Attitudes of teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education at basic education level in Lesotho

By

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Dissertation

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Education (M.ED)

at the

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

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JULY 2018

CERTIFICATION

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

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Dr Paseka A. Mosia – Supervisor

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Dr Paseka A. Mosia

Head of Educational Foundations Department

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Associate Prof. Tsepo Mokuku

Dean of the Faculty of Education

DECLARATION

Student Number: 200705314

I declare that the study entitled "Attitudes of Teachers Towards Learner Diversity and Inclusive Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Lesotho" is my own work, and that where other people's works were used, such sources were acknowledged through complete references.

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Motlalepula Alphonci Khumalo   Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my special gratitude to the following individuals that provided continued support, motivation, and advice throughout the entire process:

- I would like to give honour to God because he has truly been a rock of salvation throughout the tumultuous times. He gave me the power, wisdom and patience to complete this dissertation, through whom all things are possible.

- My supervisor, Dr Paseka Andrew Mosia for his critical guidance and patience. He has been tireless and patient in refining my skills. I am very appreciative of his unrelenting wisdom and encouragement. Through his close supervision and guidance, it was possible to produce this document. He devoted an immense amount of time, commitment and concern ensuring that I completed my dissertation. For this, he will always have my enduring gratitude.

- I am indebted to my boss, Mrs 'Makhathatso Manama, who academically supported me throughout this study. Thanks to all the participants of the primary and high schools at Mapoteng in Berea district- Lesotho for their support and tolerance during the interviews, for their time and willingness to share their experiences with me. They were very cooperative in providing valuable and reliable information. Without them this study would not have been completed. It is my hope that they have learnt as much as they have contributed.

- My beloved wife, 'Mats'epang Khumalo, for her love, moral support, continuous encouragement, guidance and belief in my abilities throughout, the study, her encouragement to continue striving towards my highest potential has always kept me focused throughout the duration of my educational journey. She has been my cheer leader. I could not have completed this without her support, especially financially.

- My two children, Ts'epang Juliet Khumalo and Ts'epo Daniel Khumalo have brought more to my life than I ever thought possible. They are the main reason I was motivated to complete this research project.

- It is truly impossible to thank all the people for their contribution towards the successful completion of this research project. Those whose names have not been mentioned are equally thanked.

ACRONYMS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
EFA	Education for All
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LCE	Lesotho College of Education
LNFOD	Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled
LNLVIP	Lesotho National League of the Impaired Persons
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Education Needs
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

APPENDICES

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century learners can present challenges to regular education school contexts as they come from diverse cultural, religious, and socioeconomic status backgrounds; have different abilities or disabilities, gender orientation, ethnicity etc. This study looks at teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and explores how teachers accommodate diverse learners in mainstream primary and secondary schools in Lesotho. Data for the study was collected using a qualitative approach utilising a case study design and was analysed through an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Thirty teachers participated in the study through focus-group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Results reveal that teachers understood in theory what inclusive education is but had no idea how to implement it in their classrooms. Teachers explained the following as some of their barriers to accommodating learner diversity in schools: lack of in-service training, inadequate support from Ministry of Education and Training, the nature of learners' disability for which they were not trained to support and there was lack of resources to enable such support, high learner-teacher ratios, and as well as unclear policy which mandate them to accommodate learner diversity. The study recommends that the MOET establish teachers' need for training, develop an inclusive education policy which should describe how learners should be supported and what resources would be needed for the support.

Keywords: diversity, inclusive education, teachers' views, teachers' attitudes, policy, resources, Lesotho

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview to the entire dissertation. First, it presents background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and objectives of the study and the research questions. Second, it explains a theoretical perspective which underpins the study as well as the rational of the study. Then the research methods and methodology for the study are explained. The key concepts of the study are also explained. Last, an outline of chapters in the dissertation is made followed by a summary of the chapter.

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.2 Inclusive Education

Previously learners with disabilities could not be catered for by the mainstream education system and were taught in segregated "special" institutions which were disguised as serving their interests (Dyson, 1999, p. 36). Inclusive education as a means to increase access and participation of learners with special educational needs (LSEN) in mainstream education is a global trend (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarthy, 1997). This realisation of individuals' rights to education was declared in 1948 by the United Nations (UN) through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration exposed educational practices in many countries as questionable and started intense debates around the most appropriate manner in which LSEN should be supported and educated (McCoy, Banks, Frawely, Watson, Shevelin & Smyth, 2014; Ware, Balfe, Butler, Day, Dupont, Harten Farerell, McDaid, O'Riordan, Prunty & Travers, 2009). Following the universal declaration on human rights, other policies were developed to promote the right to education for children with disabilities. For example, the Convention Against Discrimination in Education was enacted in 1960 to prevent any form of discrimination and promote equal participation in education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Convention Against Discrimination in Education (and) Articles 13 and 14 (Right to Education) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was promulgated to promote full participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream education and society (United Nations, 2008). Participation of people with disabilities in society is based on principles of tolerance, interdependence and equity espoused by World Declaration on Education for All and Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO, 1994). As a global agenda inclusive

education is relevant to Lesotho which ratified most of these treaties. However, Lesotho needs to transform its Education sufficiently to attain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially the fourth goal which reads, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015, p. 17). There are many challenges within the current provision of education that need to be addressed if the fourth goal of SDGs is to be achieved.

1.1.2 Contributing factors to successful inclusive education

Successful inclusion of LSEN demands several changes in mainstream schools to improve human and physical resources, and make the schools efficient and effective systems. Studies reveal that inadequately trained teachers are unable to implement inclusive education. For example, Bradshaw and Mundia (2006) assert that teachers may welcome all learners but, at times, feel ill-equipped to deal with the diverse range of needs. Norwich (1994), states that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive practices. In this regard, Schmidt, Protner, and Čagran (2015) argue that appropriate teacher training influences positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Similarly, research shows that a positive attitude on the part of teachers is closely connected with good, well planned and long-term training (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Symeonidou & Phitaka, 2009). Other studies note that teacher training prepares teachers to have confidence in dealing with LSEN and enables them to help LSEN improve their self-confidence and develop positive attitudes (Lakkala & Määttä, 2011; Kudek Mirošević &Jurčević Lozančić, 2014). Dickens and Smith's (1995) study on the attitudes of both regular and special educators towards inclusive education found that both groups were positive after appropriate in-service training.

On the other hand, Rose, Protner, and Čagran (2007) state that schools need necessary resources without which they may not facilitate inclusive education. Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) suggest that time is one resource that is very important for inclusive education. Appropriate use of time is influenced by several factors as evident in discussion that follow. According to Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger (2010), factors such as experience, personal contact with disability, classroom size, working hours, requirements for accommodations, and potential behaviour problems influence positive attitudes for teachers to implement inclusive education. Other studies identify resources needed for inclusive education such as proper supply of stationery, curriculum materials, computer hardware and software; organisational resource such as timetable, labour division, and human resource, relationship among colleagues, special education personnel, and support from community (Thousand & Villa,

2005). Further, School factors such as support services, the overall school climate, teacher collaboration and some factors external to the school such as wages influence teachers' opinions about LSEN (Opdal & Wormenæs, 2001; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Additionally, Okumbe (1998) states that school administrations need to be knowledgeable about special education policies and procedures for schools to respond appropriately to how they must change environments. A survey by LRP Publishers (1995) indicates that without the backing of school administrators, the effort to create more inclusive classrooms is not likely to succeed. Similarly, Kiragu (1982) notes that headteachers' training experience on inclusive education, personalities influence, and their performance in schools is essential. A study by Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (2006) reveals that school management attitudes have significant implications for school teachers who are directly involved in implementing inclusive education. According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2001), attitudes of school administrators can create a positive environment for students with disabilities. Generally, a school administration has a positive impact on how teachers implement inclusive education through its support and distribution of resources (Morley, Bailey & Tan, 2005; Jerlinder, Danermark, & Gill, 2010).

1.1.3 Inclusive Education initiatives in Lesotho

1.1.3.1 Government initiatives

Lesotho has made significant progress to embrace the inclusive education agenda by ratifying several UN policies such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities advocating development of inclusive education system at all levels (Rieser, 2012). Ministry of Education's (MOE) 1989 policy statement has seven goals which read:

(1). Advocate for integrating people with disabilities into the mainstream school system.

(2). Establish resource centres to assess learners' needs and prepare them for integration.

(3). Ensure that all people with disabilities complete the seven year primary education;

(4). Establish a functional itinerant special education team to support mainstream teachers.

(5) Create a network of services that would enable the education of people with disabilities.

(6) Respect the rights of children with disabilities not to be displaced but to live with parents or legal guardians, and

(7) Include special education programmes into pre-service teacher training (Ministry of Education, 1989).

In 1991, MOE, constituted the Special Education Unit with the purpose to pilot inclusive education in ten schools and train teachers to support learners in mainstream schools in selected districts of the country. But the implementations of some goals of the Policy Statement were delayed due to lack of resource. For example, Lesotho lacks trained human resources to assess needs of LSEN is a challenge to inclusive education as Mittler and Platt (1996) found that partially sighted students learned Braille when they could cope with eyeglasses or enlarged print. Special schools have also been found to admit students they were not resourced to support, such as the school for the hearing impaired admitting a learner with intellectual impairment whose hearing is unimpaired (Mittler & Platt, 1996). This tends to be one of the greatest challenges for teachers as they cannot accommodate learner diversity without clear national identification and assessment procedures for such learners and their needs.

In 2005, Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (2005) developed an Education Sector Strategic Plan and amongst the goals of the plan was advocacy for the integration/inclusion of LSEN into mainstream schools. The Strategic Sector Plan targets are as follows:

(1) Have an established Special Education Policy in 2006.

(2) Significantly increase access for children with special educational needs (SEN)/disability.

(3) Accelerate inclusion/integration of children with SEN/ disability from 4.8% to 20% by 2009 and to 40% by 2015.

(4) Train 700 teachers per year on SEN identification and assessment skills.

(5) Strengthen the capacity of the Special Education Unit by 2015.

(6) Increase human resource in Special Education Unit and decentralize the unit's services by 2015 and

(7) Mainstream gender and HIV/AIDS issues into all Special Education programmes by 2015 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2005).

It is clear from the sector plan that special education needs are not only limited to disability but include vulnerability from effects of HIV as well as sexuality issues such as conception of gender. One clear indication of the Ministry's slow progress is its failure to meet target one of the Strategic Sector Plan. Mosia (2014) observed that there was still no clear policy on Special Education in February 2012, six years after the initial deadline. MDGs Status Report (2013) on MDG 2, recommends that MOET needs to create incentives for qualified teachers to teach in remote areas that are underserved; address the educational needs of the 20% of Lesotho children who are not currently attending school, especially disadvantaged groups and replace unqualified teachers with qualified teachers.

In 2016, MOET developed another Education Sector Strategic Plan now advocating for inclusive education and not integration. Its objectives are as follows:

(1) To expand provision of inclusive education into education system by at least 25% at primary school level and 5% at post primary school level by 2026.

(2) To strengthen delivery of inclusive education, and implement inclusive education policy by 2026.

(3) To increase human resources in the Special Education Unit (SEU) and decentralise human resources in the SEU by 2026 and

(4) To enhance capacity of the SEU, and train officers on new inclusion by 2026.

The policy initiatives are an indication that MOET is willing to accommodate the needs of LSEN within its mainstream settings but inadequate progress in implementing them may indicate lack of commitment because there should be requisite resources for full implementation of these sector plans.

1.1.3.2 Reflections of independent studies on Government initiatives

Given the initiative to develop an inclusive education system in Lesotho to date, several independent studies suggest that there are challenges towards addressing learner diversity and implementing inclusive education. A feasibility study by Khatleli, Mariga, Phachaka and Stubbs (1995) showed that schools were at varying levels of "readiness" for inclusion (p. 11). Some schools appeared to have adequate resources and understanding while others had no idea

what disability support was and seemed unwilling to accept students with disabilities. Khatleli et al. (1995) pointed out that enrollment of students with disabilities was actually a non-issue, as schools in Lesotho had always admitted students with disabilities but there were inadequate infrastructure for institutionally based rehabilitation and education. A study by Johnstone and Chapman (2009)) finds out that Lesotho's Ministry of Education has not provided "a model for changing a deficit/medical model, but originally provided opportunities for understanding issues like marginalization and exclusion" (p. 132). Similarly, Urwick and Elliot's (2010) feasibility study reveals gross inadequacies of facilities and learning materials for LSEN, insufficient training of both teachers and support personnel for LSEN, inadequate public funding structures and lack of enabling legislation. In addition, the trend of opinion among the teachers, as shown by the survey, was that students with LSEN had more difficulty in learning and repeated grades more than other students. Obstacles to learning for LSEN in Lesotho include lack of special materials, inadequate teacher training, inability to cope with the regular curriculum and constraints on the teacher's time (Urwick & Elliot, 2010). Other studies point out that qualified teachers in Lesotho find teaching an average class size of 40 learners challenging and cannot address learners' individual needs because they are poorly trained to use learner-centred approaches (Moloi, Morobe & Urwick, 2008).

A qualitative study by Khoaeane and Naong (2012) states that inadequate personnel training programme for teachers in Lesotho is the key barrier for implementing inclusive education. There is little focus on support personnel, such as educational audiologists, psychologist, speech and language therapists, and communication support workers, such as interpreters, in developing countries such as Lesotho (Mosia, 2014). These are exacerbated by the use of unqualified teachers at primary schools as documented in MOET's Education Statistical Bulletin (2010) that out of 1473 registered primary schools, 60% of 11,508 teachers were qualified while 40% were unqualified. MOET cannot implement inclusive education successfully if the general education system fails to provide quality education for all learners. A qualitative study by Mosia (2014) argues that though education professionals believe that they practise inclusive education in mainstreams schools, their efforts are far below standards to address learner diversity because they are not trained, their schools lack relevant resources and education support. Further, Mosia (2014) found that "the absence of a clear policy on inclusive education has several negative effects on the implementation in schools" (p. 305).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though there are studies in Lesotho which explore how the country has implemented inclusive education initiatives, there are no studies which focus on teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and how this can affect inclusive education. MOET implemented the universal primary education in 2000 and has legalised the initiative through promulgation of Education Act of 2010 which made primary education compulsory. This policy mandates access for all children in Lesotho at basic education level. However, the promulgation of this policy alone without transformation of the financial, physical and human resources in the Ministry of Education and Training cannot ensure inclusive education. Key challenges highlighted in literature include untrained teachers, lack of resources, lack of development of the sector's bylaws and school administration's lack of support to inclusive education. It is imperative to explore teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education at both primary and secondary schools levels in Lesotho so as to illustrate measures that need to be put in place for the country to implement the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2026 and achieve SDGs in 2030.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 The aim of the study

This study basically aims to explore teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education at basic education level.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

The study will address the following objectives:

1. To explore teachers' views about learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools.
2. To describe teachers' knowledge of policies mandating them to accommodate learner diversity in schools.
3. To explain teachers' views concerning their training and skills for fully and appropriately accommodating learner diversity in their respective schools.

1.3.3 Main Research Question

The main research question is phrased as follows:

What attitudes do teachers at basic education level have towards learner diversity and inclusive education?

In striving to achieve the purpose of this study the following sub research questions were formulated:

1. How do teachers in primary and secondary schools view learner diversity and inclusive education?
2. To what extent do teachers know policies that mandate them to accommodate learner diversity in schools?
3. To what extent do teachers feel that they are adequately trained to accommodate learner diversity in schools?

1.4 THE RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

This study will help the Ministry of Education and Training to assess its efforts towards implementing inclusive education as set out in the strategic sector plan 2016 - 2026. It will also help regular education teachers to reflect on their practices and identify challenges they have towards accommodating learner diversity in their classes. The realisation may guide them to seek additional information about how to effectively include these students. Understanding teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education may facilitate the development of proper strategies to train both administrators and teachers on how to work together to implement inclusive education. In doing so, the study will immensely help MOET to effectively implement the policy of inclusive education and to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

1.5 A BRIEF DISCRIPTION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will use social constructionist perspective as lenses through which to interpret data. The model encourages persons with disabilities to question and challenge dominant ideological principles held about disability in society and discriminatory public policy as untrue and unjust (Hahn, 1988). The model also challenges the society to address issues of oppression and discrimination against people with disabilities so as to promote social inclusion, create a barrier-free society and develop a positive identity for people with disabilities (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1996). Recognizing that persons with disabilities are still exposed to and oppressed by prejudice and discrimination may be the first step in reducing prejudice (Marks, 1987). Young (1990) proposes that oppression needs to be eliminated by establishing policies, opportunities and resources that include disadvantaged social groups. Research indicates that prejudice can fail inclusion leading to negative outcomes for children (Genesi, 2000). Similarly, Derman-Sparks (1993) observes that, "The stereotypical views held about persons

of minority groups, including those with disabilities, affect the development of children who receive both blatant and subtle messages that challenge their integrity as learners" (p. 66). Further, Watermeyer (2006) argues that barriers created by society such as lack of educational services, inaccessible buildings, negative attitudes and discriminatory policies to exclude and isolate people with impairments emanate from negative perception of disability. Incidentally, Abberley (1987) urges people with disabilities to recognise negative challenges brought by impairments but promote life with disabilities as worth living. Therefore, social constructionism argues that the way teachers behave towards learners' diversity is influenced by how the broader society constructs the concept of disability and difference.

1.6 A BRIEF DISCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This section of the study describes research paradigm, approach and design adopted by the study and how data will be gathered and processed. This study perceives reality as socially constructed and true for people who value and believe in it.

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

The research is underpinned by an interpretative research paradigm. The paradigm asserts that participants "make meaning" of a phenomenon or situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). An interpretative research recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but does not reject outright some notion of objectivity. The purpose of a phenomenological study according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001) is to "understand an experience from the participant's point of view" (p. 157). The purpose of the phenomenological paradigm is to identify phenomena by how they are perceived by stakeholders in a specific situation. One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). An interpretive perspective means the study "accepts people's lived reality as true account of life and therefore it will devise ways of collecting their unbiased true essence of life" (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim 2006, p. 321). It will investigate how staff in schools, including the school management, perceives as their role in accommodating learner diversity. Therefore, the use of an interpretivist perspective will enable the researcher to explore what participants make of their teaching experiences and work with learners of various abilities. The philosophical assumption underlying this study is that social phenomena are truly understood in the contexts in which they are constructed and reproduced through activities (Åkerlind, 2005).

1.6.2 Research Approach

The researcher chose the qualitative approach for the study. Qualitative is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This is to ensure that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather in a variety of lenses which allow for multiple facts of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. The study uses a qualitative approach which offers the benefit of investigating a single unit intensively (Yin, 1994). It enables researchers to learn, first-hand, about the social world they are investigating, by means of involvement and participation and by focusing on what individuals say and do (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1991). An understanding of individual's perceptions of the world is gained through its emphasis on insight rather than statistical analysis (Bell, 1989). Taken as a whole, qualitative research is 'inductive, subjective, and contextual' in nature, and it offers an opportunity to capture the unique experiences and beliefs of participants in their interaction with their context (Morgan 2014). The strategy is inductive, the outcomes are descriptive and the meaning is mediated through "the researcher as an instrument" (Merriam, 2002, p. 178). Denzil and Lincoln (2003) maintain that qualitative research is mainly a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive practices that render the world visible.

1.6.3 Research Design

The current study aims to examine in a broader sense teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education. The study will use a case study design as it can best document and explain lived realities of teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education. De Visser and Smith (2006) state that single case-studies represent in-depth examinations of the lived experiences of a single person while Yin, Merriam and Stake (2015) see it as one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies. Smith (2011) views case study as a bounded system and Stake (1995) views case study as "an integrated system" (p. 37.) Stake (1995) state that "case study is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of the study" (p. 37). According to Yin (2003) a case study design is "considered when:(a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) when one cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) when one wants to cover contextual conditions because she/he believes that they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context" (p. 18). This study will further use one high school and one primary school as case studies in which learner diversity will be explored.

1.6.4 Participant Selection

According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), "a small sample" is used in qualitative studies because the purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (p.178). A combination of convenience and purposive sampling were applied as the most appropriate sampling methods (Bobbie & Mouton, 2006). Convenience or opportunity sampling is the most common type of sampling in studies where the only criterion according to Dornyei (2007) is the convenience of the researcher. Convenience sampling is "a type of nonprobability sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study" (Musa, 2016, p. 2). Convenience sampling was used to select schools in Mapoteng area where the researcher lives and staff who indicated availability to be interviewed either individually or in a focus-group were selected to participate in the two schools.

