He kept me laughing and grounded when I nearly tumbled down. Most importantly, he kept me in

touch with more important long-term goals and priorities at moments when research and writing threatened to take over our lives.

It is a great pleasure to express my heartfelt gratitude to our four beloved daughters Thendezile Hildia, Sebongile Lydia, Thandiwe Edith - Esther and Cabod Sibusiso. Your genuine understanding that education is the best tool to conquer any challenge absolutely meant a lot to me. I really wish to thank these incredible pillars of my strength more than words can express. You are exceptionally special in my life and I dearly love you all.

To my former colleagues at Nyakosoba Primary School where I started my teaching profession, I appreciate all the efforts to mould this competent teacher I am today. To the NULIS Community, I am very grateful for all your efforts in your different capacities during the course of this study. Some influenced me to study, others helped me with educational research skills, and some encouraged and counselled me when the journey got harder and tougher. Most importantly, some of the colleagues availed their previous studies to help while still others allocated their time to pray with me.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my three biological daughters: Thendezile, Sebongile, Sibusizo, my younger sister's daughter, Thandiwe Mats'ela and my spouse, Adam Sepamo Nkoale.

ABSTRACT

School readiness is a multidimensional construct that includes all aspects of a child's development and contribute directly to children's capabilities to learn by the time they begin formal education. Learners who start formal education with inadequate school readiness face challenges. The Horsford's (2012) Framework for School Readiness was used as a lens for this study. This framework suggests that children with school readiness have a better chance of succeeding in their academic endeavours compared with counterparts who have not acquired school readiness. The purpose of this study was to investigate 'Perceptions of Grade 1 Teachers in Teaching Learners with Insufficient School Readiness. In order to achieve this purpose, this study adopted the qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews and observations were employed for data collection from eleven teachers who work in eleven primary schools in Maseru district. Thematic Data Analysis was used to analyse data. The findings established that teachers view children's school readiness as inclusive of the following characteristics: learners' curiosity to learn, ability to follow instructions, good communication skills, good social skills, physical maturity and numeracy literacy. Moreover, the majority of participants believe that early childhood education is key in influencing children's school readiness. The findings further revealed that Grade 1 teachers support learners with insufficient school readiness through a number of the remedial teaching strategies such as individualized remedial teaching as well as the remedial teaching materials that include colourful print materials. However, it was also found that teachers face challenges in teaching learners who have insufficient school readiness. Such challenges include difficult to complete curriculum content, minimal support from parents, and loss of remedial stationery. Participants reported that they minimize the challenges they face by reporting the matter to school principals. This

study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) needs to establish a clear policy on how the learners with insufficient school readiness can be supported. It is also recommends that MoET run in-service training for Grade 1 teachers on teaching learners with insufficient school readiness and create awareness on benefits of parental involvement in learners' education.

Keywords: *early childhood education, foundational skills, school readiness, transition, remedial teaching, remedial teaching strategies.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
ECCD	Early Childhood Care Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education For All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FSR	Framework for School Readiness
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MTML	Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho
NDE	Nevada Department of Education
NEGP	National Education Goals Panel
RFF	Roger Federer Foundation
SEP	Strategic Education Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
DEDICATION	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	8
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	9
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	10
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	10
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	11
1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	18
1.9 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY	21
1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS	21
1.11 STUDY OUTLINE.....	23
1.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER	24
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	25
2.1 INTRODUCTION	25
2.2 TEACHERS' VIEWS ON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS.....	25
2.3 REMEDIAL TEACHING STRATEGIES.....	43
2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS	49
2.5 SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES.....	52
2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	53
2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER	65
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY:	67
3.1 INTRODUCTION	67
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM	68
3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH.....	72
3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES	75
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS	78
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	84

3.7	CHAPTER SUMMARY	87
	CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	89
4.1	INTRODUCTION	89
4.2	PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES	89
4.3	CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPANTS	91
4.4	TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS	97
4.5	CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS	109
4.6	STRATEGIES TEACHERS USE TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS	113
4.7	WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SUPPORT GRADE 1 TEACHERS	128
4.8	CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS	141
4.9	SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES.....	145
	CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	152
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	152
5.2	TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS.	152
5.3	CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS	162
5.4	TEACHING STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS	165
5.5	TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS	180
5.6	SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES.....	183
5.7	CONCLUSIONS.....	184
5.8	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	192
5.9	SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER	194
	REFERENCES.....	195
	APPENDICES	212

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the stage for this study. It presents the introduction that highlights components of the study. Secondly, it explains the background to the study followed by the statement of the problem as well as the main purpose of the study. Then, the key research questions that guide the entire study are outlined and the objectives are also presented. Moreover, the significance of the study and the overview of the research methodology are presented. Lastly, the scope of the study, definition of the key concepts, study outline and the summary are also outlined.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Early Childhood Education is marked from the birth of a child to eight years of age (Gordon & Browne, 2014). According to UNESCO (2019), early childhood period is characterised by the remarkable growth in a child, with brain development reaching its peak. At this stage, children are highly influenced by their environment inclusive of people around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Gordon and Browne (2014); Kiernan and Huerta (2008) consider this period as an opportune time to influence a child's personality through modelling and moulding. As a result, early childhood education is considered an important strategy that can be used to influence a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical attributes. Education at this stage builds a solid foundation for a child's lifelong learning and wellbeing (Pan et al., 2019; Rahmawati, Tairas and Nawangsari, 2018).

The kind of education to which a child is exposed at this stage is referred to as early childhood education. Heckman (2000) and Hasan et al., (2013) describe early childhood education as a strategy that is used to influence children's learning and success in their future studies and life in general. The *Encyclopaedia of Early Childhood Education Development* (2017:39) emphasises that, "Early learning begets later learning, and early success breeds later success, just as early failure breeds later failure". In support of this view, Harty and Alant (2011) also point out that because it is one of the effective strategies that can positively influence children's future learning, early childhood education should be provided to, and be accessed by every child.

The early childhood education experience is understood to be the foundation for children's school readiness. Hence, school readiness has been observed to be critical for any child who is about to start formal education (Bruwer et al., 2014). Many countries have noted this and observe early childhood education as one of the children's rights and are committed to ensuring that it is accessible and affordable to all children (United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Child). In their study on formal versus informal kindergarten care and school readiness for children of immigrant families, Grottfried and Kim (2015) have indicated that across the United States of America (South and Midwest) government has introduced the Head Start Program (HSP) for immigrant children's families. The programme targets vulnerable children and those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have equal opportunities to access quality early childhood education due to the low educational level of their parents (Grottfried & Kim, 2015).

Marti et al., (2018) in their study on intervention fidelity of Getting Ready for School (GRS) established that there is also a government-funded early education programme called ready for school in Central and Eastern Europe. The programme prepares children for primary school by helping parents to create a more effective learning environment. It focuses on improving children's school readiness by targeting improvement of their literacy and numeracy skills. Besides targeting children, the programme also helps to improve the skills of teachers and parents to enable them to assist their children to develop literacy and numeracy foundational skills during early childhood education. Parents and teachers receive training through the workshops on literacy and numeracy, and print materials are provided. As a result, Marti et al., (2018) concluded that school readiness for children whose parents and teachers participated in the programme as well as their children, tends to improve and they are able to succeed.

Every learner transitioning from one level of education to another is usually expected to possess particular skills that enable him or her to cope with the learning demands of the level they are transitioning into. These skills create a solid foundation for learning in the next level. When learners have these skills they are viewed to be prepared and ready for the level they are getting into. Likewise, learners who do not have basic or foundational skills for the level they are getting into are viewed as unprepared and not ready. Where such foundational skills are lacking, children are likely to perform poorly and this may influence them to drop out of an education system at one point in their educational journey (Rao et al., 2012; Sparapani et al., 2016). As a remedy for this situation, teachers are usually required to design and administer remedial

programmes that enable the learners to bridge the identified skill gap and acquire skills that were lacking.

Children who started in the early childhood education programmes develop skills that enable their transition to be easy from that level of learning to the next one (Chan, 2012). However, literature shows that children who have not acquired the basic skills are faced with learning challenges. Among others, the challenges include: difficulty in maintaining behaviour, taking turns, getting in line, sitting up in the classroom, lack of attention and insufficient self-care skills. Zly (2011) indicates that teachers, schools as well as families have to be ready to support children to reach their optimal development.

1.2.1 Early Childhood Education in Lesotho

The efforts of the government of Lesotho in getting children ready for primary education are reflected in the national policies and Acts. The Education Act of 1995, Education Act of 2010 and Strategic Education Plan (2005-2015) recognise early childhood education as the first official stage of education in Lesotho's education system. According to the Education Act of 1995, early childhood was absorbed in the Lesotho education system as a foundation for learning. The Education Act of 2010 stipulates that children aged 0 to 4 years should receive pre-school education. Moreover, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2005-2015) indicates that children aged five years should go through reception class in preparation for Grade 1. This suggests that all children living in Lesotho who are below six years of age are expected to attend early childhood education programmes.

The Education Sector; Strategic Plan (2005-2015), envisioned that primary schools should attach Grade R (reception class) to their structures. This was meant to ensure that all Grade 1 classes admit children who have been exposed to early childhood education and are prepared for this class. However, this target has not been realised. According to the Education Sector; Strategic Plan (2005-2015), the Education Sector Plan (2016-2026), and Education Statistics Bulletin (2015), of the 1478 primary schools in Lesotho, only 243 have reception classes attached to them. This means that the issue of access to early childhood education is still a challenge in Lesotho as the majority of children start schooling in Grade 1 at the age of six years.

The Education Strategic Plan (2005-2015) and Education Statistics Bulletin (2015), established that children's enrolment in the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes is very low. Many parents keep their children at home until they are aged six years and are at the appropriate age to start primary schooling. This behaviour is associated with parents' behavioural efforts to reduce financial costs that are incurred in ECCD education (Lefoka & Swart, 1995).

Lesotho has made several efforts to ensure that all children are ready for Grade 1. The government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Education and Training (2013) has developed the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development which has eight aims. Five of them emphasize the need for children to acquire early childhood education prior to primary education. These aims read as follows:

- Development of IECCD Centres and services with priority given to children from 0 to 3 years and their parents to ensure holistic child development.
- Ensuring that vulnerable children with developmental delays, malnutrition and

disabilities receive early childhood intervention services.

- Improvement and expansion of pre-school services (including home-based and reception year services) for children aged 3 to 5 years and improving the transition from home to primary school.
- Promoting the rights and protection of children and parents, especially in difficult circumstances.
- Expanding and improving the system for –pre-service and –in-service training for all IECCD services.

In particular, strategy four directly states that pre-school services for children between the ages of three and five should be improved and expanded in order to improve transition from home and pre-school to primary school. This assertion is further strengthened by objective three which indicates that pre-school-aged children as well as their parents must be prepared for entering primary school.

The observation that there are learners who start primary school without early childhood education implies that children who start Grade 1 in Lesotho are of two categories in terms of school readiness. Firstly, there is a group of learners which may possess a set of foundational skills acquired in early childhood education. The second group consists of learners that lack the required foundation skills as they were not exposed to early childhood education, and such children are not ready for schooling.

Learners who lack school readiness require different teaching strategies. Grade 1 teachers have to apply certain techniques in order to teach these two diverse cohorts of learners (children who are ready and those that are not ready for Grade 1). According to Bates and Pardo (2010), in their study on meeting diverse learners'

educational needs, such teachers require professional strategies that would enable them to consider what the learners need in order to be successful, and teach them using appropriate teaching methods.

Early childhood education programs enhance children's school readiness prior to formal learning (Wotipka & Rabling, 2017). These findings were unveiled in "Whose Child Is This" project, a tracer study that was conducted in Lesotho by Heerden et al., (2017), whose aim was to find out the impact of early childhood education programme on children's school readiness prior to formal schooling in Grade 1 in Lesotho primary schools.. The findings of this study indicated that children who have participated in "Whose Child Is This", an early childhood education programme, were ready for school and performed better than those who did not participate. Brown (2010) showed that for children to be ready, they must acquire integration of numerous skills and knowledge. According to The National Centre for Education Statistics (1993) and Sparapani et al., (2016), teachers indicated that children who are ready show the following indicators of readiness; ability to communicate needs, wants and thoughts, enthusiasm and curiosity in approaching class activities, development of language skills, emergent literacy and social as well as adaptive behaviour and ability to follow instructions and direction. Hair et al., (2006) indicated that the readiness skills in turn permit children to function meaningfully and successfully in a classroom setting.

It can therefore be suggested that there is limited knowledge on how Grade 1 teachers handle children who demonstrate insufficient foundational skills at that stage. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Grade 1

teachers working with learners who demonstrate insufficient school readiness skills for Grade 1.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

School readiness is important for children to start formal learning. The school readiness skills are acquired earlier before children begin school in Grade 1. A study conducted by Wotipka and Rabling (2017) showed that early childhood education caters for young children before they enter primary school. Furthermore, a tracer study that was conducted in Lesotho by Heerden et al., (2017) indicates that children who have participated in early childhood education programme were much ready for school and performed significantly better than those who did not participate in that programme.

Like any other country, Lesotho put in place national policies and laws that enhance young children's education through early childhood education. The Education Act of 2010 makes provisions for children aged two to five to attend early childhood education programmes such as pre-schools, in order to acquire the school readiness skills. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2005-2015) indicated that all schools will work towards attaching reception classes by the year 2015, yet Lesotho has not managed to achieve the Education for All (EFA) Goal No. 1 that emphasizes the need for expansion and improvement of early childhood care and education, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Therefore, the majority of the public primary schools in Lesotho still operate without a reception class, suggesting that the aim of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2005-2015) was not achieved. Furthermore, some children are not able to access early childhood education programmes as the

majority of the pre-schools require parents to pay fees and as a result, some decide not to take their children to pre-school in favour of Free Primary Education (Lefoka & Swart, 1995). Parallel to this, the UNICEF (2019) Global Report shows that only a small percentage (49.3%) of children get into primary schools with pre-school education experience. This shows that the majority of children in the public primary schools start Grade 1 with insufficient school readiness. Teachers are faced with different groups of learners; those who are ready and those who are not ready to start formal learning. In response to this problem, the study proposes to explore Grade 1 teachers' perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question of this study is: what are the perceptions of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners who lack school readiness? This main research question has the following sub-questions:

- 1.4.1 How do teachers in Grade 1 view learners' school readiness?
- 1.4.2 How do Grade 1 teachers identify learners who have not acquired school readiness?
- 1.4.3 What are the remedial teaching strategies that Grade 1 teachers employ to support learners who lack school readiness?
- 1.4.4 What challenges do Grade 1 teachers experience when supporting learners who lack school readiness and how do they address these challenges?

1.4.2 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to explore Grade 1 teachers' perceptions of teaching learners who lack school readiness.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the study is sub-divided into the following objectives:

- 1.5.1 To determine ways in which Grade 1 teachers view learners' school readiness.
- 1.5.2 To explore ways in which Grade 1 teachers identify learners who have not acquired school readiness.
- 1.5.3 To establish strategies used by Grade 1 teachers to support learners who lack school readiness.
- 1.5.4 To determine challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers when supporting learners who lack school readiness and find out how they address those challenges

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will be significant to the government of Lesotho policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training, particularly those who develop policies for early childhood education. They could use the findings of the current study to address issues of early childhood education, particularly relating to children's school readiness prior to formal learning. Furthermore, the findings could assist the policy makers to implement the policy more effectively.

The parents will also benefit from this study as they will be aware of the role played by early childhood education and how it influences children's school readiness for successful transition in their lives. With such information, parents will understand the importance of taking their children into early childhood education centres where they will acquire school readiness.

Furthermore, teachers, especially Grade 1 teachers, will be able to identify learners who lack school readiness and gain more knowledge on how to support those who lack school readiness through employing remedial teaching strategies in order to enhance their school readiness skills. The study will also benefit the school managements to establish ways in which schools can be ready to support learners who lack school readiness to reach their full potential.

In the context of Lesotho, there is paucity of literature on teachers' perceptions of teaching learners who lack school readiness. Therefore, this study will fill the gap by providing relevant findings on teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, the study will create a platform for researchers to conduct further research in the field of early childhood education.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides a brief account of the methodology used to carry out the study. The research paradigm that the study is positioned within is also highlighted. The research approach and participants' selection, data collection techniques, data processing and analysis, trustworthiness and credibility are also presented. Finally, the ethical considerations are described.

1.7.1 Research paradigm

According to Mark (2010), any conducted academic research is philosophically influenced by the researchers' world view. Therefore, various research paradigms in an educational context exist and these are categorised into four major groups namely: positivist, interpretivist, critical and pragmatic paradigms. Each paradigm has its assumptions that are foundational elements and these cut across each of the paradigms. These elements are: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology.

The present study on teachers' perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness is positioned under an interpretivist research paradigm. The aim of this paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experiences (Cuba & Lincoln, 1989). The interpretivists believe that the social world and natural world are fundamentally different from each other, therefore they advocate an approach of understanding the participant's point of view through interactive processes in which the researchers intermingle, dialogue, question, listen, write and record research data. Thus, interpretivist paradigm, in relation to four foundational elements or assumptions of a paradigm, follows an epistemology that is said to be subjective. It also subscribes to relativist ontology, naturalist methodology and a balanced axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The paradigm will help the researcher to study teachers' individual understandings from different contexts and the meanings teachers attach to their experiences in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness.

1.7.2 Research approach

This study followed a qualitative approach. This approach differs from other approaches in that it uses more words than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The qualitative approach attempts to describe the truth structured by the researcher through the eyes of the participant in the natural setting at the time of the event (Katz, 2015). This involves the interaction with participants in their natural settings and understanding how they construct meaning about issues concerning them. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the qualitative approach assisted the researcher to engage with Grade 1 teachers and understand their perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness

1.7.3 Research participants

According to Abbott and Bordens (2011), for any research study, the participants include all potential sources of information. Therefore, the potential sources of information for this study are all Grade 1 teachers in Lesotho primary schools having at least five years teaching experience. The researcher collected data from ten of them as they were teaching learners (Grade 1) in their schools. Therefore, they were in a good position to narrate their perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness.

1.7.4 Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in selected primary schools in Lesotho. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), purposive sampling is a sampling strategy that enables the researcher to hand pick the research participants that have

the potential to provide rich information. Therefore, ten teachers from public primary schools were selected. The ten qualified Grade 1 teachers with a minimum of five years teaching experience were selected to provide information regarding their experience of teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The qualified teachers were selected on the basis of their skills and knowledge in teaching and their capability to provide relevant information for learners with insufficient school readiness.

1.7.5 Data collection techniques

According to Gill et al., (2008), there is a variety of data collection techniques in qualitative research. These include observations, interviews, focus groups and physical visual analysis. This study employed interviews as the central data collection mode. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2014), there are three forms of interviews: structured interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. For this study, semi-structured interview was used on account of its benefits in empirical research. The semi-structured interview items are open-ended and revolve around key questions for the study. Semi-structured interviews permit an interviewer to probe and in turn, the participants are enabled to reveal information that would have otherwise not been revealed. The open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to gain wide information about teachers' perceptions of teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. With the permission from participants, the interviews were audio-recorded as it was the central method of data collection. All the interviews were recorded to avoid the distortion of data.

1.7.6 Data processing and analysis

After collection, data processing and data analysis followed. Data can be processed manually or using computer software. The data for this study was processed manually. Collected data was first transcribed. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), transcription is a process of writing down audio-recorded data and converting it into a format that will facilitate analysis. The researcher transcribed all the audiotape interviews and other emerging pieces of information into a written notes format prior to data analysis. Data processing happened concurrently with data collection to ensure that those transcriptions were done while data were still fresh.

In terms of data analysis, the study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic data analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is defined as a search for themes that emerge as they are crucial for the description of the phenomenon under study. This model has six phases: (i) becoming familiar with collected data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing the themes, (v) defining the themes and finally, (vi) the write-up phase. These thematic data analysis phases were applied in this study in an effort to understand the perceptions of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners who lack school readiness.

1.7.7 Trustworthiness and credibility

According to Lincon and Cuba (1985), trustworthiness of the study is the way in which the researchers persuade themselves as well as the readers that the study findings

are worthy of attention. On the other hand, Pilot & Beck (2014) insist that trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the research methods, data and interpretations are considered valuable for the study. Therefore, the following criteria were applied in the current study to confirm its trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Each of these criteria is detailed below.

1.7.8 Credibility

The study credibility is defined by Polit & Beck (2012) as the truth value of the data emerging from participant views, interpretation and representation by the researcher. On the similar issue, Korstjens and Moser (2018) add that there are different strategies to ensure credibility such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member checking. However, they indicate that not all strategies can be employed by the researcher, but it depends on the type of research one follows. As a result, for this study, the credibility of the findings was ensured by personally collecting data during data collection (prolonged engagement with participants) and also quoting the exact words or phrases of the participants during data presentation. Moreover, the issue of credibility was addressed by testing the findings and interpretation of the study with the participants.

1.7.9 Transferability

Transferability refers to the findings of the study that can be applied to other similar situations relevant to the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985). Moreover, Houghton et al., (2013) indicated that the transferability criterion is achieved if the other participants or readers find the findings meaningful to their own situations. For this study, the researcher has ensured transferability by providing thick descriptions of every step of the study. Sufficient information about the research methodology and design was also provided to allow the readers to determine if the findings fit well with their situations.

1.7.10 Dependability

The dependability of the study includes the aspect of consistency in the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The qualitative researchers employ techniques to show that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. Regarding this study, in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the researcher reported the processes within the study in detail, thereby enabling other future researchers to repeat this work.

1.7. 11 Conformability

Shenton (2016) defines conformability as the extent to which the findings obtained were the true value of the research participants. Here steps must be taken to ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas

of the participants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. Therefore, the first step in addressing this issue was to ascertain that the decisions made and methods adopted were acknowledged within the research report. The reasons for favouring one approach when others could have been taken were also explained and the weaknesses in the techniques employed were admitted. Furthermore, when presenting the findings of this study, the words of the participants were quoted in relation to their perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In any empirical research, whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed method, there are research subjects, informants or participants depending on the type of research approach and they need to be treated with respect (Hammersely & Traianou, 2012). Bordens and Abbott (2011) indicate that where human beings are participants for the study, the researcher has to comply with the ethical issues as well as the institution policies where the study is conducted and act in such a way that the participants' dignity is considered. The following ethical considerations were considered during data collection: request for permission, voluntary informed consent, and protection from harm, confidentiality and anonymity. This study employed teachers as the key research participants. As a matter of fact, the researcher sought and gained approval from the Educational Foundations Department in the Faculty of Education, NUL to collect data from the specified participants.

1.8.1 Permission for research site and voluntary informed consent

According to Ramrathan et al., (2017), it is critically important to have access to the research site where participants live in order to achieve the purpose of the study. In order to fulfil this part, official letters to the school principals requesting permission to conduct the study in their schools were issued. The researcher also prepared another set of letters to the participants requesting them to take part in the study. This called for another ethical issue named voluntary informed consent. Fouka and Mantzourou (2020) indicate that voluntary informed consent is of paramount importance in any research study as it enlightens the participants about the information needed and their intended roles within the parameters of the study. The issue of voluntary involvement was clearly stipulated in the participants' letters and communicated verbally before they signed the consent forms. The form outlined the following details: title of the study, purpose of the study and confirmation of how confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured.

The issue of informed consent is further elaborated by Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) as a contract between the researcher and the participants. According to them, informed consent has two major functions in research trustworthiness. Firstly, it makes the participants to be fully informed of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what (if any) consequences there could be. The second asks the participants to provide explicit, active and signed consent to taking part in the research, including understanding of their rights to access their information and the right to withdraw at any point. Therefore, in this study, these principles were adhered to by providing detailed and adequate information for the participants including the researcher's identity, the purpose of the study and how data was to be collected.

1.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

In relation to confidentiality and anonymity, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) point out that these ethical issues must be ensured so that none of the participants are identifiable through the information gathered during data collection and after. Hence, the researcher accorded the principle of anonymity by assigning numbers and letters to the participants and their schools, respectively, that is, starting from School A, Teacher Number 1 and ascending until the last school and teacher. Furthermore, the issue of confidentiality holds a key position in research ethics. In this regard, the researcher guaranteed the participants that the information disseminated would be confined only to the purpose of the study and not any other purpose and would be kept strictly confidential. The participants were also assured that during the publication stage, they could access the research report and confirm that all information was presented and not misinterpreted.

1.8.3 Protection from harm

Basically, participants' protection from any harm is ensured when their identity becomes unknown to the researcher and keeping the information confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Apart from this, the researcher should ensure that participants are free from any physical or psychological harm (Leedy & Ormrod, 2011). Hence, in this study, it was outlined to the participants that they were free to ask questions where they needed clarifications, free to withdraw at any time and there were no physical and psychological harm associated with their participation.

1.9 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This is a qualitative study with a small number of participants who were selected from 10 primary schools in the Maseru district. While the views of other stakeholders regarding early childhood and primary education may be important for promoting and improving it, the study focused only on what happens in the classroom, particularly on the experiences of Grade 1 teachers on working with children who start Grade 1 with insufficient foundational skills.

1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts used in this study include: Early Childhood Education (ECE), school readiness, transition, remedial teaching, remedial teaching strategies and foundational skills. These concepts are defined hereafter.

Early childhood education

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2012) defines early childhood education as a range of processes and strategies that are used to develop children holistically. Sun, Rao, and Pearson (2015) add that it is a range of educational and health services offered to young children before they start primary education. For the purpose of this study, this concept implies the preparations that influence the children's readiness for Grade 1.

School readiness

School readiness is a multidimensional construct that incorporates three aspects of readiness: (i) whether a community (parents and family members) is ready to send a child to school and support the associated educational activities of the child; (ii) whether the school is ready to accommodate the child as a new learner, or (iii) whether the child has been equipped with the skills and knowledge that allow a smooth transition from home or early childhood education programmes into the early years of primary education (Visser et al., 2019). The focus of this study is on the readiness of a child's acquirement of skills which are foundational for Grade 1

Transition.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), transition is defined as an ecological concept that comprises a series of nested structures in which children move from one structure to the other linked together in a network. The structures that are involved are home, school, church and the wider society. In this study, the concept transition means the mobility of children from one level of education, hence children from early childhood education programmes, or home moving into Grade 1.

Remedial teaching

This concept is defined as an educational program or teaching method which enables learners to gain the basic skills and be able to achieve successfully (Weissman et al., 1997). Additionally, Goff-Kfour and Ramzi (2008) indicate that remedial teaching is meant for uplifting the skills of underprepared school entrants as they get along with the school curriculum. Based on what remedial teaching aims for, teachers at any level of education can use it to supplement ways that uplift learners who demonstrate

insufficient school readiness. Therefore, for purposes of this study, remedial teaching means re-teaching of curriculum content or pre-knowledge that learners were supposed to have acquired during the early childhood education phase.

