

**Investigating teachers' experiences of teaching learners with
visual impairment at secondary school level in Lesotho**

By:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research entitled: *“Teachers’ experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment at secondary school level in Lesotho”* is my own work and that all the sources that I have cited have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not been submitted for any examination or any other qualification at any other University.

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Date: -----

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECC	:	Expanded core curriculum
ESP	:	Education Sector Plan
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	:	Individualized Education Plan
HE	:	Higher Education
LCE	:	Lesotho College of Education
LGCSE	:	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education
LIEP	:	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
LNFOOD	:	Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of Disabled
LSEN	:	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LVI	:	Learners with Visual Impairment
MoET	:	Ministry of Education and Training
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
O & M	:	Orientation and Mobility
NUL	:	National University of Lesotho
SEN	:	Special educational needs
SEU	:	Special Education Unit

UNESCO : United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPE : Universal Primary Education

USA : United States of America

VI : Visual impairment

VTs : Visiting Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment in three secondary schools in the district of Maseru. It is a qualitative case study using interpretivist paradigm. The study used Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory as a lens to direct the investigation. There were twelve teachers who participated in this study; 6 teachers from secondary school A which has long history in accommodating learners with visual impairment; three of them were support teachers and the other three were regular teachers. There were also 3 participants from secondary schools B and C respectively. All of participants were selected purposively. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data, while thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and the themes derived from direct extracts were used to present the findings. The findings reveal that teachers try to support learners with visual impairment in mainstream classrooms but all three secondary schools have no school policy that states how these learners should be supported. Although, teachers support them academically and provide concessions for them, the findings also indicate that learners with visual impairment (VI) face challenges in inclusive secondary schools. Among the challenges are, not having access to 100 percent of lessons due to inappropriate teaching methods; inadequate resources especially that enable them to learn practical subjects; inaccessible physical environment and negative attitudes from both teachers and sighted peers. The study also found that their psychosocial needs are ignored part of which results from inadequate teacher training for inclusive education. The study concludes that teachers in all the three schools lack both pre- and continuous professional development; they are inadequately trained to support learners with VI. It recommends that MoET should evaluate how Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) launched in 2019 is implemented to accommodate learners with VI in Lesotho and should also provide appropriate teaching and learning materials to schools which accommodate learners with VI. Additionally, regular teachers should work hand in hand with special education teachers, and both pre-service and in-service training should be provided for all teachers. Lastly, MoET should employ special education teachers in all schools supporting learners with VI if inclusion of learners with VI in the secondary schools is to improve.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Learners with visual impairments are a miscellaneous group with a variety of psychosocial and academic problems that need suitable care in the execution of curriculum to enable them to achieve better academically (Agesa, 2014). Nevertheless, there are learners with visual impairment (VI) who are outstanding academic achievers. According to Miyauch (2020) it is estimated that 5 percent of the total population of learners with VI are “gifted”, even though many of them are unidentified and unnoticed. Saraweera et al. (2022) also assert that recent statistics demonstrate that at least ten high performers of university graduates (learners with VI) in Sri Lanka can be ranked as super first classes. In their respective fields, such as sociology, education, law, languages, and education, they have "topped the batch." (Saraweera et al., 2022). The challenges experienced by these learners call for more teachers trained in special educational needs (SEN) who can use their skills proficiently to teach learners with disabilities at secondary level because there are greater challenges at this level than at primary level. So, teachers, as pillars of education for learners with VI, should be assisted to use teaching methodologies that can accommodate learners with VI at secondary level hence the need to investigate teachers’ experiences of instructing learners with visual impairment. This will help to determine the kind of support they need. This study investigates the experiences of teachers of learners with visual impairment at secondary level. To accomplish this, the chapter describes the concept of visual impairment and how it may act as a barrier to teaching and learning. It discusses existing provisions of education for learners with VI, which prompts thought on the issue that the present study aims to investigate. The aim of the research, objectives and research questions addressing the problem are described, as well as the significance of the study. Finally, the chapter briefly outlines the theoretical framework supporting the study and the research methodology.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1. Visual Impairment

Visual impairment is a lack of ability to process visual information due to shortage of a particular physiological purpose of the eye (Bornman & Rose, 2015). Low vision, partial sight, legal blindness, and total blindness are all used as types of sight loss (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities, 2012). Ruzickova (2016) points out that, in order to get information about the world, the most useful tool is the vision. Darge et al. (2017) indicate that, one of our main organs for assimilating information about people and their external surroundings is the visual system. According to estimates, between 75 and 90 percent when studying in the classroom comes to learners either completely or incompletely receiving stimulus through the optical path (Darge et al., 2017). In addition, Darge et al. (2017) posit that visual impairment negatively affects learners academically and such learners are not able to participate safely in sports due to visual impairment. Finally, this affects other functions, learners' self-confidence and their forthcoming professions. Thus, the implications of vision impairment on learners and their caregivers include social, psychological, and financial (Darge et al., 2017). Silva et al. (2014) add that it causes functional deficits, restricts people's ability to participate in and perform well in daily activities, and reduces their independence and quality of life. Pinquart and Pfeiffer (2012) states that due to their low capacity for learning through imitation and observation as well as their difficulty attaching meaning to concepts and ideas, learners with VI are unable to participate in learning activities.