Purposive sampling is used in this study to select participants whom the researcher thinks would give "valuable data addressing the purpose of the study" (Leedy, 2002, p. 207). Frankel and Wallen (1993), note that in purposive sampling, researchers use their personal judgments to select a sample, situating themselves upon the previous knowledge of a population in conjunction with the specific purpose of the research. Purposive sampling ensures that only those participants who could contribute meaningfully to the research are included. Oliver (2010) says, "Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher identifies certain participants as being potentially able to provide significant data on the research study" (p. 110). In this regard, I chose participants such principals, heads of department as key respondents who in turn helped me select participants who were better positioned to respond to the aim of the study as explained to them. Thirty participants were selected. twelve were participants from primary school including their principal and eighteen participants were selected from secondary school including the principal, as McMillian (2014) claims that a researcher selects particular elements from the population which represent the topic of interest.

1.6.5 Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) an interview is a "purposeful discussion between two or more people" (p. 318). In-depth interviews enabled the study to document teachers' views on training, resources, and school administrations support. An interview is recognised as a vital instrument in gathering qualitative data (Best & Kahn,

1993; Coll & Chapman, 2000). Individual and group interviews were used with research participants from primary and secondary schools about their role in teaching LSEN. This study also used focus group interview to collect data. Focus group is a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data (Kitzinger, 1995). All interviews were conducted using an interview schedule of open-ended questions and they were audio-recorded. I also recorded participants' reactions during the interviews as field notes to supplement the audio-recorded data.

1.6.6 Data Analysis

The study adopted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyse data. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach rooted in phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experiences (Smith, 2011). Smith (2011) describes idiographic as a commitment to analyse each case corpus in detail and help the researcher to examine experiences that are of existential to the participants. Smith, Jarman and Obson (1999) state that IPA explores in detail each participant's view of the topic under investigation. Other scholars like Langenhove (1995) suggest that IPA relies on ideography, meaning that researchers focus on the particular rather than universal. Smith and Osborn (2007) state that IPA aims to explore in a detailed manner how participants make sense of their personal and social world, and the currency for an IPA study is the meanings which particular experiences, events, states hold for participants.

Furthermore, Smith (2011) claims that IPA involves the detailed analytic treatment of each case followed by the search patterns across the cases and it balances convergence and divergence with the sample, not only presenting both shared themes, but also pointing to the particular way in which these themes play out for individuals. Therefore, IPA requires an intense qualitative case analysis of detailed personal accounts derived from participants. Creswell (1998) and Stake (1995) concur that data from each participant should be organised, categorized and interpreted as single instances before identifications of patterns are synthesised and generalized. Moreover, Conrad (1987) asserts that IPA adopts as far as possible an insider's perspective of the phenomenon under study.

1.6.7 Trustworthiness

In order to assure credibility of results all interviews which were audio-recorded, were transcribed word for word and the transcribed data were sent to each participant to verify if their views were captured accurately (Creswell, 2007). Informant feedback or respondent

validation is considered critical for making results of a study trustworthy (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002) as participants have the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretation, and contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study (Krefting, 1991). Additionally, Krefting, (1991) states that strategies commonly integrated into qualitative studies to establish credibility include the use of reflections or the maintenance of the field notes and peer examination of the data.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers in the social sciences have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population and the larger society (Berg, 2009). Before conducting this research, the researcher applied for ethical clearance in the Ministry of Education and Training at Teyateyaneng- Berea, sought written permission to go into the schools from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The participants were informed about the nature of the research and the responsibilities of the parties involved as well as the research procedure to be followed. At all times during the research, I was honest, respectful and sympathetic towards all the participants. The study rigorously considered the ethical issues related to the research by explaining the purpose and benefits of the study to the respective teachers before they decided to participate in the study. The participants were also informed about their right to refuse to answer questions at any time, without any penalty. The teachers were assured that their participation was free and voluntary and their experiences and perceptions would be shared anonymously and to protect their identities. An identification number was assigned to each participant to maintain the anonymity of the data.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In order to set the boundaries of the work, definition of key terms is very important to understand the concepts in the context of the study. Therefore, in this section, working definitions of key terms are explained.

1.8.1 Attitudes

According to Eargly and Chaiken (1993), an attitude is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (p. 1). In this study, the word 'attitude will be used when describing participants' views are towards, how they react to or experience elements pertaining to diversity and inclusive education. Attitudes are described as "evaluative judgements that integrate and summarize …cognitive or affective emotions" (Crano & Prislin, 2006, p. 347). Similarly, Reber (1995) views attitudes as

a response tendency, some internal affective orientation that would explain the actions of a person. This meaning is an extension of the idea of intention and contemporary usage generally entails several components namely: "cognitive (consciously held belief or opinion); affective (emotional tone or feeling) evaluative (positive or negative); and conative (deposition for action)" (Reber, 1995, p. 67).

1.8.2 Teacher/Educator

A teacher is a person, who is capable of imparting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and to acquire skills that will be used to face the challenge in life (Senge, 2000, p. 26). Therefore, in this study, a teacher/educator facilitates the learning process. He/she imparts knowledge, skills and values into learners for their overall development.

1.8.3 Learner

According to Hornby (1995), a learner is 'a person who is gaining knowledge or skill' (p. 671). For the purpose of this study, a learner is a child who is attending school, for the purpose of receiving effective, formal education he/she learns from a teacher or takes up knowledge or beliefs. The term and learner will be used interchangeably in this dissertation.

1.8.4 Diversity

"The term 'diversity' allows for the reconceptualization of 'difference' and for the production of non-hierarchical plural identities. The school that values diversity does not separate or exclude anyone, but instead celebrates the plurality of its community, to the benefit and inclusion of al" (Benjamin, 2002, p. 309). This notion of 'valuing diversity' presents a departure from the categorical thinking that has previously resulted in the separation of particular groups. It suggests that everyone is different, everyone is unique and everyone is valuable for who they are (Benjamin, 2002). In schools that value diversity, "all young people are valued as individuals so that the differences between them can be acknowledged without prejudice" (Wedell, 2008, p. 127).

1.8.5 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the term used to describe the process of bringing children with disabilities into mainstream school. In this study, the use of the term, inclusive education, will be based on the work of Booth (1996) and Humphrey (2008) that describes inclusion as a process of increasing participation of students within and reducing their exclusion from the culture, curriculum and communities of neighbourhood centres of learning. In inclusive schools, all children learn together, the school recognises and responds to the diverse needs of

their children/learners, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisation arrangement, teaching strategies, resource use and partnership with their communities.

1.9 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to two schools in Mapoteng area in the district of Berea. The study focused on the attitudes of teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education at basic Education level in Mapoteng area in Berea District Lesotho, therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised as they are not representative.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has covered background of the study which explains inclusive education, contributing factors to successful inclusive education and inclusive education initiatives in Lesotho. Furthermore, the aim, objectives as well as questions addressed by the study were explained. It also stated the significance of the study to the Ministry of Education and Training. A theoretical framework for the study was described. Lastly, it covers the methodology which includes research paradigm, approach, design as well as participation selection, data collection instrument, analysis, the trustworthiness of the study and ethical consideration that the researcher needs to observe.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This study is framed by Social Constructionist model which identifies and explains ideologies that contribute to the creation of disability. Therefore, this chapter first gives a brief explanation of the medical model from which both the social model and social constructionist perspectives depart. Social constructionism is the preferred framework for this study as it argues that transformed ideologies and attitudes towards disability enable inclusive education. The study provides a narrow view of diversity and inclusive education, only confining it to disability, hence the models.

2.1 Medical Model

The medical model of disability devalues and blames disabled person for the functional impairment. It explains a child with disability's problem as "a private problem in which only few people suffer and may not require society to collectively address" (Dyson & Forlin, 1999, p. 26). The individuals with disability are deemed to have 'diseases or problems or incapacities as attributes' (Fulcher, 1989, cited in Naicker, 1999, p. 31). It is highly focussed on "pathology, sickness, the nature and aetiology of the presenting problem, and dealing with the specific pathology" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 4). It aims to "change, treat, cure or prevent the individual from being disabled, and make them as 'normal' as possible" (Crow, 1996, P. 9). The individual or medical model focuses on disability as functional limitation, with disability commonly referring to any 'restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being' (Wood, 1981). The medical model transmitted the biased truth perceived by critical theorists as "oppressive to minority groups, such as people with disabilities", in the sense that it forced them to accept an imposed truth despite it being incongruent with their needs (Morrell, 2009, p. 97). According to the individual model then, people are disabled by their impairments located within the impaired individual (UNESCO, 2001), and therefore, it is the role of medicine and psychology to restore them to 'normality' (Thomas, Gradwell & Markkham, 2012). Non-disabled professionals are the ones who determine where disabled learners should go to school, what type of support do they need, and the type of education they deserve; and where such learners can reside (Disabled People's International, 1981). As a result, institutions like special schools for persons with disabilities are organised to segregate and exclude such students from regular schools (Rieser, 2002).

It assumes that a comprehensive diagnosis of physical, neurological or biological disorders should precede intervention in educational settings (UNESCO, 2001). The model focuses on the child's condition, seeing the problem within the child, and tries to make the child to fit within an environment (UNESCO, 2001). Accordingly, persons with disabilities must find ways to adjust as much as possible to the norms and standards of society (Oliver, 2009). Such educational systems are governed by a traditional "one –size fits all" approach to teaching. For example, learners with disabilities are expected to overcome their limitations and conform as much as they could to the model of the average student so that they could follow the standard curricula (UNESCO, 2001). If the child does not pass, the education system would not adjust for the child but the child would be blamed for nonconformity (Skrtic, 1991). Students who cannot fit in are considered not well suitable to study (Dyson & Forlin, 1999). Therefore, one had to fit within the existing system.

When applying this model to education, learners with any type of difference are singled out and the cause or origin of the difference is believed to be located within the child. Subscribing to this model leads to a belief system that regards some learners as, at best, disadvantaged and in need of individual "fixing" and, at worst, as fundamentally deficient and therefore beyond support (Engelbrecht, 2004). There is much criticism of the medical model and many view it as problematic in understanding education today. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) point out that although assessing, diagnosing and treating pathologies of learners are relevant for much clinical work, it is too restrictive in scope for educational support services.

The provision of special education in segregated settings gives example of how persons with disabilities were excluded by society. Oliver (1996) views the special educational system as perpetuating the misguided assumption that disabled people are somehow inadequate, and thus legitimizes discrimination in all other areas of their lives. Tomlinson (1982) argues that special education does not serve the needs of students with special educational needs but those of educational systems, as well as the interest of professionals and practitioners (teachers, educational psychologists, and medical officers). Similarly, Reiser (2002) argues that from the medical model children with disability are faced with a lack of expectation on the part of others. This segregated approach largely went unchallenged for many years (Pijl & Meijer, 1994). Segregated education is viewed as potentially violating the students' rights to appropriate inclusive education in their own respective local areas. It may also limit their capacity to benefit from educational opportunities in the future (UNESCO, 2005).

2.2 The Social Model

The social activism and revolution was established by disabled people together with their organisations with the aim to "fight formation of social practices in which impaired people were ill-treated and regarded as substandard" (Barnes, 2013, p. 3). Activists for the social model of disability argues that, "it is society which disables impaired people, disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society" (Union of the Physically impaired Against Segregation, 1976, p. 3-4). Finkelstein (2001) also states, "Our society is constructed by people with capabilities for a person with capabilities and it is this that makes people with impairments incapable of functioning" (p. 2). Anastasiou and Kauffman (2013) indicated that "lack of social participation for disabled persons shaped the development of negative perception towards disability" (p. 442). Hahn (1986) states that, "disability results from barriers that exist in the environment and the failure of society to restructure the social environment to accommodate the needs and aspirations of citizens with disabilities than the inability of individuals with impairments to adapt to the demands of society" (p.128). Oliver (1996) argues that disabled persons are as experts of their own situation. It recognises that while some people have impairments in their physical, intellectual and psychological functionality, these may lead to disability if society fails to accommodate them in the way it functions (Oliver 1990). A fundamental aspect of the social model concerns equality and engaging people with disabilities in decisions affecting them. A related phrase often used by disability rights campaigners, as with other social activism, is "Nothing about us without us" (Crow, 1996, p. 209).

The social model developed from "the Fundamental Principles of Disability document" (Oliver, 2013, p. 1024) in which UPIAS promoted "the rights of people with impairment and argued for removal of social barriers" (Lone & Kumar, 2013, p. 16). The social model of disability thus sees accommodating minority groups such as persons with disabilities in mainstream society as a human right issue (Barton, 2003). It fulfils persons with disabilities' right to education as stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). It argues that separate special schools deny non-disabled people day to day experience of living and growing up with disabled people (Reiser, 2002). It therefore seeks to influence changes which remove barriers in the environment for equal participation of all. The model argues that people are disabled by their environment, the attitudes of others, policies, and the practices in society which are discriminatory (Reiser, 2002). The application of this model to

educational environment, therefore, allows shifting the focus from individual diagnosis towards the classroom environment as a whole. It is no longer the students who are disabled but the curriculum which creates barriers for students with diverse learning styles (Beck, 2013). Implementing the social model in educational environment involves the dismantling of barriers to the engagement and participation of students in order to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment (Beck, 2013). Priestly (2003) reports that the social model of disability highlights on the social processes and motives that lead people with perceived impairments to be disabled and marginalised within society. Therefore, the social model is more focused on explaining the social motives and processes which result in the segregation and reclassifying of individuals with so-called impairments as "disabled" people in society.

The Social model of disability sees the problems facing disabled people as a result of society's barriers rather than the person's medical conditions reference. It argues for the full inclusion of disabled people in educational institutions, the larger societal institutions and for their complete acceptance as citizens with equal rights, entitlements and responsibilities. The social model also regards disability as all the things that impose restrictions on disabled people ranging from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination, from inaccessible buildings to unusable transportation systems, from segregated education to exclusion from work and many more. The consequences of the failure to make the environment less restrictive do not simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled people as a group who experience these failures of discriminatory institutions throughout society. It recognises the solution as to rid the society of these barriers, rather than relying on curing all people who have impairments, which is not possible. Consequently, it argues against inaccessible facilities for those who use wheelchairs for mobility proposes and that appropriately designed ramps, elevators, and physical spaces be developed to provide a conducive environment for persons using wheelchairs (Koppelman & Goodhart, 2011).

2.3 The Social Constructionist Model

Harlan Hahn (1988) and Irving Kenneth Zola (1979) are acknowledged as "the proponents of the development of the social constructionist model for people with disabilities" (Barnes, 2013, p. 6); Oliver, 1996, p. 23). Zola (1979) argues that people who claim to be knowledgeable and professional about disabled persons, are unable to truly reflect experiences of people living with a disability. Zola (1979) further contends that the advocates for medical model maintain that they are in the best position to know what can be done for people with disabilities. Hahn

(1983) asserts that non-disabled people equate disability with functional limitations.

Social constructionism explains disability as a social construct through which persons with disabilities are discriminated and oppressed by members of society who prevent them from maximum participation (Rieser, 2013). The social constructionism views people with disabilities as experts on their needs, and therefore, encourages people with disabilities to take the initiative, individually and collectively, in designing and promoting better solutions (Jenkinson, 2008). Allan (1995) suggests that social constructionists, a major criticism of individualistic models, discourage the use of all labelling or categorisation. The model focuses on inclusion, individual worth and rights, and promotes self-representation and cross-disability inclusion in the disability movement regardless of diagnoses (Jenkinson, 2008).

In explaining how reality is socially constructed Goffman, (1963) examines how individuals try to cope with their labels and control the information the public receives about them through strategies such as 'passing' as normal. Abberley (1993) contends that whilst this is helpful in looking beyond the child, people are left with a sense that 'shameful difference' is inevitable (p. 163). The social constructionist view sees the problem as being located within the minds of able-bodied people, whether individually (prejudice) or collectively, through the manifestation of hostile social attitudes and the enactment of social policies based upon a tragic view of disability (Allan, 1995). Social constructionists have attributed the problem of oppression to environmental factors, including attitudes (Allan, 1995) which the current study examines in teachers.

Studies by Hahn (1985); Liggett (1988); and Silvers (1994) indicate that society's discriminatory attitudes which oppress people with disabilities need to be challenged. Hahn (1988) states that, "persons with disabilities experience problems with presumptions of biological inferiority, stereotyping, stigmatizing, prejudice, and segregation, an experience that plagues other minorities in society" (p. 296). This model addresses issues of "oppression and discrimination against people with disabilities, promoting the social inclusion of people with disabilities, creating a barrier-free society and developing a positive identity for those with disabilities" (Finkelstein, 1993, p. 11-12; Oliver, 1993, p. 50). Proponents of the social constructionist model support the idea that disability is a product of wrong interpretation of impairments related to disabling social structures (Reindal, 1995). The model requires educators and practitioners to reflect on their own practices and explore new ways of thinking so as to "…shift the focus away from the perceived pathologies of disabled people on the deficiencies of disabling society" (Goodley, 2012, p. 665). Understanding the theoretical

framework that "guides educational practices and how they shape the attitudes, expectations and curriculum design of educators provides a strong rational for liberal rethinking of education" (Evans, 2012, p. 488). For education professionals, especially teachers, this model stimulates them to reflect on their practices and to challenge "…inequity and, wherever possible, permit ways of thinking affirmatively about disability" (Goodley, 2012, p. 665).

Disabilities are defined by arbitrary decisions of those empowered to designate them; thus, disabilities are labels determined by public policy and professionals (Hahn, 1985). What is needed is a "change in how society perceives disability" (Oliver, 1990, p. 22). The social constructionist model argues that impairment and disability are different in that impairment refers to physical/bodily dysfunction, and disability to social organization (Barnes, 1991; Oliver, 1996). Disability is due to specific social and economic structures, not a product of bodily pathology (Oliver, 1992). As a result, social and economic structures disable impaired people, excluding them from full participation in mainstream social activities (Oliver, 1996). People with disabilities are an oppressed social group (Abberley, 1987; Oliver, 1993). Society disregards the needs of people with disabilities resulting in them being an oppressed group (Hahn, 1985, 1989; Liggett, 1988; Silvers, 1994).

Therefore, the model explains ability and disability as social constructions that frame how society understands and interacts with individuals who behave in ways that are different from the norm (Dray, 2008). This requires that people without disabilities must be willing to experience the lives of people with disabilities from how people with disabilities experience it themselves (Zola, 1979; Hahn, 1988). It is a framework for recognizing how ability is framed so that people can recognize and work towards more equitable, inclusive perceptions of individuals who are different (Dray, 2008). Society needs to consult people with disabilities about their experiences. People with disabilities must challenge ideology which posits that living with a disability is a curse and expose social oppression which isolates and excludes them from full participation in mainstream of social activities (Oliver, 1996). Abberley (1987), "challenges people with disabilities to assume a minority status similar to those used by groups such as Blacks and Women to fight for legislation protecting their minority status" (p.7). Similarly, Barnes (1991) states that as a minority group, people with disability should campaign for anti-discrimination legislation that promote equal opportunities for everyone. Gill (1993) asserts that the social constructionist model inspires people with disabilities to self-identify as people with capability, rather than staying in the shadows of disability.

Generally, society's culture should be challenged for its prejudicial views and negatively shared attitudes towards people with physical and psychological impairments (Swain, Finkelstein, French & Oliver, 1993). French (1993) argues that if society's thinking towards persons with disabilities is changed this would eliminate all forms of discrimination and prejudice as the model promotes the social justice movement addressing social ills such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and classism (Johnson, 2006). Therefore, change may not come unless people with disabilities rise to challenge the social construction of disability (Taylor & Bogdan, 1993). Finally, Phillips (1992) recommends that people with disabilities should be involved "... in redefining criteria by which success (or normality) is measured" (p. 2).

2.4 SUMMARY

Learners diversity and their inclusion in primary and secondary schools is argued as a good imitative by Ministry of Education and Training as documented in Education Act 2010, MOET 1989 Policy, the Millennium Development Goal and Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016. But learners with special educational needs especially disabled persons enter into the education system without their needs being appropriately met because teachers still lack proper training, adequate resources and do not know the policy that mandates them to accommodate diverse learners in schools. Therefore, I found social constructionism model suitable for this study because it strongly encourages persons with disabilities to question and challenge dominant ideological principles held about disability in society and discriminatory public policy as untrue and unjust (Hahn, 1988). It also gives the disabled persons a conducive platform to bring in knowledge about their needs and different ways in which learning can shift power relations as we know that knowledge is a powerful tool to overcome challenges. Consequently, disabled persons challenge the society to address issues of oppression and discrimination against people with disabilities so as to promote social inclusion, create a barrier-free society and develop a positive identity for people with disabilities (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1990). Therefore, the initiative of the social constructivism theoretical perspectives inspires changes in social systems to develop policies and practices which promote equity and opportunities for every person in the society.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Determining teacher attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education is key to making necessary transformation at the basic education level in Lesotho. Firstly, the concept of attitudes will be explored to explain how they influence teacher performance. Secondly, the issue of learner diversity will be explained. For example, learners present various needs to the education system on the basis of their emotional development, socioeconomic background, sexuality and sexual orientation, disability etc. Finally, this chapter will reflect on the concept of inclusive education as it applies to how teachers must be prepared for it and how learners must be fully and properly accommodated.