1.10.5 Remedial teaching strategies

According to Goff-Kfour and Ramzi (2008), remedial teaching strategies are purposively designed and selected methods of teaching the students who seem to perform below the class average. However, for the purpose of this study remedial teaching strategies is understood as any supportive ways and means that teachers in Grade 1 employ in and outside of the classroom to help learners identified with insufficient school readiness to cope with formal schoolwork.

Foundational skills

According to Rahmawati et al., (2018), foundational skills are conceptualised as the basic skills and knowledge children need in order to settle and be successful in a formal learning environment. To scholars like Sparapani et al., (2016), the foundational skills represent a consolidation of skills, attitude and behaviour associated with initial and continuing academic journey successfully. In this study, foundational skills mean the skills, knowledge and attitudes that children have developed through early childhood education and enable them to start schooling and to adapt and adjust to formal demands of schooling.

1.11 STUDY OUTLINE

Chapter 1 presents the overview of the study and details the background information, the statement of the problem and the research questions as well as the purpose of the study that guided the whole research. The objectives and the significance of the study are stated. Furthermore, the research methodology is outlined. This outline of research methodology included the research paradigm, approach, participants, data collection techniques and data processing and analysis. Moreover, the trustworthiness and credibility, ethical considerations, the scope of the study, definition of the key concepts, the study outline and the summary of this chapter are clearly articulated.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature review and the theoretical framework that underpins this study

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, in which the interpretivist view as a research paradigm that guides the rest of the methodology or study is outlined. The research approach, design, methods and instruments for data collection and data analysis are discussed.

Chapter 4 outlines the data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5 finally presents the discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

1.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter introduced the proposed study. It covered the introduction, background to the study which discussed early childhood education and its benefits as well as the government of Lesotho's initiatives to promote early childhood and access to this type of education. The problem statement was articulated. The key research questions and other subsidiary questions that guide the study, the aim, objectives, and significance

of the study, scope and the definition of terms have been outlined. The next chapter deals with the literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter highlighted the background leading to the statement of the problem. In addition, the five key objectives which influenced the whole study and the key research questions were formulated. The current chapter reviews the related literature on teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The chapter commences with the introduction, this section, the review of related literature in line with key objectives of this study; teachers' views on children's school readiness, challenges learners with insufficient face, teaching strategies teachers use to support learners, challenges faced by teachers in supporting learners and solutions offered to address the challenges. Moreover, this chapter discusses the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

2.2 TEACHERS' VIEWS ON CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS

The concept of school readiness has been defined differently in the literature by different scholars from different contexts. Lynch and Smith (2016) define school readiness as a multidimensional construct that includes all aspects of a child's life that contribute directly to a child's ability to learn when such a child enters any level of education. Mcgettin and Cray (2012) are of a similar view which considers school readiness as a multi-dimensional set of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social capabilities that permits children to interact successfully at school. On the other hand, Altum (2018) adds that school readiness is seen as the concept that refers to the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that children acquired before formal learning occurs. Altum (2018) is of the opinion that school readiness enables learners

to be effective, successful, and be high achievers in their academic world. In addition, Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, and Calkins (2006) describe school readiness as children's capabilities that are needed to meet the cognitive, physical and social demands of a school at the entry point. In support of this, Grodsky, Huangfu, Miesner, and Packard (2017) view school readiness as the academic and behavioural skills that teachers expect children to possess when they start schooling. Generally, school readiness could be viewed as a multifaceted concept that refers to the children's attainment of a certain set of competencies that help them to successfully begin formal schooling. Therefore it critical for teachers to recognise the components of children school readiness as learners enter Grade 1.

Sahic, Sak, and Tunce (2013) in their qualitative study which seeks to compare teachers' views (pre-school and first grade) confirms that school readiness is a multifaceted process that involves all the developmental areas and other skills. Sahic, et al., (2013) paid less attention to cognitive and literacy skills in defining the children's school readiness. Therefore, their study findings showed that teachers at both levels share similar views relating to children's school readiness and agree that families, teachers and children are all significant in attaining success at school.

2.2.1 Factors that influence children's school readiness

Other studies have investigated issues related to school readiness and concluded that the factors that are associated with a family, school and with a child have a great influence on their readiness for schooling. Pan, Trang, Love, and Templin (2019) believe that the readiness of the schools, and the learners' cognitive, socio-emotional readiness, and physical readiness are interrelated. These, together with families'

involvement, can predict good academic achievement if those systems are all ready to create a conducive environment for learners' school readiness. The following section discusses these factors starting with those related to school as system.

2.2.2 Factors related to schools

How ready schools are is another factor that can influence a learner's school readiness. Research has established that schools need to be ready to support the new learners to influence their learning. Kartal and Guner (2018), who reviewed studies on school readiness between the years 2012-2017, established that many studies had revealed that the readiness of schools to accommodate all the learners influences school readiness for better learning. Kartal and Guner (2018) explained that physical features of schools such as buildings, toilets and cleanliness as well as the human resources should be user friendly to all the learners entering formal learning. In their findings, it was noted that even teachers must be supportive and ready to welcome learners. It can be inferred from the above assertion that schools have the capacity to influence children's school readiness and need to be renovated and ready to play their roles, with teachers providing the expected responsibility of leadership.

On the other hand, Janus and Duku (2010) also observed the role played by the teachers in the preparation of learners for school readiness. The findings of their study showed that low qualifications of teachers impact negatively on learners' school readiness especially among learners from low socio-economic backgrounds who have not participated in early childhood education or who attended very low quality schools. This hampers their readiness during transition to other grades. This was also supported by Rensbury's (2015) study that investigated the school readiness levels of

Grade R learners in the Gauteng province in South Africa. It emerged from the findings of Resnsbury that Grade R learners were not adequately prepared after attending only one year of pre-primary classes due to their teachers' low qualifications. It can be noted that all the teachers from any level of early years teaching need to be qualified to prepare learners for Grade 1.

2.2.3 The benefits of school readiness

School readiness is viewed as very important in every step of a child's educational lifeduring the transition from the home environment to pre-kindergarten, from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten, from kindergarten to first grade, and other levels of education (Sparapani et al., 2019). As earlier discussed, school readiness plays a vital role in the learners' transition from one level of education to another and for their future success (Majzub & Rashid, 2012). Tager (2017)observed that children who possess school readiness skills such as literacy, numeracy, and other non-cognitive skills are likely to have better academic achievement in subjects such as English and maths than their peers who have not acquired these skills. Thus, Majzub and Rashid (2012) emphasize the importance of making sure that children have the necessary skills that make them ready for schooling because there are challenges that they experience if they are not ready for school. From what has been discussed in relation to the benefits of being school-ready, it is clear that core stakeholders such as parents, families and communities need to ensure that there are resources that enhance learners' readiness before entry to informal and as well as formal education.

2.2.4 Factors related to child readiness

Some studies have also established that child-related factors such as cognitive and non-cognitive skills, age, adaptability, gender, ready schools, children's backgrounds, and early childhood education influence children' school readiness before formal learning.

2.2.5 Cognitive and non-cognitive skills

Rahmawati, Tairas and Nawangsari (2018) sought to find out the factors that influence children to be ready for school. This study interviewed Grade 1 teachers and parents. The findings indicated that both sets of participants have a common perception regarding factors that influence children's readiness to learn. They believed that learners are influenced by their cognitive skills as well as non-cognitive skills. According to participants, cognitive skills involve reading, writing and numeracy while non-cognitive involve skills about other developmental domains such as socio-emotional and physical.

In addition, Kakia, Popov and Arani (2015); have also studied how teachers examine children's school readiness before formal learning. This study showed that the holistic development of learners influences them to be ready in terms of physical and health development, their interactions as well as communication skills. This was also in line with Serry et al., (2014) who investigated the perspective held by school teachers regarding the factors that contribute to transitioning to school. The findings indicated that the teachers consider various child-related factors such as cognitive, social, self-care, emotional, and language domains.

Age

Aslan and Cikar (2019) and Furlong and Quirk (2011) have established that age influences school readiness. Aslan and Cikar investigated the readiness of children aged 60-65 months to determine their preparedness for Grade One. The findings revealed that those children were not ready for formal schooling as compared to those who were aged between 66-72 months. The findings were supported by Furlong and Quirk's (2011) study which established that where a child's age is below the required school age, such a child is usually not ready to start formal schooling and that if a child is at the appropriate age for schooling, they are usually ready for formal schooling. The studies that have investigated the influence of age on school readiness have concluded that age should be considered as one factor that can positively or negatively affect children's school readiness.

Adaptability

Some studies have investigated the influence of adaptability on children's school readiness. For instance, Brock and Curby (2016), McCartin (2016) and McCartin (2016) investigated the impact of adaptability on children's school readiness. The findings established that children who engage well with their new environment, and are able to interact with their classmates and teachers are said to succeed in their academic journey. These findings were congruent with the findings of Brock and Curby (2016) which indicated that children who have developed social skills able to persist with a given learning activity until it is completed and can adapt well to any new

environment. Hence, the authors have concluded that adjusting well predicts children's preparedness for school and good academic performance.

Gender

Some studies have focused on how gender influences school readiness and have established that it can have a negative influence on the readiness of a child for schooling. Janus and Duku's (2007) study revealed that a child's gender is a significant factor that increases the risk for lower or higher scores on the EDI measures. But it was established that males tend to get low scores as compared to females.. Similarly, the studies conducted by Furlong and Quirk (2011) and Ensar and Keskin (2014) established that boys, particularly those who were youngest in a grade, demonstrated developmental differences in cognitive skills (reading skills, attention, problem-solving and numeracy) and socio-emotional skills, and often have lower academic achievement in school. Son, Lee, and Sung's (2013) study also found out that girls significantly outperformed boys on early reading, social, and academic-related skills.

Early childhood education

Sun, Rao, and Pearson (2015) defined early childhood education as a range of educational and health services offered to young children before they start primary education. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2012) adds that early childhood education is a range of processes and strategies that are used to develop children holistically. That implies that children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional well-being is observed as important. Therefore, early childhood

education could be viewed as the second world that assists children to develop their potential fully and get ready for formal school.

Hasan, Hyson, and Chung (2013) argued that early childhood education starts in infancy, long before primary education. This implies that when a child is born, learning occurs and the type of education considered as informal unstructured learning begins to occur. Hasan et al., (2015) also believe that family education influences early childhood education. They also point out that this type of education must be shaped at the very early stages in the child's life as it prepares them for another level of education; that is Grade 1.

One of the aims of early childhood education is to prepare children for a smooth transition from home into schooling. There are many benefits acquired in the early childhood education environment. For example, according to UNESCO (2012), early childhood education exposes children to an environment that has been prepared to support and aid their holistic development before formal education. In this environment there are teachers, parents and other community members who all work together to support the child's cognitive, social, physical, emotional, moral and cultural development in preparation for formal education. This type of environment gives a child an opportunity to socialize and interact with others, and to develop emotionally while learning to form relationships with others (Bhise & Sonawat, 2016; Garcia, Evans, & Pence, 2008). According to Garcia et al., (2008), a child who is brought up in this kind of environment does not emerge as a separate entity but as part of the social network. As a result, Rao, Sun, Pearson, Pearson, Liu, Conostas, and Engle (2012) are of the view that every child should be allowed to access early childhood

education because it exposes them to the learning environments that stimulate their thinking. Keenan, Conroy, O'Sullivan, and Downes (2019) have also argued that cognitive and non-cognitive skills assist children to achieve academically. Therefore, parents, community and teachers should influence the skills through the provision of a stimulating environment. Rao et al., (2012) have further established that early childhood education promotes learner readiness for formal schooling. The authors observed that children who are engaged in the programmes that offer high-quality early childhood education often show higher numeracy and literacy achievements at the entry point and the end of Grade 1 compared to learners who had not been exposed to early childhood education at all.

It was observed that the scores of the learners who had not participated in the early childhood education programmes were less when compared to those who had early childhood education. Rao et al., (2012) also concluded that quality early childhood education influences the nature of learners' experience beyond early childhood level.

Grodsky, Yiyue, Miesner, and Packard (2017) also view school readiness as not only important when a child enters basic education but at every level of education. Their views are supported by Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) who also established that early childhood education prepares and makes young children ready for schooling. The importance of readiness is emphasized by Zyl (2011), and Bruwer, Hartell, and Steyn (2014) who are of the view that school readiness among children who are exposed to early childhood education does not only benefit entrance into formal schooling but is also important for life-long learning.

How early childhood education influences the school readiness of a child has also been investigated by others such as Gill, Winters and Friedman (2006), Furlong and Quirk (2011), and Zuilkowski, Fink, Mouchérand, and Motafwali (2012). Gill, Winters and Friedman (2006) explored existing readiness amongst kindergarten learners and the transition practices. The findings indicated that children who have participated in the early childhood education settings (pre-kindergarten) are more ready compared to those who had not. Furlong and Quirk (2011) add that pre-school experiences have a significant role in children's school readiness and high academic achievement. Furthermore, Zuilkowski et al., (2012) evaluated the effect of community-based early childhood centres in Zambia. The findings indicated that children who had attended early childhood centres did well in academic work as compared to those learners who did not participate. The authors also did a follow-up study that examined the transition practices. The results established that children who participated in the community centre were enrolled in the first grade earlier than those who did not attend. This is supported by Erkan and Kirca (2010) who investigated the effect of pre-school education on 170 young children's school readiness and found that those who had pre-school experience were more ready than other peers. Finally, Hatcher et al., (2012), in their qualitative study where they interviewed parents and pre-school teachers, found that their perceptions of kindergarten readiness were associated with the role of pre-school but also with social and emotional factors, specific school-related skills, language, and literacy skills, and the influence of assessment data.

The scholars have concluded that learners who did not have early childhood education experience face challenges in formal learning while learners with early learning experiences proceed well. They further concluded that the transition practices are

easier for children with early childhood education than those who did not have. From the above assertions, it can be noted that the experiences in early childhood education are major factors that built upon earlier learning from families.

2.2.6 The children's backgrounds

The children's backgrounds have also been identified as one factor that can positively or negatively influence school readiness. Majzub and Rashid (2012) conducted a study in Malaysia that sought to examine children's level of school readiness based on their backgrounds and their impact on school readiness. The findings indicated that children who were morally ready but socio-emotionally unready exhibited signs of school unreadiness. Bailery's (2014) findings were consistent with Majzub and Rashid's (2012) results which indicated that children who lack pre-school experience from rural communities with low-economic backgrounds performed under average as compared to their counterparts in the urban centres. Furthermore, Zhang et al.'s (2008) study that examined teachers' perceptions regarding factors that influence school readiness, showed that teachers believed factors like learners' health, attention, confidence and learning interest contribute to learners' readiness. This shows that most of the studies believed that learners' readiness depends on learners themselves as well as their teachers and parents.

2.2.7 School readiness and academic performance

The studies that investigated how school readiness influences academic performance have concluded that children who possess foundational skills when they start schooling have a high probability of performing well in elementary schools and beyond.

Hair, Haller, and Terry-Humen (2006); Zyl (2011); Furlong and Quirk (2011), and Pan, Trang, Love, and Templin (2019) discovered that there is a strong relationship between school readiness and learner academic performance. Furlong and Quirk (2011) further found that learners who experience early childhood are likely to earn better academic scores than learners who do not have the experience or are not ready for formal education. On the other hand, Hair et al., (2006) examined how school readiness dimensions collectively predict the academic and social adjustment of a child in the first grade. The findings indicated that the dimensions were interlinked and they predicted positive academic results as well as positive social adjustment in early elementary school.

Zyl (2011) also associated school readiness with high academic performance among children who were in Grade One and Grade Four. The findings established that learners who enter school ready in their first grade, are likely to perform even better in the upper grade. Pan, Trang, Love, and Templin's (2019) study also showed that the readiness of the school in terms of its resources; physical and human resources and the learner's cognitive, socio-emotional readiness, physical readiness was interrelated and could predict academic achievement.

2.2.8 Challenges experienced by learners with insufficient school readiness during transition to primary education/Grade 1

The time children transit from home to primary school has various terms. Some people call primary education big school, primary 1, first grade, grade 1, or formal schooling. Due to many factors that influence learners' school readiness, it has been observed that some children start Grade 1 ready to learn while others lack school readiness for

learning. Therefore, it was found to be important that learners should be identified or assessed as they start Grade 1 (Magnuson, Ruhm, Waldfogel, 2007).

2.2.9 Assessing children's school readiness during entry point/Grade 1

A school readiness assessment is defined by Maxwell and Clifford (2004) as a process of testing young children around school entry. On the other hand, Amod and Heafield (2013) indicated that the school readiness assessments are administered for different purposes; to prevent, identify and address barriers to learning. In addition, they also established that different school readiness assessments can guide other stakeholders like parents about their children's readiness before they start school. This implies that school readiness assessments predict preparedness for school entry and identify children who may need additional support. This is contrary to Ohle, et al.,'s (2017) study which examined perceptions of teachers on children's readiness based on the school readiness assessment and results indicated that the school readiness assessment had no impact on the teachers' perceptions. The teachers reflected the philosophy that learners should come to school as they are.

However, in some educational systems, children are assessed for readiness before they start Grade 1. In the Republic of South Africa (Gauteng Province), the Department of Basic Education educational system uses a readiness assessment tool that tests four developmental areas of a child (cognitive, social, emotional and physical developments). It is believed that these assessment tools reliably assess and provide valid results relating to the school readiness of Grades R and One, and the core competency skills for foundation phase (Grades 1-3) (Department of Basic Education, Gauteng Province, 2017).

Currently, in Lesotho, there is no national assessment for school readiness among children who start school. However, the Ministry of Education and Training is developing a school readiness initiative national assessment tool that will be used to determine every child's school readiness before starting formal learning. This initiative is in partnership with the Roger Federer Foundation (RFF) (MoET, 2020-2025) where learners from early childhood settings at the age of five in their Reception will be assessed before entering the first grade. Moreover, it was discovered that there is a project running in other primary schools as piloting schools called Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho (MTML), where the Grade 1 learners' prior knowledge is assessed.. The assessment tool aims to determine the level of knowledge children have at the beginning of their schooling and what progress they have made by the end of Grade 1. The tool covers literacy, numeracy as well as the attitudes of learners towards learning. However, it was noted that it is only one school that is at the piloting stage among the 11 that participated in this study.

2.2.10 Challenges of learners with insufficient school readiness during teaching and learning

After the learners were assessed, the feedback from assessments indicated that the those with insufficient school readiness demonstrate certain characteristics such as inability to work independently or focus on their work, difficulty to concentrate, inability to regulate their own emotions and behaviour, and lack of persistence to complete learning tasks (Bruwer, Hartell & Steyn, 2014).

In addition, Duncan, Dowett and Claessens (2006), in their study that looked into school and later achievement, established that learners who lack sufficient school

readiness lack most academic skills such as communication and reading skills. Their findings attributed such challenges to lack of exposure to nurturing and stimulating environments like home or quality early childhood education.

Furthermore, Aunio and Niemivirta (2010) also indicated that in independent work or group work, learners with insufficient school readiness may show weakness in counting numbers, knowing shapes and the alphabet, have problems with social skills and trouble following directions. However, Bhise and Sonawat (2016) opined that the challenges learners face in a classroom situation must be addressed to enable them to acquire basic skills for learning. However, the results also revealed that teachers' ratings indicated that learners lack skills such as: following directions, paying attention in the classroom, and reading skills. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to provide proper intervention strategies that support learners to acquire readiness.

2.2.11 Teachers' support through remedial instruction

Based on the literature discussed below, learners with insufficient school readiness can be supported through various teaching strategies (Abraham, 2019). Most scholars believe that remedial teaching is a core engine that drives other strategies to support learners with insufficient school readiness (Abraham, 2019; Sampson, 2018; Huang, 2010; Reme Petters, Rienties, Giesbers, Mcluckie, Luchoomun, Mazeikiene and Alisauskiene, 2014, and DeFilips, 2015). Remedial teaching is done when a learner demonstrates some deficiencies in his or her academic skills. It is special assistance that a child gets from knowledgeable people like teachers so that she or he can acquire the necessary skills (Sampson, 2018). Academic deficiencies could also mean poor performance attributed to insufficient school readiness that could be caused by various

factors such as developmental or environmental factors (Sampson, 2018). Once the teachers observe that a learner is struggling to acquire the required knowledge and skills, they are expected to adapt their teaching to suit the learning style, ability and learning pace of such learners.

Remedial teaching is defined as educational activities that are aimed at removing deficiencies and filling in the knowledge and skill gaps of a learner (Huang, 2010; Hansen, Petters, Rienties, Giesbers, Mcluckie, Luchoomun, Mazeikiene & Alisauskiene, 2014; DeFilips, 2015). In remedial teaching, the focus is on the content, knowledge, or skills that learners fail to demonstrate that they have been acquired. This is why Sampson (2018) describes remedial teaching as a type of teaching which is intended to rectify academic deficiencies among learners with insufficient school readiness for learning. They are called corrective measures. However, Siddiqui & Alghamdi (2017) showed that there are many approaches that teachers can use before implementing alternative remedial teaching strategies. They include remedial teaching that is offered during class time, after regular class time, and during school holidays (Bonnard, Giret and Sauvageot, 2018).

Remedial teaching during class time

After the learners have been identified for remedial teaching, a teacher may choose to remove these learners from the whole class to work with them in a smaller group or individually based on the learning needs of each learner or group (Bonnard et al., 2018). The learners are offered support within the regular classroom. The advantage of this approach is that learners (individually or as a group) are given an extra opportunity to be retaught or revise the concepts that have been taught in class and

this can result in performance improvement. However, the disadvantage of this approach is that some learners may take too long to relearn the content and may not have a chance to achieve other learning goals.

Remedial teaching after normal class time

With this approach, learners with insufficient school readiness remain behind after school hours to be offered lessons on the identified lacking skills (Siddiqui and Alghamdi, 2017). The advantage of this approach is that the learners will have extra time to correct the classwork. However, there is a chance that such learners can be tired and be demotivated to learn.

Remedial teaching during school holidays

With this approach, a concerned teacher or other independent experts working in the field choose to run classes during the school holidays to assist learners who are struggling with certain skills, concepts and subjects. The purpose of this approach is to support learners to acquire basic or foundational skills (Bonnard et al., 2018). The authors point out that this approach gives learners more time to learn at their own pace though this can be prolonged and learners become demotivated. Moreover, it was found that good remedial teachers consider different but connected stages to remedial teaching before the actual implementation of strategies (Eno, 2016). The following are stages for implementation of remedial teaching.

2.2.13 Implementing various remedial teaching

Remedial teaching needs preparation or planning like any other teaching. It requires a piece of highly specialized knowledge and skills on how to go about it (Chikware &

Oyedele, 2016; Samspon, 2018). They indicated steps to be followed in remedial teaching, whether conducted during class time, after class time, or during school holidays, and they are discussed below.

Diagnostic stage: before remedial teaching is enacted, a teacher should use a diagnostic procedure to identify learners who demonstrate learning deficiencies. This may be done through observations during the teaching and learning process and or through entry assessments (Eno, 2019). It is a critical stage as it sets forth the lacking skills for an individual learner, so teachers need to diagnose learners so as to provide relevant remedial teaching strategies.

Analysis stage: data collected at the diagnostic stage should be analysed to identify the knowledge or skill deficiencies (Eno, 2016).

Formulation of objectives: after identifying knowledge and skill deficiencies, teachers set the learning objectives that would be easy to observe in the learner assessment at the end of teaching. Depending on the learners' needs, the learning objectives that a teacher sets could be long-term or short-term, or address general or specific learning challenges experienced in a subject or general studies. What is important is for a concerned teacher to ensure that they are applying corrective measures to a specific problem. At this point, a teacher should also decide how a learner would be assessed (Eno, 2019).

Selection of learning resources and strategies: once a teacher has formulated the learning objectives, she or he should identify the learning materials and strategies that

would be used to support a learner. When making this selection, a teacher considers many factors which include but not limited to the nature of a learning need, learners' abilities, learning style, and availability of resources and material (Eno, 2019; Chikware and Oyedele, 2016).

On-going support: It is important that a concerned teacher also considers the strategies that will be used to provide on-going support to the learner that would ensure that learners do not regress (Eno, 2019; Chikware & Oyedele, 2016).

Learner assessment: during and after the enactment of remedial teaching, a teacher collects information that informs him or her whether learning has successfully taken place. Based on the results, the teacher may decide to terminate remedial teaching (where learning has been successful) or to begin a new cycle that starts with diagnosing a deficiency (Sampson, 2018). The stages for implementing the remedial teaching strategies are considered important as they give a clear picture of what skills are lacking, how to address the lacking skills through desired goals, the feedback and the way forward. Therefore, it is critical for teachers to assess learners before the application of any strategy so that they know what they are dealing with.

2.3 REMEDIAL TEACHING STRATEGIES

There are various remedial teaching strategies that teachers can employ to support learners who lack school readiness. For instance; master learning, peer tutoring, individualized learning, parental teaching and reward scheme. The following section discusses the remedial strategies.

Mastery learning is an instructional method that allows learners to take their time to achieve the learning goals (Lin, Liu, Chen & Liou, 2012). This strategy breaks a content (complex task) to be taught into several small learning units. For instance, if learners lack knowledge of letters or alphabet, the teacher has to teach this concept until learners have acquired it. This strategy allows learners to move on to the next level of content only after they have mastered the other part. In addition, at the initial stages, the concrete examples and activities can be used by both teachers and children to master the sub-skills. The disadvantage of this strategy is that it is time-consuming therefore it is not possible to teach a prescribed syllabus at a prescribed time to children with insufficient school readiness (Karibasappa, Nishamimut, & Padakannaya, 2008)

Parental involvement strategy is particularly used to support children to be ready for schooling (Anderson, 2015). The school may recommend that parents work with their children at home to ensure that they are ready to transition to Grade 1 or to close the gaps that are identified when a child is already in the grade. This strategy can also be used as an enforcement strategy whereby parents re-teach the content that learners have already learned at school. The advantage of parental involvement as a remedial strategy is that learners learn in their natural home settings and use their language, and this enhances their understanding. The challenge of using this strategy is where the parents may not be able to support their children due to factors such as lack of educational skills or lack of resources.

Peer tutoring strategy engages competent learners to assist other learners who experience learning challenges (Higgins, Katsipataki, Kokotsaki, Coleman, Major and

Coe, 2013). Higgins et al., (2013) view peer tutoring strategy as effective for improving academic skills among school-aged children. It is said to be effective because it allows learners to engage freely with their peers in learning. It encourages openness among learners and gives the tutors better chances of understanding the content as they assist their low achieving peers. Furthermore, Shenderivich, Thurston, and Miller (2015) cite the advantage of peer tutoring as a cheap method when compared to private tutoring schemes. One disadvantage of this strategy is that learners who are tutors may write for their peers.

Differentiation instruction, which is also termed individualized learning, personalized learning, or self-regulated learning, is defined by Knauder and Koschmieder (2019) as a strategy that enables teachers to offer targeted support to individual learners. Others, such as Stollman, Meirink, and Westenberg, and Driel (2019), view differentiation instruction as a strategy that teachers use in their classrooms to acknowledge and take into account the differences between learners and support them accordingly. Having identified the needs of the learners, a teacher tailors their lessons in such a way that they meet the needs of each learner. Thus, learners are taught individually not as a class. This approach provides learners with enough time to master the skill or concept being taught. The strategy can however be time-consuming (Stollman et al., 2019).