1.2.2 Factors that affect the education of learners with visual impairment

Several studies across the globe have identified challenges that affect the education of learners with VI namely, impairment itself, an unfriendly physical environment, inadequate teacher training, learning resources, inaccessible curriculum, and large class size. Mwakyeja (2013) indicates that VI makes learners to access a reduced amount of bodily data, which leads to shortage in different skills that are learned through observation. As a result, cognitive processes including abstract thought, problem solving, and language development may all be impacted. Due to the fact that without observation, it is impossible to employ visual information to evaluate a variety of

learning circumstances that are occurring in the environment, this ultimately results in poor performance on an individual's work (Mwakyēja, 2013). A study by Alves and Duarte (2014), conducted in Brazil examining the accommodation of learners with VI in physical education classes, indicates that learners with VI are not allowed to participate in physical education events because of inadequacy of adapted materials. Similarly, findings from a study by Dakwa (2014) in Zimbabwe show that VI negatively affects learners' chance to partake in sports and other school activities. Then the learners with VI may experience problems of exclusion within the school atmosphere. The VI also affects the learners' education, socialisation, and holistic growth.

The education of learners with VI in African countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tanzania, Nigeria, Namibia and Ghana faces various challenges. Dakwa (2014) states that in Zimbabwe, accommodation of learners with VI is not effective because of inadequate materials such as brailled books and human resource to meet the needs of learners at primary school level. Kiomoka (2014) looked on the difficulties VI students encountered in Tanzanian inclusive elementary schools and similarly discovered that the learners had no Perkins braille machines, computers, talking calculators and braille textbooks including being exposed to incidents of stigmatization. In a study that investigated challenges of teaching learners with VI in Nigeria, Omede (2015) found that, due to low resources, the high expense of education, and expensive supplies needed for efficient teaching and learning, it was occasionally disputed whether or not to offer integration and equal higher educational possibilities for students with VI.

The findings from Josua's (2013) study conducted in Namibia state that even when teachers were trained in braille, they do not practise the skill because learners with VI are not accommodated in their schools. Therefore, teachers should be trained in special education needs (and that skill should be continuous) and be given opportunities to practise what they have acquired because they tend to forget if they do not have such learners in their schools. On the other hand, Madungwe (2018) investigated the opportunities for VI students to learn Mathematics at secondary schools in Zimbabwe and concludes that VI students do not have enough opportunities to learn Mathematics at the secondary level due to teachers who did not receive enough training on inclusive education and unsuitable teaching methods used for learners with VI (Madungwe, 2018). Habulezi et al. (2017) did a study in Botswana on issues inducing performance of learners with VI in science

subjects at secondary schools and revealed a variety of problems such as shortage of staff, teachers who are inadequately trained hence lack efficiency, and learners' negative attitudes. All these factors contributed to poor performance in science subjects.

Finally, Josua (2013) investigated teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education in Ghana, and found teachers bewailed challenges brought by large number of learners in one class which posed overwhelming difficulties in the teaching of learners with disabilities.

1.2.3 Education of Learners with Visual Impairment in Lesotho

Inclusive education in Lesotho is founded on a sound legal and policy framework. Mosia (2011) says that the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has attempted to normalize the education of learners with special education needs (LSEN) by approving several policy documents on special education. The Education Act of (2010) states that the MoET will ensure that a LSEN accesses education, special treatment, and attention needed by his or her situation (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2010). On the other hand, the Child Protection and Welfare Act of (2011) also emphasizes that all children with disabilities should have the right to inclusive education. Additionally, in 2018, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) was enacted with the aim of preparing LSEN to be able to work and live independently in society, as well as to contribute to the social and economic development of the country and help them participate in the Lesotho school system (MoET, 2018). However, Mosia (2019) highlights a few challenges of the LIEP namely, the policy is too general and fails to outline assessment and support protocols for learners with various disabilities. For example, it does not specify how the needs of learners with VI should be catered for in regular schools for them to develop to their academic potential.