3.1 UNTERSTANDING TEACHER ATTITUDES

An attitude can be explained as an evaluative response to a particular object, idea, person or a group of people (Bootzin, 1991) and the evaluation, combines beliefs and feelings to influence how people think and act (Sapsford, 1999; Perloff, 2003). As Maricel (2009) indicates, teachers need in-service training in order to improve knowledge, professionalism and build appropriate skills and values. In this regard, if teachers are too effectively and efficiently accommodate learner diversity in schools they must be trained appropriately. As social constructionism states, inclusive education can come when professionals in education continuously interrogate their beliefs and attitudes towards disability to create access for the learners. For this reason, learners with diverse needs can be successfully accommodated in mainstream education if teachers communicate better, manage classes and use resources that support every learner's needs (UNESCO, 2001). Forlin (2010) argues that one of the most difficult challenges in preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms is that of ensuring that they have a positive attitude towards learners from different backgrounds and with special educational needs.

Attitudes can manifest and affect learners positively or negatively depending on the various situations which teachers face in their classrooms. When learners display positive behaviour, ask questions, and participate in the class activities this becomes a motivation to a teacher who could display positive attitude towards learners (Ulug, Ozden, & Eryilmaz, 2011). Gundogdu and Silman (2007) indicate that "teachers' positive attitudes help the learners to develop self-confidence towards school work" (p. 264. Besides that, their academic performance improves when the teacher understands their emotions and supports their social activities, appreciates, approves of and complements them (Ulug, Ozden, & Eryilmaz, 2011). On the other hand,

negative teacher attitude can manifest and affect learners' personalities and indeed their academic performance. Teachers whose knowledge is limited about learners with diverse needs may regard learners' poor academic performance as a result of laziness, stubbornness or lack of motivation and fail to address learners' challenges to learning (Fredrick, 2005). For this reason, learners with diverse needs are pushed out of the education system because teachers have not received proper training that would help them to successfully address learners' needs (Fredrick, 2005). Mosia (2014) also notes that teachers teach diverse learners in the same way as if they are the same and do not tolerate learners who need special attention.

3.2 LEARNER DIVERSITY

The term "diversity" allows for the reconceptualization of difference, and for the production of non-hierarchical plural identities (Benjamin, 2002). According to National Council for the Social Studies (NCATE) (2002), diversity is defined as "the differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, and gender" (p. 6). Although in its most literal form diversity simply means 'variety', there are different forms of variety (Roberson, 2006). Some studies distinguish between diversity in observable attributes such as race, ethnic background, age, and gender and diversity relating to underlying attributes such as education, technical abilities, functional background, socioeconomic background, personality characteristics, intelligence or values (Cummings et al. 1993; Jackson et al., 1995; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Moletsane (1998) outlines the following ten dimensions of learner differences: (1) Language; (2) Learning style; (3) Socio-economic status; (4) Religion; (5) Ability or Disability; (6) Gender; (7) Intelligence; (8) Culture; (9) Group membership, and (10) Prior learning. Diversity, defined as understanding differences among individuals based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental challenges, and other emblematic features of identity (Rappaport, 1977). Learning breakdown can result from teachers' lack of support to students who are influenced negatively by one or more of these dimensions.

Therefore, recognising learner diversity is critical as teaching is not just a linear process of transmitting knowledge from a teacher or educational materials to students, (Arends, 2004; Rivkin et al., 2000). It becomes critical to note learners' different interests, learning needs and talents resulting from their specific backgrounds, experiences and social contexts (Waslander, 2006). Prior learning is important as some learners adapt to the mainstream teaching techniques better than others (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Bowles et al., 2009). Teachers are not only required to keep order and provide useful information to students, but

they also have to be increasingly effective in enabling a diverse group of students to learn complex material and develop a wide range of skills (Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997; Barnes, 1989). Essentially the 21st century teachers must be fully prepared to teach a diverse student population and create an inclusive environment (Loreman, 2010).

Further, Simmons (1998) asserts that the foci of teacher training programmes are to prepare teachers for work in diverse settings. The programmes must play a key role in enabling educators to meet the major challenge of understanding diverse students' racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds (Bartolome & Trueba, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1997). Woolfolk-Holy and Spero (2005) found that both pre-service and in-service preparation experiences are key to the development of teacher efficacy, that is, teachers' confidence in producing positive learning environments and teaching (Ashton, 1995).

3.3 LERANER DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

Given the dynamic sources of learner differences there is an urgent and serious need to reconceptualise how teachers should support these individual differences in classroom contexts. The traditional understanding of learner differences as it is mainly based on the fixed cognitive characteristics of students is currently disputed (Gipps, 1999). The shift is now on their capabilities and the focus is on each learner's potential in the classroom. Gipps, (1999) argues that it is necessary to understand the biographies of students, both as learners and young people, and as a basis for developing their learning and communicative interactions. For this reason, it is extremely important for teachers to support and protect diversity to promote suitable environments where individuals and groups are free from prejudice, and there is equity together with mutual respect.

Discriminatory practices that go unabated are likely to endure if learners who do not conform to social norms with regard to gender identity and intimate relationships are subjected to prejudice and discrimination in their schools (Borrillo, 2010). For example, while teachers are aware of the existence of discrimination within and beyond school walls, they remain silent (Nardi & Quartiero, 2012; Reprolatina, 2011). Venturi and Bokany (2011) posit that schools appear as the most frequent sites of discrimination with an average of 27% of learners with diverse needs experiencing acts of discrimination or exclusion. A qualitative study on homophobic violence in public schools conducted by Carrara, Nascimento and Duque (2014) in 11 Brazilian cities involving school managers, administrative staff, teachers and students as participants, revealed that there was a high degree of discrimination, including episodes of

verbal, psychological and physical violence perpetrated against lesbian and gay learners. Francis (2012) found that teachers in regular schools mostly ignore teaching about gender and sexual diversity and avoid introducing topics they frame as "compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 598). Victimization on the basis of sexual orientation was widespread and included verbal, physical abuse and rape (Wells & Polders, 2006).

On a different note, Alghazo and Gaad (2004) reveal that teachers find students with an intellectual disability as being more difficult to support than students with other types of disabilities. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) reveal that while the majority of teachers agree with the inclusion policy, most are only willing to accept the inclusion of learners with mild disabilities. In their study Dupoux, Wolman and Estrada (2005) compare the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion of learners with diverse needs and abilities in Haïti and the United States; they conclude that teachers in both countries differed in severity of their attitudes from acceptance to hatred depending on a severity of disabilities accommodated. Moreover, some teachers had positive attitudes towards accommodating physical, sensory and slightly visually impaired learners while those with emotional and behavioural difficulties attract the least positive attitudes from teachers (Dupoux, Wolman & Estrada, 2005). Teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities have a "significant impact on the educational experience of affected learners" (Lodge & Lynch, 2004, p. 97; Genesi, 2007, p. 2 as cited in Marks, 1997). Genesi (2007) notes that while teachers are legally mandated to support children with disabilities included in regular classroom, there are no mechanisms to ensure that the learners are accepted or treated fairly by their teachers or peers. However, Lodge and Lynch (2004) strongly argue that schools have a critical role to actively challenge pervasive societal attitudes of able-bodyism and able-mindedness.

Equally notable, learners living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and those from extreme poverty face a great challenge in regular schools because of their status. According to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals evaluation report (2013) "Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of children leaving school early in the world because of severe poverty and HIV/AIDS" (UN, (p.13). The scourge of HIV/AIDS has affected many lives such that many learners leave school prematurely. The traditional structure of households is changing in affected communities, leaving vulnerable children to adapt to non-traditional families and poverty (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2002). Ebersohn and Eloff (2002) note that death of parents leave orphans either cared for by aged grandparents or older siblings. A joint report by the United Nations Program on HIV and

AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2004) maintain that millions of children can be described as vulnerable due to the effects of illness, poverty, conflict, disease and accidents.

Learner diversity also means that teachers in mainstream schools may have to teach learners facing psychosocial problems, behavioural challenges, and neurological disorders, epilepsy, autism, xenophobia, and other impairments such as physical, visual, learning and intellectual impairment. Consequently, teachers must be knowledgeable about appropriate teaching approaches and be supportive to the learners' needs. For example, on accommodation of challenging behaviour and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) leaners, Moss (1995) recommends that the teacher should minimise the class rules and apply them consistently and learners should be rewarded when they comply with a rule. Further, Landsberg (2013) suggests that when identifying deafness and hearing loss in the class, a teacher within an inclusive environment needs to be observant and vigilant in getting to know his or her individual learners and this is the only way teachers can truly meet learners' unique needs in the classroom settings. Generally, Kelly (2002) maintains that formal school education is a powerful tool for transforming poverty in an environment where HIV/AIDS is rampant. He further argues that growth in education may positively influence growth out of poverty. This intervention further reduces chances of girls dropping out of school. Staying in school increases girls' bonding with school and teachers which in turn makes girls to feel accepted and cared for by their teachers (Hallfors et al, 2011).

3.4 INFLUENCES IN TEACHERS ATTITUDES

Research reveals several factors which influence the teachers' attitudes to their work such as but not limited to: teachers' level of education and experience, school administration support, improved facilities, personal contact with disability, classroom size, working hours, requirements for accommodations, and potential behaviour problems (Gal, Schreur & Engel-Yeger, 2010). The attitudes of teachers may be affected by one or a combination of several factors.

3.4.1 Teachers' Level of Education, Training and Experience

Inadequate teacher training has been blamed for teachers' inability to work with learners who deviate from the norm. In this regard Skuy (1990) indicates that stress and negative attitudes result from poor level of qualification among teachers. Studies by Hoover (1984); Davies and Green (1998), Daane, Beime-Smith Dianne (2000); Mushoriwa (2000) Avramidis, Bayliss

and Burden (2000); Sadek and Sadek (2000); Bothma Gravett, and Swart (2000) Marshall, Ralph and Palmer (2002), reveal that due to lack of experience and training, the subjects in the study appeared to have a negative attitude towards inclusion of learners with learning problems, emotional, and behavioural disorders in the mainstream schools. Bothma, Gravett, and Swart (2000) conducted a study on primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in a middle-class suburb of Gauteng and found that teachers felt that LSEN would be best served in separate educational facilities which are remedial or special schools or special classes, rather than in mainstream school.

Research shows that teachers' positive attitudes can be fostered by provision of appropriate training and practical experiences of successful inclusion in order to help them develop skills required in handling classes with diverse needs (Slee, 2001; Brodsky, 2001; Engelbrecht & Forlin, 1998; Peresuh, Adenigba & Ogonda, 1997). Attitudes towards including children with disabilities were more positive among those who had received more inclusive education training and they are mostly positive when they had a real experience of inclusion in their classes (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011). A variety of teachers' qualifications was used by Avramidis et al. (2000) in their study on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of LSEN. The study indicated that educators holding diplomas and in-service training certificates in special education tend to have a more positive attitude towards inclusion, while educators with substantial training in special education have significantly higher positive attitudes. In-service teacher education is perceived by many low income countries as a more effective way of "closing the gap between policy and practice" in order to respond to the demands of the MDGs for teacher education (Save the Children, 2012).

Therefore, it is advisable that teachers gain positive experiences in order to develop the proper positive attitudes towards the inclusion of special needs in mainstream classes (Watkins, 2007). Studies by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002); Praisner (2003); Subban and Sharma (2006) clearly show that positive attitudes in schools can be fostered through training in special education and constructive experiences with learners who have a range of disabilities. Hsien, Brown, and Bortoli (2011) found that higher qualifications and training in special education resulted in a more positive attitude in teachers towards inclusive education. Additionally, Marchesi (1998) found that professional training of teachers was reported to be one of the key factors to successful inclusion. Further, Avramidis et al. (2000) and Briggs et al (2002), support the view that teachers who perceive themselves as competent inclusive educators often have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education than those who do not. Teachers acquire

increased competence as a result of increased training in the field of inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Teacher professional development is needed for teachers to understand their students and to learn different instructional strategies to teach diverse learners in such an inclusive environment. Dickens and Smith (1995) conducted a study on the attitudes of both regular and special educators towards inclusion and found that respondents reveal more favourable attitudes towards inclusion after their in-service training. In a study conducted by Kim (2011), similar results were found; teachers who completed more special education coursework demonstrated more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Buell, Hallam, Gamel-Mccormick, and Scheer, (1999) firmly note the following training areas as essential: motivation, communication, and behaviour management of students with special needs, IEP development and review, assistive technology, adaptation of curriculum and lesson materials, and collaboration with other school personnel, parents, and families. This professional development helps teachers to become more positive compared to those teachers without training (Jobe & Rust, 1996). Therefore, inclusive education can be effective when general education teachers receive proper professional development to meet the needs of the special education students in their classrooms (Snyder, 1999). According to Swain, Nordness, and Leader-Janssen (2012), teacher training must provide teachers with proper strategies and techniques which are necessary for effective instruction within the classroom for students with special needs. It can be concluded that with thorough training, teachers could develop higher self-efficacy and gain more confidence in their instruction, leading to an overall positive attitude towards inclusion, and possible effective instruction.

3.4.2 School administration support

Although principals do not necessarily need to be disability experts, they must have fundamental knowledge and skills that will enable them to perform essential special education leadership tasks. Research has demonstrated that principals who focus on instructional issues, demonstrate administrative support for inclusive education, and provide high-quality professional development for teachers produce enhanced outcomes for learners with disabilities and for others at risk for school failure (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Klingner et al., 2001). Support from school administration, as Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger (2010) clearly propose, can lead to teachers having reasonable workloads, reasonable working hours, and enough financial resources dedicated for supporting and enhancing positive attitudes towards inclusive education.

Administrative support has been cited as a significant factor in determining teacher attitudes towards inclusion, as the teacher feels reaffirmed if the school principal fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students (Idol, 1994; Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Teachers believe that the support from the school leadership is critical for them to implement inclusive practices (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000; Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). Principals need to accept responsibility for supporting both teachers and learners in order to inspire these feelings among other school personnel (Gameros, 1995; Idol, 1994).

Moreover, school administration plays an essential role in ensuring that educational programmes meet the diverse needs of learners within schools. According to the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012), leaders are responsible for "setting out values and vision, providing instructional leadership, promoting teacher learning and development, improving the curriculum, managing resources and building collaboration both within and beyond the school" (p. 20). Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006), see school principals' role as "determining the focus and direction of work in the school" (p. 101). They play an extremely crucial role in ensuring that their schools accommodate learners with diverse needs. Watkins and Meyer (2010) share the view that "principals as custodians in their respective schools should have personal vision, share policies, enhance and encourage practice in learner diversity and inclusive education" (p. 240).

Besides support from an individual institution, collaboration between schools is encouraged; there is a view that schools which are effective in including diverse learners are those which work together. For example, Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, and Williams (2000) note that schools become more inclusive as they become more collaborative. Coleman (1990), states that effective leaders know how to build positive relationships that increase the social capital of their schools. By creating and supporting relational networks that facilitate dialogue, support, and sharing between teachers, administrators, students, and families, the social capital grows as stakeholders work together for the benefit of all learners, including those with disabilities and others at risk. Evidence from research vividly indicates that these relational networks are particularly critical for lasting success of special education efforts (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999). By building trust, improving and increasing communication, and sharing knowledge and skills about effective ways to serve all students, the synergy of teamwork takes hold and all participants benefit (Wasley, Hampel & Clark, 1997).

3.4.3 Improved school resources/facilities

Research more importantly points to another critical factor for teachers to support learner diversity in their schools. Teachers' positive attitudes are influenced by the availability of relevant resources in the classroom (Rose et al, 2007). Education must cater for learners' different modes of learning. For example, if there are learners with visual impairments in a school, Braille facilities must be made readily available at the school (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). Audio aids should be available for those with hearing impairments. Since the conditions are unfavourable for learners in rural areas, learners are still not going to benefit from inclusive education unless the conditions are improved with immediate effect (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990).

In addition, availability of materials that correlate between class level material and the learner with disabilities level is another factor that contributes to success or failure of inclusion. Center and Ward (1987) indicate that one factor has consistently been found to be associated with more positive attitudes is the availability of appropriate facilities that can meet individual learner's needs at classroom and school levels. Clough and Lindsay (1991) state that support can be physical resources such as teaching and learning materials, IT equipment, a restructured physical environment, and human resources such as learning support assistant, special education teachers, and speech therapists.

3.4.5 Class Size

Class sizes also play a major role in the teaching of children with disabilities in both primary and secondary schools as mainstream classrooms are generally overcrowded (Green, 1991). It becomes very difficult for teachers to attend to the normal children's needs and LSEN who have to be addressed in the same learning environment. Therefore, Large classes are seen as an obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001). Generally, larger classes place additional demands on the regular teacher, while reinforcing the concern that not all learners may receive sufficient time or attention (Stoler, 1992; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

3.4.8 The nature of disabilities

Research has found that the nature and type of the disability can influence teachers' positive or negative attitudes towards inclusion (Ryan, 2009). Regular teachers are known to accept learners with physical disability than learners with other disabilities such as specific learning

difficulties, visual impairments, hearing impairment, behavioural difficulties and intellectual disabilities, on descending order (Algazo & Gaad, 2004; Glaubman & Lifshitz, 2001). In Qaraqish's (2008) study conducted in Saudi Arabia; regular classroom teachers showed positive attitudes towards including students with learning problems but showed negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with physical and behavioural problems in classroom.

Research on teachers' attitudes by Bowman (1986) clearly indicates that teachers tend to favour different types of children with SEN for inclusive education. Most favoured for inclusive learning were children with medical and physical difficulties because they are considered easiest to manage in the classrooms (UNESCO, 1994). There are teachers who felt that learners with moderate learning difficulties and severe emotional and behavioural difficulties were suitable for inclusive education (Bowman, 1986). According to Meijer, Pijl and Hegarty (1994), teachers perceived that learners with sensory impairments, visual and hearing impairments could be taught in mainstream classes. On the other hand, very few of the teachers considered those children with severe mental impairments and multiple handicaps could be taught in mainstream classes (Bowman, 1986). Salvia and Munson (1986) indicate that there is a wide range of differences in teachers' attitudes on the suitability of children with various types of SEN for inclusion in mainstream settings.

3.5 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

According to Miles (2000), inclusive education is basically concerned in removing all barriers to learning, and with participation of all learners who are mostly vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. According to UNESCO (2000), it mainly addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all forms of exclusion from the fundamental human right to education. Inclusive education demands that teachers accommodate learner diversity in their schools and classes regardless of their individual differences. Humphrey (2008) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2005) pin down the understanding of inclusive education on four dimensions namely, presence, participation, acceptance and achievement which are central for an inclusive education system. Participation is about "enabling diverse learners to learn alongside their peers, share experiences, and engage them in decisions that affect them either directly or indirectly" (Booth, 2005, p.153). Humphrey (2008) claims that "for successful participation, teachers should ensure that the diverse learners receive quality education" (p. 42). Moreover, Booth and Ainscow (2002) state that for successful participation of all learners

in education, barriers to learning should be removed and schools need to develop the resources for individual learners to fully participate in quality education along other learners. Inclusive education should also maximize student participation so that students truly realize their individual academic potentials in a classroom setting (Barton, 2003). The main reason for promoting appropriate attendance to learner diversity in regular schools is to increase learners' opportunities to learn through interaction within and among themselves; and as a result this promotes their participation in the life of their respective communities (UNESCO, 2001). As Swart (2004) sees it, inclusive education ensures respect for diversity and creates an environment that supports all learners, educators and school communities to maximise participation of all learners to reach their full potential. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular education system to cater for all children (UNESCO, 2009).

UNESCO (2005) describes presence as "considerations in the learning context for students with disabilities and setting acceptance expectations for attendance and punctuality" (p. 15). Similarly, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) state that presence is concerned with where children are educated and how reliably they get education, punctuality of their attendance, and the extent to which teachers respond to the diverse needs by treating them all on an equal basis, value them and including them as much as possible in classroom activities. Moreover, teachers should apply different teaching strategies that accommodate all learners' needs as learners use different ways to acquire knowledge (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). Booth (2005) strongly argues that "inclusive education increases learners' participation in schools, and reduces their exclusion from the curricula, their various cultures and respective communities" (p.152). Besides that, participation is about being with and collaborating with other learners as Ainscow and Booth (2002) indicate that it implies active engagement and involvement in decision making and demonstrates acceptance of what a person is. Moreover inclusive education is about promoting equity, compassion, respect of diversity, honesty, rights, joy, and sustainability among various groups of learners (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006).