Reward scheme remedial strategy is described as a teaching and learning process where learners with insufficient readiness are offered tokens for mastering the content (Maawa & Cruz, 2019). According to Maawa and Cruz (2019), the reward scheme is done on learners who attend remedial lessons to motivate them, not during the regular

class. The advantage of this strategy is that every learner in the remedial strives hard to achieve the learning goal. In addition, the benefit of this method is that it can be incorporated with other remedial strategies. However, the learners can be reluctant to learn if there are no rewards.

2.3.1 Selection of teaching materials

Selection of apt remedial teaching materials is highly important in the remediation process (Abraham, 2019). A major issue in remedial teaching is the lack of effective teaching materials. Most of the published materials have been designed for group teaching, not for special individual learning purpose. According to Abraham (2019), some of the teaching materials can be designed, modified and graded for the purpose of corrective teaching task. The materials can be selected from websites, newspapers, magazines, or even from any authentic sources which may be turned into enjoyable activities to enhance effectiveness in learning. Furthermore, it was noted from the findings of Abraham (2019) that the materials must also match the skills of the learners that the teachers wish to rectify. Therefore it can be asserted that teachers are at liberty to select teaching materials from any sources as long as they tally with the learners' level of readiness. They may be chalkboard, bottles tops, counters and many others that the teachers may think of. This why the theory of Horsford (2012) for school readiness indicates that the community where learners live must be in a position to provide rich teaching materials for them to be ready for school. Therefore, in this regard the current study is of the view that all stakeholders involved in preparing learners' readiness must be involved and provide support. These could be school teachers, principals, other teachers, public and private systems as well as learners who are at the centre of the school readiness initiatives.

2.3.2 Parental support

Lesotho is used to a proverb that says education is a three-legged pot. In actual sense it is important for parents to be involved in the education of learners, especially those that are new at school and lack readiness for learning. According to Zyl (2013), parental involvement may initially seem easy to describe in words. According to Zyl (2013) it is a very complex concept that holds many definitions depending on the context in which it is applied. In the education context of learners, parental involvement is defined as support and active participation of parents in their children's formal education (Zyl, 2013). Moreover, Zyl (2013) highlighted that parents are active when they participate in an observable manner like assisting their children with homework (Vandergrift and Greene, 1992). Again, the theory for this study advocates for parents' involvement in preparing children's school readiness.

To conclude, in relation to friendliness and motivation of learners with insufficient school readiness, this perspective on school readiness emphasizes the mediating role of relational processes. It also offers guidance for designing interventions to improve school readiness through strengthening relationships between parents and children, parents and teachers, and teachers and children.

2.3.3 Support of other stakeholders, motivation and school readiness

Eisenberg, Valiente and Eggum (2010) reviewed research on relation of self-regulation to variables involved in school success and showed that learners who seem not to adapt well to their new schools due to insufficient school readiness. The findings

established that high quality relationships with peers and teachers at new schools improve the learners' adaptability and engagement in school activities. Eisenberg et al., mentioned that when teachers are friendly to their learners when they face skills deficiencies and motivate them in every step they take successfully, the learners were reported to acquire the basic skills readiness. And by so doing, Arnold (2007) indicated that learners' readiness is improved. On the other hand, UNICEF (2012) showed that the teachers must be user friendly and motivate all the learners though the attention must be paid to those who were disadvantaged during their early years of schooling. This means the teachers at school, the principals, the parents as well as the other teachers must ensure that learners with insufficient school readiness are supported in acquiring school readiness.

Furthermore, Mashburn and Pianta (2010) found that most of the views on children's school readiness tend to focus on social and academic competencies that children are presumed to need to start school ready to learn. However, a child-focused view of school readiness is limited because it neither identifies processes that lead children to acquire these competencies, nor recognizes children's dependence on opportunities within settings that support development of these competencies. Therefore, Mashburn and Pianta (2010) view school readiness as a function of an organized system of interactions and transactions among people (children, teachers, parents, and other caregivers), settings (home, school, and childcare), and institutions (communities, neighborhoods, and governments).

Rahmati Tairas and Nawangsari (2021) opine that establishment of good relations is an important task at early elementary education. In their study that aimed to determine

the influence of motivation towards other components of school readiness, such as socio-emotional, it was revealed that motivation encourages learners with insufficient readiness to enhance basic skills in learning.

This means the primary mechanisms through which children acquire readiness and related competencies are the social relationships children form with peers, parents, and teachers through friendliness. But the findings of Yirci and Kocabas indicated the schools' failures and successes are dependent upon the school principal. Therefore, if they do not support the learners with insufficient school readiness it means a big failure on teachers and learners, especially for learners who seem not to be ready for formal school. Therefore, school principals are heads with many roles such as guiding teachers on how to teach and support learners.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS

Generally speaking, teachers are seen as the key agents in educating learners, and they teach at different levels. Some are in preschools, primary schools, high schools and in higher education (Education Act, 2010). However, teachers in primary education, especially Grade 1 teachers, are furthering children's school readiness that they acquired from different backgrounds like in their homes and in early childhood education settings. However, children enrolled in Grade 1 may not be school-ready due to many factors such as poverty (Leslie, Roos, and Lee, 2019). Therefore, the issue of insufficient school readiness can pose challenges to Grade 1 teachers as well as the learners.

2.4.1. Lengthy curriculum and high content

The challenge posed by a lengthy curriculum and high content was confirmed by a study by Bruwer (2014) which investigated the impact of insufficient school readiness on learning in South Africa. The findings indicated that teachers were challenged for the fact that their learners could not cope with the formal learning in Grade 1. Bruwer (2014) further postulates that teachers who faced this challenge attributed it to the inadequacy of early learning experiences. This implies that teachers of children who lack exposure to early education experience certain challenges. This assertion was confirmed by several studies which revealed the benefits of early childhood education.

In the same study (Bruwer, 2014), the findings linked the lack of early experience to be factorized to poverty. This assertion was also indicated by Loslie, Roos, and Lee (2019) in Manitoba Canada, as they showed that children born in poverty experience more difficulty in reaching their school readiness, and these challenges extend to their teachers too. In other words, learners' challenges turn to be teachers' problems too. In a similar study, Leslie, et al., (2019), the findings revealed that if learners who lack school readiness can transit out of the poverty cycle within two years, they are likely to reach their school readiness levels before formal learning. This means children who may be identified earlier are likely to overcome and acquire readiness skills.

In addition to curriculum challenge, Bruwer (2014), as well as Wesley and Buysse (2003) assert that teachers experience several tensions related to views on children's school readiness. These findings further showed that the teachers' challenges arise between their philosophies of teaching and learning and the expectations set forth by the state. This means that the curriculum fits all and teachers are expected to teach it

to every learner even though learners differ in terms of readiness. This also implies pressure on core players; teachers and learners.

2.4.2. Lack of teaching materials

Furthermore, Ntumi (2016) conducted a study on challenges facing the public primary school teachers in their teaching career. The findings revealed that teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning materials to help learners to acquire school readiness skills. Moreover, Ntumi (2016) reiterates that parents do not involve themselves in supporting learners to acquire readiness skills and this makes it difficult for teachers to do the work alone. Although Ntumi was not writing specifically about Grade 1 challenges, the findings seem equally applicable to the participants' challenges for this study as the early childhood teachers prepare young children for primary school.

On the other hand, Wildschut, Moodley, and Aronstam (2015) in their study that aims to assess learners' literacy skills suggest that some of the learners experience barriers in terms of receptive and expressive language, perceptual skills, and fine motor development. This means that children must acquire literacy skills earlier before starting primary school (Wildschut, et al., 2015).

2.4.3. Lack of parental involvement

Gundogmus (2018) conducted a study whose aims were to identify the difficulties experienced by primary teachers in the process of primary reading and writing instruction and the solutions offered eliminate the challenges. This review established

that parental indifference is a challenge as parents fail to reinforce the activities at home with learners who are beginning to read. Another finding indicated that the learners themselves were not ready to learn reading and writing as foundational skills due to the low level of readiness to learn. Moreover, the study found that another challenge is that of teachers lacking professional experience in supporting learners in learning reading and writing skills. And finally, the findings show that the learners are regularly absent from school and lack interest to learn which makes it challenging for teachers to see the progress of learners in acquiring the basic reading and writing skills.

2.5 SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES

Based on the challenges teachers face in supporting learners to acquire readiness skills, some studies like Gundogmus (2018) have provided solutions to the challenges. Gundogmus (2018) identifies difficulties that primary school teachers experience in primary reading and writing instruction. Teachers should find ways on how the parents of learners who begin to learn basic skills may be educated on how to support the learners in reinforcing the school activities at home too. Furthermore, the results indicated that teachers solve other challenges of unreadiness of learners through the provision of activities that suit the learners' readiness level. This means that the teachers teach learners the content or the basic skills that can lead them to learn other skills. Finally, the findings revealed that teachers learn to collaborate with parents to work hand-in-hand to support learners who lack interest and who become absent on school days. In addition, Webster-Stratton, Reid, and Stoolmiller's (2008) findings established that parental involvement is a strategy for improving reading and leads to

later academic achievement success. Webster-Stratton, et al., (2008) also elaborated on the issue of parental involvement in assisting learners with readiness skills.

On the other hand, in Adewumi's (2019) study on the experiences of teachers in implementing inclusion of learners with special needs, the findings indicated that teachers offer good practices to overcome the challenges of inclusive education among learners such as giving remedial work, the use of teaching aids, offering individual work and also informing parents about learners' challenges.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted Horsford's (2012) model of school readiness as its lens. It is a Framework for School Readiness (FRS) and posits that children should be ready for school, parents and communities should be ready to support children for school and schools should also be ready to support learners. This implies that children's school readiness requires multiple stakeholders to be ready for learning. Horsford's model put forth that ready systems, ready schools, ready educators, and ready families and communities should work together to ensure that children are ready for school. Therefore, Nevada's framework revised the equation for children's school readiness as follows: ready families + ready educators + ready schools + ready communities + ready systems = children are ready for school.

Apart from these stakeholders, the framework indicated that the children's developmental skills and as well as their behaviours shape their school readiness. The following subsequent sections illustrate and discuss the Horsford's (2012) model of

school readiness for children in figure 2.2.1 below. The discussion starts with ready systems as a stakeholder.



Figure: 2.2.1: Framework for School Readiness (Adopted from Horsford, 2012:4).

2.6.1 Ready systems

According to Horsford (2012), ready systems are defined as a conceptual guide for future conversations policies, and practices aimed at ensuring that these multiple stakeholders understand their roles and impact on children's school readiness. Based on the Nevada Education Department (2012), a range of social policies on children have both indirect or direct impacts on the lives of young children's school readiness in their early years and before formal learning. This implies that if the public and private agencies design the policies that support children's school readiness and ensure that they are implemented, children could be indirectly influenced and this may have a direct positive impact.

Supplementary to this, Kresslein (2005) reiterates that the availability, quality and affordability of proven programmes that influence child development and school readiness must be put in place to enhance school readiness. Kresslein (2005) further echoes that ready systems also include the degree to which public and private agencies promote policies and practices including data collection that enhance access to early childhood programmes needed to support children's school preparedness. Furthermore, Kresslein indicated that ready systems with proper information and tools from research may help other stakeholders to understand their roles in supporting children's readiness for school. Therefore, for this current study, the ready systems will inform the public and private agencies to review the policies and practices that are implemented in terms of children's school readiness. Furthermore, the framework will assist the policymakers to find new data that other partners like school communities and parents need to play their roles effectively to prepare children for school.

2.6.2 Ready schools

The theory also recognizes ready schools as one important stakeholder for children's school readiness. Ready schools are described as learning environments that enhance further and directly children's school readiness and build upon their prior skills, knowledge and abilities (Horsford, 2012). Kartal and Guner (2018) echo that ready schools' physical environments must be nurtured and suitable for learners' level of physical development. This implies that ready schools' resources should align with the developmental ages of children during the transition and the resources must be accessible by every learner admitted.

According to National Educational Goals Panel (1991) in America, ready schools possess the following characteristics: they smooth the transition between home and school by sharing other similar resources for preschools, home, and the big school. This strives for continuity between early care and education programmes and elementary schools, and helps children learn and make sense of their complex and exciting world.

Furthermore, ready schools should be committed to the success of every child, are committed to the success of every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day, and expand approaches that have been shown to raise achievement. Moreover, they must be in a good position to alter practices and programmes if they do not benefit children and serve children in communities with strong leadership partnerships.

This implies that ready schools' stakeholder focuses on a school as an organization and liaises with other closer stakeholders in promoting children's school readiness. Therefore, the theory will assist the researcher to identify schools that are ready for Grade 1 students and describe how ready schools benefit learners who get into Grade 1 without the necessary school readiness skills.

2.6.3 Ready educators

In the framework of children's school readiness, Horsford indicated that the stakeholders are interconnected to enhance children's readiness. Therefore, ready educators are closely related to ready schools. So the theory depicts that ready

educators are crucial for children's school readiness (Nevada, Education Department, 2010). This Nevada Department defines ready educators as skilled educators who understand age-appropriate development for children they teach, possess the skills to develop appropriate curriculum based on children's development levels, recognize children's level of readiness, reinforce their teaching, and extend children's strengths and are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences, including children with special needs.

Moreover, Horsford (2012) posits that ready educators mean the extent to which educators are ready to support learners' school readiness. This means that learners do come to school with varying levels of school readiness and the educators should ensure every child learns at his or her pace. UNICEF (2012) adds that educators should be in a position to welcome learners and ensure that their readiness improves for good academic performance. In other words, ready educators are prepared to support learners through a range of educational strategies that promote their school readiness. As part of the theory, ready educators is the core basis for this current study as it emphasizes the role of educators in the enhancement of children's school readiness. Therefore, it will help the researcher to describe the role played by teachers in ensuring children's school readiness. It will further help the researcher to identify ways in which teachers unpack the curriculum and ensure that learners who lack school readiness acquire readiness.

2.6.4 Ready families

Ready families are the closest stakeholders to children and can enhance children's school readiness before learning and during the learning process. These are places

where children are born and grow up. According to the framework of the Nevada Education Department (2010), ready families are the first children's teachers and most important teachers, providing steady and supportive relationships, ensuring safe and consistent home environments, promoting good health, and fostering curiosity, excitement about learning. Kid sense (2018) adds that parents teach their children the skills such as self-care, dressing, toileting and eating and get ready to leave their families. The corporation also includes task activities such as teaching children to develop good relationships with other people other than their own family members and exposing the children to education books. Moreover, Nonoyama-Tarumi and Bredeg (2009) indicated that the education books should be in line with children's developmental age so as to enable them to understand the pictures and concepts in the books. Parents should demonstrate their willingness and ability to support their children with resources needed for big schools such as books, pencils, and other additional resources to enhance their readiness to learn. Moreover, they should help children to complete their homework and be ready to participate in different school activities such as being selected as a committee member, assist teachers by visiting their children's classes as well as participating in school improvements that aim at enhancing children's learning. The ready families add its significance to this study as it gives the researcher the chance to realize the role the families play in school readiness. The researcher will be in a position to tell the support the families offer to learners with insufficient school readiness and its effectiveness.

2.6.5 Ready communities

Apart from the close stakeholders mentioned above and discussed in this study, the communities are indicated by the framework as another crucial stakeholder in shaping

children's school readiness. According to Nevada Education Department (2010), ready communities are defined as independent institutions or organizations such as businesses operating in communities for serving children's families with goods and services that help children's school readiness. Furthermore, the theory posits that the institutions like local governments are important in promoting school readiness as they clear records of when children were born. This is also further supported by health institutions that provide children's families with access to information regarding children's health. Carol (2000) argued that health issues promote school readiness as children's development levels are measured and reordered. This implies that children are in a position to be screened and referred accordingly with necessary interventions such as immunization from communicable diseases that cause delay children's school readiness. This is also observed by Horsford (2012) as he posits that the children must ensure that they support learners' readiness through resources that they use as educational materials.

The theory brings relevance to this study as it assists the current researcher to clearly understand the roles that the communities play to ensure that children's families are supported in promoting their children's skills for school and continue to support the learners who may lack school readiness skills.

2.6.6 Ready learners

According to the theory demonstrated in figure 2.2.1, the ready learners are the final product of school readiness or final stakeholder in the process of school readiness. The other stakeholders such as the ready system, educators, families, schools and communities are initial dimensions that must be ready first to prepare children for

school readiness before learning. Ready learners are defined as learners' dimensions of readiness that refers to how well a child is and has been prepared to transit from home or early childhood education into schooling. Learners' readiness focuses on a child's behaviour, foundational skills, and knowledge that allow learners to fully participate in the school activities and be successful (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004) Rahmawati, (2018) adds that school readiness or ready learners means the capabilities that children must possess to enter an elementary school so that school success can be achieved.

According to Teke (2010) and UNICEF (2012), when a child is ready for school, such a child should be able to carry out activities that are cognitive, affective, linguistic, social, or physical as required by the school in which the child is enrolled. Teke (2010) points out that children who are viewed to be school ready are those who, when entering schooling, can carry out specific school tasks which require them to get along with others, cooperate, demonstrate self-confidence, be able to express themselves using language and be able to respond to the messages that are communicated and follow rules. Moreover, Janus and Gaskin (2013) explain that school readiness, regarding a child, is a child's capabilities needed to meet the cognitive, physical, and social demands of the school entry. Ready children have acquired readiness skills and the readiness skills for school have been conceptualized as the skills and knowledge that children need when they enter school to learn effectively in the school setting (Janus, 2007); Janus and Gaskin (2013). The National Educational Goals Panel America in 1991 also agreed on the five domains of children's development as a base that can be used to explain children's school readiness. These domains include physical development and health, social and emotional development, language and

early literacy, cognition, and general knowledge and approaches to learning. These components of ready learners are described hereafter.

2.6.7 Physical development and health

According to Nevada Education Department (2010), physical development and health domain cover factors such as health status, growth, and disabilities; physical abilities, such as gross and fine motor skills. A healthy child attends lessons much better than a sick child who can be absent from school sometimes for days. This physical development and health domain also includes gross motor skills and fine motor skills. The gross motor skills assist the children to perform other tasks such as sitting uprightly; being able to run, jump and skip while fine motor skills enable children to hold and write with a pen (Kagan and Lowesten, 2004). Therefore, the health component connected to the physical part is crucial for children's school readiness as it assists the child to attend lessons on daily basis and ultimately promotes school readiness. Another component under this domain is the rate of growth of each child. This simply means whether the child growth bar is increasing or decreasing and that alone may affect children's school readiness. The World Health Organisation (2000) regards child growth as a major component under the physical domain as it stipulates clearly how the child grows. WHO (2000) includes height as one indicator that can show whether a child is adequately growing or has inadequate growth, Hence, the issue of growth can affect children's school readiness positively if the child's growth is satisfying. It may affect school negatively if the child's growth is stunting.

So, this implies that the theory will help the researcher to understand clearly the factors that may influence children's school readiness and can be from the literature review

and the data to be collected. Furthermore, this brings relevance to the study as it shows the researcher that the developmental school readiness domains interconnect for children to be ready for school.

2.6.8 Social and emotional development

Social and emotional development is another domain of development that builds upon children's school readiness (Horsford, 2012). This explains whether the learners are socially developed or emotionally matured. This means the domains are made of two interrelated components (NED, 2010). The first one, the social component refers to children's abilities to form close relationships with other learners and their teachers and interact mindfully in the school environment (Yates, Ostrosky, Cheatham & Fetting, 2008). The second component, emotional development includes children's perceptions of themselves, their abilities to understand the feelings of other people, and their ability to interpret and express their feelings, and be able to self-regulate their emotions. This implies that an emotionally ready child can say no or yes or sorry to other people around him or her without fear but with respect. The National Educational Goals Panel (1991) adds that children who possess the social and emotional skills are likely to acquire school readiness even if they lack insufficient readiness skills as they set the stage for future academic achievements, personal outcomes, and other areas of development (Denhan and Brown (2010). The socio and emotional domains also assist learners to regulate and express their emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

This part of the theory is relevant to this study as it will help the researcher to have a clear understanding of how the participants of the study view children's school readiness.

2.6.9 Cognition and general knowledge

The cognition and general knowledge is another component in children's school readiness. It is also twofold as it has cognition part and general knowledge about the learners who are ready for school. Cognition refers to the thinking ability of a child on curriculum concepts and being able to solve problems related to content learning. This means the child who is ready cognitively embraces the conceptual skill in the thinking part. The conceptual skills are observable from when a learner has developed as a child who possesses them can form images of concepts learned. Such learners can draw, illustrate and label such drawings (Hsin & Xie, 2017). On the other hand, cognitive readiness is seen as an essential ingredient for a child's school readiness and can be measured by test scores (Davies, Janus, Duku, & Gaskin, 2016). This means educators can administer certain readiness assessments that can assess children's cognition. These skills that are initially developed during early childhood education should focus on the nurturing of cognitive readiness and continued in other levels of education like primary education upwards. Hsin and Xie (2017) added that cognitive and its component, are the core indicators that enable children to perform academically better at school and achieve more scores even though this study does not focus on this area alone but perceptions of teachers on general insufficient school readiness.

The other component is general knowledge. According to the NED (2010), general knowledge refers to the ability of the child to view and be aware of his or her natural environment, the knowledge about particular objects, and the way the world works. It may be mathematical knowledge or abstract thoughts including imaginations. Similarly, this component will assist the current researcher to observe in the findings whether general knowledge is considered as important in their readiness.

2.6.10 Language and early literacy

According to the framework, the language domain includes communication and emergent literacy. Communication includes listening, speaking and vocabulary while emergent literacy includes print awareness, story sense, early writing, and the connection of letters to sounds (NED, 2010). Lonigan and Shanahan (2009) add that Language and Literacy skills are the fundamental skills in learning at a very early education level. Language includes reading, speech, auditory discrimination and memory or sequencing skills, phonological and morphological skills, alphabetic and orthographic knowledge. The literacy skills on the other hand are recognized through the learner's ability to identify letters, sounds, rhyming words, and to read and write simple words and sentences. Children must acquire these skills before formal education as they are indicators of their school readiness (Webb & Willams 2018). Fallon and Katz (2011) have indicated that the early acquisition of literacy skills interrelates with early numeracy skills. Furthermore, Fallon and Katz (2011) posit that the delayed acquisition of these skills affects children's academic achievement and life opportunities. Hence, children must acquire the skills before Grade 1 as it is the target for this current study.

The framework adopted is found to be more relevant to this study as it will help the researcher to explore more on identifying the most lacking skills in learners with insufficient school readiness

2.6.11 Approaches to learning

This framework also looked into how learners approach their learning. According to the theory, Horsford's (2012) approaches to learning refer to the inclination to use skills that the ready child acquired, knowledge gathered, and other individual children's capacities. The key components include enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence on tasks, as well as temperament and cultural patterns and values (Nevada Education Department, 2010). The approaches to learning are increasingly being identified as important for children's success and school readiness as they determine the interests of the individual child in learning. Pan, Trang, Love, and Templin (2009) add that the approaches to learning refer to learners' attitudes, habits, and learning styles that characterize how they learn. They also include curiosity, creativity, persistence, planning and engagement in learning. Hence, children who possess positive attitudes towards learning seem to be ready for school. The theory is appropriate to this study as it shows approaches learners apply in a learning situation.

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented the literature review. It covered the introduction section and further gives the review of the literature around the five key research questions that influence this study. In addition, the chapter further discussed the theoretical

framework and how it significant to this study. The next chapter, which is chapter three, will discuss the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the review of literature related to exploring teachers' perceptions about teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The review focused on the key objectives of the study and other issues on school readiness such as factors influencing school readiness. In addition, it explained the theoretical framework adopted for the study and concluded with a summary for the chapter.

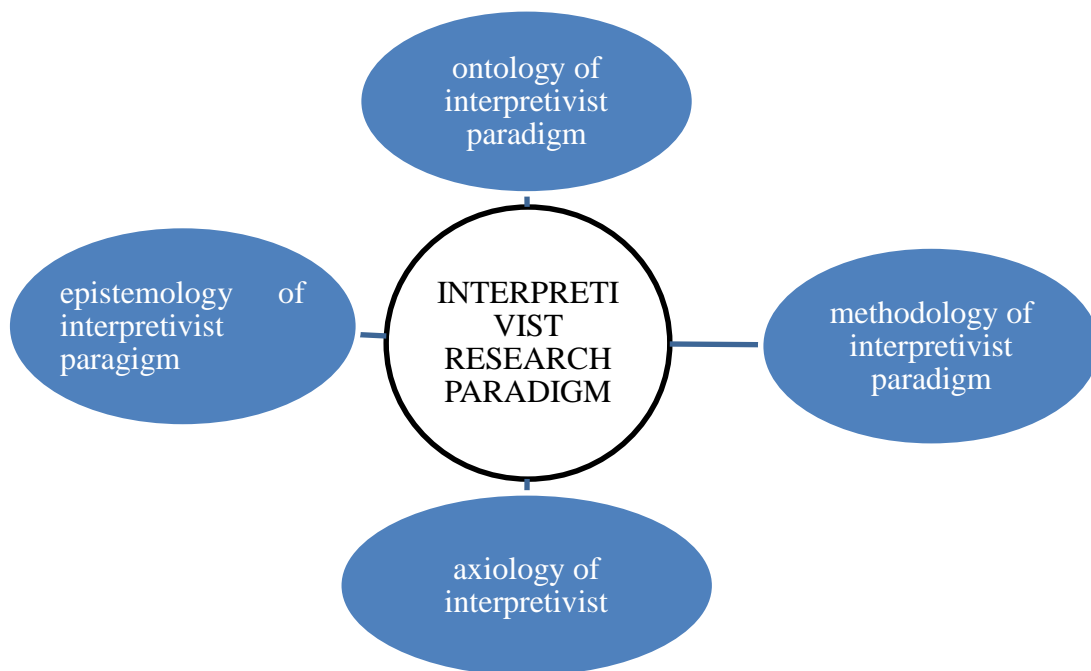
This chapter outlines the research methodology for the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), research methodology presents the procedures followed in undertaking a research. It involves the steps taken in order to investigate the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, in research methodology the researcher provides a clear rationale for every procedure followed so as to allow other readers to judge the credibility of the findings of the study. The chapter started with the introduction above that highlighted the previous chapter, and then it explained the major parts in research methodology. This information is presented in the following sections: the research paradigm discussed first, followed by research approach as well as research design for the study. The population of the study has also been described including the selection of the participants from the entire population. Furthermore, data collection methods and instruments are discussed. Moreover, data analysis techniques, trustworthiness and credibility as well as ethical considerations are discussed. Finally, the delimitation of the study and chapter summary are presented.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Mark (2010), researches conducted are philosophically influenced by the researchers' world view. This world view or how researchers view their world is called research paradigm. There are four research paradigms in the educational context. These are positivism, interpretivist, critical and pragmatic paradigms (Kivunja and Kiyini, 2017). Each paradigm describes how the researchers come to know the reality about their world. That is, whether they view the reality to be objective or subjective. Furthermore, each paradigm has foundational elements: epistemology of the paradigm, ontology of the paradigm, methodology of the paradigm and axiology of the paradigm.