Independent studies on inclusive education in Lesotho have shown that the MoET faces challenges in putting inclusive education into practice. These include Eriamiatoe (2013), Mosia (2014) and Ralejoe (2016) who state that the Lesotho government has not successfully made IE work. Access to adequate resources to execute IE in Lesotho schools is frequently made by organizations for disabled people (Eriamiatoe, 2013). On the other, this indicates a contradiction because Lesotho is a member of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that advocates for

IE. Mosia (2014) conducted a qualitative study on the threats to inclusive education in Lesotho among which are an assertion that inclusive education in Lesotho is not effective. Educators do not understand IE and lack resources to make it successful. Ralejoe's (2016) study on views of Lesotho secondary schools' teachers about the inclusion of learners with disabilities revealed that teachers in mainstream secondary schools had inadequate knowledge and skills of accommodating learners with VI and they also violate some inclusion practices. Chataika et al. (2012) also posit that inadequate resources, such as a lack of teacher training, insufficient support, and a lack of transparency, have all contributed to the unsuccessful execution of inclusive education in Lesotho.

Studies that specifically investigated teachers' experiences of teaching learners with VI in secondary schools are those of Tseeke (2016) and Ralejoe (2019) who found similar results regarding the barriers that restrict the effective inclusive education for learners with VI in secondary schools. Tseeke (2016) conducted a study on educators' attitudes about incorporating learners with VI in inclusive secondary schools. The study gathered information on teachers and learners' experiences as well as attitudes. The school chosen for the study was selected because of having accommodated learners with VI for a very long time in Lesotho, and 6 teachers (3 regular teachers and 3 braille transcribers) from the school were selected for the study while Ralejoe (2019) conducted a qualitative research where he engaged 8 teachers from one school in Maseru. This study focused more on the perceptions of educators regarding the inclusion of learners with VI in one secondary school. According to the study, none of the support teachers had any formal training on accommodating learners with VI. The studies by Tseeke (2016) and Ralejoe (2019) focused on one secondary school while there are two additional secondary schools catering for learners with VI hence the current study was conducted to capture experiences of teachers from at least three schools to triangulate data on teachers' experiences. Their studies focused on general teachers in the school with a long history in accommodating learners with VI while this current study focuses on three general teachers and three support teachers which two of them having a qualification in special education. Ralejoe (2019) recommended that for learners with VI to fully participate in the classroom, they must be given the opportunity to use assistive devices such as audio tapes, brailing machines, and magnifiers.

On the other hand, Tseeke (2016) suggested that MoET should formulate a clear inclusive education policy that outlines how it should be implemented. Again, the policy should provide clear guidelines on how inclusive education practices and services such as identification and assessment of disabilities, referral procedures, rehabilitation and support systems of learners with disabilities should be implemented (Tseeke, 2016). In 2018, LIEP was ratified to prepare learners with a variety of disabilities to take part in the Lesotho educational system and live freely in society and it was also implemented with the intention of allowing such learners to contribute in the nation's socioeconomic development (Ministry of Education and Training, [MoET], 2018). However, according to Mosia (2019), LIEP faces several difficulties, including the fact that the policy is too vague and does not provide assessment and assistance protocols for learners with different disabilities. For instance, it barely mentions how the needs of learners with VI should be met in regular classrooms to enable them to reach their maximum educational capabilities. Therefore, there is no single study that has investigated experiences of teachers of learners with VI in Lesotho secondary schools; hence it was essential to explore teachers' experiences in accommodating the needs of learners with VI in inclusive setting. With this study, my intention is to fill the literature gap that exists in Lesotho on supporting learners with VI in secondary schools. Teachers' knowledge in this area could help them to improve their instruction of learners with VI in inclusive settings.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Wilson (2016), learners with VI do not get the same opportunity for education and social life as other learners because VI limits their learning opportunities. Research globally highlights six contributing factors to unequal access to education for learners with VI as, impairment itself, inaccessible physical environment, inadequate teacher training, learning resources, inaccessible curriculum, and large class size. However, much has not been studied on the teachers' experiences of teaching learners with VI, hence the need for the current study in Lesotho. For learners with VI, access and inclusion in education settings is limited by facilities that are generally designed for able-bodied learners through the way curriculum is delivered in classrooms. In addition, VI creates a unique difficulty in classes that serve sighted learners as the content and assessment of the curriculum are planned for those who are sighted. For example, teaching aids are displayed as visual images in the classrooms in the form of posters, signs and

displays. This study therefore seeks to explore how teachers of learners with VI in three schools support them.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

1.4.1. Research Aim

The aim of the study is to explore teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment at secondary schools.