In the classroom, inclusive education implies that teachers should value achievement of learners regardless of disability or differences they may have. Humphrey (2008) explains that learners with disabilities should be accepted by other learners and teachers in schools in order to facilitate cognitive, social and emotional development of every learner (p. 42). Achievement is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results

(Humphrey, 2008). Participation relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, it must incorporate the views of the learners themselves. According to Weimer (2005), "the teacher or facilitator should accommodate learners' input when asking questions and give them time to respond to questions asked" (p. 109). Again, the teacher should create supportive classroom environment, and this implies that the teacher should be patient with students, giving them time to find their way to the right or better answer (Weimer, 2005). Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt (2004) further indicate that participation of learners in the classroom is about how teachers affirm learners' contributions and provide them with constructive feedback. Participation is about attending individual learners' needs and making them feel welcomed in the classroom. The teacher's main task is to respond to learners diverse needs in the classroom by creating a safe and learner-friendly environment for everyone. When assessing these dimensions closely, participation means that educational provision should be of good quality and must actively and meaningfully engage the students (Humphrey, 2008).

Educational equality is fundamentally grounded in the egalitarian principle that social and institutional arrangements should be designed to give equal consideration to all. It rests on equal respect to all individuals and, as such, it is a fundamental value of social justice (Terzi, 2008). According to this value, educational institutions should be designed to enact the equal entitlement of every child to education, while acknowledging and respecting individual differences (Terzi, 2008). Generally, Booth (2005) saw inclusive education values as entailing equity, participation, rights, community, compassion, respect for diversity and sustainability. Inclusive education involves an approach to education that reflects the values of society concerned as it tries to increase the participation of all its citizens and reduce all forms of discrimination and exclusion (Booth, 2005). According to Booth (2005) at the inception of inclusive education overcomes structural and attitudinal challenges with an active involvement with others and having a real say in the experience of teaching. From the social constructionist model a properly implemented inclusive education involves having the identity of children with disabilities affirmed; being accepted and valued for being themselves and different.

3.6 ACCOMMODATING LEARNER DIVERSITY IN LESOTHO CONTEXT

Research in Lesotho currently indicates that the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has implemented inclusive education in mainstream schools but accommodation of learner diversity is faced with many challenges as teachers are unable to cater for learner differences in the schools. A qualitative study by Khoaeane and Naong (2012) reveals that inadequate personnel training programmes for teachers is a major challenge of achieving inclusive

education in developing countries such as Lesotho. Khoaeane and Naong (2012) study also provides evidence that in Lesotho, teachers are not trained in inclusive education and they do not have the professional skills needed for addressing learner diversity in their classrooms. Mosia (2014) found that teachers lacked relevant skills which could make inclusive education work because they taught learners as if all learners were the same and as a result, they became intolerant to learners with special educational needs. The Ministry of Education and Training (2008) clearly states that "educators are sometimes ill-equipped and/or do not possess the necessary skills required when teaching children with physical or mental disabilities" (p. 69).

Besides that, teachers and learners are faced with a serious lack of improved facilities as Mosia (2014) reveals that Special Education Unit lacks resources to support schools at primary level to practise inclusive education and this becomes a major constraint because among the challenges, teachers struggle with insufficient classroom space, furniture, textbooks and general teaching and learning facilities (Moloi, Morobe & Urwick, 2008). According to Lesotho National League of the Impaired Persons LNLVIP's (2017) report, there is a need to train teachers on Braille countrywide to promote proper education of visually impaired persons. The constraints towards the implementation of inclusive education hinder the successful inclusion of diverse needs of learners in the schools (Jopo, Maema, & Ramokoena, 2011); Khati, and Makatjane (2009) study reveals that it is not sufficient for learners to only have access to school buildings without support as they may not access quality education as expected by MOET. There is further lack of support for teachers; for example, evidence demonstrates that there is a critical shortage of educational tools and equipment such as braille for visually impaired persons, hearing aids for the hearing impaired learners, in order to appropriately meet the needs of these learners who require special care in the inclusive classroom (MOET-Lesotho, 2005).

Overcrowding or large classes makes it even more difficult for teachers to attend individual learners as the study by Mosia (2014) specifically indicates that learner–teacher ratios apparently seem to be very high in some classes for a teacher to effectively support learners identified to have special educational needs in their respective classes. Some studies point out that even qualified teachers in Lesotho find it very challenging to address individual learners' needs when class size average is 40 because they are poorly trained to use learner-centred approaches (Moloi, Morobe, & Urwick, 2008). Additionally, MOET (2005) shows that in 2005, learner –teacher ratio was estimated at 67:1 and this number seemed to be higher because the Ministry of Education and Training introduced Free Primary Education in 2000 without

preparing and training teachers first. MOET acknowledged the need to increase the number of teaching staff to ease "the high student-teacher ratio and introduced long-term contracts, better working conditions and welfare benefits to increase teachers' job satisfactions" (MOET, 2005a, p. 6). The shortage of qualified teachers, as well as overcrowding in the classrooms, is among many factors that contribute to low quality and inefficient primary and secondary education. The quality of education provided to support LSEN has been undermined by unqualified teachers who are employed to reduce pupil-teacher ratios (Seotsoanyana & Matheolane, 2010). UNESCO Institution for Statistics (2007:87) states that in addition to overcrowding, primary education suffers from problems of educator quality associated with the absence of regular in-service training opportunities for educators, poor supervision by frequently inexperienced principals, inadequate inspection support and a high proportion of about 20% of uncertified educators.

Terzi (2014) also claims that, "such deprivation of educational opportunities for students with disabilities is a basic disadvantage similar to removing opportunity for life to such individuals" (p. 486). MOET (2008) states that, "only small proportions of learners with severe disabilities are attending the special schools that can support them according to their specialised learning needs" (p. 18). According to Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) (2017) report, "learners with disabilities go through inaccessible curriculum and assessment from time to time due to lack of disability sensitive planning which is taking place in all departments of the Ministry of Education and Training" (p. 5). For instance, school supply unit is unable to supply schools with accessible textbooks and teachers from various schools require capacity on how to include children with disabilities in the classroom situation. Sebatane (2009) considers disability as one of the various contributing factors to primary school learners' to drop out of school in large numbers. Sebatane (2009) further states that the lack of initial access to school for learners with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) means most of them are able to drop out of school. The role of the educator is important because appropriate teaching methods could enhance the learning potential of many learners with SEN. Many educators do not gain the appropriate training nor do they in some cases know how to identify forms of learning difficulties.

In 2010 learners with SEN or disabilities amounted to 20490 (5.3%) out of 388681 learners who were enrolled while in 2011 learners with some forms of disability amounted to 20636 which was 5.4% of the 385437 learners who were enrolled. According to Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (2009) "learners with disabilities are at risk of dropping out of school due to exclusion

and lack of appropriate support from their educators and parents" (p. 2). Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (2009) further suggests that "the school environment also contributes towards drop-outs rate due to the lack of appropriate facilities for learners with disabilities such as school toilets or play grounds which are not accessible for the learners in wheelchairs" (p. 2). Furthermore, UNESCO (2011) states that "some schools in Lesotho are situated very far away that travelling to and from school every day is difficult and tiring for the disabled learners and consequently they drop out of school" (p. 346). As for the educators, their working conditions are hardly ideal or productive for teaching and learning as classes are overcrowded, under staffed and the equipment is often inadequate or not operational.

Majority of school buildings are inaccessible for learners with disabilities. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (2008) regarding the evaluation of free primary education in Lesotho, "there are situations in which infrastructure and conditions are quite poor" (p. 69-70). Again LNFOD (2017) indicates that learners with disabilities experience serious inequalities in terms of access to quality inclusive education due to limited funding for the implementation of inclusive education strategies. LNFOD (2017) further states that lack of accessible infrastructure in terms of physical environment and inaccessible toilets lead to dropping out of learners with disabilities from school.

3.7 SUMMARY

Learners' diversity and their inclusion in the mainstream schools are guided by four values which Humphrey (2008) names as follows: presence, participation, acceptance and achievement. Therefore, for successful inclusion of learners, teachers need to develop positive attitudes in order to influence accommodation of different learners. Besides that, teachers with the support of MOET and school administration can be able to address learners with disabilities when teachers are properly trained, equipped with improved school resources and class size is reduced to a reasonable number for each teacher. There is evidence that learners with special educational needs still face many challenges to be appropriately accommodated and included in mainstream schools by their teachers and school administration.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the research paradigm adopted for this study which is: interpretative. It also describes the research approach designs adopted in this study which are qualitative and case-study respectively. In addition, it explains sampling, data collection and data analysis procedures followed in the study. Eventually, it explains processes that were followed to ensure that the study is ethical and trustworthy.

4.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study adopted an interpretative paradigm. According to McQueen (2002), interpretivists view the world through a "series of individual eyes" and choose participants who "have their own interpretations of reality to encompass the worldview" (p.16). The meaning is discovered through language (Schwandt, 2007). Interpretive paradigm is underpinned by interpretation; as a researcher, I influence how people view the phenomenon under study, once participants have expressed their experiences, I draw inferences about their views (Akerlind, 2005). The focus is on "understanding the participants' voices" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 346).

Similarly, Costly (2010) states that "the paradigm is used for subjective experience as it provides insights into people's experiences, motivations and actions" (p. 87). Interpretive research focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Individuals are "thus not passive followers in social, political and historical happenings but possess the inner capacity which allows individual judgement, perceptions and agency" (Coetzee, 2011, p. 68). Through using the interpretive paradigm, I took the participants' subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them and likely to influence their daily interaction with learners. I gained optimal understanding of their views and experiences regarding their attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative approach which captures the everyday life of participants. Creswell (2009) states that "qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p.4). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as involving "…an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world" (p. 2). This means that qualitative researchers study things in their

natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Myers (2009) explains qualitative research as an approach to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Such studies allow the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented (Philip, 1998). As Merriam (2002) opines, " in qualitative research the researcher searches for meaning and understanding by using self as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and the end product being richly descriptive" (p.178). Qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and written descriptions of people, events, opinions, attitudes and the researcher's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009).

As this study examined teachers and principals' attitudes, qualitative research approach was particularly best suited to explore the attitudes as this approach mainly makes sense of or interprets phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I explored in a deep and detailed manner the factors which are influencing teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and their inclusive learning in Mapoteng Schools.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design describes "the procedure for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions data was obtained" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 346). This study adopted a case study design which looks at a single unit as a point of interest. Robson (2002) defines case study as, 'development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a [case], or of a small number of related (cases)' (p. 183). According to Sturman (1997), a case study can be viewed as the "exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon" (p. 61). Case studies can provide a kind of deep understanding of "phenomena, events, people, or organisations..." In essence, case studies open the door to the processes created and used by individuals involved in the phenomenon, event, group, or organisation under study (Berg, 2009, p. 318). It was most appropriate for this research as it allowed for "deep, rich data generation and analysis, within a specific, bounded system" (Yin, 2002, p. 14). It allowed me to explore how teachers at two levels of education, namely, primary and secondary properly cater for the needs of diverse learners in their teaching.

Henning (2004) distinguishes a case study from other types of qualitative research in that "it is an intensive description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system" (p. 40). Merriam (2009) explains a "bounded system" as a single entity or a unit around which there are

boundaries (p. 46). It is one of the several ways of doing research in order to understand human beings in a social context by interpreting their actions as a single group, community or a single event. Further, Yin (2003) adds that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially where contextual conditions of the event being studied are critical and where the researcher has no control over the events as they unfold" (p. 18). This study explored "multiplicity of perspectives which are rooted in a specific context" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Therefore, this study used one primary school and one secondary school in Mapoteng as cases for explaining teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education.

4.4 SAMPLING

This study adopted two sampling techniques namely, convenience and purposive. The two are non-probability sampling procedures as Welman (2009) specifically defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling where researchers rely on their experiences, ingenuity and/or previous research findings to obtain units of analysis. Purposive sampling selects "information-rich" cases for in-depth study (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2008) stated that "the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants who will best help the researcher to understand the research question" (p. 183). Two schools were selected because they were, closer to where I live, convenient, but also admit learners with diverse needs, purposively. Convenience sampling was used for this study as practical criteria to select schools in Mapoteng that were geographically closer to where I live and engage teachers who were available on the days earmarked for the study and were willing to participate in it (Zhi, 2014; Battaglia, 2008).

Selection of two schools was purposive in that selected schools are known in the area to accept learners with diverse needs; the Education Act 2010 vividly mandates schools to ensure that all children in Lesotho at both primary and secondary levels access the education they deserve. Purposive sampling was also used to select 30 research participants: 12 participants were teachers from a mainstream primary school while 18 participants were teachers from a high school. The participants in each school included the respective principals. The participants were chosen for various reasons, including the following: both teachers and principals had all information regarding their attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in the mainstream schools.

4.4.1 Description of the physical setting

The study was carried in Mapoteng in Berea District, Lesotho. For the purpose of this study, a primary school is referred to as school A. The school has five hundred and eighty-five learners and 14 teachers. The school admits both boys and girls from grade one to grade seven and each grade has about seventy to eighty learners divided into two streams managed by one educator per stream.

School B is a high school. The school has one thousand four hundred and sixty-two learners taught by 32 teachers. Only a few of these learners are from different countries such as Ghana, India, and Uganda. Each class has approximately sixty to seventy pupils. Secondary classes are said to be overcrowded especially grade eight classes. There are four streams in each grade.

4.4.2 Description of participants

The following tables represent the description of participants

Table 1: Description of participants (Primary Teachers)

Participant	Gender	Position at school	Highest Qualification	Years' Experience
1	Female	Grade 1	HONS. ED	3
2	Female	Grade 1	B.ED	5
3	Female	Grade 2	B.ED	4
4	Female	Grade 2	B.ED	4
5	Female	Grade 3	HONS.ED	6
6	Female	Grade 3	B.ED	8
7	male	Grade 4	B.ED	10
8	Female	Grade 4	B.ED	16
9	female	Grade 5	Dip	9
10	Female	Grade 6	B.ED HONS	8
11	Female	Grade 7	B.ED	20
12	Female	Principal	B.ED	15

Table 2: Description of participants (Secondary Teachers)

Participant	Gender	Position at school	Highest Qualification	Years' Experience
1	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	23
2	Male	Grade 8-10	Dip	2
3	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	8
4	Female	Grade 8-12	Dip	10
5	Female	Grade 8-10	Dip	6
6	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	25
7	Female	Grade 8- 12	B.ED	19
8	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	28
6	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	20
7	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	18
8	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	15
9	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	9
10	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	7
11	Male	Grade 8-12	BE.D	10
12	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	4
13	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	5
14	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	9
15	Female	Grade 8-12	B.ED	26
16	Female	Principal	B.ED	28
17	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	6
18	Male	Grade 8-12	B.ED	11

4.5 Data collection instrument

This study used semi-structured interviews to explore participants' views of learner diversity and inclusive education in depth. In-depth interviews allowed the researcher to assess respondents' attitudes, feelings, thoughts and experiences leading to a holistic picture of progress, needs and challenges in their work (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Open-ended research questions were derived from an interview schedule which explored topics such as participants' daily activities with LSEN, support given to them, knowledge of special education policy and their perceived constraints.

4.5.1 Focused group interview

Group interviews were used with research participants in both schools. I used focus group interviews with teachers who were all available at lunch time and did individual interviews with participants who indicated availability but could not be part of focus group interviews. Participants in the primary school teach from grade 1 to grade 7 while participants in the secondary teachers teach from grade 8 to grade 12. Hennink (2007), states that "a focus group interview involves a group of 6-12 people who come from similar cultural backgrounds or have similar experiences or concerns" (p. 6). Focused group interviews were conducted with all teachers. At the primary level, 12 teachers were interviewed using focused group discussion. Each group had 5 members. At secondary school, there were three groups and, the first group was of 6 members, the second group also consisted 5 members and the last group was of 5 members. Participants in primary school were interviewed at lunch time and the interviews lasted about sixty minutes while in high school it was done during afternoon study hours. Among the advantages of a focus group interview as described by Nachmais and Nachmais (2008) are that it is a socially oriented procedure, it is relatively of low-cost, and it has high face validity. All interviews were held in the respective staffrooms.

4.5.2 Semi-structure interview

Harrell and Brandly (2009) state that interview gives an interviewer an opportunity to be one-on-one with the interviewee to gather information on a specific set of topics. "In-depth interviews are a particular kind of conversation between the researcher and the interviewee that requires active asking and listening". The process is a meaning-making endeavour embarked on as a partnership between the interviewer and his or her respondent (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119). Therefore, as I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), I found semi-structured interview suitable for this study. I made use of semi-structured interviews as the primary means of data generation. Babbie and Mouton (2001), state that in a semi-

structured interview, the interviewer has a general plan of investigation, but allows the conversation to progress in no specific order, although specific areas of interest are raised. Two staff members were interviewed individually at primary school level as they were absent for group discussion, but their views were important as they had done special education at Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and the University of Free State (UFS) respectively. At secondary school level, I had to interview two participants separately because they had done special education at different institutions and thought they could enhance findings of the study beyond group discussions. The first participant did her special education at the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) while the other participant did his special education at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). Both the principal and the deputy at secondary school were interviewed separately in their respective offices. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the deputy principal and principal at secondary schools. Participants shared their views in semi-structured interviews that lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

Participants were given an opportunity to use either Sesotho or English as there are two official languages in Lesotho; almost all of the participants used Sesotho and few of them used English. Participants who used English for the interview also code-switched occasionally when they could not find the right English words to express themselves. All interviews were audio recorded with participants' consent. The interviews conducted in Sesotho were transcribed and translated into the English Language and, as part of member-check; participants were asked to verify if certain English words captured the meaning they expressed in Sesotho.

4.6 Data Analysis Methods

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was adopted for this study. IPA aims to provide a detailed examination of teachers' "lived experience" as they teach learners with diverse needs (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 9). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a strategy that "examines participants' narratives or accounts of their experience in their unique contexts" (Smith, 2011, p. 9). Data analysis came up with findings that show patterns of information from the questions that were asked by the researcher. I identified passages of text by applying labels to them to indicate that they were examples of a specific theme or idea (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Essentially, coding was used to divide the data up into themes and I generated and constructed themes from all the data. It uses an inductive analysis of qualitative data where the main purpose was to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in new data, without the restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Merriam, 2002; Terre

Blanche et al., 2006). From the themes identified, I used the language that arose from the interviews to label the categories (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Therefore, IPA helped the researcher to be knowledgeable about participants' responses and understand their perceptions on the subject matter. I was able to transcribe data verbatim with illustrations such as "pauses, mis-hearings, apparent mistakes, and even speech dynamics" (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p.217).

4.6.1 Data analysis process

I used coding to establish key findings from the data collected. IPA has eight steps which according to Palmer et al. (2010) are as follows: 1. Finding participants' objects of concern and experiential claims; 2. Identifying the roles played by the researcher and participants in generating data; 3. Finding further roles and relationships, that is, taking note of any role players, besides participants and researchers, mentioned in the texts and their significance; 4. Analysis should also identify any social systems and organisations mentioned by participants as well as the roles they play; 5. It includes examinations of stories participants tell and their purpose, and the extent to which the stories unite or divide group voice; 6. Examining how language is used and if it has any effect on the message participants intend to pass; Finally, steps 7 and 8 focus on organizing and comparing themes in the entire analysis so as to arrange related themes accordingly until a coherent picture is achieved. The eight steps were carefully followed and helped the researcher assess different layers of meaning in the participants' utterance (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn 1999; Biggerstaff & Thompson (2008; Mosia, 2017).

I began to read and re-read transcripts closely line-by-line analysing teachers' understanding of the word "learner diversity". I started to transcribe the data collected writing down word-for-word what the participant said and the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data was presented and the findings interpreted (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p.7). For example, participant 1 understanding of the word learner difference was preliminarily interpreted. I went through the whole interview making preliminary notes in the left margin first, then proceeded to abstract themes' titles afterwards, and then indicated first initial notes and then the emerged themes were noted in the right-hand side margin, and as I went through the transcript, I was able to identify similarities and differences of participants' views towards learner diversity and inclusive education in the classroom context (Smith, 2010).

Analysis in qualitative research is "a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases,

and meanings" (Berg, 2009, p. 338). I critically looked at the themes which directly connected within the experiential material emphasizing convergence, commonality and nuance (Eatough & Smith, 2008), usually first for single cases and then subsequently across multiples. The data that seemed to cluster were written together under superordinate concepts, and this helped me to draw together a number of the initial categories which I had identified and the themes emerged. For example, teachers' understanding of inclusive education emerged as a theme. I re-checked the transcripts to make sure that "there was a clear connection from the primary source" (Smith, 2010, p. 223).

In this research, coding was used and I generated and constructed themes from all the data. The method was inductive and the process was to reduce and analyse the data into key themes (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). I tabled a list of themes as "they emerged from participants' responses", like learners' disabilities as a source of learner diversity (Smith, 2010, p. 223), and then developed a structure that illustrates the relationships between the themes. This helped me to organise coded data to be traced right through the analysis-from initial codes on the transcript, initial clustering and thematic development, into the final structure of themes (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009).