This study on teachers' perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness adopted the interpretivist research paradigm whose aim is to understand the subjective world of humans through their experiences with the world (Cuba & Lincoln, 1989). The interpretivist believes that the social world and natural world are fundamentally different to each other and that there are multiple realities. Therefore they advocate an approach of understanding the participants' point of view through interactive processes in which the researchers intermingle, dialogue, question, listen, write and record research data. The interpretivist asserts that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed by individuals in their contexts hence why interpretivist research paradigm is also called constructivism. In other words, the proponents of this philosophical view regard knowledge as belonging to individuals' own thoughts and consciousness. The interpretivist paradigm is illustrated in figure 3.2.1 below.

The researcher's presentation of interpretivist research paradigm:



Source: Adopted from Kivunja and Kuyini (2017)

For this study, the interpretivist paradigm has been adopted. The rationale for selecting it will be reflected and discussed in relation to four elements of this paradigm. These are epistemology of the paradigm, ontology of the paradigm, methodology of the paradigm and axiology of the paradigm. These elements are discussed below.

3.2.1 Epistemology of a paradigm

The epistemology of paradigm is the study of knowledge (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). According to Cooksey and McDonald (2011), epistemology in research means the researchers have to describe how to know multiple truths. Hence the epistemology for interpretivist is subjective. This implies that the researchers looked into the matter through the lens of the research participants, their experiences, feelings and interests. Therefore, that knowledge about the problem at hand was built upon. In the case of this study, the researcher came to know the truth about teachers' perceptions in

teaching learners with insufficient school readiness through the participants' views on this matter by allowing them to answer the research questions. Cooksey and McDonald (2011) posit that the study of knowledge, that is epistemology, is concerned with how the knowledge is acquired and communicated to humans. As a result, the interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to interview the teachers and interpret the data. Therefore, this paradigm is suitable for this study as it enabled the researcher to know the truth based on what participants experienced through interactive measures such as interviews.

3.2.2 Ontology of the paradigm

The other element of interpretivist research paradigm is ontology. The ontology of the paradigm concerns beliefs the researchers make about the reality of the social phenomenon under investigation, its significance and nature (Scotland, 2012). According to interpretivist, the nature of reality is perceived from the participants point of view. Furthermore, this paradigm believes that there are multiple realities that exists. This applies to this study as the researcher asked many teachers to find out the multiple realities that exist in their natural settings. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), it asks the questions like, is there reality out there or in a person's mind? Hence, the current study investigated the perceptions of teachers about teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. This implies that there is reality in the natural settings where teachers live or work with learners with insufficient school readiness. This paradigm through its element of ontology enabled the researcher of this study to interact and make sense of the data gathered without her imaginative thought. The teachers' perceptions could not be established without asking them to share the reality of how they teach learners with insufficient school readiness. The

paradigm helped the researcher to answer the research questions. In other words, interpretivist believes that knowledge is socially constructed between the researcher and the participants' interactions.

3.2.3 Methodology of the paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kiyini's (2017) explanation, methodology of the paradigm includes how data will be collected and knowledge is acquired. It refers to the research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in an investigation that is well planned to find out something (Keeves & Dang 2003). This study intends to find out teachers' perceptions about learners with insufficient school readiness. Therefore, this element of interpretivist enabled the researcher to find appropriate design, methods, and approaches in order to know the reality about teaching learners who lack school skills. The study was a case study. According to Starman (2013) the case study is more qualitative than quantitative and characterised by interpretative paradigm. On the other hand, MacMillian and Schumacher (2014) define the case study as an indepth exploration from multiple perspectives. Hence, this was a single case that intended to explore the perception of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The case study allowed the researcher to deal with the teachers' case concerning insufficient school readiness. This study adopted interview to acquire knowledge from teachers in their natural settings. In other words, the interpretivist upholds that the methodology is naturalist.

3.2.4 Axiology

According to Kuyini and Kivunja (2017), axiology refers to the ethical issues considered when one undertakes the research. Kiyini and Kivunja (2017) further add that axiology includes definitions, evaluations and understanding concepts of right and wrong in research. This paradigm under the element of axiology enabled the current researcher to clearly articulate the study topic and select the right participants for the study. Furthermore, the paradigm through axiology helped the researcher to ensure that the participants understood their roles, and ethical issues were clearly stipulated and upheld throughout the study. Moreover, the paradigm assisted the researcher to consider the right choice of data collection methods in order to explore teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The interview was considered the best tool to collect data as it matches with qualitative research that also map well with interpretivist research paradigm. Finally, they ensured that the results made sense to the beneficiary who were considered as teachers teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, policy makers, parents and other scholars who went to pursue further research in the area. Moreover, the axiology element of interpretivist paradigm means a balanced presentation of a balanced report of the research findings (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). This part of interpretivist paradigm helped the researcher to write the final report of the findings about the problem that was investigated.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Depending on the purpose, a study may either follow quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research approach or research design in order to answer the key research questions. This is supported by Pathak, Jena and Kalra (2013) who argue that research is scientific, therefore it is based upon finding a solution to a particular

problem one can identify. Moreover, they indicate that there are various methods of formulating a research design for the study namely qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The elementary method of conducting research was quantitative, but recently, qualitative method of research has also gained momentum among researchers (Pathak, Bijayini and Sanjay, 2013). Therefore, this study intended to explore teachers' perceptions about teaching learners with insufficient school readiness and followed the qualitative approach.

According to Choy (2014), the qualitative approach is the type of design in which qualitative researchers begin with a self-assessment and reflections about themselves as situated in a social-historical context. This implies that the qualitative approach researchers are ready to be part of the social settings where they collect data. Therefore, this approach to this study enabled the current researcher to describe and explain meanings from the participants' perspectives. Neuman and Rossman (2006) added that the qualitative approach does not narrowly focus on a specific question but ponders the open-ended questions in order to gain deep understanding of the problem at hand. This characteristic of qualitative approach enabled the researcher for this study to develop more questions in order to explore teachers' perceptions in dealing with learners with insufficient school readiness. Pathak, Bijayini and Sanjay (2013) more proved that qualitative gives voice to the participants as compared to quantitative approach. This gave the current research for the study more opportunities to get involved with teachers and understand how they teach learners with insufficient school readiness or it implies rich data.

The qualitative research approach emphasises the need for a researcher to go to the field and interact with the participants in their natural settings and understand how they construct meaning (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014). The qualitative approach attempts to describe the truth structured by the researcher through the eyes of the participants in the natural setting at the time of the event (Katz, 2015). This meant interacting with the participants in their natural settings, and understanding how they construct meaning.

3.3.1 Research participants

According to Abbott and Bordens (2011), the participants of the study include all potential sources of information for any research or problem under investigation. Therefore, the potential sources of information for this study were all Grade 1 teachers in Lesotho primary schools. According to the Education Act (2010), all children must start Grade 1 if their sixth birthday is turned on the 30th June in the year started school. The Act does not specify the type of children to start Grade 1 in terms of readiness. This means every child is free to come and teachers find themselves teaching learners who are ready to learn and those that may not. Therefore, data for this study was gathered from eleven Grade 1 teachers. They were regarded to be in a good position to narrate their perceptions in teaching learners who lack school readiness.

3.3.2 Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in the primary schools in Lesotho. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), purposive sampling is a sampling strategy that enables the researcher to hand pick the research participants that have

potential to provide rich information. The eleven qualified Grade 1 teachers from public primary schools were selected. Qualified teachers were selected due to the skills and knowledge on teaching beginning students which they may have acquired during their training. Furthermore, the selected teachers had to have a minimum of five years teaching experience in Grade 1. It was felt that this experience could enable them to have information on teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The six of the eleven teachers who were selected to participate in this study were from the government-owned schools while another five participants were from five church-owned schools. The eleven participants in this study consisted of eleven female teachers. The bias towards female participants was not intentional but happened as a result of the dominance of female teachers at Grade 1 level in Lesotho primary schools.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008), there are variety of data collection techniques in qualitative research approach. These include observations, interviews, focus groups and physical visual analysis.

3.4.1 Interviews

This study employed semi-structured interviews, as the central data collection mode, camera and observation. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended to enable participants to respond according to their knowledge and not be restricted by the question. This helped the researcher to collect wide information on teachers' perceptions of teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The interview

schedule revolved around key questions for the study so they enabled the researcher to collect information that responds to the research questions. Semi-structured interviews allow an interviewer to probe participants to reveal information that would otherwise not be revealed.

Before the interviews started, permission was sought from each participant to audio-record their responses. The participants agreed and the interviews were recorded. The audio-recorded data ensured that no information was lost during interview and at the same time it enabled the researcher to pay attention to whatever information was revealed.

3.4.2 Observation

Marshall and Rossman (2014) define observation as looking and noting systematically people, events settings, artefacts, routines and so on. Cresswell, (2012) reiterates that the observation offers the researcher the opportunity to gather first-hand information from naturally occurring social situations rather than reported data. However, in the current study the observation method was not used as a principal method for data collection rather as a supplementary method for reality check of verbal and non-verbal data collection. The study adopted the highly structured observation which enables a researcher to know in advance what is it to observe (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

Furthermore, observation method helped the researcher to triangulate the data collected through interviews for the trustworthiness of the results. It has been clearly indicated by McMillian et al., (2014) that observation allows the researcher to see and

hear what is really occurring naturally in the real lives of the participants. Therefore, observing the Grade 1 physical setting classrooms would also give valid meaning of what actually happens during the teaching and learning process. Some of the Grade 1 exercise books were observed as a way of validating the dominant skills which learners with insufficient school readiness lack. Furthermore, the participants were observed on how they support learners as well as the teaching resources they use in the classrooms and finally, the classroom teaching materials display for learners with insufficient school readiness.

There are several roles that one may undertake under observation such as participant observer or non-participant observer (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The participant observer allows the researcher to be part of the participants, interact with them, take part in all activities while the non-participant observer enables the researcher to observe the occurrences without disturbing the participants. The observer may only ask later after the observation took place for detailed information. Therefore, this study adopted the non-participant role to allow the findings to be neutral without any impact from the researcher. Therefore, some of the interview protocol questions under this study were observed and captured with permission from the participants.

3.4.4 Data processing

After data collection, the next step in qualitative research is data processing and data analysis. The data collected can be processed manually or using computer software. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), the manually processed data refers to that which is worked out by the human capacity as a central method of processing

data with less help from software. On the other hand data processed through computer software indicates that less human and much process is done by computer.

The data for this study was processed manually. It was first transcribed. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), transcription is a process of writing down any form of data collected from either audio-recording during interviews, observations, and focus group interviews and converting it into a format that facilitates analysis. However, the researcher employed the interviews that were taped and transcribed each tape immediately after interviews while what transpired in the interview was still fresh.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

In terms of data analysis, the study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic data analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being crucial for the description of the phenomenon under study. The model has six phases, namely: becoming familiar with collected data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining the themes and finally write-up phase. The following paragraphs detail how these data analysis steps were applied.

3.5.1 Become familiar with data

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase is where the analyst or researcher has to have knowledge about the collected data. At this stage, verbal or interview transcripts and field notes were already transcribed. The familiarisation stage is done

through repeated reading of data in an active or rigorous manner (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This ensures that every question intended to be asked was achieved and emerging data will also surface and be recognised. The researcher read and re-read the data several times in order to familiarise herself with all data set. In addition to repeated reading, the researcher also interpreted the direct quotations and non-verbal clues that were displayed by each participant during data collection. This first stage of data analysis was achieved through playing audiotapes separately and several times. The process of transcription due to re-reading of data several times, and reference was made to field notes.

3.5.2 Generate initial codes

After the completion of the first phase of getting familiar with data, the researcher has to generate initial codes. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), code[s] is a name or label given for any segment or piece of collected data that stands alone and is used to provide meaning to the segment. Braun and Clarke (2006) add that the codes may be derived or formed through data from specific research questions. In this study, the preliminary codes were generated for each interview question as well as the emerging codes due to emerging data during data collection. For example, question one looked into how teachers (Grade 1) interpret school readiness and these were the initial codes: family education, early childhood education and social interaction.

3.5.3 Search for themes

According to Braun and Clarke's model of analysis, after the data has been coded the next stage is to search for themes. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), themes refer to several codes that have been formed together. This stage assisted the

researcher to go through all the codes generated in stage two of this model and observe the codes that showed commonality and categorise them under one theme.

3.5.4 Review themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), all themes formed need refinement. Braun and Clarke refer to refinement of themes as ensuring that they serve the purposes that were intended to. This implies that from data, codes and themes, there is matching process rather than mismatch of data and themes. Similarly, the researcher reviewed the coded data for each theme to reconsider whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. Furthermore, refinement involves checking that all themes have sufficient data to support them as well as their sub-themes. Therefore, the researcher ensured that refinement of the themes was done through returning to the raw data to see if each generated theme had enough data. According to Nowell, Morris, White and Moules (2017), during review of themes, some themes can be broad and need to be broken down while others can be weak to be recognised as stand-alone themes, and such themes can be combined. This stage helped the researcher to be aware of inadequacies in the initial coding and attend them.

3.5.5 Define themes

In defining the themes, it must be ensured that the themes correspond with the whole data set. Then the researcher moves forward where they define and redefine the themes that will be presented for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this study, the researcher defined and redefined all themes generated and found the essence of what

each theme was all about and determined what aspect of data each theme held. For instance, the first theme for this study was: teachers' interpretations of school readiness, therefore all data that interpreted school readiness was presented and analysed.

3.5.6 Trustworthiness and credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness of the study is a way in which researchers persuade themselves as well as the readers that the study findings are worthy of attention. Polit and Beck (2010) add that trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the research methods, study data and interpretations are considered valuable for the study. Therefore, the following criteria were applied in the current study to confirm the trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Each of these criteria is detailed below.

3.5.7 Credibility

The study credibility is defined by Polit and Beck (2012) as the value truth of the data, which are participants' views, interpretation and representation by the researcher. On the similar issue, Korstjens and Moser (2018) add that there are different strategies to ensure credibility such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member checking. However, not all strategies can be employed by the researcher, but it depends on the type of research one follows. As a result, the researcher in this study ensured the credibility of the findings by personally collecting data and ensuring prolonged engagement with participants. The researcher also quoted the exact words or phrases of the participants during data presentation. Moreover, credibility was

addressed through the frequent debriefing sessions. According to Sheton (2004), frequent debriefing sessions refer to purposeful interaction between the researcher and his or her superiors. Sheton (2004) further showed that the sessions involve discussions where the researcher's vision on his or her problem is widened. In the case of this study the supervisor was regarded as the superior. Through the meetings, formal and informal, the supervisor discussed with the researcher alternative approaches, and this helped the researcher to come up with credible findings. Furthermore, member checking was employed to enhance the study credibility. Sheton (2004) argued that researchers should also welcome the inputs of colleagues. Sheton indicated that through questioning and answering method, the researcher is able to refine her or his research methods because asking questions develops greater understanding of the social phenomenon under study. In this study, the researcher asked the colleagues in the same field and developed deeper knowledge of her research topic.

3.5.8 Transferability

Transferability refers to the findings of the study that can be applied to other similar situations relevant to the phenomenon under study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Moreover, Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2013) indicate that the transferability criterion is achieved if the other readers find the findings meaningful to their own situations. This study ensured transferability by providing thick descriptions of every step taken and that there was sufficient information about the research methodology and design so as to allow the readers to see if the findings fit well with their situations. This criterion was also addressed through rationalizing for every step taken during the

research process, for example, the study approach selected and why the particular selection. Moreover, the researcher provided a detailed description of the participants' characteristics to enable the readers of this study to make comparisons with other contexts and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable to their own setting; this is called transferability judgement (Houghton, et al., 2013).

3.5.9 Dependability

Dependability includes the aspect of consistency of the research findings (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Qualitative researchers employ techniques to show that if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. In order to address the dependability issue, the processes followed within the study were reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work.

3.5.10 Conformability

Shelton (2016) defines conformability as the extent to which the findings obtained are the true value of the research participants. Taylor and Medina (2011) add that conformability occurs when research data is tracked to the original sources not the imagination of the researcher. Therefore, there were steps taken to ensure that the findings were the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. Therefore, the first step was that the decisions made and methods adopted were acknowledged within the research report, and the reasons for favouring one approach when others could have been

taken were also explained. Furthermore, the words of the participants were quoted verbatim in relation to their perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In any research, participants need to be treated with respect (Hammersely and Traianou, 2012). Bordens and Abbott (2011) indicated that where human beings are participants in a study, ethical issues must be complied with as well as the institution policies where the study is conducted and the researcher should act in such a way that participants' dignity is considered. The following ethical considerations were considered during data collection and thereafter: request for permission, voluntary informed consent, and protection from harm, confidentiality and anonymity. This study employed teachers as the key research participants; hence the research was approved by the Ministry of Education and Training through the official letter that bore the researcher's full names, the topic and institution.

3.6.1 Permission for research site and voluntary informed consent

According to Ramrathan, Grange and Shawa (2017), it is critically important to have access to the research site where participants live in order to achieve the purpose of the study. The researcher in the current study wrote official letters to the school principals requesting permission to carry out the study in their schools. Moreover, another set of letters were delivered to ten participants requesting them to take part in the study. All these letters explained the purpose of the study. Participants were

assured that they were participating in the study out of their own will and could withdraw from it at any time. This enabled the researcher to comply with an ethical issue named informed voluntary consent. Fouka and Mantzourou (2020) add that voluntary informed consent is paramount in any research because it means that the study participants were fully informed about their involvement. The issue of voluntary consent was captured in the letter for each participant and communicated verbally before the participants signed the consent forms. The form included information like: the title of the study, the purpose of the study, and procedures on how confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured.

The issue of informed consent is defined by Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) as a contract between the researcher and the participants. According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018), informed consent has two major terms in research trustworthiness. Firstly, it means the participants must be fully informed of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what (if any) consequences there could be. The second asks the participants to provide explicit, active, signed consent to taking part with the research, including understanding their rights to access their information and the right to withdraw at any point. Therefore, this study adhered to these principles by providing adequate information for the participants, for instance, who the researcher was, the purpose of the study and how data was to be collected.

3.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

In relation to confidentiality and anonymity, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) point out that these ethical issues must be ensured so that none of the participants are

identifiable through the information declared during data collection and after. Hence, the researcher employed the principle of anonymity through the letters for teachers' names and numbers for schools, for example, school A and teacher 1. Furthermore, the issue of confidentiality holds a key position in research ethics. In this regard the researcher guaranteed the participant that the information declared would be used for the purpose of study and not for any other purpose.

3.6.3 Protection from harm

Basically, participants' protection from any harm is ensured when their identity becomes unknown to the researcher and keeping the information confidential (Fleming and Zegwaard, 2018). Therefore, it was ensured that participants were free from any physical or psychological harm as pointed by Leedy and Ormrod (2011). Hence, the researcher in this study established good rapport with the study participants to ensure that they were psychologically ready and showed willingness to respond and participate. Furthermore, the researcher asked each participant about the language she wanted to use and that made the teachers psychologically free by using the language they were comfortable with. The researcher also ensured that there was no disharmony between her and the participants and treated them with due respect.

3.6.4 The delimitation of the study

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018), the delimitation of study refers to limitations deliberately set by researchers in their studies in order to achieve their study objectives. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018:3) further indicate that delimitation of the studies asks the question like "why I did not do like this". The aim of this study was to

explore Grade 1 teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. Thus, the study employed Grade 1 teachers, and not any other teachers, specifically because they were teaching the learners in the schools where the study was conducted. Furthermore, eleven teachers were purposefully sampled for management of data and the nature of the study, which is qualitative. Moreover, there were other methods of data collection under qualitative approach such as various interview patterns and observations, but this study used the interview (semi-structured) as the central method for data collection because the study was concerned with teachers' perceptions while observation was the supplementary method of data collection. The findings for the study could also not be generalised to other contexts because they might differ.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research paradigm to which the study was aligned, as well as its beliefs, were articulated. Moreover, the study approach for the study was presented along with its components such as: participants and how they were selected, data collection techniques and data analysis. Furthermore, the trustworthiness, ethical considerations and delimitations of this study were covered. The next chapter will deal with presentations of the findings and analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology adopted in this study. It highlighted the research approach, methods, participants, and data collected as well as data analysis methods. The current chapter, chapter four, focuses on data presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data collected on Grade 1 teachers' perceptions of teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 Grade 1 teachers from 11 primary schools in the Maseru district. Six of the schools are located in the rural areas while the five are in the urban areas. Data collection took approximately one month.

The following paragraphs focus on descriptions of research participants, followed by the context of schools from which data was collected. Furthermore, the actual presentation of data is done, followed by data analysis and interpretation, and finally, the summary of the chapter. In line with ethical issues, the names of the primary schools and teachers that took part in this study were withheld and pseudonyms were used instead of actual names. The schools were named using letters of the alphabet so that there are schools A up to K while teachers were named in a number sequence so that there are Teachers 1 to 11.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

The following table shows participants' profiles. The table includes the participants' alphabet names, sex, educational qualifications, experience as teachers, and experience in teaching Grade 1.

Table 1: Participants' profiles

Participants	Sex: F/M	Age Range	Qualifications	General Teaching Experience	Teaching Experience in Grade 1
A	F	50-59	DIP	31	15
B	F	40-49	CECE	18	5
C	F	50-59	LIET 1	25	10
D	F	50-59	B.ED	35	8
E	F	50-59	G.C.E	35	12
F	F	60-65	D.E.P	25	6
G	F	60-65	P.T.C	36	16
H	F	50-59	B.ED	37	8
I	F	50-59	B.ED	32	5
J	F	30-39	D.E.P	5	5
K	F	40-49	J.C	30	10

All the participants in this study are Basotho women whose ages can be categorized into four groups. The youngest teacher is aged between 30-39 years. Two teachers fall within the 40-49 years range, while three teachers' age is between 50-59. The other five teachers are aged between 60-65 years.

4.2.1 Participants' Educational Qualifications

The participants' educational qualifications range from Junior Certificate (J.C) to Bachelor of Education (B.ED Primary). Out of the eleven, three hold B.ED (Primary) qualification, another three hold Diploma in Education Primary (DEP) certificate. Of the five remaining participants, one holds Junior Certificate (JC), one holds a Certificate in Early Childhood Education (CECE), one has General Certificate in Education (GCE), one holds Lesotho In-service Education for Teachers (LIET 1) and the last one holds Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC). This suggests that only two participants were not qualified as teachers.

4.3 CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This section presents the context of the schools where data was collected. These descriptions entail the location of each of the schools and infrastructure. Moreover, the number of teachers, number of classes in each school, and number of learners in Grade 1 are presented.

School A

School A is a well-resourced school located in an urban area. It is owned by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and has a total school roll of 440 learners, making it fall within the large schools category. The school has 14 teachers including the school principal and deputy. The classes are from Grade 1 to 7. The teachers are paired for each grade. It has a huge church-funded building, 22 classrooms, 12 of which were built by the community while 10 were constructed with funds from the government. School A also has a tap from which learners get drinking water. Moreover, it has a principal's office as well as a staffroom for teachers. In Grade 1, there are two female teachers for a class of 26 learners. The school has toilets for both teachers and learners.

School B

School B is a rural school owned by the RCC. It has 183 learners and 8 teachers including the school principal. Grade 1 has 21 learners and is taught by one teacher. The school has six classrooms. It also owns one VIP toilet for teachers and three toilets for the girls while boys have no toilets and they use the forest near the school. Moreover, there is no running water at the school and they get water from the community tap in summer. In winter the tap dries up and learners make their provisions or get water from village wells. Furthermore, the school lacks a principal's office and staffroom for teachers.

School C

The third school where data was collected is rural-based and run by Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC). It has a school roll of 168 learners. The school has seven teachers including the school principal and the classes are from Grade 1 up to 7. The class roll for first grade is 11 learners. The school has seven classrooms and Grade 1 uses one of the large classrooms which has enough space but seems to be very cold in winter, particularly for young learners. The school owns a tap that can provide water throughout all four seasons. There are toilets for both teachers and learners. But there is no principal's office and staffroom for teachers.

School D

The fourth school, School D, is an urban school owned by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). It has a total school roll of 268 learners. The school has six teachers who are responsible for seven classes from Grade 1 to 7. The significant difference in this

school is that one teacher is responsible for a multi-grade class that consists of learners doing Grades 1 and 2. The class roll for Grade 1 is 46 while for Grade 2 it is 26 learners, suggesting that Teacher 4 in School D teaches a total of 72 students. The physical buildings include five classrooms. The school has running water in the school yard though it lacks the office and staffroom. There are three toilets where learners co-share two of them while teachers share the remaining.

School E

The fifth school, School E, is an urban area with the largest school roll of about 445 as compared to the other participating schools. The school belongs to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and has 13 teachers responsible for seven classes; Grades 1 to 7. There are two teachers for 103 learners in Grade 1. Due to the large number of learners in Grade 1 as well as COVID-19 precautions, the learners are divided into two groups and come to school in shifts. As observed by the researcher, the first group of learners is taught in the morning hours from 8.00 am to 11.00 am. The second group starts school at 11 am and knocks off at 2.00 pm. On the school premises, there is a private pre-school operating. There are eight classrooms including a computer room. Moreover, the school has an office but no staffroom. There is running water as well as toilets for both teachers and learners, with boys having their toilet block, separate from the girls' block.

School F

School F is owned by the RCC and is located in the rural areas. It has six teachers who are responsible for seven grades. Amongst the six teachers, one is a multi-grade teacher responsible for classes 2 and 3. Grade 1 has only eight learners and it uses one of the old school buildings that were once used for the school's poultry project. The school has five classrooms inclusive of the church hall which is also used as a classroom. The school has a principal's office however there is no staffroom for teachers. The observation done in the Grade 1 classroom showed that there were no class materials displayed on the walls and it was also discovered that the walls and floors were moist. However, part of the chalkboard is used as a display board. The school has a tap though it is no longer in good condition due to damage. School F may be classified as an average school in terms of its resources.

School G

School G is a rural school owned by the RCC. It has a total learner population of 140. In this school, there are five teachers, and classes run from Grade 1 up to 7. During data collection, the researcher observed that two of the five teachers teach multi-grades. The Grade 1 teacher also teaches Grade 2. When the teacher was asked about the class roll, she did not tell the exact number of learners for Grade 1. She indicated that after three months or the first quarter she will be in a position to present the principal with a list of learners who are in Grade 1 and Grade 2. She argued that the learners who were supposed to be in Grade 2 had no clue about school activities due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Therefore, she showed that learners are all taught the Grade 1 curriculum, and later on Grade 2 learners will be selected from the group. School G has 10 classrooms, an office, and toilets for both teachers and learners. The school also has a pipe water tap.