1.4.2 Research Objectives

The current study intends to:

1. Explore challenges learners with visual impairment (VI) encounter in their studies.
2. Describe the way teachers view their support to learners with VI.
3. Explain the extent to which teachers feel adequately trained to support learners with VI.
4. Suggest ways of supporting learners with VI efficiently in their studies at secondary school level.

1.4.3 Research Questions

1. What challenges do learners with VI encounter in their studies?
2. How do teachers view their support to learners with VI?
3. To what extent do teachers feel adequately trained to support learners with VI?
4. Which strategies can be employed to improve support to learners with VI?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teachers are the pillars of inclusive education, and this indicates their importance in making inclusive education work. Therefore, the results of the study will help educators better meet the educational needs of various groups of learners who have historically faced discrimination because of their visual impairments. Apart from that, this study is essential to show how learners with visual impairments are taught in general education settings. Additionally, this research will help curriculum developers in designing curriculum that accommodates different types of learners,

including learners with VI within the education system of Lesotho to enable them to equitably access curriculum like their peers. It sensitizes curriculum planners on the need to adapt curriculum to make it more user friendly to learners with VI and to come up with policies that meet special educational needs.

Furthermore, this study will give teachers a chance to offer their perspectives on how education is delivered in their institutions and to voice their thoughts, particularly in respect to the inclusion of learners with disabilities. The study could benefit teachers since they might be helped to learn how to use suitable methods for learners with VI to improve their learning. This study also aims to inform education stakeholders in the government of Lesotho about the knowledge and expertise teachers have about inclusion of learners with VI so that appropriate initiatives can be made to support teachers. The Examinations Council of Lesotho will also benefit from this study as they will be challenged to provide appropriate examination structures for learners with VI.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the social constructivism theory of Vygotsky as the lens to investigate teachers' experiences in teaching learners with VI. As a proponent of Social Constructivism, Lev Vygotsky developed his theory in 1968 to challenge the interpretations of Jean Piaget which generally emphasised cognitive development as a personal endeavor rather than a group effort (Martinez, 2010). Vygotsky (1978) indicated that the assessment of mental functions must be a collaborative not an independent activity. He emphasized that what learners may accomplish today through collaboration, they can achieve without help tomorrow. Vygotsky says that specific skills that are not acquired through learning and development and do not lead to further learning in other areas. He argues that we must examine the developmental levels to better understand a child's true learning and abilities, independently and dependently (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1986) argues that culture is important in shaping individuals' learning; that is learning is a two-way structure of social knowledge and principles. Vygotsky believed that to develop thought by shaping behaviour, private speech can be helpful. He further shows that in understanding situations and overcoming problems, children can employ private speech (Vygotsky, 1986). Akpa et al. (2020) add that social constructivism views learning as a social process in which learners must cooperate to engage in meaningful learning. According to social constructivism, language and culture act as the frames

through which individuals comprehend, relate to, and value reality. According to Vygotsky, social relationships are necessary for lifetime development, and social learning primarily promotes cognitive growth. (Akpan et al., 2020). They further indicate that Social Constructivism sees the social trait of learning and using discussion, interacting with others, and applying knowledge as important features of learning and as ways of achieving learning objectives. Kapur (2018) indicates that through interaction, learners improve and get experience which is essential to live positive and purposeful lives. Mohamed and Romli (2021) posit that this theory can assist learners to master language and improve their performance through social interaction among themselves. This is also applicable in the teaching of learners with VI in secondary school where social collaboration is the focal aim of a learner's achievement. In other words, learners can interact with their teachers and their peers to achieve the desired goal (Mohamed & Romli, 2021).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The section briefly describes the research methodology and methods adopted to examine the problem stated. The section also explains the research paradigm, research approach, participant selection, data collection methods and data analysis. Other aspects of the research such as ethical considerations and measures of trustworthiness will form part of this section.

1.7.1 Research Paradigm

This study used the interpretivist paradigm which recognises the responsibility of people to comprehend the world in which they live and to appreciate the unique meanings that each person attaches to it, resulting in a variety of nuanced opinions (Creswell, 2014). Goldkuhl (2012) posits that the fundamental idea of interpretivists is to acknowledge the existence of the subjective meanings in society, that is, to rebuild, understand and to avoid twisting them. In order to explain how these meanings, ideas, and plans of the members support their activities, all interpretative research tries to explore how members of a social group endorse their realities and give them significance through their participation in social processes (Goldkuhl, 2012). By employing techniques like "verstehen" (understanding) and "hermeneutic" (uncovering and interpreting meanings), interpretive researchers aim to understand how people interpret the world around them. This is done to make participants view the world from their own perspectives rather than those of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018).