I tested and developed the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation to explore reflexivity teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education (Smith, 2007). Once I felt that I had captured the essence of the interviews and truly interacted with the data, I began to interpret the findings. The interpretation of the results was the final written account of the research as Smith and Osborn (1999) suggest that the final stage is to translate the analytic themes into a narrative.   Therefore, a narrative writing was developed from detailed commentary data, which took me through this interpretation, theme-by-theme (Smith, 2007) and that gave teachers' views on learner diversity and inclusive education in the mainstream schools in Lesotho.

4.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

Rubin and Babbie (2007) define trustworthiness as "the degree of consistency in measurement" (p. 101). Shaw (2010) describes trustworthiness as "transparency which the researcher shows in the analysis of data" (p. 182). According to Mqulwana (2010), "to judge qualitative research, it must have the following qualities: transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability" (p. 61). Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) consider that credibility, transferability, dependability, and Confirmability as strategies used to establish the

trustworthiness of the study. Creswell (2009) states that, "trustworthiness in qualitative studies is based on determining whether the findings are accurate" (p. 191). Therefore, the study had followed the following strategies:

4.7.1 Credibility

Rubin and Babbie (2007) define credibility as "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (p. 103). The data collected from individual and group discussion interviews were crystallized as one way of improving the quality of qualitative research result. The researcher ensured credibility and quality in interview data that was assured by using a technique called member check (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Baxter & Jack, 2008) for members to check and to certify information before analysis. It was critical to ensure credibility of results because of being a member of staff. During data analysis, I engaged with recordings, notes and transcripts intensively to demonstrate clear links between the data and interpretations.

Regular discussions were held with participants to member-check data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Member checks entail returning the transcripts to the participants, allowing them to confirm that what has been deduced and written, present a true and valid reflection of their responses. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), member checks entail returning the transcripts to the participants, allowing them to confirm what has been deduced and written, present a true and valid reflection of their responses. Therefore, data collected and transcribed was sent back to participants for "member check, and to verify if they confirm the transcribed data as reflecting their experiences", thus, ensuring that there was no prejudice in transcribing data and time was provided for each participant to read through the transcript of their interview and the coding of the data. This gave the participants an opportunity to validate the data generated through their interview (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). All participants were satisfied that the interview transcripts adequately represented the content covered in the interview.

4.7.2 Transferability

The concept of transferability is also known as applicability, which refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004) and is comparable to what quantitative researchers refer to as "external validity" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 200). I provided a detailed description that involves the researcher in elucidating all processes from data collection, context of the study, to production of the final report (Li, 2004) so that any future research can follow the same

procedure. It is a matter of judgement of the "context and phenomena" found which allows others to assess the transferability of the findings to another setting (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 268). Teachers were cooperative in answering research questions and their responses related well with the topic of the research.

4.7.3 Dependability

According to Van de Riet & Durrheim (2006), dependability can be attained "through rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and develop out of contextual interaction" (p. 93-94). Dependability was achieved by letting data and their context speak for themselves; therefore, actual quotes of participants were used verbatim to express their untainted perception of issues as dependability. This is "analogous to the notion of reliability in quantitative research" (Riege, 2003, p. 81). Therefore, it was the responsibility of the researcher to describe the changes that occurred in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study. During the code-recode strategy, I coded the same data twice by giving at least one or two weeks' gestation between each coding and results from two coding were compared to verify whether the results were the same or different. This helped me to understand deeply the patterns of the data; and also improved the knowledge of participants' narrations (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010; Chilisa & Preece, 2005).

4.7.4 Confirmability of the findings

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Bowen, 2009). In quantitative research confirmability is similar to objectivity or neutrality. It follows a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability; the documentation procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study as Wilson (2009) explains that, for confirmability to be guaranteed, the final reports should be sent to the participants to verify whether the findings mirror what they had offered as information. The steps were taken to stay away from "subjectivity that may include biased analysis, motivation and perception on the part of the researcher" (Bray, 2007, p. 539). Consequently, I had to make a precious differentiation of actual statements, views of participants and their reflections or likely conclusions.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Jegede (2009), states that "specific standards which are ethical principles that govern the treatment of human participants served as the basis for the methodological approach need to be observed in the study" (p. 80). For that reason, participants were given explanation about

the study and guarantee that it was their choice to participate as Bray (2007) indicates that "participants need to be guaranteed a clear explanation of the purpose of the research and a clear choice as to whether they want to participate based on a full knowledge and understanding of what is involved" (p. 44). Therefore, ethical measures adhered to as guidance throughout were as follows:

4.8.1 Permission

Before the research began I sought permission to conduct study from the Ministry of Education and Training offices in Berea District, Teyateyaneng. I got a positive response from the District in Teyateyaneng to start the research (see appendix VI). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that "the researchers must ask for permission from the authority in order to gain access to information pertaining to them" (p. 200). Permission was granted on the condition that official programmes and classes were not disrupted. The researcher then visited the schools' principals after an appointment had been made through a telephone call to both centres with the letter of approval from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). A formal letter of application was made to principals indicating purpose of the study (see appendix I).

4.8.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

According to Creswell (2007) the researchers provide participants with sufficient information on what the study is about, the risks, benefits, and allow them to make a decision if they will participate. King (2010) opines that the information should be communicated in simple and clear language. Springer (2010) indicates that "participants should be allowed to either give or withhold consent to participate without coercion" (p. 93). Further, Springer (2010) states that, "participants should be assured that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate or withdraw from the study will not result in any form of penalty" (p. 95). In addition, caring and fairness in the form of open discussions and negotiations with the research participants can promote fairness in the research process. In this study, I encouraged participants to make free choice of participation. They were provided with sufficient information about the purpose of the study to allow them to decide for or against participation.

4.8.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality of participants were guaranteed during the interview. Mertens and Ginsberg (2008) reveal that the researcher is unable to connect the participant's responses with his or her identity. Creswell (2007) states that the researcher knows what each participant said; the participant's identity is kept secret when reporting or writing up the findings. I maintained

confidentiality of data by ensuring "the separation of data from identifiable individuals and storing the code linking to individuals securely" as I know that I was working with human beings (Smyth & Williamson, 2004, p. 28). The participants were assured that they would remain "anonymous as to protect their identity" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 67). According to King (2010), participants' anonymity should be maintained throughout the data collection process. Therefore, their names, identity, and the research sites were not revealed in the report findings. Codes were used to conceal the names of participants, for example, they were addressed as participant 1, 2, 3 and etc. the codes were used so that any person reading the reports could not be able to identify or link the responses to a particular participant.

4.9 Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study cannot be used to form the whole picture (generalizations) about attitudes of teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education in the regular at primary and secondary in Lesotho. This is because the researcher conducted his study only within Mapoteng Area, namely Mokoallong Primary School and Dahon High School in the Berea district. McMillan (2008), states that researchers are not aiming at the generalization of the results but the extension of understanding. The description enables others to understand similar situations and extend these understandings in subsequent researches.

4.10 SUMMARY

The chapter has adopted methods which provided participants a chance to express their opinions or thoughts on their attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Lesotho. Qualitative approach was engaged in this study while case study was used to give an in-depth assessment of live experiences with diverse learners in the regular schools. Focus group and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data on teachers' attitudes. The researcher had observed ethical considerations when collecting data and analysis was done following the principles of IPA.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This study focussed on teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education at basic education level in Lesotho. The aim was to explore teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education at both primary and secondary. The findings describe teachers' attitudes, views, training and knowledge about policies that mandate them to accommodate learner diversity as they work with diverse group every day and suggest ways in which both teachers and MOET can improve their practices in order to create a conducive and inclusive environment for all learners.

The results are presented according to themes generated from individual and focus group interviews with teachers and principals. The findings describe how learner diversity influences teachers' attitudes in implementing inclusive education. For the purposes of providing authenticity and trustworthiness, participants' words were quoted verbatim. These permit the readers to make their own interpretations of the data generated.

The results are organised into seven broad themes which emerged from the analysis namely: (a) teachers' understanding of learner diversity (b) teachers' understandings of inclusive education; (c) teachers' view on accommodation of learner diversity; (d) Influences of Education Resources on Inclusive Education; (e)Teacher Training and preparedness; (f) Policy mandate for inclusive education. (g) Teacher Attitudes to inclusive education. Participants responded to the following three questions:

> 1. How do teachers in primary and secondary schools view learner diversity and inclusive education?

> 2. To what extent do teachers know policies that mandate them to accommodate learner diversity in schools?

> 3. To what extent do teachers feel that they are adequately trained to accommodate learner diversity in schools?

5.1 Teachers' understanding of learner diversity

The majority of participants seemed to understand diversity as a version of difference. They each had their own unique way of explaining how they understood the concept, but the overall finding was that participant's understood diversity by often simply describing it as

"difference". Difference in their responses referred to socioeconomic background, sex-orientation, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, language, academic performance, abilities and disabilities.

5.1.1 Socioeconomic status and poverty as a source of learner diversity

In responding to what participants understood about learner diversity in their schools, several came out. The following are some of their perceptions.

Participant 27, a deputy female principal teacher at a primary school states:

Normally, children from low-income families often start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families. Poverty hinders learners' education as they come to school without eating anything, sometimes as teachers; we've to cater for them when food is not available in the kitchen.

Poverty as a state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support, a condition of being poor, seems hinder learners' education because being from poor families implies that some learners come to school in the morning without having eaten something and they fail to concentrate on empty stomachs.

Participant 1, male teacher at a secondary school level, indicates:

We teach learners that socially and emotionally have problems. There are a number of cases where we get reports that girls, especially vulnerable orphans are sexually abused by boys, stepfathers, or uncles. The orphans [girls] very often are forced into marriage by guardians or relatives. Besides that, learners live in families where there is violence. Very often, vulnerable children live with guardians [and] experience violence at home.

Participant 1 continues:

I've just learned that in some families, children witness parents' quarrels and frictions or sometimes children become victims of violence at home. So the events learners experience have negative impact on their learning as they psychologically and emotionally affect them, therefore, their learning too is negatively affected by these incidents.

Children from low socio-economic status households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher socio-economic status groups. Initial academic skills are correlated with the home environment where low literacy environments and chronic stress negatively affect a child's pre-academic skills

The same issue of socioeconomic challenges seemed to be echoed by other participants' responses. Participant 2, a female teacher at primary schools, states:

> *You know some learners are from very poor families come to school without eating anything, for this reason it's not easy for them to listen or concentrate well in the class while they're hungry. This is the situation that hurts us every day. It makes our work more difficult because we teach learners with empty stomachs. Sometimes World Food Programme delays the process of sending food to schools and learners spend about 2 to 3 weeks without food, so you can just imagine how learners and teachers feel.*

Participant 4, a male teacher at a high school, puts forward that:

> *Learners from low-socioeconomic status develop academic skills slower than those children from higher socioeconomic groups. For instance, a learner who lives in Mapoteng is smarter than a learner who comes from Senqunyane village where there is no cell phone, television and the latest technology. So their performance in class will differ because they come from different environment.*

Participant 10, a female at a primary teacher, shared the same idea with above participants on low-socioeconomic status.

She clearly posits that:

> *Teaching learners who are from low-socioeconomic families can negatively affect them psychologically because they delay to develop fundamental skills of reading, such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language. This is because at home books, newspapers or magazines are not available. That's my observation.*

Learners living in poor conditions, being Sexual abuse and experience violence are subject to increase emotional stress which adversely affects learning and development. Apart from

that low socio- economic status and poverty, which are barriers to learning, orphanages and children headed households put learners at risk and ultimately the social background becomes barriers to learning. These barriers are seen as learner diversity among learners and they have negative impact on learners' performance in class as they face challenges that teachers are unable to overcome.

5.1.2 Learners' disabilities as source of learner diversity

Learners' disabilities make teachers experience learning problems in the schools forming learner diversity. Participants expressed their views as follows: For example,

Participant 14, a male teacher at a secondary school illustrates:

Here for example, we've learners with a variety and different levels of disability. Putting them in one classroom together is to seek a problem. First, as a teacher I can't help them and second, those without disabilities will not learn. It's better to separate them during classroom teaching and let them interact outside the classroom.

Participant 10, a female teacher at a primary school confesses:

I must be honest…the severe the learner's disability, the less positive my attitude is toward inclusion of learner difference. Learners with physical and sensory are much better than those with intellectual, learning and behavioural disabilities.

She further explains:

They are about five learners with learning problem in my class. They're unable to read well, and spell words correctly. Besides that, some are unable to calculate and to acquire numerical skills.

Another aspect that teachers are faced with is teaching learners who are partially sighted. Participant 23, a female teacher at secondary school indicates:

You know what makes me fail to address learner diversity is teaching a learner who is partially sighted.

Learner diversity seemed to prevent teachers to meet and fulfil requirements of the curriculum as some disabilities need more teachers' attention.

Participant 21 a female teacher at a secondary school, states:

> *I've a learner whom I assume that he has mental retardation. I've to repeat things to him so that he could grasp. He needs to be taught one concept several times so that he could follow but it is not that simple as some learners need my attention.*

Participant 5, a female teacher at a primary school explains how skin colour affects learner difference in the schools.

She briefly narrates:

> *There is an albino learner in my class; some black learners do him fun things in my absence. Again, they don't accept him in buzz groups or other school activities. For this reason, he doesn't attend school properly.*

The challenges brought by learners with hearing problem forces teachers to find mechanisms of how to help them.

Participant 9, a female teacher at a secondary school states:

> *I've a learner with hearing impairment in my class. When teaching her, I've to speak looking at her so that she could hear what I'm saying. I also make sure that she sits in front of the class where she could see me.*

Participant 22, a male teacher at a secondary school notes:

> *They are unable to read and write well especially subject like English. Some of them have repeated a class more than twice. Others are promoted without being properly assessed like other learners.*

A different aspect of learner diversity and their inclusion which was witnessed in class was severe intellectual barrier as Participant 20, a female teacher at a primary school notes:

[There are] learners who experience mild to severe intellectual barriers to learning whose specific educational needs should be met in the regular schools. We accommodate them but the challenge is that we fail to address and meet their educational needs.

Many teachers adopt creative ways of responding to learners' disabilities and try to understand the variety of disabilities learners have, but still teachers fail to respond to their individual needs since they are not adequately trained to handle them. Therefore, their presence in schools does not reflect the true picture of inclusive education.

5.1.3 Emotional and behavioural disorders as a source of learner diversity

Various perceptions were reported about learner diversity based on behavioural problems such as bullying, aggression and low self-esteem were reported to be challenging to not only learners but also for teachers. Participants gave the following responses:

Participant 19, a female teacher at a primary school, states:

> *Some learners, especially orphan and vulnerable children (OVC), due to inferiority complex, tender to bully other children. Every day, I've to deal with cases where other learners would be complaining about learners who are bullying them. They take others' property by force and steal from their classmates. Sometimes, they beat them. I think experiences they have at home affect them emotionally and socially. I think they need help of psychologists, therapists and counsellors.*

With a view to bullying, Participant 18, a male teacher at high school reveals:

> *In my school, some boys and girls give us problems. There's a lot of indifference or else other teachers don't know how to deal with homophobic bullying so they refer to me because I'm more assertive and confident. I deal with it because I choose to focus on what I can do rather than on what I suffered. Believe me; I'm working hard with the support of school management to end this bad practice of bullying. Though, I don't have skills and knowledge, I'm trying.*

Participant 15, a female teacher at a primary school, clarifies:

> *They beat others, or pinch them, or walk around the class while I'm busy teaching and do fun things that would make the whole class laugh. I think they have a serious problem; they need to be separated from normal learners. Truly, they're wasting other learners' time. I'm unable to handle them.*

A unique aspect of learner diversity expressed as a challenge at the school was the abuse of drugs and alcohol in secondary schools. It seemed to bring major challenges mainly on orphans and vulnerable learners.

Participant 25, a male teacher at a high school, opines:

Our learners especially orphans and vulnerable are engaged in activities of drugs and alcohol abuse. As a result, they dodge classes and hide themselves in hostels or stay behind shacks or sometimes they can be seen in public bars during school hours. So, this compromises their performance in class. They don't attend school regularly and for that matter, some of them drop out of school.

Some participants observed lack of motivation and low self-esteem in orphaned and vulnerable learners.

Participant 20, a female teacher from a primary school states:

I've observed that orphan and vulnerable children have low-self-esteem. They don't look active in a class at all. They've no desire to learn but i know they've ability. But the challenge is that willingness is not there. Though, it is a challenge to work with diverse learners especially OVC in class, I do support and encourage them to work hard. Honestly, it is not easy. I don't have skills on how to motivate them. They demand a lot from a teacher. Some of my colleagues have negative attitudes towards them because they think they are lazy.

The main emanating issue from participants argument on learner difference is that there is a need psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable learners because it seems emotional and behavioural problems among them such as bullying, aggression are a challenge that need to be addressed by different people including: parents, teachers, psychologists, therapists and counsellors.

5.1.4 Inadequate life skills and sexuality education as a source of learner diversity

Epidemics which arise in any society have a significant impact on learners. With the outbreak and rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and high pregnancy, many children are either infected or affected by both conditions. Twelve participants' responses in both focus group and individual

interviews explained that the impact of HIV/AIDS and pregnancy affect students' learning negatively as indicated in the following responses:

Participant 7, a female teacher at a secondary school, speaks:

> *A great number of learners today are growing up in a world affected by HIV/AIDS. This negatively affects their academic performance; it causes a lot of pain and trauma in the lives of learners who are struggling to do well at school. As a result of that in most cases, learners decide to quit school. Many learners are regularly taken out of school because of the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS to take care of their ill parents, siblings or relatives.*

As a follow up to the above participant's comments, Participant 12 a female teacher at a secondary school explains:

> *I think it becomes a challenge to me to teach in a class where some learners are HIV positive because it needs me to use the correct language when teaching the diverse learners in the classroom. I need to be careful about HIV and AIDS because learners who live with HIV may feel that they are victims and this could send a wrong message to them and other learners. So it becomes a sensitive issue to me.*

Participants expressed their concerns that HIV and AIDS becomes stigma among learners and as a result learners with HIV are unable to accept their status due to discrimination.

Participant 13, a male teacher at a secondary school clarifies:

> *It becomes more challenging when learners who claimed that they are HIV negative discriminate their peers by doing unpleasant activities like not sharing textbooks, seat, or even allowing such learners in their groups. Mostly, learners who are HIV positive isolate themselves from other learners. Though, we are teaching them to accept others, it is not easy to address diverse groups.*

The most difficult part for teachers was how to deal with children whose parents died of HIV/AIDS related illnesses.

Participant 23, a female teacher at primary school discloses:

Sometimes, it becomes more difficult for me to speak openly about HIV and AIDS because some learners here know that they are without parents due to the disease. And even such learners who know why they have no parents lack concentration, look depressed and struggle to communicate with other learners.

Participant 16, a female teacher at a secondary school explains:

Since it is not easy to disclose information for OVC who are not aware that their parents died of HIV/AIDS, We only teach them opportunity diseases that are likely to cause HIV and AIDS and can cause death.

Another aspect with regard learner diversity which became a challenge was high rate of pregnancy among teenagers who are between 12-18 years. Participants' responses were as shown as the following:

Participant 2, a female teacher at a high school, briefly explains:

The challenge that we have in this school is high rate of pregnancy among our youth. We've about 4 to 5 female girls who become pregnant in a year. They are impregnated by boys, stepfathers, fathers or relatives; as a result they drop out of school with high rate.

Participant 14, a male teacher from a high school, opines:

There are cases where a pregnant girl remains in school until she is ready to go into labour. We can't chase them away from school because by so doing we would be acting against MOET policy which gives every learner a right to education. As a male teacher, it becomes a challenge because I don't have skills and knowledge on how to help a pregnant woman. Even our culture doesn't allow us male teachers to interfere in women's issues such as this one.

Participant 8, a male teacher at high school goes on to state:

Other learners, especially boys, don't treat pregnant girls very well. They would talk bad things, ill-treat or use abusive language like they (boys) get sleepy due to the girls condition. Some would be laughing and enjoying the moment. This is not a pleasing

*situation. Therefore, once a girl knows that she is pregnant, they drop out of school. Sometimes, parents and teachers don't know that a certain girl is pregnant. Only her friends would be the first ones to know. Or you find out when you don't see her in school. So teaching pregnant girls becomes a challeng*e.

Participant 21, female teacher at a secondary school, echoes:

They don't perform well indeed in their studies because of the unpleasant situation they have experienced, some drop out of the school. If a married girl can manage to come back to school, other learners, start ill-treating her by talking bad things about her especially boys. So addressing learner difference is not that simple indeed.

Similarly, participant 15, a female teacher at primary school signals:

Most teens become pregnant because at home they face challenges such as high evidence of poverty, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse, so parents don't support their children who are at the age of 12 to 18 years. This makes learner diversity more challenge because to address their needs or individual problem is not that easy.

Life skills are especially needed to prevent intergenerational dating or what can purely be sexual abuse by adults.