School H

School H is a rural school with a student roll of 27 from Grade 1 up to 6. It is a community school and has only two teachers and each teaches three classes. Grade 1 has only three learners. The Grade 1 teacher is a multi-grade teacher and is responsible for three grades, namely Grades 1, 2, and 3. However, during data collection, there were two volunteer teachers in the school. Each one of them was allocated one class and that reduced the workload of the two full-time teachers. The school has five working classrooms. However, the researcher observed that the roofing of two additional classrooms was blown away by wind. There is no office for the principal nor a staffroom for teachers. The school has separate toilets for teachers and learners. However, there is no water tap. The upper class learners draw water from the community tap. From this entire picture of the school, the researcher observed that it operates under challenging resources.

School I

The ninth school (School I) is located in a rural area and its proprietor is the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL). Its roll is 103 learners and classes are from Grade 1 to 7. There are three teachers all of who are multi-grade teachers. The school principal teaches Grade 1 and 2. There are 20 Grade 1 learners while Grade 2 has 21 learners. The school has three classrooms, an office, a staffroom, and separate toilets for boys, girls and teachers. However, the school does not have running water and water was observed to be a challenge for the entire community. As a result, the school gets water

from the well. From the entire details about the school, one concluded that the school has meagre resources.

School J

The tenth school from which data was collected is School J, owned by LEC. It is located in a rural area. The school has enrolled 187 learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. There are seven teachers including the school principal, and each teacher is responsible for one class. There are nine classrooms, five of which are well structured while the other four are not properly maintained. The school has the principal's office but no staffroom for teachers. There are toilets for teachers and learners. However, there is no piped water; the school gets water from the school tank that collects water during the rainy season or from a community spring.

School K

The eleventh school that was visited during data collection is School K owned by the RCC. It is situated in a rural area. Furthermore, it is the second least populated school, with a school roll of 69 learners. The school runs from Grade 1 up to 4 with three teachers. One of the teachers, the principal, is a multi-grade teacher responsible for Grade 1 and 2. The class roll for Grade 1 is 12, and Grade 2 also has 12 learners. It was observed that the Grade 1 learners use benches for sitting and writing as there are no tables. School K has four classrooms and one toilet for both teachers and learners. Moreover, it was also observed that learners only use the toilet for defecation and use dongas for urination. There is no running water, office and staffroom. Therefore, School K may be classified as having limited resources.

4.4 TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS

To determine teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, participants were asked how they view children's school readiness. From their responses, the following themes emerged: learners with school readiness are curious, they follow instructions, have good communication skills, numeracy, and writing skills, have a good posture, age, and skills. Each of these themes is described below, beginning with curiosity.

4.4.1 Curiosity in children with school readiness

The majority (eight out of eleven) of the participants viewed curiosity as one of the major components in determining children's school readiness in Grade 1. Among them, 73% indicated that children with school readiness are willing to perform any class activity quickly, be marked, and volunteer to do more class work. Such children also make numerous attempts without being discouraged. Participant 4 from School D explained that *“even the way ready learners sit determines that they are ready to learn, they are always eager to do something in the class and sit near the teacher.”* Participant 5 from School E added that *“a curious child, ready for school makes several attempts regardless of whether she or he gets it correct but keeps on trying, never gives up.”* On the other hand, Teacher 7 from School G demonstrated that learners who are active in-class participation are evaluated as ready to learn and need to be directed in their activeness towards school work. This was also echoed by teacher 9 who indicated that a child who starts formal schooling is supposed to be determined and attentive in a classroom. This is how the participant briefly explained, *“children*

who start school have to be self-motivated. And be able to hear what the teacher says, so that shows that such children are ready to learn.”

From the responses gathered, the majority of the participants believed that learners who demonstrate an eagerness to do school work are ready for Grade 1. They believed that they will learn as long as they keep on trying.

4.4.2 Children with school readiness follow instructions

Following instructions emerged from the data collected as another component of children's school readiness. The majority (76%) of the participants said that learners who have acquired school readiness can properly follow instructions during lessons as well as in extra-curricular activities. At the beginning of the year when learners arrive at school, teachers assess their readiness using oral questions such as “what is your name? The participants said that knowing oneself is one of the strategies that they use to check whether learners answer promptly, without hesitating, keeping quiet, or crying. The participants also indicated that giving instructions to learners assists them to quickly differentiate those with school readiness from those who have not acquired it. As put by the participant 3:

...during a lesson we teach learners to follow instructions. For example, if we teach them counting numbers, as a teacher I have to count first and allow them to count as well, so ready learners follow very well while those who are not ready find it challenging.

Following instructions, as mentioned by the majority of participants, was viewed as one indicator of children's school readiness. This suggests that learners who follow instructions are in a position to learn, do activities that lead to acquiring more content knowledge from the teachers and the entire school environment, and be promoted.

4.4.3 Communication skills in children with school readiness

It further emerged from five participants (46%) that communication skills in children with school readiness were considered an important element of children's readiness. They emphasized that communication skills enable Grade 1 learners to communicate with their teachers and fellow students. This is particularly important at the beginning of the year when new Grade 1 entrants are orally assessed.

Participant 6 explained that communication skills that the learners must possess are first acquired at home before they start school. The participant showed that the family should ensure that learners come to school possessing communication skills. As reciprocated by the participant, *"readiness of a child depends on the acquisition of communication skills and the flexibility of the child to have acquired the skills at home before primary schooling."*

On the same issue of communication skills, participant 10 reiterated that learners who can communicate in class do not look passive and surprised as teachers impart new knowledge but rather make the input of what is being taught. This is how the participant put it in her words: *"the children who are ready do not look surprised if the teacher is*

communicating with them as they are familiar with school language from home as well as preschools.”

4.4.4 Socialisations skills in children with school readiness

The other participants regarded social skills as another component of school readiness. They (36%) showed that learners' ability to engage in verbal and non-verbally reciprocity with other learners is a good sign that they are ready for school. Such learners take turns during play time and form good relations with classmates, friends, and unfamiliar faces like their teachers. Furthermore, the participants commented that the learners need social skills because some lessons need learners who able to recognize and follow social norms. As put by participant 2,

...ready children love the teacher, peers, and other teachers and enjoy sitting upfront where she/he can see /her teacher. Again, these social skills enable the learners to interact in lessons that need their engagement fully, so really socialization skills aid learners to perform well and look happy.

Participant 7 reiterated that ready children do not get easily frustrated when expectations are placed upon them but rather like to get engaged and form good relations. The participant expressed it in this manner, *“a ready child does not cry when the class activities demands are high but enjoys the companionship of teacher and other learners.”* The participant explained further that the learners with readiness do not fear the teachers but rather see them as their parents.

Based on the data collected, it was revealed that social skills are regarded by other participants as critical for children's school readiness as they indicated that socially interactive learners build friendships, interact well with teachers and other learners and help such learners to approach their learning positively. So this implies that social skills are critical to learning as learners are expected to exhibit positive behaviour in and outside the classroom and abide by the social norms.

4.4.5 Physical development

The physical development of children was regarded as another indicator of children's school readiness as shown by the participants' responses. Three out of 11 participants emphasized that young children need to be physically healthy to be ready to learn. They indicated that children must start school while they have developed fine motor skills to learn writing. They also showed that learners need to develop gross motor skills because other activities need a lot of movement such as running, sporting, walking, climbing, standing, and jumping. As put by the participant, *"fine motor skills are important in children's school readiness as they directly assist learners to achieve the educational goals because learners are expected to write, pick small items, grip a pencil and also cut with scissors, so these skills are critical."* Moreover, the participant echoed that, *"at school, there are many activities that children may be engaged in to learn. Learners learn by following instructions such as jump, come, run, climb, sit, stand and other activities that need children to have developed large motor skills."*

On the other hand, participant 8 indicated that learners who start Grade 1 at least must possess good fine motor skills just to grip the pencil properly and be able to draw

patterns. The participant emphasized that *“I would love if children starting Grade 1 know how to hold their pencils and be able to copy any written class activities as such tasks help them to sharpen their fine motor skills but here children come as they are, lacking the necessary skills.”* Participant 7 echoed that writing skills also show that the children are ready to learn. She indicated that minimum writing skills are needed as other upper skills may be learned during the year. As stipulated by the participant, *“being eager to write in class is a good sign that may also measure children’s school readiness and such learners become happy during writing lessons and want to learn more of the skill.”*

But this issue was raised by only three participants, suggesting that it may not be considered to be the most important element that builds children’s school readiness.

4.4.6 Numeracy skills in children with school readiness

The numeracy skills have been noted as one of the participants’ responses in their views on children’s school readiness. Among them, 9% indicated that counting must be prior knowledge for children as they are about to start Grade 1. Participant 4 indicated that verbal counting is important and leads to the learning of more concepts in number work. She put it in this manner: *“I view children’s readiness when the child comes to school with prior knowledge like counting numbers.”* It was however realized that numeracy skills were mentioned by one participant. This gives an impression that the majority of the participants do not consider numeracy skills important as children are about to start their first grade.

To generate more views on participants' views on children's school readiness, the participants were asked about the factors that influence children's school readiness. The section below presents the themes related to factors influencing children's school readiness first.

4.4.7 Factors influencing children' school readiness

The following themes emerged on factors influencing children's school readiness: Early Childhood Education (ECE), age, knowledgeable others such as family or parents, teachers, and other learners, and communication skills. The following paragraphs discuss the themes starting with early childhood education.

When the participants were asked about factors that influence children to be ready for Grade 1, all of them (100%) acknowledged that early childhood education, commonly known as pre-school, is the key to influencing children's readiness for school. All the participants acknowledged that preschool education has value in preparing children to learn for the next level of education. They explained that children from pre-schools are better off than those who did not have access to it. They indicated that learners from pre-schools know school life as the world of teachers, other learners, and the learning world. Participant 1 posited that children who attended pre-schools do present prior knowledge necessary for formal schooling. She emphasized that: *"I think children come ready because of the pre-schools they have attended though families may also add the significant role to children's school readiness."*

Participant 7 added that *“In many cases, one may find that a child who demonstrates readiness to learn is the one who has attended pre-school and is familiar with school life and the child is ready to interact with teachers and other learners at school.”* In addition to what participants indicated, participant 9 set forth that, *“I believe that pre-school experience is the major weapon that influences children’s school readiness because children in such settings are taught foundational skills even though they learn mostly in play.”*

However, out of 11 participants who alleged that early childhood education is important, four emphasized that early childhood education influences school readiness but it depends on whether it is of good quality or not. These participants expressed that currently, the early childhood education no longer offers quality opportunities for young children to develop the necessary foundational skills because some teachers in these schools lack relevant qualifications for the job. Participant 8 explained that currently, pre-schools have a different vision other than equipping children with quality foundation skills. The participant narrated that,

...currently, any community member with or without basic education is capable of starting a pre-school without considering other requirements like enough space and others. This implies that children are at risk of acquiring poor education because their caregivers are unqualified.

She continued that the issue of access to early childhood education that influences sufficient school readiness may be attributed to the Ministry of Education and Training as it is the one in charge.

4.4.8 Influence of knowledgeable others

Data collected also revealed that apart from early childhood education, other factors such as parents, other learners and teachers influence children's school readiness. Three participants indicated that some parents create a conducive environment for the learners to have materials such as exercise books, pencils and crayons for their siblings and the young ones to imitate them. Furthermore, they expressed that some parents motivate their children to go to school so that they become teachers, nurses and so many other things. Participants made an example where they teach learners about careers and learners tell the parents' expectations of what they want to be as they grow up. Moreover, the participants expressed that the children's school readiness is also influenced by other learners who attend school by telling them games played at school and the food available. And also, some participants believed that they influence children's school readiness as they are the ones who teach and guide learners till they master school activities throughout the year. As expressed by participant 4, *"I think parents have influence, they encourage children to go to school so that they may pursue various careers."* Participant 3 emphasized that:

...we have children from various villages, then these learners are the ones who influence other little ones' school readiness as they come to school. They discuss and meet with their little brothers and sisters about school activities like ball games, their new teachers, the food they eat at school and school tours they take and the children just love to come to big schools.

The last issue under knowledgeable others is teachers as sources of influence in children's school readiness. Participant 3 postulated that teachers influence readiness

in children only while they are at school. The participant reported that during teaching and learning, they guide them towards their readiness to learn. She said:

...as a teacher, I am the one who shows learners how to achieve tasks in class, for example, if they [learners] are to learn about nouns I am going to draw pictures first, colour them and discuss the content with them. As I am doing so, I am influencing the learners to learn, this means I am the visible factor.

Only two participants were aware that other learners already attending primary school can influence young learners' school readiness. This suggests that this point may not be highly regarded by Grade 1 teachers. Finally, the majority of participants (10) did not see themselves as agents of readiness when learners started Grade 1. This implies that children who are admitted into Grade 1 without having acquired school readiness skills do not get the necessary attention that will enable them to acquire essential skills.

4.4.9 Children's age

The children's age was the last factor that the participants mentioned as playing a role in children's school readiness. Only one participant indicated that the age of the children determines their school readiness. Children aged six years are considered ready to start school. However, this participant further indicated that it can still happen that children aged six lack the school readiness skills. This is how participant 3 put it: *"indeed readiness also depends on the children's age though the children differ, for instance, some reach readiness earlier, at four to five years while others do not mature until they are six years old.."*

The fact that it was only one participant who indicated that the age of the child may influence his or her readiness for school implies that not all participants regard age as a major factor in determining learners' school readiness. Having discussed factors that influence school readiness, the following section presents the benefits children enjoy when they have acquired school readiness when starting Grade 1.

4.4.10 Benefits of school readiness

Concerning benefits that children earn when they start school with school readiness skills, the following themes emerged: good academic performance, development of social and communication skills. These are presented in detail in the subsequent section starting with good academic performance.

4.4.11 Good Academic performance

When participants were asked about the benefits of school readiness when children start Grade 1, more than half of the participants, (seven out of 11) explained that children gain good academic performance. Learners with school readiness are happier and happiness brings curiosity to write and pass and do well in their school work. The participants also emphasized that learners showed their eagerness to write their work independently once instructions are given. They indicated that learners with school readiness also feel happy to assist other learners who may be struggling. As explained by participant 2, "*children who start the first grade and have acquired readiness skills to learn pass [nodding her head], do not repeat classes. Indeed they are capable and do their work quickly.*"

Participant 3 added that *“ready children do their work quickly and are curious to do classwork activities.”* In addition to that, participant 4 expressed that,

...children, who come readily when they start Grade 1, are open-minded, curious, and independent and persist on classroom tasks until the work is fully done. They are eager to know more from the teacher and pass very well. Even if the task is challenging, they persist and make several attempts to win.

4.4.12 Development of social and communication skills

Three participants showed that children who come to school ready have an opportunity to develop social skills. They expressed that the skills allow learners to navigate well with other learners as well as their class teachers and the rest of the teachers at school. Such interactions strengthen their readiness skills. Furthermore, the participants indicated that learners who start Grade 1 ready can develop better language skills since at the beginning participants use language or communication skills to teach and assess learners. As put by participant 7, *“a child who is ready can interact with peers, abide by the social norms, communicate, and gather new knowledge and vocabulary, as he/she socializes and communicates.”*

4.4.13 Finish work on time

One participant, (participant 11) indicated with pleasure that ready learners can finish their work quickly and independently and thereafter get extra time to play while others

are helped by the teachers. As put by the participant,, *“they get extra time because they almost finish on time and go outside earlier for break or lunchtime, so this gives them the motivation to work on time as there will be tokens.”*

Since this matter was expressed by one only participant it gives an impression that the majority of participants do not consider it as an important benefit for learners.

4.5 CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS

To establish more understanding of teachers' perceptions on teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, participants were also asked about challenges experienced by these learners. The following themes emerged: learners with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills, communication skills, listening skills, and reading skills. The next section discusses the themes starting with a lack of writing skills.

4.5.1 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills

The majority of the participants, (nine out of 11) showed that learners with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills. They expressed that during lessons when learners write, those who lack school readiness indicate that they do not know how to write and cry. Participant 2, in a rural school indicated that

...they refuse to write if they are requested to perform a certain task in the class; they always say I do not know. Even if the teacher says, let's sing, the children who are not ready say they do not know and cry most of the time.

Participant 3 added that [laughing]

...during school work activities after a teacher's presentation, I normally call them forward to the chalkboard to point and count and match the numbers with objects put in the box. Learners with insufficient school readiness experience challenges in terms of counting and matching the numbers with the objects. Then even if the other learners help them or the teacher, they end up crying, hey! They cry, lack recognition. Sometimes I think that maybe they have problems with their eyes because even in their books they do not write what is supposed to be written. They are unable to copy from the board into their exercise books. Really they lack writing skills, and they do not know how to use their fine motor skills.

The same participant continued that the learners who lack school readiness cannot write as expected; rather they write something like zeros. The participants also emphasized that the way learners with insufficient school readiness write causes their classmates to laugh and discriminate against them as they write in a very funny way. As put forward by one participant,

Even in counting numbers learners with insufficient school readiness count numbers in a funny way too. For example, if the teacher wants to help such child to count and say one, the child instead of saying one, will say, they say one, they say two, they say three and this leads to discrimination too and such learners sometimes fight those who laugh at them.

Another participant added that those learners who have not acquired school readiness prefer playing instead of learning. They play and talk during lessons and tell their teachers that they don't know how to write. Participant 5 added that

“They hate writing lessons. They only want to go out and play or just stand and watch others playing and at times such learners dropout of school or repeat grades.”

4.5.2 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack communication skills

Apart from lacking writing skills, some participants (27%) indicated that learners who have not acquired readiness lack communication skills. The participants showed that children who start Grade 1 before developing adequate language skills become anxious during lessons. Such children do not appropriately respond to questions. They sometimes cry instead of responding to questions. Participant 9 expressed that

Due to lack of communication skills, the learners experience anxiety because they do not show up in the class. They are not free to socialize and play games that need communication skills and this makes them to be behind their peers because they are not able to express themselves.

4.5.3 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack listening skills

Some participants, (18%) demonstrated that the learners with insufficient school readiness lack listening skills. Such learners do not even answer appropriately when asked questions on what was learned. Their responses will be far from correct. Two participants indicated that the learners do not follow well during teaching and learning because they lack focus. As put by participant 7,

The learners lack listening skills, even if the teacher uses their native language which is Sesotho. Such children struggle to just follow simple instructions because it's like they are not ready to listen to anything or anybody.

4.5.4 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack reading skills

Reading skills also emerged as a challenge in learners with insufficient school readiness. Learners with insufficient school readiness lack phonic awareness and are hindered even to read very simple English words. Such learners may only be given books to count the numbers at the bottom of the page up to certain numbers. One participant said that *“learners cannot even read five vowels which are regarded as basic in learning to read both English and Sesotho.”*

From what transpired through the participants' responses about challenges faced by learners with insufficient school readiness, only one participant indicated that learners are challenged more during reading sessions. Since this was communicated by one participant with the least Grade 1 class roll, it suggests that the majority do not consider it as important for learners.

To understand the challenges learners with insufficient school readiness experienced, the participants were also asked about the support they render to such learners to acquire school readiness. These strategies are presented in the next section.

4.6 STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS

To understand how teachers support the learners with insufficient school readiness, participants were asked about the strategies they use to support these learners and how effective they were. The following theme emerged: individualized teaching, grouping, peer tutoring, remedial teaching, repetition, homework, demonstration, and role-playing. Each of these is discussed in the following sections, starting with individualized teaching strategy.

4.6.1 Individualised teaching

The majority (nine out of the 11 participants (81%)) reported that they employ individualized teaching strategies in assisting learners with insufficient to acquire readiness skills. They indicated that individualized teaching promotes learners' readiness skills gradually. However, the participant indicated that it needs a teacher who is patient with the little ones. Observations conducted by the researcher also showed that most of the participants, nine out of 11 (81%) supported learners by moving from one table to another, explaining instructions given, writing in the learners' exercise books to demonstrate items, and sometimes drawing dots in the learners' exercise books for them to follow the lines as they practise writing on the lines. One-on-one teaching helps teachers to address different types of needs such as numbers, alphabet communication, and writing skills. As stated by participant 1, "*because they are different in terms of the readiness level, I normally call them one by one to my desk after giving instructions to the whole class to check where I have to assist as each learner.*"

Participant 2 showed that calling them one by one helped her significantly because the individual learner has his or her specific learning needs and she can offer help and be aware if the learner is not following.

In addition, participant 4 showed that one-on-one method is much better in terms of helping learners who lack behind their classmates. This is because individualized learning enables the teacher to target learners' needs. As put by the participant,

In some concepts like counting numbers, for those that lack counting skills I usually call them to my table while others are busy doing their work to count one by one from 1 up to 5 until they master then we can move from 5 to 10. Because they are not many who lack counting skills. They are mostly children who did not attend pre-schools.

The participant emphasized that the conversation must be in a friendly manner to win such learners though the participant showed that the strategy of one-on-one communication does not improve skills rapidly as sometimes such learner may be absent for a week without any report.

It further emerged that some teachers do not do much about learners who lack school readiness. This emerged from one participant who expressed that there are no teaching strategies that she uses to help learners with insufficient school readiness as she struggles to teach the rest of the class. This participant (10) may have felt like this because she has the least teaching experience as she had only been teaching for five years. However, she is a trained teacher and one would expect that she has adequate

skills to teach Grade 1 learners, including those with inadequate school readiness.

She said the following:

Truly speaking, I have a challenge here, because I started teaching Grade 1 in 2017, fresh from Lesotho College of Education. As I was learning how to teach the little ones, after two years if I am mistaken, there was a teachers' strike, followed by Corona Virus lockdown. I may not say I have a range of strategies that I use for such learners since I am also acquiring experience in teaching young learners while at the same time I am learning how to assist learners with insufficient school readiness. Hey! It is challenging for me, the challenge is that they delay responding to the concept taught so I think I lack skills.

4.6.2 Grouping

The data collected revealed that five out of 11 participants (55%) employ grouping as a strategy to support learners who lack school readiness in the first grade. Learners are grouped according to their readiness levels in learning. They are divided into two different groups depending on their performance. One group consists of those who are ready and the other is made up of learners who don't have school readiness. Each group is assigned tasks that are appropriate for their skills. Participant 2 elaborated that,

Because I always know that learners differ in terms of readiness to learn, I divide my learners into groups. So during lessons, I go round and check on every group and assist each based on its learning needs. Those that are not ready I even call them as a group to my table and teach them separately

through holding their hands, writing in their exercise books as well as repeating the instructions. This is done while others are busy on the learning tasks and in most cases the tasks of learners who lack school readiness differ from those given to other learners.

The other participants continued to show that the grouping method involves other strategies such as demonstration. As put by participant 3, *“even if I call the group of learners who lack readiness, I employ other strategies because at times I write in their exercise books to demonstrate activities.”*

Participant 11 expressed that the grouping method is effective because it builds the learners' self-confidence until they master the concepts without being mocked by other learners who are ready and learn faster.

4.6.3 Peer tutoring

It emerged from data collected that four of the eleven participants, (36%) resorted to using peer tutoring to support learners with insufficient school readiness. They expressed that most learners who have attended pre-schools seem to be eager to help other learners as they usually finish their tasks earlier than the other learners in class. Therefore, the teachers guided the tutoring peers not to write for the tutored learners. Participant 5 said the following:

Due to the large roll, we have diverse learners who start Grade 1. Some lack proper communication skills so I put them among learners who have

to acquire proper skills in communication and assign the peer to help him or her in counting using counters and at times one may find that some learners are enrolled but are disabled.

Participant 6 added that the learners who lack foundational skills become happier as they are assisted by their peers. As explained by the participant, *“sometimes you have to allow their peers who have acquired skills to help them to complete their tasks.”*

Participant 9 echoed that: *“I have also seen that when they are taught by their peers, they become much better. Therefore, as a teacher I follow up to ensure that they are moving towards the learning need.”*

4.6.4 Remedial teaching strategy

Three of the participants use remedial teaching as a strategy to help learners with insufficient school readiness to promote their skills. They explained that they offer remedial at different times such as during class time, during break or lunch, and after normal class lessons. All participants acknowledged that this strategy is effective as it targets the learning challenges experienced by the learners individually or as a group. However, they give more value to remedial that is done in spare time while other learners are playing outside during break. Other participants however indicated that some learners feel uncomfortable when they are left, especially during lunch hour, as they are afraid that the lunch provisions may be finished. This is how participant 3 elaborated:

...I give the learners adequate time to try to complete the task on the day we focus on lacking skills during class activities while other learners have gone for the break and this seems to be effective during that time as during break time there is no food. Whereas at lunchtime if I try to reteach the content the learners want to go out to have their food and therefore it is not effective at all.

4.6.5 Repetition

Three participants (27%) use the repetition strategy as a way of supporting learners to acquire readiness skills. During the teaching and learning process, they repeat the content several times as participants are aware of the learners who lack readiness skills. Therefore, during repetition, participants established that learners gradually gain the content. Moreover, the participants showed that during class activities that need learners to perform certain tasks, they repeat instructions several times as they go around the class and help learners. This how participant1 elaborated:

...for the learners with insufficient school readiness skills to catch up with the whole class I employ repetition in my teachings as well as during instructions. Before you even came here I was teaching the whole class Sesotho and chose those that I know are not ready to tell the Sesotho vowels. So once the majority of learners grasp the skills, I take that as an opportunity for me as a teacher to repeat and ask such learners to imitate me or other learners.

During data collection, the researcher observed two participants repeating content lessons several times to allow the learners who delay to catch up. This corroborates what the teachers had revealed in the interviews.

4.6.6 Homework

One of the eleven, participants (9%) asserted that she uses homework as a strategy to help learners catch up with the lacking skills especially writing skills. She showed that she writes in the learners' exercises books and tells them to ask their sisters and brothers to help them. She continued that during homework parents are also invited to help their children. However, she indicated that this is not an effective strategy as some parents write for learners and this is revealed by the time the same learners are given the same work and get it wrong This is how participant 7 put it:

Sometimes I call their relatives from other upper classes and show them how they should assist learners particularly in counting numbers and writing them in their exercise books but at times one may find that the work is written by the parents, not learners.

4.6.7 Demonstration

Demonstration emerged as one of the strategies that teachers use to assist learners with insufficient school readiness. Three of the eleven participants (27%) indicated that they use demonstration because it enables learners to observe how activities are done. They explained that during the demonstration, participants write in the learners' exercise books for them to look at and copy as

expected. Participant 1 stated that: *“I start to show them to do air writing, from there we move to floor writing where I show them how to write what we did on-air then, later on, I hold their hands to do what.”* Participant 4 echoed the issue: *“I write with the red pen in their exercise books and ask them to write over the items I wrote.”* Participant 6 added that *“sometimes I even hold their hands for them to try writing skills.”*

4.6.8 Role-play

On the other hand, two participants demonstrated that they use role-play to support learners to acquire school readiness. They use songs that match what they want to teach and learners sing and act out such songs. Participant 3 gave an example of how she teaches the formation of vowels. This is how she explained it:

Sometimes if I teach them five vowels and they still do not follow well I repeat my lesson in a form of an educational play that depicts how the vowels are formed. For example, I sing with the learners, and by the time we go back to vowels some will still remember how the vowels are formed and be able to differentiate them.