Participant 17, a female teacher at a secondary school states:

Our school girls are abused. The abuse of young girls is also high because men with money use their economic position to take advantage of the vulnerable girls who are often stuck in poverty. We make them aware about situations like this one's but they still suffer consequences of being cheated and definitely fall pregnant.

Early sexual debut coupled with poor life skills lead to unwanted pregnancy which learners try to conceal by doing unsafe abortions.

Participant 29, a Deputy female Principal at a high school, points out:

A girl aged 13 fell pregnant. She even confirmed to me that she was pregnant. I even saw that her tummy started growing big. She was seven months pregnant when I noticed that. I even went to the stage where school management knew her condition

and certainly even the parents especially her mother. But I was surprised when I was told that she did abortion. I met her she was no longer pregnant. Psychologically and emotionally, and physically, these practices damage our children.

Participant 30, a female principal at a high school clearly narrates:

Normally, we do quarterly check-ups; girls need to be checked by nurses at our clinic. And they're supposed to bring results at office. We do this because we want both the school and parents to know the health of our children especially girls as we know they're faced with more challenges than boys. But you'll find out that some parents deliberately decide not to allow their children to go for check-ups. In most cases, these girls fall pregnant, so once the girl knows that she is pregnant, she would decide to stay at home for a certain period in order to get rid of this pregnancy. Then she'll come back. Truly, this situation is not pleasing. We've rules and regulations in this school which need to be observed by every learner. We don't want them to set a bad precedency for other learners. We're Basotho society who should stick to our ethics.

Though, there are efforts by schools to address challenges faced by learners, the findings reveal that teachers do not have skills to teach life orientation skills and sexuality education to their learners. They are unable to handle learners who ill-treat others, and issues such as peer pressure and sexual abuse, are not adequately addressed in schools. The contributing factors mentioned by educators included fewer teachers trained on life orientation skills, and a large number of OVC in schools. Key challenges highlighted by educators include high HIV/AIDS infections, unwanted pregnancies, illegal abortion and subsequent emotional trauma.

5.1.5 Influence of language difference on learner diversity

It seemed language disparities among learners influence learner diversity as teachers experienced challenges while teaching them. Four participants in the group discussion had the following views:

Participant 3, a male teacher at a high school, notes:

You know, learners' language also becomes a challenge; we've Indians, Ghanaians and Basotho children in this school. So it is not easy to address each learner's needs.

As a follow up to participant 3's comments, participant 4, a male teacher at high school opines:

Not everyone speaks the same language; most of our learners here speak both Sesotho and English though. Basotho children lack English foundation background in writing and speaking, sometimes this forces me to code switch. I've to use Sesotho to explain some issues so that they can follow. On the other hand, I don't know other learners' language so that I can help them with their own language too. English becomes the only medium of instruction for them. When using Sesotho, other learners are left behind...as if they are being prejudiced or discriminated.

Participant 26, a female teacher at secondary school observes:

Some learners do poorly in classroom because the cultural nature of the home environment does not prepare them for the work they will be required to do at school. For instance, some learners may not have as many books to read to them as children in other homes. Not being able to read has a negative influence on their vocabulary development. Therefore, learners arrive at school lacking the level of vocabulary development which results in shortcomings in skills, knowledge, and behaviours that contribute to poor school performance.

By the same token, participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school vividly points out:

In church schools and community schools from grade 1-3, learners are taught in Sesotho as language policy requires while in private schools, learners are taught in English which is against the language policy. So you see teaching these diverse learners in the same classroom when they are in grade 4 becomes a challenge because they are not on the same level of speaking, writing, and reading English. Those in private or English Medium are more advanced than the ones from ordinary schools. On the other hand, learners from English medium only know how to speak English but have spelling mistakes or error.

Generally, a teacher's knowledge of a learner's first language positions him or her in a better position to support them. However, in this study teachers lack this opportunity

5.1.6 Gender identity influences on learner diversity

Gender identity was another dimension of learner diversity expressed by participants. Some participants viewed diversities in gender identity as a challenge. Four participants in an individual interview reveal.

Participant 20, a female teacher at a primary school, explains:

We've learners who show characteristics of being lesbians and guys. There are two girls here who behave like boys. They walk and talk like them. In most of the time, they are with them. The same thing applies to boys, they behave like girls, and we've about 4 of them. The challenge is that other learners and including teachers do not support such behaviour.

Participant 26, a female teacher at a secondary school, shares similar sentiments that:

Learners discriminate them by using abusive language and speaking to them funny ways like 'come here you little girl' while addressing a boy.

Participant 10, a female teacher from a primary school adds:

Discrimination on gender particularly on lesbians and gays forces learners to hide their sexual identity because anything related to sexuality is deemed inappropriate for children in the school setting.

Participant 21, a female teacher at secondary school claims:

The fact that the learner doesn't socialize with the rest of the school or other learners is probably due mostly to the fact she wouldn't feel comfortable with other girls and enjoy company of boys. Some teachers would rebuke her to stay away from boys or they consider her as a gay.

Research shows that stigmatizing experiences at school have negative effect on the psychological health of learners who display behaviour of being lesbians and guys as teachers fail to support them in the school environment. Therefore, their inclusion becomes a challenge since teachers lack life and sex orientation on how to accommodate them.

5.1.7 The impact of different beliefs on learner diversity

Another facet of learner diversity was religion which became a challenge in the school or classroom settings. Three participants in an individual interview said their learners differ in religion as some are Christians, Muslims, and Hinduisms, and Buddhism.

Participant 6, a female teacher at a high school affirms that:

We teach learners who differ in religion. Some learners believe in Bible, Quran and Torah, while other learners believe in Basotho religion. Basotho people worship the ancestors spirits (Balimo). So teaching them only Christianity becomes challenge as some feel that their religion is compromised. For example, learners who believe in Quran don't participate when I teach Bible because their parents, guardians or their reverends or priests have instructed them to do so. So when it's time for religious Education, they would decide to go out of the class. On the other hand, Basotho children very often make arguments about their religion other than Christianity.

Participant 29, a female deputy principal at high school, observes:

In this school, my observation is that learners are separated according to their perceived religious identity. You'll find that those are Islamic are always in one group. So to address learner diversity is not that simple.

Since learners attend church schools, their diversity is affected by the denomination of their respective schools. Participant 30, a female principal at high school, indicates:

This is a Christian school; therefore, every learner in this school is expected to abide by school regulations. Yes, we know people have different beliefs but parents know that once they have brought their children here they have to observe the regulations that guide this school. We expect every learner regardless of their religion to follow the doctrine here. On Sunday morning all learners must attend the mass and those who fail to do that they know the consequences.

Despite eagerness to learn in secondary schools, learners are still faced with a challenge where their religions are being compromised by school leaders. Teachers force them to follow the doctrine of the schools in which they are enrolled. Consequently, their inclusion in religious schools becomes difficult as teachers prejudice them. In general, it can be said that teachers

perceive that the inclusion of learners with disabilities is a challenge in the regular schools because they are unable to address and meet their individual needs.

5.2 Teachers' understandings of inclusive education

In responding to the question on the concept of inclusive education teachers had different views. Participants expressed their views as follows.

Participant 18, a male teacher at a high school narrates:

> *I think inclusive education is a policy which needs everyone to abide by it, and educating disabled children should be seen as a right and not a favour; they deserve to go to school like all the other children. We accept them to be part unless they may not be able to fit into the mainstream then I make them go through the process of diagnosis to prove he or she cannot fit in this school because some of them may need extra help as they can't catch up with their non-disabled counterparts. I believe they have to be part of the class and the learning process but their pace of doing things will differ. It's my hope that Ministry of Education and Training would clear itself on the practice of inclusive education to achieve success.*

Inclusion is about cooperating with other learners in the classroom but this is exceptional for certain learners.

Participant 3, a male teacher at a high school explains:

> *Inclusive education… is a good thing because all learners being and learn together from the lower level of education and are taught to love one another and cooperate with all people regardless of individual conditions. However, this inclusion should be for all learners with disabilities except those with mental disorders because this group has a very special type of disability that cannot be mixed with other learners in the same classroom, their inclusion should be in school compound and not in classroom. This will give the teacher a room to teach children with more or less capacities to learn.*

Participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school viewed inclusion as a healthy process to integrate the whole society. She indicates:

Inclusion is a very healthy process as it helps in making an equal society where each and every individual is given equal rights. Education is a fundamental right in Lesotho and nobody should, therefore, be denied it. It is the most appropriate step to integrate the whole society. The children learn tolerance, acceptance by the process of inclusion in schools.

Participant 21, a female teacher at a secondary school, expresses her views as follows:

It's a type of practice where learners with diverse needs are taught in one class by a regular teacher no matter the disabilities they have. Inclusive education aims to promote oneness of the learners in the school. It says learners who were discriminated and segregated because of their disabilities be included into mainstream schools and be given the same opportunities.

A teacher with ten years of teaching experience, expressed that all educational institutions must adopt inclusive education to promote the wellbeing of children. According to this teacher, inclusion is valuable not only for the special needs children but for all pupils as this process enables them to understand the structure of their society.

She asserts:

Inclusion is a very good step to remove inferiority and superiority from a classroom. If inclusive education is a success, it will be bliss for the special children and they can very happily study in the school with a positive attitude. Without inclusivity we cannot promote the wellbeing of special children. Participant 26, a female teacher at a secondary school.

Generally, teachers' understanding of inclusive education is quite similar. However, their understanding is very limited to participation of children with disabilities in regular schools, and none of them expressed a broader understanding to include some essential elements of the definition which declares that inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out all learners, and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education For All (EFA).

5.3 Teachers' views on accommodation of learner diversity

In responding to how teachers view accommodating learner differences in schools, participants had conflated feelings towards accommodating learner differences in the mainstream schools as some viewed it as a good idea while others viewed it as a challenge. For instance,

Participant 3 proclaims:

I do encourage the idea of accommodating learners who are diverse in the mainstream schools or classrooms because it enables them to be in the same environment and by so doing they get to know each other better because normal learners can offer support to learners with disabilities while on the other hand, disabled learners also can assist non-disabled learners with their gifted skills. For example, a learner with visual impairment uses the skill of listening. So he or she can apply his or her effort to listen attentively to what the teacher is saying. Therefore, non-disabled learners can rely on him or her for that matter.

In the same way, accommodation of learner differences was supported by participant 2 as she states:

Though, accommodation of learners who are diverse may have challenges, I do support it because it gives every learner a right to participate in all school activities. I've a learner here who seems not enjoying being in class doing Maths, English or any other subject, but once it's time for extra-mural activities such as football, he is the one to inform me that we should take the ball to play. He is so talented in that particular field. In class, he is so bored.

Participant 21 also shares the same sentiments on accommodating learner diversity. She states:

I'm willing to accommodate learner differences in my class because I perceive that my school administration foster a supportive climate and also encourages team work and collaboration of teachers.

Similarly, participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school opines:

I think it's a good idea to accommodate learner differences, especially disabled learners in our regular schools because if we don't, that's discrimination and it's against Law of Lesotho. We'll be denying them the opportunity to study wherever they want to. Even our Education Act 2010…I don't remember the section but it states that every learner has a right to education. Therefore, it's vital to give them opportunity to study like other learners who are normal.

However, some participants view accommodation of learner differences as a challenge. For example, participant 10, a female teacher at a primary school states:

I don't think the idea of accommodating diverse learners in the regular schools can work efficiently. A typical example is me. I'm unable to teach learners with special educational needs. There are those learners who display different forms of disabilities in my class. For example, I've a learner whom I assume has severe epilepsy in my class; you know when this epilepsy attacks her, I don't know how to handle the situation and the lesson has to stop. My learners know about her problem. Really the situation also affects them too.

Participant 16, a female teacher at secondary school, shares similar sentiments on views of accommodation of learner diversity.

In my view, I don't see accommodating diverse learners as a good idea. Those learners with special educational needs are promoted to next class without being assessed and finally drop out of the school without basic knowledge. In my view, Ministry of Education and Training is not to ready to meet the needs of disabled learners. We're wasting their time indeed and even parents who have money take their children to special schools where they know they will be catered for. Unfortunate are those families who cannot afford the expensive books for their children.

Insufficient support by school management brought teachers a lot of stress in their daily work.

She states:

We don't have a support from school management because classes are overcrowded. Management registers a lot of learners yet they know that teachers are few in number. Besides that, the work overloads result in a high level of stress among teachers

because we teach many learners. We're doing injustice to these learners. We're not able to identify their weakness and strengths. Participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school.

Participants 1, a male teacher at a high school, felt that they were not ready or prepared to appropriately meet the needs of learners with special educational needs.

He explains:

I see a learner with special educational needs as a burden in the classroom, a learner who decreases the effectiveness of teaching and learning because she needs to be attended specially and that means other learners will be not be catered for.

Another participant adds:

I feel frustrated and guilty due to the time that is taken away from the majority of other learners in order to accommodate the needs of one learner with special educational needs. Hmm…really it's unfair to spend more time devoted on one learner while the rest are neglected. If learners with special educational needs would be in one class, it would be much better. Participant 3, a male teacher at a high school.

A teacher, who had been teaching in the selected school for 30 years, claimed that learner differences need teachers who can manage the classroom. Participant 23, a female teacher at primary school observes:

Learners with special educational needs need young teachers who have skills to manage classroom. These learners are too demanding and if you're old, as I'm, I'm almost 62 years now; your class becomes a mess. I'm talking from the experience. I can't teach such learners at my age. Young teachers from LCE can manage.

Though the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) wants every learner to participate and be admitted in mainstream schools and get basic education, it is clear from participants' responses that learner inclusion remains a serious challenge as some are not prepared to accommodate them in the classroom setting. Participants' responses clearly indicate that teachers had conflicting ideas on the accommodation of learner diversity. Some are in favour

of learner diversity while others see their participation, presence and acceptance as a challenge as they fail to properly meet their educational needs.

5.4 Influences of Education Resources on Inclusive Education

Several issues were highlighted by participants as barriers to inclusive education; these are access to built-in environment, access to teaching and learning resources, teachers' workload and teacher training.

5.4.1 Physical accessibility of built environment

As much as the schools would like to accommodate learners with physical disabilities in classrooms, their physical infrastructure poses a huge challenge to learners. The following are some of the participants' views.

Participant 30, a female principal at a high school, explains:

We're able to accommodate learners who are physically impaired in my school because with little funds we collect from parents, we managed to build ramps. Ramps help learners to have access in classrooms but they are not all over because they are very expensive. We still have a challenge because learners are unable to access a classroom of Home Economics.

The deputy principal reiterates:

Since we built the ramps, the number of learners who are physically impaired has increased. But the challenge is that toilets and kitchen are inaccessible. This is because the building are lower the deep steps and to make ramps it would be costly. Participant 29, a female deputy principal at a high school.

She further declares:

Personally, I suggest that MOET should help schools with funds so that we can build environment which is learner friendly. We want to accommodate all learners regardless of their disabilities. Just imagine, every time when a learner wants a toilet, she needs to be accompanied by other learners. Everyone needs privacy…this is a fact.

Nevertheless, two participants reported that learner differences encountered challenges as they were unable to accommodate learners who use wheelchairs:

She explains:

We had a learner who used a wheelchair, but the challenge is the buildings. The wheelchair had to be lifted up for her to enter the class. The school has no funds which can help us to build ramps. The subvention MOET provides won't allow us to build them. They're very expensive. So due to the unfriendly environment, the learner did not take a long time being in school and was forced to drop out of the educational system…. Many buildings do not support people with disability; they are built in a way that for a person with a wheeled chair it is not easy to enter the building because of the stairs. In some other places, the transport system does not support people with disability. Participant 28, a female principal at a primary school.

Participant 27, a female deputy principal at a primary school, observes:

Her wheelchair didn't last because she travelled a long distance from home to school. Again, the path was rough for the wheelchair. Therefore, she was forced to stay home because the school couldn't afford to buy her another wheelchair. Parents too were very poor to replace the old wheelchair by a new one….We need our school environment to be paved so that learners who use wheelchairs can move freely around the school and entrance to school classrooms is accessible for them.

Without physical accessibility, learners lack independence and have to rely on external assistance. This does not characteristically typify an inclusive environment or what sometimes is referred to as a learner-friendly environment given that some learners are excluded.

5.4.2 Access to teaching and learning material including braille facilities

Participants reported lack of books, Braille and inadequate facilities and relevant materials as major obstacles to cater for learner diversity and implement inclusive education in schools. Responses include the following.

Participant 2, a female teacher at primary school, states:

I've a learner who is partially blind. She squeezes her eyes when she looks at the board. I think she needs braille so that she can read well and do other educational activities. The challenge is that the braille is not there and again, if braille is available, I don't know how to use it. It is a pity that children like this I have in class are struggling to learn. I wish MOET could do something about the children with visual impairment.

Participant 15, a female teacher at a primary school, indicates:

There are no facilities such as books and even chalkboards we use don't accommodate leaners with visual impairment. The font used in books does not accommodate learners with visual impairment. Usually learners, who are not able to look at the chalkboard, wait for their classmates to finish coping tasks or activities on the chalkboard then later be able to write them during their spare time.

Participant 30, a female principal at high school, discloses:

We teach learners without books. For example, there is high shortage of books in our schools. Some textbooks are old and while other books have pages missing…. MOET through School Supply Unit [SSU] fails to replace textbooks in the secondary school which are old and torn in time. So you'll find that SSU would replace them after 20 years and the books are not that quality. Here I'm talking about the blurb of the book. It becomes a challenge to us as a school as this affects both teachers and learners' learning negatively. Only families who can afford to buy their children manage to do that but learners from poor families have a challenge.

Shortage of books forces learners to share books.

Participant 22, a male teacher at a primary school, reports:

In my class, 10 learners share a textbook which makes teaching and learning more difficult and our furniture is old and broken, and 4-5 learners have to share a desk that is supposed to accommodate 3 learners. Therefore, insufficient resources make the work complex in our day-to-day teaching and learning.

Another aspect that becomes a challenge to cater for learner diversity and implement inclusive education was shortage of school furniture as hinted by participant 28, a female principal at a primary school. She opines:

Hmm…in primary schools, the furniture is too old and learners are overcrowded in classrooms, some have to sit right on the floor or on stones. Most of our school furniture is broken. I don't remember the year we received furniture from School Supply Unity. I think 20 years ago. Overcrowding is due to Free Primary Education (FPE) which started in 2000. So it's not easy to accommodate and implement learner diversity and inclusive education fully due to this condition.

In response to what the school does with subvention money from the government, Participant 28 continues:

The subvention MOET provides to schools is twenty maloti per child. So this money is supposed to be used on school maintenance only. It doesn't cater for big activities such as buying desks or buildings but for minor activities like broken lock, door or windows. We need more funding from MOET so that we can cater for other activities.

Teachers' responses indicated that a lack of resources is a problem for teaching and learning. Even if there are some resources available, it is not enough and learners have to share. The school is also unable to provide resources due to finances.

It is evident from the above findings that teachers have challenges resulting from shortage of books, Braille and inadequate facilities and relevant materials, make teachers fail to meet the needs of diverse learners in regular schools.

5.4.3 Access to psychosocial support services including sign language interpretation

The role of the school counsellors, psychologists and sign language interpreters in schools is evident from results of this study. Five participants' responses indicate the need for support from extra teaching staff.

Participant 29, a female deputy principal at a secondary school, explains:

We need school physiotherapists and occupational therapists to assist us in schools. MOET needs to provide schools with human resource that could help teachers with learners with speech problems. You know some learners due to speech problem are unable to pronounce words correctly…. We also experience problems with learners with hearing impairment, so we need sign language interpreters who can assist with such learners.

Participant 5, a female teacher from primary teacher, also indicates:

A school counsellor should be there to support teachers when they need to deal with difficult cases such as social problems, behavioural disorders or life skills and life orientation in schools generally.

Participant 1, a male teacher at a secondary school, adds:

The government should put one social worker in a cluster of schools for OVC to be referred to them. The social workers could visit these children in their homes and assist parents/guardians apply for social grants to support them. Second, counselling services should be provided on a regular basis to OVC.

Teacher and learner support involve the provision of on-going emotional and psychological support from school counsellors. The following quotes were highlighted by the respondents on the role of school counsellors in supporting learners.

Participant 11, a female teacher from a primary school, states:

The role of the school counsellors is to provide on-going psychological support to learner who has experienced rape and sexual exploitation.

Participant 28 suggests:

I'm not trained as a special education teacher. I think we need guidance counsellors in our schools who can train us on professional specialist courses on teaching strategies, disabilities and special needs on how learners learn, classroom organization and even how to manage them. We fail these learners with special educational needs because we don't have skills.

Participants' views show dire need for support from guidance counsellors, psychologists and sign language interpreters are the key role players in ensuring that the goals of inclusive education are actualized in primary and secondary schools.

5.4.4 Teacher-learner ratio and effects on teaching methods

Large number of learners was among the challenges that teachers faced in the accommodation of learner diversity and inclusive education. In reacting to how they address learner diversity in their classrooms, teachers gave a gloomy picture of their workload as evident in excerpts below.

Participant 8, a male teacher at high school, states:

It is not easy to implement this inclusion thing and cater for the diverse needs of all learners, because I am dealing with many learners. This individual attention is not possible with so many learners. We are trying to accommodate the learners who are struggling, but there are too many learners in one class, so you end up doing only what you can.

Participant 4, a male teacher at a high school, claims:

Due to the size of my class, I don't have enough time to pay attention to each and give every learner a chance to speak and participate. It is not easy to interact face-to-face with my learners.

Participant 1, a male teacher at a secondary school, states:

I must be honest here, since I'm teaching a large class of 60 learners, I don't use learner-centred learning but I focus more on teacher centred learning because it saves me time to present my lessons within forty minutes. Learner centred learning can be successful only if learner-teacher ratio is 35:1. Again, due to overcrowding, classroom setting does not allow learners to be grouped.

Participant 23, a female teacher at a primary school, articulates:

I prefer to put them in large groups because they're many. They're about 86 in a classroom. I don't allow face to face contact because it'll require more time and too

much energy. This is the only way I can help them. Truly large classrooms bring a challenge to us old people. I'm 60 years old now, that energy is gone…so do you think I can manage them, no that's impossible.

Participant 26, a female teacher at a secondary school, explains:

As an English teacher, I normally find myself attached to the look-and-say sentence method…as I read; they read after me every word or sentence. I don't allow them to read on their own because that would consume my time. I also use the method where I read to learners, here they listen attentively. Both methods really work well where the class is large. I know these teaching methods limit learner-learner interaction but there's nothing we can do to address the situation.

Participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school also explains:

I basically do most of the talking. I prefer to use lecturing method to teach these 86 learners. Learners do not respond to questions sometimes.

Participant 9, a female teacher from secondary school, opines:

I'm not able to know individual achievement of learning objectives because the class is too large and of course it reduces the completion of learning activities. If the class would be small, I think my learners would achieve the set outcomes.

Participant 28, a female principal at a primary school, clarifies:

The situation of overcrowding is exacerbated by shortage of teachers. You'll find that if a teacher dies, MOET does not hire another teacher for that post because it claims that it does not have money. So teachers are left with a burden to teach many learners. It's not simple to accommodate and meet learners with special educational needs. As a result, learners go to the next grade without knowing how to read and write because teachers are unable to attend them individually. On the other hand, MOET does not allow learners to repeat classes.

Large classes had a psychological effect on teachers as they were unable to meet individual learners' needs.

Participant 24, a female teacher at primary school, opines:

Large class gives me heart attack; you always have to shout out and try to accommodate everyone which is impossible. Really, it becomes a burden to us teachers especially old people like me. I don't have that energy to control noise and to mark them.

Participant 12, a female teacher at a secondary school, explains:

Large class of size makes me feel frustrated. I always feel tired after making the first 30 learners and the rest I don't mark because it's impossible to mark 76 learners within 40 minutes.

Participant 13, a female teacher at a secondary school further adds that:

I feel hopeless to manage large size class successfully. Their noise gives me headache…you know… you must have a tablet in your bag because it doesn't matter whether you group them or not but as they discuss, the noise itself have negative effects on me.

Participant 17, a female teacher at a secondary school, notes:

They affect my health negatively because I become mad when I remember the number of learners I've to teach.

Participant 15, a female teacher at a primary school, reiterates:

I'm not sure that my learners get what I've taught exactly. You know why? Because it's difficult to control the learners and I don't know what they've learnt because they're a lot…some may understand, but some may not. I'm unable to assess them. How can I engage them when they're 86 in class?

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has proposed that all learners should be admitted in regular schools, the truth of the matter is that it has not hired enough teachers and erected more classrooms that could sufficiently accommodate diverse learners. Consequently, teachers feel frustrated and hopeless to engage and accommodate large numbers of learners in the inclusive classrooms.

5.5 Teacher Preparedness for Inclusive Education

The success of inclusive education hinges on teachers' preparedness. The level of preparedness of teachers determines their degree of acceptance and their efficiency in the implementation of inclusive education. Participants mention that lack of training on skills and knowledge on how to appropriately accommodate diverse learners in their classroom is a major constraint. For example, Participant 13, a male teacher at a high school states:

> *Though I'm a professional teacher, I'm not adequately trained professional who can assist and teach learners who have severe disabilities such as visual impairment. I don't know how to help them because I don't have skills and knowledge about learners who are visually impaired. I've a learner with that problem. Though, I sympathise with her condition, but I can't do anything because even my colleagues have the same problem of not knowing how to help him.*

Teachers seemed to have problems supporting learners with hearing impairment. For example, participant 9, a female at a secondary teacher, explains:

> *I've learner with hearing impairment in my class. I'm not able to address and help her. I feel she is not included because I don't have skills, knowledge and as a result, I develop negative attitudes towards learner. It's a challenge to me because I've never received any form of training to handle learners like her. I think I need training on sign language so that I can be able to communicate with such learners. This is difficult for me. It's pity that I can't help her.*

Participant 3, a male teacher at a high school also mentions:

> *I don't know appropriate teaching strategies on how to handle and cater for learners who have hearing impairment. I only help her to sit in front of others and try to speak looking at her but you'll find that such a learner doesn't hear anything….hmm the sign language too is also challenge to me, I know nothing about them. I wish I could be helped so that I can manage and help this poor learner.*

Participant 16, a female teacher at a secondary school shares the same sentiments with participant 9 as she indicates that:

Last year, I had a learner with hard hearing and I didn't know how to help him. I was helpless and my colleagues too had no means to help me. He dropped out of the school because there was no way I could help. So his parents decided to take him out of the school because we're unable to help him.

Teachers experienced a challenge to handle learners with ADHD, autism and emotional problems in the classroom setting.

Participant 4, a male teacher at a high school states:

I don't know how to handle learners who are ADHD, autism, emotion or behavioural disorders in the class because I don't have knowledge.

Participant 24, a female teacher at a primary school contradicts her here by arguing that.

I love to teach learners with behavioural problems but I lack confidence in my own instructional skills and quality of support personnel available for me. I think I could develop positive attitudes if I could be helped to manage instructional skills.

Participants indicated that learning sign language could assist them to accommodate learners with hard hearing.

Participant 18, a female teacher at a high school, indicates:

I think… if I knew how to sign, he would get help. I think…we need training on matters like this one so that we can accommodate them.

Another aspect that teachers are faced with is teaching learners who are partially sighted. Participant 23, a female teacher at primary school indicates:

I don't know how to help such a learner who is partially sighted. What I can do is to sit such a learner in front and try to write in bold on the chalkboard. But still she'll tell me that she can't see well, so she will have to wait for his friends to finish copying notes then later she can write.

Another aspect that teachers are faced with is teaching learners who are partially sighted. Participant 11 a female teacher at primary school indicates:

I think…visual barrier should be facilitated through individualised support measures, the use of braille equipment and other specialised devices. So challenge is that they're not available in our schools.

Participant 1, a female teacher at a secondary school lamented that she was unable to meet the needs of slow learners due time spent on learners with behavioural orders.

She explores:

It's a challenge because we fail to finish planned syllabus, time is spent on disciplining the learners with behavioural disorders in the classroom than teaching, you're not able to cater for learners who are slow to grasp, and it limits the pace of learners who are fast to grasp more concepts. In my view, I don't see accommodating diverse learners as a good idea.

Participant 26 reported that a special support from a colleague who has done special education was so helpful in the school.

She indicates:

The adequate support we get from a colleague is so helpful because for mild disabilities we able to handle but for severe disabilities it become a big challenge.

Teachers' lack of appropriate strategies in teaching and learning also hinders learners with disabilities to acquire basic education like other normal learners.

Participant 21, a female teacher at secondary school submits that:

Learners with learning problem give me tough time in class. You know… I don't know how to teach them because you need to repeat concepts more than four times, they are not able conceptualize what is being taught. They need more time, patience and dedication of the teachers. Therefore, other learners need my attention. It's not easy at all to cater for them.

Another, participant 14, a male teacher at a secondary school suggests:

I wish Ministry of Education and Training would provide us with continuous in-service training and professional development programmes which can help us on how to teach learners especially learners with special educational needs. These learners are here with us but us luck appropriate values, skills, knowledge and attitudes towards them because we're not equipped with necessary skills and knowledge.

Similarly, participant 5, a female teacher at a primary school, explains:

I'm not prepared to teach in an inclusive environment. I think…it's important for MOET to give us professional training so that we become expertise as this would prepare us to work with learners with special needs. I think…this would boost our self-confidence and off-course build or develop a positive attitude towards learner difference and their inclusion in school environments. At the moment I feel negative towards learners with special educational needs because I'm not trained.

A few participants received training in special education at Lesotho College of Education (LCE), the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the University of Orange Free State (UFS) through one or two courses taken in the first year. On the question how their knowledge helps them in teaching diverse learners in an inclusive environment, four participants' views include the following:

Participant 6, a male teacher at a high school narrates:

I did…special education in the first year when I was at Lesotho College of Education (LCE), then for the other years I focused on other courses which I admired most. Special education is…a good course. When I'm now in the field of education, I see its relevance. I'm not able to address some issues here I come across because I still lack knowledge. Really…I'm unable to meet individual learners' needs. This is a challenge but I believe in-service programmes would help me to become a better teacher.

Similarly, participant 7, a female teacher from a high school received training on special education while at the National University of Lesotho but in the first year only.

She indicates:

I didn't do inclusive education. I was introduced to special education only in the first year. I still feel that if I was fully trained on special education, I'd be a better teacher. I do apply that little knowledge I've but it's not sufficient. There're a lot of challenges here which I can't be able to over here. For example, I don't know how to help learners with epilepsy, mental retardation and visual impaired persons. These learners need human personnel who is fully acquainted and trained in these areas.

Participant 13, a male teacher at secondary school, also explains:

I've done a one year course on special education at the University of Free State. I don't know anything about inclusive education and to be honest I think I'll not implement it because I didn't receive any training in inclusive education.

Another facet that brings a challenge was teachers without proper qualifications in primary schools.

Participant 28, a female principal at a primary school explains:

We still have a challenge of unqualified teachers in schools. These teachers have no teaching qualification [certificates]. They're teaching with COSC, therefore it becomes a challenge for them to teach effectively and efficiently as they lack skills and knowledge on how to handle diverse learners in the classroom.

Mainstream teachers seemed to generally lack confidence in addressing learner diversity in their schools as a result of inadequate training. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education as proposed by international organisations-UN in countries like Lesotho becomes impractical.

5.6 Policy Mandate for Inclusive Education

The greatest barrier for teachers to accommodate learner diversity comes from unclear policies. In response to what policies govern inclusive education in their schools; teachers seemed not to have a clear understanding of any policy that mandates them to accommodate learners with diverse needs. A few excerpts are cited below as examples.

Participant 1, a male teacher at a high school, says:

I don't want to lie; I don't know the policy which could help me accept learners who are diverse in my classroom. Nobody mentioned policies or policy that can guide me to accept such learners.

Participant 3 states:

I don't know if there are policies because no one have ever said anything about them, even my principal has never told me about policies that help me accept learners with diverse needs in our education system.

Participant 30 indicates:

I'm new in this office, so policies with regard learners who are diverse and their inclusion is something that is new to me. Even during my tenure as deputy principal, I wasn't informed about such policies. I don't know if my former principal is aware of them. If policies are not clear, it means our work as implementers, become more difficult. I think it's time that MOET hold workshops to teach us about the policies or if they are not there, they should speed up the process of establishing them so that we can fulfil the dream of MOET.

Participant 19, a female teacher at a primary school, adds:

You know…developing countries like Lesotho lack mandatory policies and legislation that can support the effective implementation of inclusion program. I've never seen or heard about the policy which can guide us leaders of the schools on how to implement inclusive education. We only hear about it on radios and from persons like you. No one has ever disseminated or held a workshop for us principals. I don't know what inclusive education is all about. I'd be lying if I can say I know inclusive education.

At times the Education Act of 2010 is mistaken as a policy advocating inclusive education.

Participant 23, a female teacher at a primary school, opines:

I only heard that MOET have introduced Education Act 2010, which gives provision to primary learners to attend schools without paying fees. I don't know if the Education Act is a policy.

Another participant 23 shared similar sentiments with regard not knowing the policy.

Participant 21, a female teacher at a secondary school, reflects:

When we're talking about policy, are we talking about Education Act 2010? I don't remember the section, but there is something about children's right for education. Besides education Act 2010, I've never heard anything about policy which talks about inclusive education.

Participant 6, a female teacher at a high school, recalls:

There was a campaign around 2010 by MOET where we were introduced to Education for All; I don't know when we talk of policy, are we referring to that? If we're talking about EFA, we used to celebrate it and it was called EFA day. We celebrated it once around October 2010 and i didn't hear of it anymore. So if you're talking about it, I remember though it was not clear whether it was a policy or not.

Some view the MOET strategic sector plan as part of policy on inclusive education.

For example, Participant 13, a male teacher at a secondary school, indicates:

I read something about the Strategic Plan of 2005 where it stated that teachers would be trained for inclusive education. MOET target was to train about seven hundred teachers in a year. It seems…MOET's target is to train only new teachers who are trained at LCE and NUL but it is quiet about teachers who are already in the field of teaching. The question is how can we say we're striving towards inclusive learning yet a large number of teachers who are already teaching are left behind?

Participant 11, a female teacher at a primary school, adds:

I'm not sure when we are talking about policies we are referring to Millennium Development Goals of 2005 which outlines where the country would be in 2015. I don't know which goals were achieved and which did see the light of the day.

Participant 18, a male teacher at a high school, points out:

1don't think we have a clear policy on inclusive education. What I know Lesotho through Ministry of Education and Training had adopted United Nations several Conventions such as UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and many more…but to say we've a clear policy on which indicates that learners with diverse needs be included in the mainstream schools, I'd be lying.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is slow in developing a clear policy on learner diversity and inclusive education. Consequently, it is not surprising when teachers find it difficult to fully implement inclusive education in regular schools. MOET should work harder on the process of developing the policy on inclusive education and adequately train a large number of teachers to fully implement inclusive education.

5.7 Teacher Attitudes to inclusive education

Most of the teachers have negative attitudes towards learners with special educational needs. Given the fact that teachers do not know the policy that strictly mandates them to accommodate learner diversity, and they are not specially trained in inclusive education, they do not possess the necessary skills, knowledge and positive attitudes to offer quality services to the diverse learners.

For example,

Participant 28, a female principal and teacher at a primary school highlights:

You know sometimes we see learners who misbehave in class and we don't know the cause and sometimes we even develop negative attitudes towards them without knowing why they misbehave in class.

Participant 25, a male teacher at high school reports:

If I don't have the necessary training to teach children with special need and help them, I wouldn't prefer them in my class, as I wouldn't be able to do justice to them. But if I get the training I require, I would be comfortable with having them in my class.

For example, participant 24, a female teacher at a primary school, states:

To be honest I don't like teaching children with disabilities, especially those with obvious physical disabilities.

Participant 25, a male teacher at high school, asserts:

I don't think I can include learners with behavioural disorders in my class. It's not easy to handle them. They need special attention.

Similarly, participant 3, a male teacher at high school, indicates:

I don't like having children with disabilities in my class and I don't think others like it too.

Teachers' lack of experience may have influenced them to develop negative attitudes towards inclusive education.

Participant 14, a male teacher at secondary school, indicates:

I don't have experience of teaching learners with disabilities especially severe disabilities learners that one I cannot manage.

Teachers did not support lesbian and gay learners in their classrooms as participant 17, a female teacher at secondary school, opines:

Though it is the right for every learner to be in school, I don't feel comfortable to teach lesbians and gays in my class. I'm more negative towards them as you know in our culture we don't have lesbians and gays.

Broadly speaking, teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education are influenced by several factors which among others, include unclear policies on inclusive education, teachers' lack of training, inadequate resources and high learner-teacher ratios. Therefore, it is not surprising that teachers both in primary and secondary schools, in this study developed negative attitudes because of the abovementioned facts.

5.8 SUMMARY

It has been found that teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education were influenced by a number of factors. Teachers face challenges of accommodating leaners that

socially, emotionally and psychologically experience violence and low socio-economic background at their homes and as a result, their academic performance in schools is bad. Teachers also have to accommodate learners with various disabilities for which they have not received any training. These forces teachers to use other mechanisms to accommodate disabled learners, but still learners face challenges as their needs are not properly met. Therefore, this study strongly suggests that there is a serious need for psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable learners. This is primarily because it seems clear that emotional and behavioural problems among learners such as bullying and aggression are a challenge that needs to be addressed by different people including: parents, teachers, psychologists, therapists and counsellors. Though, there are efforts by schools to address challenges faced by learners, the findings reveal that teachers do not have skills to teach life skills and sexuality education to their learners. Key challenges are high HIV/AIDS infections, unwanted teenage pregnancies, illegal abortion and subsequent emotional trauma which seem to be escalating in large numbers among learners especially girls. These bring learners a major challenge as their inclusion in the schools is also a serious challenge.

Besides that, gender, language and religion among diverse learners bring a challenge to teachers as some fail to address these disparities in the classrooms. Nevertheless, teachers have some essence of what inclusive education is; although their understanding is very limited to participation of children with disabilities in regular schools. It is clear from participants' responses that learners' inclusion remains a major challenge as some are not prepared to properly accommodate them in the classroom setting. Participants' responses clearly indicate that teachers had conflicting ideas on the accommodation of learner diversity. Some are in favour of learner diversity while others see their participation, presence and acceptance as a challenge as they fail to meet their educational needs. Several issues are highlighted by participants as barriers to inclusive education; these are access to built-in environment, access to teaching and learning resources, teachers' workload and teacher training. Teachers' unpreparedness and lack of training in inclusive education and unclear policies on inclusive education are also other factors that immensely contribute to teachers' negativity towards learner diversity and their inclusion in the mainstream schools in Lesotho.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter basically presents a discussion of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study. Findings of the study are discussed using the three research questions, previous literature and the theoretical framework as guides to understanding attitudes of teachers towards learner diversity at primary and secondary schools. Next, the conclusions for the study are drawn to make judgement about the findings and contribution of the study. Then, the study provides recommendations for policy development; change of practice and for further research. Lastly, limitations of the study are clearly stated.

6.1 Teachers' views about learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools.

6.1.1 Learners' Diversity

In responding to how teachers view learner diversity and inclusive education, findings of the study indicate that teachers are aware of several issues which impact on learner diversity in their respective schools. These factors include the effect of socioeconomic status, learners' disabilities, emotional and behavioural disorders, inadequate life skills and sexuality education, influence of language difference, gender identity and the impact of different beliefs on learner diversity.

Moreover, the study highlights that teachers understand learner diversity to include any factors which may affect learning substantially such as learners who are emotionally and sexually abused by some community members. Participants seem to think such learners present a challenge in their classes as they may lack concentration in class and consequently drop in their academic performance. The findings compare with Shonk and Cicchetti's (2001) study which found a relationship between child abuse and child performance competencies such as engagement in academic tasks and paying attention in the classroom. In the same vein, Chalk, Gibbons and Scarup (2002) also found an association between child abuse and attention deficit disorders. Teachers apparently seem unable to manage the challenges brought by these learner differences in their classes as they indicate that learners' performance helplessly deteriorates.

The study also reveals that low socio-economic status has negative impact on learners' educational performance. Learners come to school on empty stomach leading to lack of concentration in the classroom. Some orphaned and vulnerable learners encounter challenges such as behaviour problems, low self-esteem and they display an urgently serious need for counselling services. This directly compares with studies which reveal low socioeconomic status as subjecting learners to violence, frictions and quarrels they experience at home thus affecting them psychologically and emotionally (Schechter & Willheim, 2009; Horner, 2005). Additionally, learners from low socioeconomic status delay to develop other important skills such as reading. The findings support previous research which clearly notes that low socio-economic background has negative impact on children's readiness for school (Amutabi, 2003). It is therefore highly imperative for both the schools' administration and MOET to develop conducive mechanisms aimed at addressing the effects of poverty which seems to be an obstacle to some learners especially the vulnerable and the orphaned.

Additionally, the results reveal that teachers have problems in dealing with learners who display several types of challenges including disabilities. There are learners, who display behavioural problems such as bullying, aggression and low self-esteem who are reported to be challenging to not only their fellow learners but also to their teachers. They also engage in drug and alcohol abuse which leads them to truancy. The findings on bullying confirm results of a study done by Mosia (2015) in Lesotho which indicates prevalence of bullying and similarly to the current findings that teachers have no systematic ways of addressing the behaviour. This reflects an urgent need for the Ministry of Education and Training to develop clear guidelines on how to deal with bullying and for teachers to be trained accordingly.