From what transpired during data analysis, it was noted that the majority of participants (79%) did not consider this strategy as improving school readiness.

4.6.9 Being friendly

Among all the participants, two (27%) indicated that they also support learners with insufficient school readiness through the establishment of friendly relationships with them until they are free from anxiety. The participants explained that during class

activities, as they go around the class, they come closer to those that they already identified as learners with insufficient school readiness skills and try to talk with them nicely as a way of encouraging them to try and finish the activities. Participant 2 elaborated in this way: *“First of all, I must be friendly, speak nicely, pat them on their shoulders and even call them my friends to enable them to recognize me not as strange but as a parent or friend too.”*

However, being friendly to learners was not mentioned by the majority of the participants therefore it may not be considered alongside teaching strategies as less common in promoting children’s school readiness skills to learn.

4.6.10 Motivating learners

Participant 4 showed that motivating learners who do not have school readiness is another strategy that works towards increasing children’s school readiness in Grade 1. She said that encouraging them at every step helps them to try harder. However, the participant showed that this method is not a quick way that produces desired outcomes. The motivation process is done even when learners are clueless about what is happening in the classroom situation, meaning the learners may not follow the instructions at all. This is how participant 4 explained it: *“I encourage them to keep trying even if the learner may not follow instruction. I praise every step the learners take whether right or wrong.”*

Supporting learners through motivation as participant 4 indicate, cannot be regarded as a major way of developing readiness skills as only one participant mentioned it. The

majority of the participants mentioned teaching strategies that support learners to acquire skills without pairing them with motivation.

4.6.11 Allocation of responsibilities

Allocation of any other extra classwork cited by two participants as another way that may enforce school readiness skills in learners was mentioned. The participants showed that at times learners with insufficient skills are given extra responsibilities such as being responsible for school books or exercise books. The participants indicated the allocation of responsibilities offers the learners with lack of communication skills the opportunity to speak as they distribute the exercise books. Participant 8 explained it thus:

Sometimes I give duties such as being a nurse to remind me to take my medication. This makes them feel free to speak to the teacher or any other people around them and indeed they are very shy at the beginning but later on they come and remind me.

Participant 9 added that,

I give them classroom responsibilities by pairing a learner who is school ready with a learner who lacks readiness skills. What I know is that a ready learner will push the partner to do their work. Let's say they are bookkeepers, so when I tell them to bring Sesotho books the expectation is that both learners will execute their duties well.

The data analysis shows that allocation of duties improves communication and social skills as both ready and non-ready learners get time to interact with each other. This

means the learners with insufficient school readiness are exposed to an environment that needs them to speak and eventually improve their readiness.

4.6.12 Parents' visits

Parents' meetings with school teachers were also regarded as another way of supporting learners with insufficient school readiness. The participants showed that parents come to school and both teachers and parents discuss the challenges learners face. However, the participants showed that not all parents understand how to take part in helping learners to acquire readiness skills. Participant 11 explains:

Sometimes I call parents and discuss the learning needs of their children and guide them on how best they can help them.. However, only a few parents effectively help their children to acquire school readiness as other parents are not trained to teach learners. Some parents help their children write the children's work instead of supporting them to complete the school work. As teachers, we are helpless.

4.6.13 Teaching resources to support learners with insufficient school readiness

To get a deeper understanding of the participants' support to learners with insufficient school readiness, the participants were asked about the teaching resources that they use in helping learners to acquire school readiness skills, and their effectiveness. The following two themes emerged: teaching resources that include chalkboard display, shapes, books, and charts; and improvised teaching resources that include sticks,

boxes and stones. The next section presents the teaching resources starting with chalkboard display materials.

4.6.14 Chalkboard displays

The participants mentioned a wide range of resources they used to support learners with insufficient school readiness to acquire the necessary skills. These include the use of chalkboard display, teaching resources for remediation lessons, print materials and charts. When the participants were asked about their displays on the chalkboard, almost all of them (81%) indicated that learners with insufficient school readiness learn better when there are chalkboard displays and such pictures were visible in the Grade 1 classes. From the observations made in each Grade 1 classroom, all the participants had a good display of content materials on the chalkboard. There were numbers and objects relating to each number coloured with coloured chalk and pictures relating to people. This is how participant 1 explained it:

Normally this is how learners, both ready and unready, benefit from the chalkboard. Some work that you see on the board was written one week ago. The reason is that whenever we teach there are some numbers that I teach them every day so for learners to acquire counting skills and form numbers correctly they should always see what the teacher is teaching.

Participant 5 added that “*usually I teach and leave some of the work on the board so that learners, either those that are ready or those that are not ready, could copy or refer to the board.*”

However, the participants highlighted that chalkboard display of content is valuable for equipping learners with perceptual and writing skills as they indicated that most of the learners who lack school readiness lack writing skills. Therefore, learners find it very difficult to copy what is written on the board and write in their exercises books. All the participants proposed other materials which are tangible and colourful.

4.6.15 Teaching resources for remedial classes

More than half of the participants, 6 of the 11, (55%) explained that resources such as counters and bottle tops are good for assisting learners to count. They indicated that the counters are effective as they have various colours that capture learners' attention.

This is how participant 4 elaborated:

Learners need very attractive resources, so using concrete material like counters enhances children's school readiness to enjoy counting as it is the basis for learning numbers. Again if you may have a look at these counters, they are connectors, meaning a learner may connect one counter to another up to the number she or he likes, and in that manner, learners who lack focus are helped as they focus on connecting counters. They are helpful.

However, the participants expressed that the counters are only used in the class as they disappear. Therefore, some participants proposed that learners with or without school readiness must collect the bottle tops of various colours for counting. The participants continued to emphasize that the bottle tops are always carried from home to school and put on each learner's table and used as expected. This is how participant 7 said it:

I prefer bottle tops as you may see on their tables [pointing with a hand] they are brighter due to their various colours and learners enjoy counting. Sometimes they come to my table to count and where they get stuck, I assist.

On the other hand, the participants showed that they use the resources such as boxes of different shapes to teach learners the concept of shapes and it was highlighted that concrete materials such as boxes are effective in enhancing learners' school readiness and learners become happy. However, the participant also explained that they also use other artificial shapes to continue the concept of shape. Participant 11 elaborates: *"When we learn shapes, I always ask the learners to collect the boxes of the different sizes and shapes then I reteach the concept of shapes and I always use the man-made shape forms."*

4.6.16 Print materials

From the participants' responses, it was also noted that some of them use print materials like textbooks, learners' exercise books, pencils, crayons, whiteboards, whiteboard markers, Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL), and abacus to assist learners to acquire readiness skills. The participants showed that in the print materials there are colourful pictures that learners like and become happy as they learn through them. Apart from these, they indicated that they also highlighted the use of the whiteboard markers where learners are trained on how they form letters of the alphabet. The use

of BTL was also mentioned and used for remediating letters of the alphabet while the abacus was used as a counting tool.

Participant 9 added that *“I use the learners’ exercise books and pencils offered to them by the school and write in them and ask them to practise the activities. The same participant continued that, “We also have an A4 whiteboard and markers, so learners use them for practising letters or numbers and I have seen that they enjoy writing on them as they write and erase.”* On the other hand, participant 2 indicated the use of Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) as a way of supporting learners who lack writing skills to trace on the BTL cards and write beneath the card or in their exercise books.

Participant 11 demonstrated the use of the abacus in supporting learners to count numbers well. As put by the participant,

Learners also use the abacus for counting and this is good as it has different colours and this enables them to move their hands from one side of the abacus to the other side. So, they seem to enjoy it a lot, and this also teaches them shapes as most of the beads used in the abacus are circular.

4.6.17 Charts

On the other hand, four of the 11 participants postulated that charts and pictures on the class walls have a positive impact in promoting children’s school readiness. They indicated that at the time, they (participants) and the learners discuss the content

related to improving school readiness. However, some indicated that the display is effective if learners have already acquired the readiness before as they will be able to recognize what has been displayed on their walls as well as the writings displayed.

As elaborated by participant 1,

I usually draw some content part of the curriculum on chart papers to assist learners who are not ready to see the pictures. Indeed, the charts are not meant for learners who lack school readiness alone but mostly they are the ones to refer to walls if they have forgotten letters of the alphabet.

Participant 3 added:

I also use charts to show the letters that seem to be challenging for them to write. I write the letters like, b, d and p, and then explain them in terms of their legs. For instance, letter b has a front belly and leg up, letter d has back belly and leg up while letter p has front belly but leg down and we also act them out through demonstration [the participant folds her hands forward and backward and hand up or down depending on the leg of the letter].

Concerning pictures, participant 4 showed that drawing objects concerning numbers assists learners to make the association between objects and numbers.

4.7 WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SUPPORT GRADE 1 TEACHERS

To gather more data on the support rendered to learners encountering problems who lack school readiness, participants were also asked about the kind of support they get from school principals. The following themes emerged: supportive, unsupportive, and school principal being in charge of the class.

Nine of the eleven participants (82%) explained that the school principals assist them in supporting learners with insufficient school readiness in their classes. Out of nine, six participants showed that they get support through verbal discussions, teaching and learning resources, and through assistance in teaching learners who lack the readiness skills.

4.7.1 Support through discussions

The participants reported that some school principals support them through the discussions of how they should go about teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. Participants made it clear that they seek support from school principals and after discussions, the principals offer their support through teaching the learners who lack readiness as well as providing additional learning materials. As put by participant 3,

I usually discuss the challenges that the learners with insufficient school readiness experience with the school principal though she has never taught Grade 1. So sometimes, she visits the class and watches me teaching. For instance, if I was teaching letter formation, say a, then later after the lesson she will sit down and call the learners who are not ready as a group and try to help them on how a proper 'a' is formed. Therefore, later on, one would find that learners are better; they may write something like zero with the longest tail, which is better than doing nothing.

Participant 1 also reiterated that *“Yes, there is support for the learners in the form of teaching materials such as counters from the office.”* Participant 7 echoed that the school principal was new in the office and indicated that the principal has to settle the matters directly relating to the office. But on the other hand, the participant showed that in general staff meetings she passes comments on the type of learners the school has admitted and she is told to just carry on.

4.7.2 Support through discussions and teaching

Participant 2 added:

Yes ma’am, the principal does come to my class to check on the learners whom I discussed with her that they are not ready for learning at all. So the principal will take them aside and try to assess them as she teaches them and guide me on how best I may assist them too.

4.7.3 Self-supporting school principals

Three school principals (27%) are teaching the Grade 1 classes. The participants showed that they left office work and offer their time to teach and even help learners with insufficient school readiness. Participant 4 elaborates:

Madam, [with confidence] I am a living testimony, I have left office work because of the declining school roll each year to teach and very luckily I teach these angels [pointing at the learners] so there is no way I may not

support them, I have to [paused] support them as I am the cornerstone of the school.

Participant 9 added: *“Ma’am, did you find me in the office as you were looking for the school principal? No! It is because I am the principal and a teacher so I support the learners 100% to ensure that the learners I teach are acquiring the school readiness.”*

However, two participants expressed that there is no support from the school principal concerning learners with insufficient school readiness. These participants maintained that they never seek support as they already know that their school is understaffed due to the yearly school roll declining. Participant 8 explained that, *“truly speaking I do not want to lie, there is support and I have never asked for it as I already know that we are understaffed, two teachers teaching from Grade 1 up to 6 I have never seen that, even if our school roll is declining”* Participant 6 added that, *“the school principal seems to have no special interest in learners with insufficient school readiness, thus offers general support for all learners.”*

4.7.4 Other teachers’ support towards learners with insufficient school readiness

Furthermore, the participants were asked about the support that other teachers offer concerning learners with insufficient school readiness. The majority of the participants, (9 of the 11) acknowledged that there is support from other teachers and it is administered by different teachers: core teachers, previous teachers who taught

Grade 1, as well as volunteer teachers. The next sections discuss the teachers' support starting with pairing teachers.

4.7.5 Pairing teachers' support

Concerning core teachers' support, participants from two schools (the one with the largest roll and the one that practises the shift system) indicated that two teachers are allocated to Grade 1. The participants expressed that the class allocation means one teacher specifically supports the learners with insufficient readiness skills. This is how participant 1 elaborated:

We are two teachers in Grade 1, so I always share the challenges with the partner teacher, and together we have input on how best learners with insufficient school readiness can be supported to acquire skills throughout the year. Even now, the teacher you see over there [pointing with the hand] is assessing learners' prior knowledge; we are the piloting school on the project called Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho.

4.7.6 Previous Grade 1 teachers

Some participants demonstrated that there are teachers who have taught Grade 1 before, and indicated that those teachers are good resource persons who support them. The participants further explained that the previous teachers assist them with skills such as how the learners may develop the writing skills. As put by participant 4,

Other teachers who have taught Grade 1 are the ones that I normally ask. They have knowledge and skills on how the learners can be helped to

master certain skills such as writing, as tracing leads to the development of fine motor skills.

4.7.7 Other grade teachers

Some participants showed that there is support from other teachers and indicated that they informally make the other staff members aware of the learners who need support. Then it was also highlighted that the other staff offer their experiences. As explained by the participant,

The other teachers sometimes come to Grade 1 class and guide on how best we may help learners. Even their exercise books look different; they show that they are lacking certain skills.

Participant 5 echoed that: *“I usually ask them about the learners who lack readiness and I even tell them that so and so is disabled, so sometimes they come and assess the learners and give their voices on what might be done.”* Participant 6 put it in this manne:

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Mm! [with very low voice] they do help and advice, for instance, sometimes other teachers may take them for counting and it so helpful as I also learn how best they can learn to count as teachers have a range of strategies.

4.7.8 Volunteering teachers

Supplementary to other teachers' support, the participants also indicated that there were volunteering teachers who work temporarily in their schools to provide support

as they are understaffed. The participants established that the volunteering teachers assist them in English language speaking in learners with insufficient school readiness. This how participant 3 explained:

Here we are understaffed so it is me and the principal but lately, we have volunteering teachers who help me a lot as I like learners who speak English, so the teacher communicates in the second language so it helps my learners to improve English vocabulary.

Participant 11 added that *“we are short of teachers, so lucky here we work as teams in every matter affecting our learners even in this issue of learners who lack school readiness the others highly support me.”*

However, the other two participants of the eleven participants showed that there is not yet support from other teachers concerning learners who lack school readiness even if they share the challenges experienced by the learners. Participant 4 expressed that,

I do not know what I can say because I have tried to share the challenges of learners with other teachers but unfortunately, they indicated that they have never taught Grade 1 so they indicated that they do not have skills to support, especially the unready learners.

Participant 7 added that,

I normally complain to other teachers about the learners that the school admits in Grade 1 or make a comment about the learners that come to school without school readiness, so teachers have not come yet to support me, I am alone.

Based on the data gathered, it was highlighted that the other teachers support Grade 1 teachers concerning learners with insufficient school readiness. This implies that the learners may be in a good position to acquire the skills due to the support rendered. And it also suggests that the participants may acquire more skills and knowledge of how they should offer their support to learners. However, there was a small percentage of the participants who indicated that there is no support yet and it was noted that this was due to a lack of communication between the participants and the other teachers. Looking at how the school teachers support the teachers in Grade 1 implies that the core teachers and previous Grade 1 teachers are the best people to provide support.

4.7.9 Parents' support towards learners

When the participants were asked about the support they get from learners' parents with insufficient school readiness, the majority of them (six participants) expressed that parents do not support them; even if they do, it is not as expected while the other five participants indicated that there is support. According to these participants, the parents' support is through assisting learners with homework and signing the work. On the other hand, the participants indicated that parents support even though they teach children to content that is beyond the learners' school readiness skills so the participants expressed that they advised parents not to assist the learners as they sometimes lose temper when learners seem not to understand what they are learning.

This is how participant 1 explained it: *"Few parents support learners through completion of homework and by signing the learners' exercise books but if they are asked to attend the meetings concerning these learners, they delay to turn back."*

Participant 2 continued that,

Some parents support their children academically especially when they face challenges but as a teacher, I have realized that they lose temper when children do not do or write as expected. They become angry with them for not acknowledging that their children have not matured in terms of school readiness skills for learning. For instance, one may find that the children at home are taught how to write 5+1 yet at school, we are still learning counting numbers. So, I have also discussed with them that they should not get angry or teach them because they are forcing them to learn abstract concepts yet the learners have not mastered the concepts using concrete materials.

Participant 6 echoed that:

Few parents support the learners. They will come to school and indicate that they were trying to help them but they did not know if they are on the right track, some will say that they were aware of what the learners are doing. But others complain that their children are still young to do school work so they will still write when they are ready.

Participant 8 reiterated that “*parents agree that they will support their children but they do not put words into practice.*”

However, some participants, (5 of the 11) explained that parents of learners who lack school readiness do not support their children in terms of academic work to improve readiness skills. Participants’ responses made the researcher conclude that parents

are blamed for not taking their children to pre-school education. Furthermore, the participants demonstrated that some parents lack knowledge of how they should go about helping the learners with insufficient readiness skills. As put by participant 3, *“even if you invite them, they do not attend to anything concerning their children, they never attend.”*

Participant 4 added that,

Parents have already failed to take their children to preschool so I am not surprised if they show no support to these little ones because most of the learners who lack school readiness are the ones that have no experience in early childhood education or pre-school.

Supplementary to this, participant 7 expressed that *“parents are not helping in this community; they did not want to pay for pre-school children, and they wait for Free Primary Education even if the child seems not ready to start school.”* Participant 9 explained in this manner, *“The parents lack knowledge that quality education is called the three-legged pot. So, I have learned that I should not consider them but rather help learners in my way.”*

From the data, it was noted that the parents are of two categories; some help while others do not. Among these two groups, the majority of parents do not support teachers concerning learners with insufficient school readiness.

4.7.10 Ministry of Education and Training support

This is the fourth category of support where the participants were also asked about the support they get from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) as the big

stakeholder in learners' education. The following themes emerged: stationery, food, and Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho (MTM). The following sections present these themes.

4.7.11 Stationery

All the participants indicated that there is stationery that the MoET offers primary schools from Grade R up to 7 freely. These include exercise books, textbooks, pencils, rubbers, crayons, drawing books, posters, charts and whiteboard markers. According to the participants, the stationery is meant for all learners however, they still considered that to be support as learners with insufficient school readiness also benefited from the stationery. Participant 1 showed that,

...Hey! I do not know what I can say, because the Ministry supports every school with the teaching materials such as books, exercise books, pencils, rubber and many more but these are for all learners not specifically for learners with insufficient school readiness. However, the learners with insufficient school readiness also benefit as they do not lack any stationery to use as well.

Participant 6 echoed that: *“MoET supports us with general teaching resources such as counters and charts. Therefore, as teachers we also use the teaching materials to support even learners who seem to lag behind others.”*

Moreover, all participants expressed that there is food at school provided by the Ministry of Education and Training. The food scheme is supervised by the school principals, and they rotationally employ the parents for a minimum of a year to prepare

soft porridge and the main course meal for lunch. On the other hand, one participant affirmed that there is a special help through the Ministry. Out of the 11 participants, one said that there is support which came as a new project starting in 2020-2021. This is called Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha (MTM) or Development of Education in Grade 1 Lesotho.

From what has been gathered from participants, the MoET supports the learners indirectly as those with insufficient readiness also get the stationery. Therefore, this implies that the MoET works hand in hand with the participants to enhance their readiness skills.

4.7.12 Food

On the other hand, the majority of the participants also showed that the Ministry supports learners because they get food at school but they emphasized that the food is not specifically for learners who lack readiness skills but all the learners from Grade 1 up to 7. One participant explains;

No ma'am, I may not say that the Ministry is supporting us, I have never seen a resources persons from the Ministry of Education here concerning learners who lack school readiness, even where I came from. So they do not know the challenges I am facing with the learners but if they visit the school regularly it would be better. However, we acknowledge that the learners, all of them are provided with food at school as we know that some are vulnerable.

Based on the data on the support the participants get from the Ministry of Education and Training, it was found that there is limited support yet for learners with insufficient school readiness.

4.7.14 Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho (MTML)

Only one participant expressed that there is support currently in other schools that were selected as pilot schools for a new project called Mekolokotoane ea Thuto ea Mantlha Lesotho which aims at determining the readiness level of children at the beginning of the year and the end of Grade 1. As elaborated by participant 1,

This year we are so lucky ma'am, our school has been chosen as a piloting school whereby learners in Grade 1 are assessed as they start the class to determine their level of knowledge at the start and the progress they have made by the end of Grade 1. The assessment tool determines learners' prior knowledge concerning literacy and numeracy. The assessment from MTML also looks into learners' approaches towards learning. Therefore, to us as the teachers, we see it as support from Ministry as it helps us to have detailed information of the learners and identify those who lack school readiness. Therefore we may adjust our teaching strategies to assist them.

The assessment tools have been indicated as important in assisting the participants to diagnose the readiness level of each learner when they begin primary school. This implies that the participants have a good opportunity to remedy the situation of learners; right at the beginning of the year. However, this

issue of assessment tool was noted by one participant suggesting that the majority of Grade 1 learners do not access it as it is in a pilot stage.

4.8 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS

The participants were also asked about the challenges they experience while they teach learners with insufficient school readiness. The following are the themes that emerged from the data collected: unfinished curriculum content, demotivation, multi-grade teaching and unfair promotion. The subsequent sections present the themes starting with unfinished curriculum content.

4.8.1 Lengthy curriculum and high content

Eight participants indicated that they lag behind in teaching the content in Grade 1 due to teaching two groups; those who have acquired school readiness and those who have not. The participants showed that they teach learners of different readiness skills and that affects the way of teaching as they should not leave the unprepared learners behind. They also argued that the content in Grade1 is huge and it is not easy to cover it all. The participants also indicated that they take a very long time to help the learners.

This is how participant 1 explained:

We are not able to complete the content in Grade 1 because of learners who vary in terms of their readiness level; to go forward and backward is not easy at all. We do not even teach half of the content; imagine teaching unit 1 with 23 learning outcomes, unit 2 with 28, unit 3 with 24, and unit 4 with 29 to learners with insufficient school readiness, hey! This is too much.

Participant 2 added that,

I have to take a very long [paused] time, really, I take a long time, one may find that I have only managed to teach one window. This is because teaching learners with insufficient school readiness needs a lot of repetition and at the same time waste time for other learners who are ready to learn. If I may speak the truth, most learners did not attend pre-school.

4.8.2 Demotivation

On the other hand, four participants showed that they get demotivated in teaching passive learners who may not give any feedback on the content taught. The participants showed that even the feedback they get is demotivating to them as most of the time learners have no clue of the skills taught. They showed in their responses that it is even worse when it comes to the English window where the learners have to learn through English instruction. The learners do not relate to the school environment at all at the beginning of the year. This is how participant 4 explained:

It is so demotivating to teach a learner who lacks skills and at the same time lacking uniform and without Vaseline, hey! It is challenging ma'am.

Participant 7 elaborated this way, “*as a teacher I become very demotivated to teach, and then at the end of the lesson there is no positive feedback.*” Participant 8 echoed that,

Hey! [deep breath] teaching even English window in Sesotho is so demotivating as learners, just three of them, may not yet know ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and one has to teach this window in Sesotho. When are they going to

understand? So one has to use both languages. Hey! Teaching Grade 1 is a sacrifice!

It was noted that most of the participants are very demotivated in teaching learners with insufficient readiness skills. Therefore, this implies that they may lose interest in supporting the learners to develop the necessary skills for learning. It is however surprising that trained teachers can be this demotivated about teaching learners with diverse abilities as this is one of the content areas in teacher training.

4.9.3 Multi-grade teaching

Five of the eleven participants expressed that they practise multi-grade teaching in their schools due to the declining school roll and also teaching Grade 1 learners with diverse learning readiness levels. They indicated that multi-grade teaching is demanding as compared to someone who is teaching only one grade. They further explained that multi-grade teaching needs integration of content from the lower to the upper grade. This increases their load. Participant 4 put it in this manner: *“Hm! It is not easy ma’am, I am teaching both Grade 1 and 2 and both of the classes have learners with different abilities as others have been promoted but still lacking some skills. This means I am overloaded but I continue.”*

Participant 8 reiterated that:

The worst part is that we are understaffed. I am teaching Grade 1, 2, and 3. Hey! I have never seen this, indeed, the roll for these classes is not even more than 10 each class but balancing all grades is challenging and frustrating.

From what expired from the participants, many of them are challenged due to teaching more than one class. It implies that learners with insufficient readiness skills can delay developing the necessary skills as their teachers are overloaded. Such children may not get the necessary attention from their teachers and, consequently, be promoted to the next class with the same limitations as far as school readiness is concerned.

4.8.4 Lack of parental involvement

Two participants, (articipant 4 and 11) expressed that learners' parents were not supportive at all. They mentioned that there were conflicts and quarrels among parents and teachers because the parents do not want their children to repeat Grade 1 but rather suggest unfair promotion. Participant 4 explains:

Some challenges arise from parents. When they are called for a meeting to discuss learners' progress, they do not show their anger but during report collection, they will make a lot of noise that their children shall not repeat and indeed they do not. Learners fail but are promoted to the next class and for that matter, as a teacher, I have to discuss further with the next teacher about such a learner who may not seem ready for Grade 2.

4.9.5 Loss of stationery for remedial lessons

On the other hand, two participants demonstrated that the learners with insufficient school readiness do not know how to take care of their exercise books, pencils and crayons. Parents also misuse the stationery offered to learners by taking it away from learners without permission and let their children go to school empty-handed. As put by participant 7,

The other days learners are given the exercise books to do homework or to show to their parents, but some learners lose their books while others report that the parents took them and said that learners shall be given new ones.

This hinders the progress of each learner.

After the analysis of data collected on the challenges the participants experience in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, it was highlighted that the majority of them experience demotivation as a result of unsupportive parents towards learners. This means that the learners get support from their teachers while they are only at school and this may slow their progress in acquiring readiness skills. It was also noted that the participants face tension due to overload and the implication is that their performance in teaching may be negatively affected.

4.9 SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES

To minimize the challenges faced by participants' in teaching learners who lack readiness skills, they were asked to cite the strategies they use in solving the challenges they experienced. The following themes emerged from data collected: continuous support and reporting to the school principal. The next section presents the themes and starts with continuous support.

4.9.1 Continuous support

The majority of the participants (9 of the 11) indicated that they employ the self-winning strategy called continuous support through remedial lessons to solve some of the challenges experienced in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. They

indicated that they continue to assist learners throughout the year until they develop the necessary skills for learning at school as well as alternating the teaching strategies.

This is how participant 2 explained: *"I have realized that if I continue to support the learners now and then, they become better and I become less stressed."*

Furthermore, the participants showed that the application of overtime is effective in addressing some challenges like helping learners to hold their pencil properly.

Participant 4 elaborates:

I offer the learners who lack school readiness remedial as I have realized that their parents are not willing to support and I also change the lesson patterns during the remedial teaching. For instance, if I taught five letters, during the remedial lesson I will teach one at the go and they follow bit by bit.

At times, the participants indicated that they apply positive counseling especially when they are demotivated. They acknowledged the support from other bodies but explained that the most effective way of addressing the challenges is when the participant knows that she is a teacher and must teach and support all learners. Participant 5 showed that staying positive is the best way to deal with the stress of teaching learners who are slow to grasp skills. This is how participant 5 elaborated:

I sometimes give up and counsel myself and say, not all children have failed, some performed well and those that did not do well will do well next year. I tell myself that those who have to repeat should do so or be

promoted as they are as their parents do not support yet need the learners to be promoted to the next class.

Participant 6 reiterated that *“through hard work,, we can carry on supporting the learners to acquire the readiness skills, otherwise there may be more challenges affecting my teaching.”* Participant 8 asserted that,

As teachers, especially for learners who lack skills in readiness, one has to develop or learn to be patient because it is so frustrating to have learners of varying readiness levels in one class. So one has to be patient with them and allow them to grow slowly until they can master certain skills needed in teaching and learning process.

Another participant (participant 9) indicated that modeling behaviour for learners who misbehave helps them to stop using vulgar language. The participant said *“whenever they report any misbehavior, I take that as a platform to instill the expected behaviour”*

From the data collected, it was highlighted that the majority of the participants address some of the challenges they experienced through continuously supporting learners with insufficient school readiness. This implies that the participants try harder to enhance learners' school readiness skills even though there are some barriers, and this brings hope for learners to pick up.

4.9.2 Reporting to school principals

On the other hand, some participants (5 of the 11) expressed that they usually report whatever challenges that emerge as a result of teaching learners who lack school readiness skills to the school principals. This occurs in cases where participants found challenges to be too intense for them to handle. School principals provide advice and counseling. As said by participant 3,

Some challenges are beyond my control, so at times I report to the school principal, and then she advises accordingly. For instance, some parents do not acknowledge when their children have to report, so this means I have to table the matter before the school principal.

Participant 5 added:

I usually report the concerns to the school principal and the principal offers to counsel. She sometimes says that if learners are not ready and you have played your role as a teacher, next year if parents allow they will have acquired readiness to learn, and indeed I have seen that it happens the way she said except for learners that are disabled.

Participant 8 echoed that, *"I call parents for a discussion on the issue of lacking readiness skills but the challenge is that few parents attend while others do not, so it is really hard to say the issues are all solved."*

:From data collected it was noted that that the majority of the participants solve most of the challenges through the continuous support that they offer to learners with insufficient school readiness. This means that participants themselves strive hard to ensure that learners acquire school readiness. It also emerged that the participants

report the challenges to the school principal and this implies that there is cooperation between participants and principals.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented the data and findings, and provided the analysis and interpretation on perceptions of Grade 1 teachers on teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The presentation focused on the research objectives. The next chapter discusses the findings that emerged during data analysis. Moreover, the conclusions will be drawn based on the key findings of this study. Recommendations for key stakeholders will be presented too.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored perceptions of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness. The previous chapter dealt with data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The current chapter discusses the findings obtained from data analysis. Moreover, the conclusions for this study are drawn based on the key objectives. The recommendations are also provided in this chapter. This chapter is structured into six main sections: the introduction, discussion of findings, conclusions, recommendations and the summary of the chapter. The discussion of the findings is based on the following main objectives of this study:

- (1) To determine teachers' views about children's school readiness.
- (2) To find strategies teachers use to identify learners with insufficient school readiness.
- (3) To determine strategies and resources teachers use to support the learners with insufficient school readiness.
- (4) To find the challenges teachers experience in teaching with learners with insufficient school readiness and ways in which they address the challenges.

5.2 TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS

Data collected on how teachers in Grade 1 view children's school readiness revealed six themes namely: curiosity, ability to follow instructions, communication skills,, socialisation skills, physical development and numeracy skills. Each of these themes is discussed below, beginning with curiosity.

5.2.1 Curiosity in children with school readiness

Data collected revealed that participants viewed curiosity as one of the components of children with school readiness. The majority of the participants, eight out of eleven, (73%) demonstrated that children with school readiness are curious in most curriculum activities. Such learners perform any piece of class work quickly and submit their work to be marked and proceed to new activities or extra work. This finding is in line with the findings of Grodsky, Huangfu, Miesner, and Packard (2017) that children's school readiness, amongst others, includes the high motivation and eagerness to participate in any school activities. Teachers expect learners to have acquired some behavioural skills such as participation in class activities as they start schooling and therefore, they are regarded as curious to learn.

5.2.2 Children with school readiness follow instructions

From the findings, it was revealed that learners with school readiness follow instructions. This view was held by the majority of participants (76%) who indicated that in January when schools open, newly admitted Grade 1 learners are given simple oral instructions related to themselves, class activities and extra-curricular activities to test their readiness to learn. Giving instructions is an effective strategy to determine the learners who are not ready and those that are ready to learn. These findings are consistent with Rahmawati, Tairas and Nawangsari (2018) who found out that

following instructions needs to register first in children's cognitive domain to respond effectively to instructions given by teachers. Moreover, Rahmawati, et al., (2018) showed that the learners need to be cognitively matured to carry out the activities in or out of the classroom. In line with this finding, Kaika, Popov and Arani (2015) looked into the most common parent-child activities for Grade 1 as rated by their parents and teachers. The study revealed that learners who start the first grade lack skills such as following instructions. This means that following instructions adds value to learners' readiness skills to perform better at school. This was also revealed by the participants as one of the prerequisites for starting school.

5.2.3 *Communication skills in children with school readiness*

Communication skills in children school readiness has emerged during data analysis as one of the views of the Grade 1 teachers. Participants expressed that proper language development is significant as it leads to proper communication skills that enable learners to participate in classroom activities through speaking. The participants asserted that communication strengthens learning at school. Communication skills were linked with learning even at homes where the participants explained that learners acquire these skills at home before they start the first grade. These findings are in line with Serry, Imms, Froude, Joffe, Heine, and Merrigan's (2014) study that investigated the perspective held by school teachers regarding the factors that contribute to transition to school. Their study's findings indicated that the teachers consider various child-related factors such as cognitive, social, self-care, emotional and language domains as other determinants of children who are ready for school.

5.2.4 Socialisation skills in children with school readiness

The current study also revealed that social skills are an important package of children's school readiness. Four of the eleven participants showed that social skills assist learners to carry out daily school activities as those with the skills seem to be able to work with teachers and interact with their classmates to achieve learning goals. The findings correlate with the study findings of Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle and Calkins (2006) that school readiness is viewed as capabilities that are needed to meet the cognitive, physical and social demands of a school at the entry. This is also supported by the findings of Altum (2018) that the attitude of learners towards their learning is also determined by the way they conduct themselves towards their teachers and other learners. Altum posits that social skills set the base for effective learning for new learners as their behaviour, skills and attitudes are components of their readiness to learn.

5.2.5 Physical development

The participants in this study noted that the physical development of children who are about to start Grade 1 is of paramount importance in school readiness. It can therefore be regarded as another indicator of school readiness. Two of the participants established that children need to be physically healthy to carry out other activities such as running, jumping, chasing, carrying and writing, as well a good development of fine motor skills. The findings of the study concur with those of Lynch and Smith's (2016) study that asserted school readiness as a multi-dimensional construct that includes all aspects of a child's life that contribute directly to their ability to learn when they enter any level of education. This view considers school readiness as a multi-dimensional

set of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social capabilities that permits children to interact successfully at school.

5.2.6 Numeracy skills in children with school readiness

It also emerged in the current study's findings that numeracy skills contribute to the betterment of children who are about to start the first grade. Only one participant indicated that counting numbers must be the prior knowledge for children who are to start Grade 1. The participant considered verbal counting as important since it leads to the learning of other number concepts. The findings are in line with those of Tager (2017) who found that children who possess school readiness skills such as literacy, numeracy, and other skills are likely to have better academic achievement in subjects such as English and maths than their peers who have not acquired these skills.

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that the participants did not view learners' school readiness holistically as they paid less attention to the health issues and emotional development of learners and as well as their general knowledge other than the academic world as they start Grade 1. The theory for this study, School Readiness by Horsford (2012) emphasized the need for learners to be healthy as they start school. Again, it highlighted the issue of emotions as critical since learners have to control their emotions and be sensitive to other people's emotions. Moreover, the theory demonstrated the benefit of general knowledge that learners acquire from home. Horsford (2012) noted that learning is built upon the general knowledge about what one knows about the world around him or her. Therefore, this study finds it critical for participants to reconsider the school readiness for learners holistically.

5.3 Factors influencing children's school readiness

To gather more data, under the first objective of this study, on the views of teachers about children's school readiness, the participants were asked about factors that influence the children's school readiness. The following themes emerged: early childhood education, children's age, knowledgeable others (family members, teachers and other senior learners) and communication skills.

5.3.1 *Early childhood education/pre-schools*

All the participants viewed early childhood education as the major influence for children's school readiness. They indicated that pre-schools prepare children to acquire foundational skills. Learners who participated in early childhood settings are better in terms of school life than those who did not. These findings correspond with the study of Erkan, Tarman, Sanli, Kosan and Omruuzun (2018) where they found the benefits of pre-school education in developing children's developmental domain and also for comfortable and smooth transition to elementary school, and preparing them for the next stage to be able to meet the demands of formal education. On the other hand, the findings revealed that the poor quality of early childhood education impacts children's school readiness. The participants showed that there are other settings that offer less readiness in early learning experiences to prepare learners to start Grade 1. This finding is line with the findings of Ducan, Dowsett, Classens, et al., (2007) that focused on the school readiness and later achievement and found that early low quality childhood education is likely to have less impact on the development of children's school readiness. The fact is that teachers are aware of the significant role played by quality early childhood education and its influence on the school readiness.

This is further supported by Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) whose findings showed that learners who did not attend quality pre-schools demonstrate deficiency in school readiness. This includes lack of proper resources at pre-school that fail to stimulate children's readiness to learn, and as well as unqualified caregivers.

5.3.2 Knowledgeable others

Another large number of participants (7 out of 11) revealed that certain people around children can influence them to be ready for school. They mentioned parents or families, teachers themselves and other senior learners. The current study findings demonstrated that some parents are able to create a conducive environment with books, pencils and rubbers for young children or for their siblings, and children in such households start school life as early as possible. This finding is similar to Horsford' (2012) theory on school readiness. The theory highlights that parental involvement in learners' education promotes their school readiness because it is ecological as parents must be involved earlier in their children's education. The family involvement in children school readiness plays a significant role.

Other participants (2 out of 11) viewed school readiness as an outcome of family education on their children while they are still at home. Participants emphasized the importance of family education because it teaches children how to interact with family members and other people. A child who is able to interact smoothly with other people other than family members will be in a position to learn from teachers and other learners. This finding was supported by UNICEF's (2012) study which found that families as well as communities have a role to play in learner readiness for schooling. They indicated that families should support children to do school work and be involved

in other school activities like parents meetings. This is also in line with the theory of this study: Framework for School Readiness that highlighted that families and communities are major systems in influencing children to be ready for school. It indicated that families must be ready to support learners before formal education by various ways such as sending them to early childhood education centres as well as supporting children while they are at school (Horsford, 2012)

Furthermore, this finding corroborates the results of the study by McBryde, Ziviani and Cuskelly (2004) which revealed that school readiness has moved from a child-centred to an ecological definition in which children's school readiness is understood in terms of the influence of contexts such as family. This was also revealed by Erkan and Kirca (2010); and Erkan (2011) who emphasised the importance of the facilities provided by the families and guardians on children's school readiness for formal education. This is further supported by the National Policy of Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (2013). The policy puts more emphasis on a nurturing environment where children are born and raised. This means that families have a great responsibility on children's school readiness. It is therefore certain that school readiness or learner readiness may be interpreted differently depending on the context where it is interpreted. This implies that families have influence on children's preparedness for school.; Therefore, they need to support children prior to starting school so as promote their academic performance (Horsford, 2012).

5.3.3 Children's age

The age of the children also emerged among factors that influence their readiness. Six-year old children are considered ready for school. However, one participant

indicated otherwise that it is not always the case that children's age is a major predictor of their school readiness. This finding is consistent with the findings of Aslan and Cikar (2019) and Furlong and Quirk (2011) which established that age can influence school readiness as revealed in the literature review chapter. The studies that have investigated the influence of age on school readiness have concluded that age should be considered as one factor that can positively or negatively affect children's school readiness. Therefore, the age is significant.

Among the factors that influence learners to be ready for school, the participants did not consider the gender of learners as one factor that can positively or negatively influence their readiness to start Grade 1. On the other hand, the study of Janus and Duku (2007) that looked into gender differences has established that gender can impact negatively on readiness of a child for schooling. Janus and Duku found that boys fare worse than girls in school readiness assessments.

Moreover, for more information the study participants were asked about the benefits that children get when they start school ready. Then the following themes emerged; good academic performance, development of more skills (social and communication) and extra time.

5.3.4 *Good academic performance*

The majority of the participants (7) established that children who start the first grade with sufficient school readiness achieve good academic performance. Ready learners do their work happily and independently as they have basic skills of how to tackle some class activities and that gives them a better chance over other learners and get

good marks. The findings are in line with Tager (2017) who has observed that children who possess school readiness skills such as literacy, numeracy and other non-cognitive skills are likely to have better academic achievement in subjects such as English and maths than their peers who have not acquired these skills. In the same vein, the study findings of Pan, Trang, Love and Templin (2019) revealed that there was a strong relationship between school readiness and learner academic performance. They indicated that learners who are school ready earn good grades.

5.3.5 *Development of necessary skills*

The development of necessary skills such as social and communication emerged as a benefit of starting school having achieved school readiness. Three participants revealed that children who acquired school readiness have an opportunity to further develop the necessary skills that assist them to learn. Social skills help children to relate well with other children and their teacher while they also develop more. Furthermore, the participants demonstrated that learners at school acquire the communication skills more as they are assessed through language, especially at the beginning of the year when they are just new but teachers need to determine their readiness. These findings are in line with Horsford's (2012) theory of School Readiness which is the lens for this study. Horsford indicated that language is one of the key developmental domains that build up children school readiness for learning. Horsford pointed out the importance of language as a skill that learners need since at times they need to communicate some of the concepts learnt through proper communication skills. The theory of School Readiness further highlighted language as critical in assisting learners to get along with others at school.

5.3.6 *Finishing work on time*

The findings of this study further revealed that during class activities, learners with sufficient school readiness seem to finish ahead of those with insufficient school readiness. Learners who have finished their work are given extra time to play while others are being helped by the teacher. However, none of the literature reviewed revealed this point suggesting that this study could be the first to reveal that learners who finish classroom activities are in some cases allowed to play during lesson time instead of being given work to do in class. This finding was attributed to the fact that such participants were practising multi-grade teaching and had diverse areas to cover. These findings are supported by the theory of this study;(School Readiness) which found the approaches to learning as another dominant factor that enables learners to finish their work on time since they display good attitudes towards their learning. The theory emphasized the other mini-skills under approaches to learning as being attentive and focus as critical in learning, and this shows readiness (Horsford, 2012).

5.3 CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS

Data collected established a number of themes on the challenges experienced by the learners with insufficient school readiness. The themes are as follows: learners with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills, communication skills, listening skills and reading skills. These factors are discussed below, beginning with lack of writing skills.

5.3.1 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills

The study participants reported that learners who start Grade 1 with insufficient school readiness lack writing skills. The majority (9 of the 11) of participants expressed that some learners enrolled in the first grade have not yet developed fine motor skills. Consequently, they struggle with writing activities and do not know how to control a pencil when writing. These findings are consistent with those of Magnuson, Ruhm and Waldfogel, (2007) who found that from the first time when learners arrive at school, their fine motor skills that enable them to carry out pencil activities must be developed in Grade 1; which is the appropriate level for their development. Therefore, according to Magnuson, et al., (2007), learners who lack access to early childhood education find it challenging in terms of their fine motor skills. They indicated that learners should be identified as early as possible to enable them to acquire readiness skills.

5.3.2 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack communication skills

Lack of communication skills in learners with insufficient school readiness emerged in the current study. Three participants emphasised that such learners have not developed adequate language skills to enable them to be fruitful in class. They indicated that at times learners go through oral lessons and others seem not ready to respond to such lessons due to lack of communication skills. These findings are in line with Aunio and Niemivirta (2010) who found that learners with insufficient school readiness may show challenges in language development which can be a barrier to the learning process as some concepts in learning require learners to participate through speaking. On the other hand, these findings of the study and literature agree with the theory used in this study as it emphasises language as critical for children's readiness for formal learning (Horsford, 2012)

5.3.3 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack listening skills

Moreover, it was indicated that learners with limited school readiness lack listening skills. Only two participants expressed that learners who start Grade 1 with insufficient school readiness display limitations in listening to directions given during some class activities. They indicated that such learners are vulnerable to failure or school dropout. These findings concur with the findings of Bhise and Sonawat (2016) that learners should be assessed before primary school learning as those with insufficient school readiness may show weaknesses in following directions or listening. According to Bhise and Sonawat (2016), listening skills involve other skills like following daily classroom routines and doing as expected. Therefore, this means the learners with insufficient readiness may not do as teachers expect and are liable to repeat a class.

5.3.4 Learners with insufficient school readiness lack reading skills

Lacking reading skills also emerged as a theme under the challenges the learners with insufficient school readiness experienced. One participant explained that learners with inadequate readiness skills for learning lack phonics awareness and have challenges reading letters of the alphabet and written numbers. This finding is also similar to that of Bhise and Sonawat (2016) which found that such learners demonstrate weakness in reading numbers and the alphabet. Furthermore, a study conducted by Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens (2007) that looked into school readiness and later achievement yielded similar findings that children should acquire pre-literacy skills such as reading since they are academic entry skills for formal learning. It was also established from the findings of this study that the participants were aware of certain lacking skills while they were working with learners. This implies that learners enter Grade 1 without clear or formal assessment in terms of school readiness. Whereas, Maxwell and Clifford

(2004) were of the opinion that every learner entering the formal education or Grade 1 must pass a school readiness test. According to Maxwell and Clifford (2004), the school readiness assessment helps to identify and prevent the basic skills that might be lacking. This finding was supported by Heafied who also established that different school readiness assessments offered at different times per year help core stakeholders like teachers to predict the outcomes as well as providing early intervention teaching strategies.

5.4 TEACHING STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS

The analysis of data concerning teaching strategies used by teachers to support learners with insufficient school readiness established the following points: individualised teaching, grouping teaching, peer tutoring teaching, remedial teaching, repetition teaching, homework teaching, demonstration teaching and role play teaching. Each of these are discussed below starting with the individualised teaching strategy.

5.4.1 Individualised teaching strategy

Individualised teaching emerged as one of the strategies that teachers use to support learners with insufficient school readiness to acquire readiness skills. The majority of the participants (9 of the 11) indicated that learners with insufficient readiness skills learn better when they are approached individually. Learners are assisted near the teachers' tables or the teacher takes rounds to assist them one by one depending on each learners' challenges. The findings of this study concur with the study by Knauder and Koschmieder (2019) that individualised teaching enables teachers to offer

targeted support to individual learners. Another study by Stollman, Meirink, Westenberg and Driel (2019) also supports differentiation instruction or individualised teaching as a strategy, teachers use in their classrooms to acknowledge and take into account the differences between learners and support each accordingly. Having identified the needs of the learners, teachers tailor their lessons in such a way that they meet the needs of each learner.

5.4.2 Grouping teaching strategy

With regard to grouping as a teaching strategy, the participants declared that learners with shortage of skills in Grade 1 are grouped in terms of their capabilities or learning needs areas so that they can be assisted as a group. The findings are similar to those of Abraham (2019) which found that learners can be put under remedial in terms of grouping method that targets certain academic deficiencies. This is because participants believe in pairing learners to help one another. This strategy enables learners with insufficient school readiness to be located easily during the teaching process so that they can be supported.

5.4.3 Peer tutoring teaching strategy

Peer tutoring also emerged as a teaching strategy that the participants resort to as they aid learners who lack school readiness. They explained that learners who have acquired school readiness as they start school finish class activities much quicker and teachers use them to support their peers to understand certain concepts such as counting numbers or matching numbers with objects. This finding is similar to the findings of Higgins, Katsipataki, Kokotsaki, Coleman, Major and Coe (2013) which established that peer tutoring is effective for improving academic skills among school-

aged children. It is said to be effective because it allows learners to engage freely with their peers in learning. They indicated that the peer tutoring encourages openness among learners and gives peer tutors a better chance of understanding the content as they assist their low achieving peers. Hence, Shenderivich, Thurston, and Miller (2015) sees peer tutoring as a cheap method when compared to private tutoring schemes.

5.4.4 Remedial teaching strategy

The present study also discovered that remedial teaching strategy was used as a school readiness promotion strategy. Three participants indicated that the remedial teaching may be offered at different times of the day. It can be during lessons, after normal classes or during school holidays. All the three participants indicated that learners who lack skills are sometimes assisted during class work, once they have been diagnosed, while other capable ones are still doing their class activities. The findings are in line with Bonnard, Giret and Sauvageot, (2018) that learners be offered support within regular classrooms. The advantage of this approach is that learners (individually or as a group) are given an extra opportunity to be retaught or revise the concepts that have been taught in class and this can result in performance improvement.

On the other hand, the participants suggested that the remedial can be done after normal classes while other capable learners have gone home. This finding is similar to Siddiqui and Alghamdi's (2017) findings which revealed that learners with insufficient school readiness remain behind after school hours to be offered lessons on areas identified as lacking.. The current study however, established that some learners seemed to be uncomfortable when they were left behind while other learners

were going home. Therefore, this approach was found not to be effective in improving learners' readiness to learn as compared to the first one; remedial during normal class work activities.

Another approach that emerged was providing remedial teaching during school holidays. The participants explained that teachers discuss learners' problems with the concerned parents who then seek the assistance of private tutors during school holidays where their children can acquire the basic skills for learning. This finding is also backed by Bonnard, et al., (2018) who found that learners are sometimes supported by independent experts during school holidays to assist them to improve their readiness for learning. In their findings, Bornnard, et al., (2018) found that the learners attend independent private tutoring where they further pass through various stages where they are diagnosed, the analysis stage for what has been collected regarding school readiness. Then later on, the private tutors formulate the objectives based on learning needs to be addressed and ultimately remediate and offer feedback to parents and the school (Eno, 2019; Chikware & Oyedele, 2016).

5.4.5 Repetition teaching strategy

Repetition teaching strategy also emerged as a helpful teaching strategy for learners. Three participants argued that the content that is taught in class is repeated several times for learners with insufficient school readiness to gradually acquire content. The participants also showed that shaping is used during remedial teaching. Content is broken down into smaller units and each unit is repeated until it is mastered. This finding is in line with Lin, Liu, Chen and Lion's (2012) findings which revealed that repetition of content (or sometimes called mastering learning) offers learners time to

get basic skills as the lacking skill is rectified. According to Lin, et al., the teachers who offer remedial using repetition break the content in to small units to enable learners with insufficient school readiness to gradually master the skills. This means if learners lack recognition of the alphabet, the teachers can first teach them to master the first five vowels before teaching them the rest of the alphabet, and this was proved to be an effective strategy by the participants.

5.4.6 Homework

During data analysis homework emerged as a strategy that participants use to enhance school readiness. Only one participant explained that homework was used to improve the writing skills. The participant demonstrated that at times learners who have not yet developed fine motor skills are given their exercise books to practise writing skills with their family members such as siblings, parents or guardians. The findings of this study are consistent with Zyl (2013) who showed that there are levels of parental involvement in relation to schools: cooperation, participation and partnership. Therefore, Zyl (2013) found that under cooperation, the parents support the school at home by demonstrating their loyalty to the school and supervising learners' homework. It was further found that the parents can be able to provide support once there is clear communication between the school and parents on various issues like learners' underachievement.

5.4.7 Demonstration

Demonstration also surfaced as one of the support strategies used to impart skills to learners who lack school readiness. Three participants acknowledged that demonstration enables these learners to observe how class activities are done. They

indicated that they write in the learners' exercise books and let them imitate what has been written in their books. Learners perform those activities under close supervision of their teachers. The participants showed that the demonstration is much better in assisting learners to acquire the basic skills for learning, as they start doodling till they are able to form some numbers or letters better. Similarly, Abraham (2019) found that when learners are helped step by step through demonstration, they learn better in acquiring skills for learning in the future.

5.4.8 Role play

Data collected in the current study revealed that role play is one the teaching strategies that the participants use to help the learners with insufficient school readiness to acquire the basic skills that enable them to learn better. Two participants showed that they reteach the content through role play where learners sing the content or do dramatization. The participants indicated that role play is very useful in instilling the lacking readiness skills as learners relearn through play. These findings are consistent with those of Cohen's (2001) study which looked into teachers' strategies regarding language development. The findings revealed that role play enhances readiness in terms of language. It was highlighted that teachers choose learners based on their speaking abilities and teach them the target content but the actual target being the learners who seem not to talk.

It was also noted that apart from the teaching strategies there are also other ways used to strengthen Grade 1 learners' school readiness. Participants use supportive measures such as being friendly to learners, motivating and allocating them

responsibilities, and parental involvement. The next sections discuss these themes starting with friendliness with learners.

5.4.9 *Being friendly to learners*

During data analysis, two participants explained that learners who seem to lag behind others need to be loved by their teachers. They indicated that teachers should establish a good rapport with them so that learners won't see a gap between home and school. Therefore, according to the participants, this was regarded as the effective way of enhancing the readiness skills of learners as they indicated that learners gradually relax. They also highlighted that when learners seemed to be friendly, the participants bring them close to school activities step by step. These findings concur with those of Arnold (2007) who focused on the readiness, transition and continuity of learners in the school system. The findings revealed that teachers need to be friendly with learners who experience stressful moments in the formal school where they transited so that they may not observe the gap between home and school. Arnold (2007) suggests that this strategy improves learners' school readiness. On the other hand, UNICEF (2012) indicated that teachers should be friendly to all learners though more attention must be paid to those who were disadvantaged during their early years of schooling. This implies that school teachers must adjust their schools to be user friendly to all learners to meet their various learning needs.

5.4.10 *Motivating learners*

Moreover, motivation surfaced as another way of supplementing the teaching strategies to improve learners' readiness skills. Only one participant mentioned that

the learners are not well prepared in terms of readiness skills. The participant showed that the learners improve if the teachers are in a position to motivate them in every single step they are able to achieve. The participant showed that learners may be motivated through a number of ways such as ensuring that every morning they are welcomed and given tokens. According to the theory for this study, Framework for School Readiness, the teachers are seen amongst other stakeholders as key for children's school readiness. Therefore, the theory by Horsford (2012) indicates the role of the teacher as teaching, supporting and motivating learners for every achievement made for their knowledge and academic growth. So these findings link well with the findings of the study though the theory does not specify the tangible motivations under the issue of ready educators for learners' school readiness.