Learner diversity is also brought by disabilities. Teachers seem to have identified certain disabilities as prevalent in their schools; these included learning difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Teachers show greater willingness to include learners with certain types of disabilities such as physical and sensory disabilities than other disabilities. What is evident from the findings is that, although teachers deal with learners with disabilities; they do not feel that it is their responsibility to accommodate them in the mainstream schools. They feel that the learners could better be helped in special schools. The findings support research which states that regular teachers are known to accept learners with mild physical disabilities than learners with severe disabilities (Algazo & Gaad, 2004; Glaubm & Lifshitz, 2001; Ryan, 2009). Poor attitude could result from the extent to which teachers feel adequately trained and comfortable to teach them (Lakkala & Määttä, 2011; Kudek Mirošević, & Jurčević Lozančić, 2014). From the social constructionist perspective the negative attitude evident from these results leading to lack of support for the learners, does not necessarily result from the severity of disability, but may point to a display of hostile social attitudes people without disabilities display towards those living with disabilities (Allan, 1995).

A further dimension of learner diversity is learners' sexual orientation. Participants indicated that lesbians and gays face the challenge of being discriminated and denied their rights by both teachers and learners. It seems that majority of teachers have negative attitudes towards homosexuality because they allow harassment and victimization on the basis of sexual orientation to go unrestricted. The results show a serious need to improve teachers' knowledge about human rights and issues affecting lesbians and gays, not only to serve the needs of these learners; but to address and evaluate their personal feelings and opinions surrounding them. This finding compares with results from previous research which shows a high degree of discrimination, including episodes of verbal, psychological and physical violence perpetrated against lesbian and gay learners (Carrara, Nascimento & Duque, 2014). From the social constructionist perspective, gays and lesbians, similar to persons with disabilities, form a minority which the dominant groups in society discriminate (Hahn, 1985; 1989; Liggett, 1988). Society's view of heterosexuality as the only means for sexual expression in society is evident in these results. This calls for the Ministry of Education and Training to conscientise teachers that these learners belong in the society and should be allowed to participate in school activities on an equal basis with others.

Closely related to the issue of sexual orientation above is learners' lack of life skills training leading to high levels of HIV infections and pregnancy in learners thus affecting them negatively in their lives as it is highlighted by participants that learners practise illegal abortion and subsequently emotional trauma follows. Learners with HIV/AIDS infections or affected by the scourge are stigmatized and discriminated by their peers and some teachers. This reflects teachers' lack of life skills and to some extent a poor implementation of the subject if it has failed to change attitudes of some teachers. Consequently, their accommodation in the regular schools is not practicable and evident. The findings are consistent with the Caplan (1992) who indicates that teachers need to be oriented on life skills so that they can confidently teach life skills to their learners and enhance their mental health.

Teachers seem to consider language disparities among learners, especially in secondary schools, as another aspect of learner diversity. Though, the schools accommodate learners with different languages it appears that majority of teachers are not ready to use English as a medium of instruction frequently. Participants prefer to code-switch from English to Sesotho where Basotho learners seem not to understand or follow certain concepts. As a result, this leaves learners whose first language is not Sesotho behind, because they do not follow class proceedings conducted in Sesotho. This may reflect a negative attitude towards foreigners or ignorance that their behaviour can impact on excluded learners' feelings of belonging in that classroom (Hutchings, 2006). Generally, a teacher's knowledge of a learner's first language positions him or her to better support them. However, in this study teachers do not know the first languages of all learners in their classes thus resulting in exclusion.

Further, the findings reveal that learners' beliefs are a major challenge to teachers in secondary schools. Since the school wants them to follow a certain doctrine, learners and teachers seem to have conflicts which affect the teaching and learning process. Some learners do not attend lessons when it is time for Religious Knowledge Studies because they feel their religion is not included in the curriculum and as a result, they feel as if their religion is being compromised by school administration. Similar to research elsewhere, religious conflicts show a struggle over values which bring intolerance and friction among people (Olite & Olawale, 1999). This study found that teachers who teach Religious Knowledge develop negative attitudes towards learners who do not do Religious Knowledge because of their faith. This calls for re-training of teachers to teach different religions in schools which can accommodate learner diversity instead of relying on their personal beliefs.

Teachers are aware of these factors that bring learner diversity. Given the fact that teachers are negative about learners who display certain sexual orientations, who display behavioural disorders in the classrooms and who also have severe disabilities, it is clear that they are not ready to accommodate them in their regular classes. This means that these will ultimately influence their attitudes negatively.

6.1.2 Inclusive Education

In responding to what teachers understand about inclusive education in their schools, several interpretations of inclusive education were made by participants. Some see it as a policy which needs everyone to abide to, while others view it as a very good step to remove inferiority and superiority from the classroom. It is a very healthy process as it helps them make equal society where each and every individual is given equal rights. Participants highlighted that it is a type of practice where learners with diverse needs are taught in one class by a regular teacher no matter the disabilities they have. They understand inclusive education as the presence of diverse of learners in their regular schools, and it is also evident from their description of learner diversity that their schools do admit learners facing several barriers to learning and development. However, their explanation shows a limited understanding of inclusive education as presence of diverse learners does not ensure participation. They also admit that they do not know how to support and ensure their participation in classroom activities like normal learners. This falls short of the four principles Humphrey sets, namely, presence, participation, achievement and acceptance. The finding compare with Mosia's (2014) study which found that though teachers have an idea of what inclusive education is, they fail to implement it due to lack of training. When teachers are not trained and have a faint idea of what it takes to include diverse learners, they are likely to feel frustrated and develop negative attitudes.

6.2 Resource Availability and Teachers Training for Inclusive Education.

The school physical infrastructure was said to create practical mobility challenges to learners with physical and visual disabilities leading to serious inequalities in terms of access to the schools' physical resources. They always have to be assisted by their schoolmates wherever they may want to use the toilets due to lack of enough funds that can build more ramps. Classrooms are also inaccessible for learners with wheelchairs at the primary and secondary level. From the social constructionist perspective, learners with disability are disabled by the environment create by people who ignore their mobility needs (Oliver, 1996), thus making as if school attendance is for people with normally functioning limps.

Besides that, there is lack of teaching facilities and materials and that undermines teachers' efforts to implement inclusive education. There are broken and old furniture which is not user-friendly for ordinary learners which is coupled with shortage of buildings and that make accommodation of learner diversity more difficult. The subvention money which MOET provides for primary schools is not enough to meet the needs of the schools. In the delivery of the curriculum, the situation is worsened by insufficient textbooks and even old chalkboards which do not accommodate learners with visual impairments. Evidence demonstrates that there is a critical shortage of educational tools and equipment to meet the needs of learners who require special care in the inclusive classroom (Ministry of Education and Training-Lesotho, 2005).

Furthermore, inclusive education is affected by high learner-teacher ratios evident at both primary and secondary school levels. There is as high as 80:1 learner-teacher ratio at primary level while at secondary it ranges up to 98:1. In such contexts, it would be a major challenge for a teacher to appropriately meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. The findings of this study agree with results from Johnstone and Chapman (2009) which state and reveal that large class sizes tend to take a toll on the social and intellectual growth of students with and without disabilities. The findings also concur with findings from Mosia (2014) who indicates that the pupil–teacher ratios in some classes were too high to such an extent that it would not be easy for teachers to effectively support the learners. Beyond the findings of Mosia's (2014) and Johnstone and Chapman's (2009) studies, this study indicates that these unhealthy working environments have a bearing on teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity which negatively affect how they support the learners. In such contexts teachers would resort to lecture methods of teaching which research does not support as good for inclusive education. For example, Benjamin (2005) argues that, with lecture method, learners are pretty much omitted to their own capacity of understanding and in big classes it becomes more difficult for teachers to recognize learners who are slow to grasp. A study conducted in Lesotho by Moloi, Morobe, & Urwick (2008) found that teachers prefer teacher-centred methods and misunderstood learner-centred pedagogy and as such teacher-centred methods are not productive for teaching hands-on subjects such as Mathematics.

Finally, results of this study indicate that teachers are not professionally trained to teach diverse learners in mainstream schools. For example, some participants have indicated that they do not know how to teach learners with visual impairment and behavioural disorders. The situation is

worsened by the fact that some teachers in primary and secondary schools are reported to be unqualified and as a result inclusive education is not practicable and achievable. A study conducted in Lesotho blamed a high turnover of key staff in the Ministry of Education and Training as well as amongst teachers who had received training (Phachaka 1998). Lack of support from MOET is also highlighted. Research on teacher training by Schmidt and Vrhovnik (2015) in Slovenia, indicates the importance of teacher training in preparing them for inclusion and giving them more professional expertise as it enables them to work with children with SEN, boosts their self-confidence, and helps them develop a more positive attitude towards inclusive practice. This study concurs with the study of Khoaeane and Naong (2015) who provide the evidence that in Lesotho; teachers are not trained in inclusive education and they do not have the professional skills needed for working or assisting learners in the inclusive or mainstream class. Lack of support from MOET is also a prominent feature of the threats to inclusive education according to Mosia (2014).

6.3 Teachers' knowledge of policies which mandate them to accommodate learner diversity in schools.

Given the fact that most teachers understand that they are working with diverse learners in their schools; that they have limited knowledge about inclusive education, and that they do not get support from schools' administration and the Ministry of education and Training to implement inclusive education; it was very important therefore that this study explains if teachers could support learners on the basis of policy mandate. The results indicate that they do not know any policy which talks about inclusive education. Their responses particularly hint on the following policy documents: Education Act 2010, the Strategic plan of 2005, and some global initiatives such as Education for All, and the Millennium Development Goals 2005 which Lesotho adopted. It is not surprising therefore, that some teachers feel that they cannot support learners with diverse needs because they do not feel mandated to do so. From the social constructionist perspective, it means the teachers will actually think that learners with disabilities do not belong in the mainstream schools as discrimination is enabled by public policy which supports the views of the dominant groups in society (Hahn, 1985).

It seems that the Ministry of Education and Training is not concerned with the full implementation of inclusive education mandated by the Salamanca Statement (1994) which stresses the importance of inclusive education by calling on governments to give the highest policy and budgetary priority so that all children regardless of their individual differences or

difficulties enrol in mainstream schools. Social constructionism claims that people with disabilities must challenge ideology which posits that living with a disability is a curse and expose social oppression which isolates and excludes them from full participation in mainstream of social activities (Oliver, 1996). Generally, society's culture should be challenged for its prejudicial views and negatively shared attitudes towards people with physical and psychological impairments (Swain, Finkelstein, French & Oliver 1993). Results of the current study compare with results from Mosia (2014). Mosia (2014) indicates that lack of clear policy on inclusive education is a threat for learners to be included in the mainstream schools. He further revealed that though learners who are visually impaired were there in regular schools, teachers said they forgot about them while teaching. ,

6.4 CONCLUSION

Conclusions for this study are drawn in line with the objectives that guided the entire thesis and discussion of research findings. The three objectives are stated as follows:

1. To explore teachers' views about learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools.
2. To describe teachers' knowledge of policies mandating them to accommodate learner diversity in schools.
3. To explain teachers' views concerning their training and skills for accommodating learner diversity in their schools.

6.4.1 First objective of the study

The first objective of the study was to explore and explain teachers' views towards learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools. This study concludes that:

1. Teachers know factors that contribute towards learner diversity. They have stated various ways in which learners are different from each other and the extent to which these differences affect their academic and emotional wellbeing.
2. The knowledge which emanates from teachers' dealing practically with the learners is not sufficient to influence them to support such learners.
3. Some teachers develop negative attitudes towards learners with diverse needs because they believe such learners belong somewhere else not in mainstream classes.
4. Teachers also know what inclusive education is because they have heard about it while only a few have been trained on inclusive education.

5. The knowledge of inclusive education is limited, not supported by any school or the Ministry's practices and that does not directly translate to effective support of the learners.

6.4.2 The second objective of the study

The second objective of the study was to describe teachers' knowledge of policies which mandate them to accommodate learner diversity in schools. The study concludes that teachers do not know any policy that binds them to support every learner at their disposal and this leads to exclusion of those learners which teachers view as not belonging to their classes.

6.4.3 The third objective of the study

The third objective of the study was to find out how teachers view their training and skills for accommodating learner diversity in their schools. The study concludes that:

1. Teachers, as they admit, have limited knowledge on how to support certain learners in their classes.
2. There is lack of continuous professional development by the Ministry of Education and Training on inclusive education issues.
3. Teachers are not aware of the support mechanisms, if any, from MOET such as counsellors, psychologists, and sign language interpreters to whom they can refer learners for assessment and support.
4. A critical challenge that is additional to lack of knowledge is that there are inadequate human, teaching and physical resources to support inclusive education in schools.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the presented results, discussions and conclusions; several issues would need to be addressed in order to improve teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Lesotho. The following recommendations are among the issues that can be improved to address teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and their inclusion of special learners in the regular schools.

6.5.1 Recommendations for Policy Development on inclusive education

➢ The Ministry of Education and Training should establish a clear policy on learner diversity and inclusive education and the policy should not be in white and black only, but it should be implemented and put into practice in order to answer the challenges teachers face to accommodate diverse learners in the inclusive schools. Moreover, the

policy should indicate how the implementers in this case teachers, would be helped to make such a policy efficient and effective, what type of resources would be available to help teachers help learners especially learners who need special attention.

6.5.2 Recommendations for continuous professional development

➢ It is vital for the Ministry of Education and Training to include sign language in the training of teachers so that sign language can be used as the medium of communication for learners with hearing impairments and use braille for learners with visual impairments.

➢ The Ministry of Education and Training should organize continuous professional development for teachers so that they can support learner diversity.

6.5.3 Recommendations for improved Resources and Materials that meet learners 'needs

➢ For physical accessibility, MOET and schools' management should make school environments to be accessible to ensure enjoyment of the fundamental right of persons with disabilities to education, accessibility must, therefore, be addressed broadly, in relation to, for example, entrance ways to buildings and classrooms, appropriate seating, restrooms facilities, and transportation to the education facility.

➢ The Ministry of education and Training should improve school facilities, equipment and materials in schools. For instance, desks should be available for learners in both primary and secondary schools.

➢ Again, for schools which have large numbers of learners more teachers should be employed in order to reduce high learner-teacher ratios. More buildings are needed for schools that are overcrowded.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following recommendation for future research has been provided below:

➢ This study has only explored teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Mapoteng Berea Lesotho. Therefore, a much larger study involving a range of schools from other contexts such as urban and

rural areas is seriously needed in order to get a better picture and clear perspective of the magnitude of teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education.

6.7 LIMITATIONS

The current study used two schools as a case study out of many schools in Lesotho and its findings may not be generalised beyond the schools. Additionally, as a study which used qualitative approach, its findings may not be generalised to reflect experiences of all teachers.

6.8 SUMMARY

This study was set out to explore attitudes of teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education in primary and secondary schools in Lesotho. Conclusions drawn from this study are that teachers have negative attitudes towards learner diversity and their inclusion in the mainstream schools in Lesotho. The following emerged as major challenges that teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education, for example, teachers' lack of training, lack of resources, and lack of policy on inclusive education. Mainstream teachers generally lacked confidence as they attempted to include learners with diverse needs in their respective classes. There is no progress if there are challenges encountered by teachers. These problems lead to negative attitudes of the teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education in Lesotho.

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APPENDICES

THE APPLICATION LETTER FROM THE RESEARCHER TO THE PRINCIPALS

I, Motlalepula Alphonci Khumalo, am doing research with Paseka Andrew Mosia, a Senior Lecturer in the Educational Foundations Department at the National University of Lesotho, towards a Master of Education degree in Inclusive Education. We therefore request participation of your school teachers in a study entitled: Attitudes of Teachers towards Learner Diversity and Inclusive Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Lesotho.

The aim of the study is to explore teachers' attitudes towards learner differences and their inclusion in the mainstream schools. Therefore, your school has been selected because it is strongly believed that your staff can contribute immensely towards the subject matter of the study. The study requests participation of all teachers, there is no gender preference in this selection, therefore, both males and females are encouraged to participate in this study. Teachers' participation in this study will take part in group discussions of (five or more) lasting for about an hour while individual interviews will last for forty minutes for each participant.

This study will help the Ministry of Education and Training to assess its efforts towards implementing inclusive education as set out in the sector plan 2016 - 2026. It will also help regular education teachers to reflect on their practices and identify challenges they have towards accommodating learner diversity in their classes. The realisation may guide them to seek additional information about how to effectively include these students. Understanding teachers' attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education may facilitate the development of strategies to train both administrators and teachers on how to work together to efficiently and indeed successfully implement inclusive education. In doing so, the study will help MOET to effectively implement the policy of inclusive education and to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). The researcher will inform you once the study has been completed and if you wish that we can have a seminar on the findings.

Yours sincerely

Motlalepula Alphonci Khumalo

Master of Education student at NUL

THE INFORMATION NOTE FOR EDUCATORS

In this study I want to find out your views about learner diversity and how diverse learners are included in regular schools. I sincerely believe that you can tell me your views about what makes learner differences and the inclusion of such learners in the regular schools. I also want you to know if you have received any training towards inclusive education and finally, I want to know if you know the policy that mandates proper accommodation of learner diversity in your schools. This research will involve your participation in a focus group interview and individual interview that will last for an hour. You are being invited to take part in this research because I strongly feel that your experiences as a teacher can contribute much to my understanding and knowledge about how you deal with diverse learners in your school. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier. If you accept, you will be asked to take part in focus group discussions or individual interviews which involve questions that relate to your work with diverse learners.

The interviews will be tape-recorded to enable me to capture your views, but the audio will not be shared with anyone and will be used solely for the study. The information recorded is confidential and will be kept safely to be destroyed after five years. You are also free not to take part in the discussions if you feel the questions are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

There will be no direct benefit to you but your participation will be useful to other teachers in Lesotho as they will learn from your experiences in order to appropriately address learner diversity in their own contexts. The knowledge gained from this research will be shared with you before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a summary of the results and then the results will be published so that other interested people may learn from the research.

Consent Form

I _____have read the foregoing information and have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I therefore give full consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Signature:..

Date:..

THE INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of learner diversity in schools?
   a. What type of diversity do you work with at this school?
   b. How are these differences catered for in individual classes?

2. Do you know the policies that mandate you to accommodate learner diversity in schools?
   a. If yes, could you please explain them?
   b. If no, do you think there is a need for such policy?

3. What is your understanding of inclusive education?
   a. Is your school inclusive, explain?
   b. What makes you as teachers to find it challenging in working with diverse learners?
   c. What helped you in the process?
   d. What did you learn?

4. To what extent do you feel that you are trained to accommodate learner diversity?
   a. What type of training would help you to accommodate diverse learners in your classrooms?
   b. What type of facilities that can assist you to meet learners' needs?

5. How supportive is your school administration to teachers so that they can accommodate learner differences?

6. What kind of support do you get from MOET to accommodate learners with diverse needs?

LETTERS FROM THE PRINCIPALS TO THE RESEARCHER

School A

Dahon High School

P.O. Box 12

Mapoteng 250

9th September 2017

Ref to your Letter

Mr Khumalo

Dear Sir
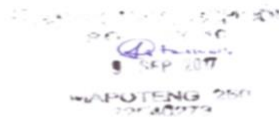
RE: Request to research at……………………………………

The ………………………………………… is in receipt of your application to do a research at this school.

After going through your request, the school has decided to give you go ahead with your research in our school. We sincerely believe that your research project will be beneficial to both of our school and the Ministry of Education and Training and the country at large.

We wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

School B

Mokoallong Primary School

P.O. Box 15

Mapoteng 250

10th September 2017

Ref to your Letter
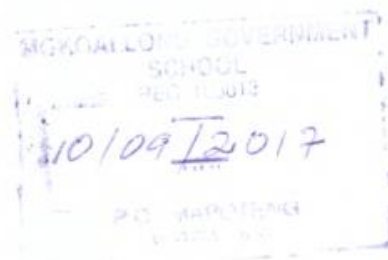
Mr Khumalo

Dear Sir

RE: Request to research at...

The .... is in receipt of your application to do a research at this school.

The school has decided to give you go ahead with your research in our school. We sincerely believe that your research project will be beneficial to both of our school and the Ministry of Education and Training and the country at large.

We wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

M.D. Majoro

APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ministry of Education and Training - Berea

16/05/2017

The Principal

_____

Berea

Dear Sir/Madam,

Introducing NUL Student Researcher to your school

Mr Motlalepula Khumalo, a Master of Education student at NUL is conducting a study on 'Attitude of teachers towards learner diversity and inclusive education". The study requires that he visits schools to conduct interviews and focal point discussions.

I therefore call upon your assistance to ensure that there is minimal disruption of classes but maximum amicable cooperation to make the research a success.

Your support will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Neo Monese
District Education Manager – Berea

P.O. Box 561, Berea 200 Tel: 22500323 / 22500235