5.4.11 Allocating learners' responsibilities

Furthermore, giving learners roles to do in classrooms emerged as another way to support to develop readiness skills. Two participants demonstrated that some learners start Grade 1 very shy to interact with teachers and other learners. Therefore, such learners can be allocated duties to perform in class such as being a book keepers where they will ensure that text books are delivered in class through the help of the teacher.

5.4.12 Parental involvement

Another supplementary method used by participants to support learners to acquire school readiness skills was parental involvement. This was cited by one participant who said that parents were also called for several meetings to discuss the challenges learners with insufficient school readiness experienced. Then both the parents and the

participant discuss learners' problems and ways in which they can be assisted to acquire school readiness. This finding is similar to Zyl's (2013) finding that indicates that parental involvement plays a significant role in learners' education and increases their academic achievement.

5.4.13 Teaching resources that teachers use to support learners with insufficient school readiness

Having discussed the teaching strategies that the participants employ in supporting learners to acquire the readiness skill, the section below discusses teaching resources that teachers use to assist learners with insufficient school readiness. The following themes emerged: chalkboard displays, teaching materials for remediation, print materials, chart pictures and improvised teaching materials. The discussion commences with chalkboard display then the rest of the teaching resources will follow.

5.4.14 Chalkboard displays

The present study, revealed that chalkboards are heavily used as a teaching resource to display the content that has been taught for learners to refer to during class activities. All participants demonstrated that the use of chalkboard is useful for the learners to master some skills such as writing.

5.4.15 Materials for remediation and improvisation

The specific teaching materials for remediation were also mentioned as effective in supporting learners to acquire basic school readiness. More than half of the participants (6 of the 11) explained that there are counters of various colours that

learners use to learn basic skills in counting. Puzzles are used to build their attention skills. These materials are effective as learners were able to manipulate them, as well as join them to build any shape they like and they enjoy working with them as they look attractive due to the various colours. However, the participants showed that the counters were not adequate for all learners with insufficient school readiness because they share them with other learners who are already doing other number topics like adding or subtraction. These findings concur with those of Arnold (2007) which looked into readiness, transition and continuity of learners. The findings showed that there are colourful materials specifically designed to support learners with learning challenges, and these are meant to arouse their interest. Therefore, counters and puzzles were indicated as helpful in enhancing readiness for learning.

On the other hand, improvised teaching materials emerged as teaching materials that participants use to improve children's school readiness to learn better. Due to the absence of teaching materials in schools, the participants said improvised materials such as bottle tops play a significant role in assisting learners to acquire school readiness. The theory is line with these findings in the sense that the ready community provides its learners with resources to use and learn at school. Therefore, for learners to become ready, their community is supposed to be rich in terms of materials (Horsford, 2012)

5.4.16 Print materials and charts

The participants, (six out of 11) also reported that there are text books, as well as teaching kits for literacies that participants use to support learners who lack school readiness. The participants indicated that there are colourful pictures in the text books

that capture the interest of the learners during the relearning process. The participants also highlighted the use of A4 white boards that have letters of alphabet that learners trace and erase as many time as they can until they master the correct formation of letters. These findings are in line with those of Well (1985) which found that printed materials like books and as well as charts are critical in improving school readiness. But Wells (1985) highlighted that the printed materials' influence on learners' readiness depends on the extent to which they were used in the pre-school years. This implies that the benefits of printed material as well as charts are limited as compared to exposure from early years. So, this brings attention to the findings of Magnuson and Waldfogel (2005) who looked into the benefits of early childhood education and transition. The findings showed that learners who attended pre-school programmes enter school ready and are knowledgeable about print materials for school and this improves their school readiness.

5.4.17 School principal's support towards learners with insufficient school readiness

Three themes emerged pertaining to the school principal's support towards learners who start Grade 1 without enough school readiness skills. These themes are supportive school principals, unsupportive school principals and self-supportive school principals. The following sections discuss these themes starting with supportive school principals.

5.4.18 Supportive school principals

It emerged that participants in the present study were supported by school principals in assisting learners who come to school unprepared for learning. These findings are consistent with those of Marishane (2013) in Botha (2013) which showed that the school principals have various leadership styles such as being an instructional leader. Marishane (2013) indicated that this type of principal ensures that teaching and learning occurs smoothly at school. They support the teachers in their daily teaching activities including supporting learners who lag behind. Moreover, the Education Act (2010) indicates that the role of the school principal is an overseer of the school. So, this gives them power to ensure that Grade 1 teachers and the learners with insufficient school readiness are supported.

5.4.19 Unsupportive school principals

On the other hand, it was revealed from two participants that some school principals seemed to lack interest in ensuring that all learners get quality education regardless of their educational background. Three participants indicated that there is no support due to lack of interest and the fact that schools are under-staffed and enrolments are declining. These findings concur with the findings of Yirci and Kocabas (2010) which found that school principal are heads of schools so the failures or successes of the school depends on their effectiveness of ensuring that every learner is fully supported. This is also in line with this study's theory which indicated that schools should be ready to support learners regardless of their various readiness levels. Principals are the chain of command to support the teachers as well as learners.

5.4.20 Self-supportive school principals

Three participants indicated that they support themselves fully as they demonstrated that they teach Grade 1 and are also principals. These principals support the learners who lack readiness skills to acquire basic skills. This finding concurs with the theory for this study which indicates that the school should be ready to support learners to gain school readiness for learning (Horsford, 2012). Therefore, the school principals are seen as some of the human resources that ensure that all learners and teachers succeed. This is why the Education Act (2010) makes reference to the role of school principals as overseers of the programmes running in the school. So, they have to support themselves by also teaching as they are also instructional leaders.

5.4.21 Other teachers' support towards learners with insufficient school readiness

It was noted that participants were also supported by other school teachers in their schools. The majority, (nine participants) acknowledged the support rendered by their colleagues. They indicated that the support comes in various forms, and other school teachers who assist them to support learners are: pair teachers, previous Grade 1 teachers, other grade teachers and volunteering teachers. The following paragraphs discuss these themes.

5.4.22 School teacher's support (pairs, previous Grade 1, other teachers and volunteers)

It emerged that some schools pair teachers to support their colleagues who teach Grade 1. This is done to ensure that learners who have not acquired school readiness get the necessary attention.

The findings also revealed that participants were assisted by other school teachers in teaching learners who were not yet prepared for Grade 1. Three participants indicated that they informally discuss the challenges learners experience then the teachers offer their advice on how best learners can be supported to gain the basic readiness skills for Grade 1. Therefore, the participants acknowledged that this assists them to reconsider other strategies and materials to support learners.

On the other hand, volunteering teachers also emerged as an important support system for participants with learners who lack school readiness. This also caters for situations where there is understaffing and teachers are overworked. The support that the other teachers offer concurs with the theory for this study which indicated that educators or teachers are in the forefront to teach and support learners to acquire school readiness (Horsford, 2012). They support through careful planning of the curriculum content to match learners' readiness level and tailor their strategies to meet the learners' needs in education.

5.4.23 Parental support towards learners

In relation to parental support towards learners who lack school readiness, the following themes surfaced: supportive parents and unsupportive parents. This section discusses the themes starting with first theme, supportive parents.

5.4.24 Supportive parents

It was noted from the data analysed that some parents were not supportive towards their children who lack school readiness. More than half of the participants, (6) expressed that parents lack supportive skills. They indicated that even if they support, the parents seem to teach the content that was beyond the readiness level of the learners. These findings support the theory used for this study which indicate parents (families) as one of the core stakeholders that must ensure that children are ready for school (Horsford, 2012). According to Horsford's theory for school readiness, the parents should create a conducive home environment that stimulates readiness for learning. This can be through parents reading stories for their children (Arnold, 2007) and participating in various levels at their children's schools, for example, school boards and assisting children to complete homework (Zyl, 2013).

5.4.25 Ministry of Education and Training support

The fourth category of support towards learners with insufficient school readiness was the Ministry of Education and Training. The following themes emerged: general support that involves provision of stationery, food and assessment materials.

All the participants acknowledged the general support that was continuously offered by Ministry of Education and Training. Learners get all the necessary stationery that supports their education. This includes exercise books, pencils, and rubbers, drawing books, crayons and counters. In addition, the participants mentioned that the Ministry supports all learners with food. This is helpful especially for vulnerable children from poorer families. The support by MoET is in line with their policy to provide Free Primary

Education, stationery and food for vulnerable learners to ensure that they complete primary education (Free Primary Education, 2000; Strategic Education Plan, 2005-2015; Education Strategic Plan, 2016-2030).

,Additionally, one participant highlighted that MoET supports the learners through provision of assessment tools for readiness. The participant indicated that tools were given to schools that were selected as piloting schools. School A is one of the schools found during data collection assessing learners' readiness this year (2021) through the partnership of the Ministry with the Mekolokotoane ea Mantlha Lesotho. (MTML, 2020-2021). The findings for this study are in line with the Horsford's (2012) theory of School Readiness that firstly indicated that the systems must be ready to ensure that learners are ready for school. According to Horsford's theory, ready systems guide policies and practices that aim to impact on children' school readiness. It seems that MoET is working harder to support teachers in Grade 1 to ensure that learners entering formal education are assessed and supported.

5.5 TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING LEARNERS WITH INSUFFICIENT SCHOOL READINESS

Having discussed support related to various stakeholders in educating learners with insufficient school readiness, this last section discusses the challenges teachers experienced in supporting learners who are not ready and as well as solutions to the challenges. The following emerged in relation to the challenges experienced: unfinished curriculum, demotivation, multi-grade teaching, unfair promotion and loss of stationery.

5.5.1 Lengthy curriculum and high content

Participants in the current study considered lengthy curriculum as a serious challenge they face, and compounded by the gaps in readiness which learners display. These findings are similar to those of Bruwer (2014) who investigated the impact of insufficient school readiness on learning in South Africa. The findings indicated that teachers were challenged for the fact that their learners could not cope with the Grade 1 curriculum due to their readiness skills. The curriculum seemed to be inaccessible as it appears not to match with the readiness levels of learners who were enrolled in that year.

5.5.2 Demotivation

The findings of this study also highlighted that the participants were demotivated, passive or even cried in class. This finding corresponds with the findings of Bruwer (2014) who looked into school readiness versus practice, and found that Grade 1 teachers were demotivated by the fact that their learners were not coping with the demands for formal learning. The findings also established that the teachers in Bruwer's study attributed the findings to the issue of inaccessibility of early childhood education hence learners could not cope with the formal curriculum in Grade 1.

5.5.3 Multi-grade teaching

Participants for this study postulated that multi-grade teaching poses some challenges in assisting learners with insufficient school readiness. Nearly half of the participants (5) explained that they were teaching more than one grade and this kind of teaching is demanding compared to someone who teaches only one grade. They emphasised that they are overloaded and this is a barrier to providing appropriate support to

learners who lack school readiness. The multi-grade teaching seemed to be new knowledge for this study, as there is scarcity of literature that connects it to children school readiness. Furthermore, the theory for this study has not mentioned the concept of multi-grade teaching in relation to children's school readiness.

5.5.4 Lack of parental cooperation (quarrels and loss of remedial exercises)

Unfair promotions also emerged as a challenge participants experienced. Two of them expressed that they are seriously challenged at the end of the year when learners are promoted to the next class. Some parents do not want their children to repeat Grade 1 despite such children having failed Grade 1. These parents quarrel with teachers on this matter. The findings revealed that parents were in denial that their children lack school readiness due to lack of access to early childhood education.

It emerged from the findings that participants were faced with loss of remedial exercises that learners use on daily basis. The participants showed that the learners leave the exercise books at home, and it brought a challenge in tracking their progress. The participants further explained that parents directly contributed to the issue of such exercise books because the parents took the books for other household purposes. What emerged as findings of this study is parallel to the theory of School Readiness. In the theory, (Horsford 2012), the parents are expected to support learners with any school work including taking care of their books and report and make follow up with the school. But it was noted that when there is lack of parental involvement the learners

face challenges. The findings of Zyl (2013) indicated that families should provide appropriate and supportive learning environment for learners at home.

5.6 SOLUTIONS TO TEACHERS' CHALLENGES

It emerged that participants in the current study considered continuous support and reporting to school principals as the solutions to the challenges experienced in supporting learners with insufficient readiness. These two sections discuss the two themes starting with continuous support.

5.6.1 *Continuous support*

The findings of this study revealed that participants solve some of the challenges they experienced through continuous support. The participants indicated that their learners are fully supported even if they cannot complete the curriculum despite the challenges brought by the parents. These findings are in line with Horsford's theory which highlights that ready educators are ready to provide support to learners to be ready for school continuously. The teachers have to understand their roles in teaching and supporting learners regardless of their learning challenges.

5.6.2 *Reporting to school principals*

Moreover, reporting to school principals surfaced as another solution to participants' challenges. The five participants acknowledged that the principal is an overseer of all the learners regardless of their readiness level. Therefore, they indicated that the matters of learners who do not cope well in classes should be supervised by the school principal. The school principals are regarded as ready systems which ensure that other

stakeholders understand their roles to support learners' readiness for school. They (school principals) are seen as creating school policies at the school level in support learners to gain readiness.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to respond to the following main research question: What are Grade 1 teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness skills?

The following the sub-questions were derived from the main question:

1. What are the views of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness?
2. What challenges do learners with insufficient school readiness experience?
3. What teaching strategies do Grade 1 teachers use to support learners with insufficient school readiness?
4. What challenges do Grade 1 teachers experience in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness and how they address them?

5.7.1 Teachers views about children's school readiness

Regarding the first question which read: What are the views of Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, this study concludes that teachers view school readiness to consist of curiosity, following instructions, communication

skills, socialisation skills, physical development and numeracy skills. Learners who have achieved school readiness were said to be able to follow instructions which assist them to carry out the school learning tasks. Learners with school readiness were found to have good communication skills which enable them to participate in oral classroom activities through speaking. Such learners further have good social skills which enable them to interact meaningfully with their classmates and their teachers in order to learn new skills. Good socialisation skills further enable such children to participate in group activities.

Furthermore, the physical development surfaced as paramount towards children's school readiness. The children with school readiness have good gross motor skills which enable them to run, jump, skip, push, pull and carry objects. Their fine motor skills are well developed and assist them to carry out activities like holding objects with their fingers and controlling the pencil when writing.

The numeracy skills in children's school readiness emerged as important for children starting the first grade. These skills enable children to count from zero to ten. The verbal counting was indicated as critical in learning number concepts such as writing numbers.

In relation to factors that influence learners' school readiness, this study concludes that teachers attribute learners' readiness to the influence of early childhood education, influences of knowledgeable others as well as learners' age. The learners with school readiness were mentioned as those who went to high quality preschools as teachers believed that low quality early childhood education has less influence on

learners' readiness. Again, learners who acquired readiness were said to be the result of people around them while they were still at home. Their parents/families were said to have influenced them through the provision of conducive environments and the age of learners was explained as an influence. Those who seemed to have matured well in terms of starting Grade 1 at the age of six were considered ready for formal school.

Regarding the benefits that learners get when they enter school/Grade 1 ready, the present study shows in conclusion that learners earn good academic performance, develop more skills and finish their work on time. The teachers demonstrated that learners with school readiness easily understand the content curriculum and get grades pass in most class activities. Furthermore, they get a chance to develop more skills fully as they do their daily work at school. The teachers indicated that social, communication and motor skills develop more. Moreover, learners who are ready were said to finish their work on time and that alone offers them an opportunity to play other school games.

5.7.2 Challenges experienced by learners with insufficient school readiness

In relation to challenges which learners with insufficient school readiness experienced during teaching and learning, this study concludes that such learners lack writing, communication, listening and reading skills. They are not able to hold their pencils because they seem not to have developed fine motor skills. The learners also struggle with writing activities, their letters and numbers are poorly formed and they keep on scribbling and doodling.

Furthermore, the communication skills emerged as a challenge to learners that are not ready. These learners are not able to respond well to oral conversations and fail to participate in school activities that need them to speak. They are reported to cry when they are asked questions. Such children are not able to express themselves.

On the other hand, it was highlighted that learners with insufficient school readiness exhibit lack of listening skills. They are not able to take simple directions such as imitating teachers in learning to count or reciting letters of the alphabet. They keep quiet and remain passive rather than acting out information they listened to. Moreover, learners are reported to lack reading skills. They are unable to recite letters of the alphabet or identify them. Their teachers reported that such learners seem to be clueless about basic skills in reading letters as well as counting and reading numbers on their own or with teachers and other peers

5.7.3 Teachers strategies in supporting learners with insufficient school readiness

On the teaching strategies used to support learners with insufficient school readiness, the current study concludes that teachers use individualized teaching, group teaching, remedial teaching, repetition teaching, homework, demonstration and role-play. However, the other teaching strategies (homework and remedial after school) were highlighted to be less effective because parents need to be more involved and are not skilled in pedagogic matters. As such, they are not able to teach their children, instead they copy or write for them. Consequently, learners do not acquire the desired skills.

Apart from the teaching strategies that teachers use to support learners to acquire school readiness, this study concludes that there were other methods used to support learners such as being friendly, motivation, allocation of duties and parental involvement. The teachers indicated that the other way of helping learners to be school ready was to love them, be friendly as well as motivate every step they take towards their learning. They, teachers, indicated that even if the work is not satisfactory, learners were motivated until the desired work was reflected. Again, teachers indicated that learners who seem to lack communication skills were allocated duties that force them to talk slowly with teachers and peers. However, the teachers showed that learners were paired with the learners who had developed proper communication skills with the belief that there might be imitation between the learners. Moreover, the parents were involved in supporting learners though it was an ineffective as they (parents) were reported not to show up for the meeting to discuss learners' challenges and the way forward. They were reported to come only during collection of reports.

The study also concludes that the teachers use various teaching materials to support learners who lag behind their peers. They use chalkboard displays, printed books and charts as well as the improvised materials. The teachers indicated that the chalkboard assists learners with insufficient school readiness to be familiar with school life. They indicated that content written takes some days so as to enable learners as well as the teacher to refer to it while it also strengthens the skills of those who were ready. They also showed that school books and other printed charts were so helpful for their attractive colours that capture learners' attention to learn. The learners were also requested to bring materials like bottle tops of various colours for learning counting, colours and concepts like simple operations (adding and subtraction).

In relation to the support that Grade 1 teachers get from schools (principals & other teachers), parents and the Ministry of Education and Training, this study concludes that almost all school principals understand their roles as school managers in ensuring that all the teachers and learners at their schools should be supported regardless of the learning challenges they experience in class. The school principals supported teachers through discussion pertaining to learners with insufficient school readiness and also by teaching them. Three school principals were Grade 1 class teachers. They showed that they teach and fully support learners, though it was reported that only two principals pay less interest in learners with insufficient readiness.

Based on the support of other teachers, this study concludes that previous Grade 1 teachers, other grade teachers and volunteers support Grade 1 teachers to ensure that learners who lack readiness also develop basic skills for learning. They discuss the matters concerning learners, assist in teaching, and find relatives for the learners in their classes to assist.

In relation to the support that the teachers get from the learners' parents, this study concludes that there is no sufficient support that parents offer to learners as well as to the Grade 1 teachers. The parents were reported to be uncooperative as they do not support learners to complete the homework and do not participate in meetings concerning the challenges learners with insufficient school readiness face. There were only two parents who were reported to be supportive, where they even sign the work and ask about the performance of learners.

Coming to the support rendered by the MoET to teachers in Grade 1, this study concludes that there is no specific support towards learners with insufficient school readiness at schools. MoET supports all learners generally with food, stationery and materials but not specifically attending to the needs of learners with insufficient school readiness. The only support that was mentioned by one school, (School A) indicated that this year (2021) the school was piloting under the project of the Ministry and MTML t to assess the readiness skills of learners at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year to evaluate what the learners achieved through the year.

5.7.4 Challenges experienced by teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness

In relation to the fourth objective, namely challenges experienced by Grade 1 teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, the current study concludes that the participants are faced with challenges such as difficulty to finish the curriculum, demotivated teachers, multi-grade teaching, unfair promotions and loss of stationery.

With regard to difficulty to complete the curriculum, the current study found that Grade 1 learners have many learning windows, which have many objectives and teachers are unable to cover all the content. This situation is more severe with learners who lack school readiness because they are unable to readily acquire the Grade 1 skills.

On the question of motivation, this study concludes that learners who lack school readiness are passive in most classroom activities and it is not easy to mediate them as they do not respond to questions. Consequently, teachers do not know how to

engage them. In some schools this situation is aggravated by multi-grade teaching. Some teachers teach both Grade 1s and 2s in the same class. As a result, such teachers are overloaded due to the wide curriculum that they have to cover, and they are unable to concentrate on learners who lack school readiness skills. Consequently, some of those children are unable to progress with their learning and others eventually drop out of school. This study further concludes that some parents quarrel with teachers when their children who lacked school readiness fail Grade 1. Such parents cause conflict between teachers and parents as well as amongst the teachers.

Loss of stationery surfaced as one of the challenges participants experienced in teaching learners who were not ready. Learners leave some of their books at home and as teachers follow the matter up, they find that the learners' books were misused for other purposes. Consequently, teachers are not able to follow up the progress of the learners and they find themselves issuing several books to one child.

5.7.5 Solutions to challenges experienced by teachers in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness

With regard to the solutions to challenges experienced in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness, this study concludes that the teachers press on and continue to support learners who lack skills regardless of the challenges. This study revealed that teachers practise positive self-talk for every challenge concerning teaching these learners. Sometimes teachers report the learners' matters to school principals. The principal is the manager of all school activities so teachers believe that they have to assist and act upon the matters pertaining to all learners as well as those

that experience learning challenges. In such cases, principals advise, counsel and assist them on how to support learners with insufficient school readiness.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes following recommendations based on the findings that emerged. The recommendations address different stakeholders such as the Grade 1 teachers, school principals, parents, and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET).

5.8.1 Recommendations for Grade 1 teachers

The teachers in the first grade are regarded as some of the core stakeholders who prepare learners' school readiness from the formative years to early primary. It is recommended that the Grade 1 teachers must reconsider the school readiness holistically. This means that all domains of children's development be included in their views about children's readiness including learners' socio-emotional domain. Moreover, the study recommends that the teachers should to motivate parents to be involved in the education of learners who lack school readiness. Furthermore, the learners must be assessed at their entry point to examine their readiness level and apply corrective teaching strategies for remedial teaching as well as teaching materials that enhance their school readiness.

5.8.2 Recommendations for school principals

The school principals are regarded as school managers who effectively plan, organize, control and lead the schools as organizations. Therefore, this study recommends that

the school principal must support the teachers who teach the learners with insufficient readiness. Moreover, the school principals must ensure that their teachers run in-house workshops which enhance their preparedness to teach every learner regardless of their learning needs.

5.8.3 Recommendations for parents

Parents are initially considered as the first teachers of their children because they are the ones who bring them up before they get to early childhood education. This study recommends that parents should ensure conducive home environments that stimulate children's readiness to learn. Furthermore, the study recommends that parents must ensure their children participate in the early years of education settings during their transition from small to big schools for progress, support and monitoring of learners.

5.8.4 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Training

The Ministry of Education and Training is regarded as the big stakeholder in education in ensuring that every citizen of Lesotho accesses quality education from as early as possible. Therefore, this study recommends that the MoET should train Grade 1 teachers on how to support learners encountering learning challenges due to lack of readiness skills. Furthermore, the study recommends that the MoET should supply the schools with necessary teaching materials to support learners who lack readiness skills.

In order to ensure that all learners starting the first grade have acquired the school readiness skills for learning, it is recommended that the education policy makers develop a policy that ensures that all learners at their early years are well nurtured in

preparation for Grade 1. Furthermore, these stakeholders are also encouraged to develop a policy on how the early childhood education settings should operate in order to get rid of mushrooming pre-schools which are established by whoever wishes to.

5.8.5 Recommendation for further research

The current research explored teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness in eleven primary schools in Maseru district. As the result, many teachers from various contexts need to be researched in order to have broader perception of teachers regarding learners' insufficient school readiness.

5.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed the findings obtained in the analysis. The conclusions were also drawn based on the findings on the key questions that guided the study. Moreover, the recommendations for Grade 1 teachers, school principals, parents, and the Ministry of Education and Training as well as policy makers were presented in this chapter.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FIRST LETTER OF INTRODUCTION-PRINCIPAL

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266
22340601/3631

Fax: +266 22340000



P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

12th December 2021

LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE PRINCIPAL

I, **Mathabo Nkoale**, am a Master of Education student at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). As part of my studies, I am required to white a dissertation and as such I am undertaking a study on **Grade 1 teachers' perceptions on teaching learners with insufficient school readiness** and your school has been selected as one of the schools to provide the necessary information regarding the topic mentioned. The information that teachers provide will only be used for the purpose of this study. The identity of your school and that of your teachers will not be revealed and descriptions will be done in such a way that they do not reveal the identity of your school.

Researcher's signature ----- **Date** -----

Principal's signature: ----- **Date** -----

APPEDIX B: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION-PARTICIPANTS

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266
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Fax: +266 22340000



P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

12th April 2021

I, **Mathabo Nkoale**, am undertaking a study in fulfilment of the Master of Education qualification at the National University of Lesotho (**NUL**). The aim of this study is **to explore Grade 1 teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness**. You are kindly requested to participate by responding to the following interview questions. All the data that will be collected in this interview will be used for the purposes of studying and all participants will be protected from any form of harm.

Researcher's signature ----- **Date** -----

Principal's signature: ----- **Date** -----

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview schedule for Grade 1 Teachers

I, **Mathabo Nkoale**, am undertaking a study in fulfilment of the Master of Education qualification at the National University of Lesotho (**NUL**). The aim of this study is **to explore Grade 1 teachers' perceptions in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness**. You are kindly requested to participate by responding to the following interview questions. All the data that will be collected in this interview will be used for the purposes of studying and all participants will be protected from any harm.

General Information

Gender: A. Male () B. Female ()

Age Ranges: () 20-29 () 30-39 () 40-49 () 50-59 () 60 +

Educational Qualifications: -----

General Teaching Experience: -----

Teaching Experience in Grade 1: -----

Interview Questions List

1. How do you view children's school readiness?
 2. What factors influence children's school readiness skills?
 3. What benefits do children get when they have acquired school readiness when they start Grade 1?
 4. What challenges do children with insufficient school readiness experience?
- Which school readiness skills do you mostly find lacking in most Grade 1 learners?

5. What teaching strategies do teachers use to ensure that learners who lack school readiness acquire it? *Do you see these strategies being effective in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness?*
6. Which materials do teachers use to support learners who lack school readiness? *Do you see the materials being effective in helping learners with insufficient school readiness?*
7. What kind of support do you get from your school in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness? Support from *school principal and other teachers.*
11. How do parents help you in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness skills?
12. How does the Ministry of Education assist you in teaching children with insufficient school readiness skills?
13. What challenges do you face as you teach learners who lack school readiness?
14. How do you solve the challenges faced in teaching learners with insufficient school readiness?

APPENDIX E: CAMERA

Ask to take some pictures on some learners with insufficient school readiness
Displays on the walls, learners exercise books, materials etc.