Methodologically, interpretivists gain a comprehensive grasp of the phenomenon being studied by drawing variability of approaches, tools, and techniques (Denizin & Lincoln, 2011). Apart from that, Rehman and Alharthi (2016) say interpretative methodology needs the social phenomena to be seen as the perspective of the participant rather than the researchers who understand it in their context. As Rehman and Alharthi (2016) note, this study reflects the perceptions of teachers on what they understand to be challenges or opportunities of teaching learners with VI.

1.7.2 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative approach which as Creswell (2014) posits, aims to discover and understand the meaning individuals or groups attribute to human problems. Rakotsoane (2018) indicates that qualitative research is about recording, analyzing, and challenging beliefs, behaviour, and emotions while illuminating the deeper meaning and value of human behaviour. Kabir (2016) adds that qualitative data frequently does not include numbers and statistics in defining traits, and is usually descriptive in nature, meaning that the data collected is explained by using words and sentences.

According to Rakotsoane (2018), the main goal of qualitative research is to have a complete understanding of people and the social and cultural contexts in which they live. The goal of the qualitative method is to look at a pattern of meaning in relation to the gathered data. This is something called a bottom-up approach because the researcher moves from the specific to the general (Rakotsoane, 2018). Methods used in the qualitative approach are those that assure participants freedom and allow genuineness to them instead of compelling them to choose from a set of pre-determined answers (Rakotsoane, 2018). This approach often involves a smaller number of participants and uses interviews, observations and open-ended surveys to attain data of visual and word-based materials (Zohrabi, 2013). As a result, I believe that qualitative approach was more appropriate for this study as it pursues to respond to queries about teachers' experiences of teaching learners with VI in secondary schools.

1.7.3 Research Design

To get detailed knowledge about teachers' experiences in teaching learners with VI in Lesotho secondary schools, a descriptive case study design was considered suitable for this current study.

A research design is a plan that specifies the ways and conditions for gathering and interpreting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Wilson (2013) indicates that a case study is an organised technique of assessing events, gathering, analysing data and recording the findings, with the final analysis of the case explored. The problem, context, arguments, and the lessons learnt should be included in the case study (Creswell, 2014). Ebneyamini and Moghadam (2018) postulate that case study design permits a researcher to strictly study the data inside a particular perspective. According to Yin (2014) and Merriam (2009), a case or cases are chosen because of what they can disclose about the focus of interest, and depend on the intention and situations of the study. Its purpose is to find a comprehensive and complete explanation of a social result of a social element. In case study, various sources can also be used in qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews, observation and any related documents (Devi, 2020). This study focuses on three secondary schools in Maseru, targeting support teachers and regular teachers in the schools for data generation. These schools were selected because there are no other schools in Lesotho that accommodate learners with VI.

1.7.4 Participants Selection

The participants in this study were chosen using a non-probability sampling method to give data for its context. As a result, three secondary schools which offer education to learners with VI in Maseru were chosen using purposive sampling. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) posit that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure in which participants are selected because the researcher believes they can provide relevant information to the study. In other words, the researcher chooses specific components from the population that is knowledgeable about the concerned area. A decision is made regarding the questions that should be chosen to collect useful data in order to answer the research's goal, and the researcher does this basing herself on the knowledge of the subject matter (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Apart from that, in purposive sampling, I chose respondents because I believed they would give data to address the research problem (Taherdoost, 2016). Etikan and Bala (2017) state that in purposive sampling, the researcher's focus should be on those people who possess similar qualities, have the required knowledge and are keen to impart it. In this study, three secondary schools were selected purposively as they are the only secondary schools in the country which accommodate learners with VI. Therefore, the data were collected from three support teachers who have qualifications in

special education and nine general education teachers who teach learners with VI in different grades and subjects.

1.7.5 Data Collection

Kabir (2016) indicates that data collecting is the process of learning about an interesting subject in a conventional orderly way that permits participants to respond to specified research questions, test hypotheses and assess results. Teachers of three secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI in Maseru were the sources of information for this study. According to Jamshed, (2014), interview questions generally help the important aim of exploring many participants more carefully and keeping the interview engrossed on the preferred route of action. Kabir (2018) adds that interviews include asking questions and receiving answers from respondents in the study. The semi-structured interview guide gives a precise perfect set of guidelines for researchers looking to generate qualitative data, that is, when data is collected, participants are given interview guides containing open-ended questions so that they can express their skills and feelings leading to a specific behaviour using their own words regarding the area of the study (Jamshed, 2014). Hence teachers of learners with VI from the selected secondary schools were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions and share their experiences while teaching learners with VI in mainstream classrooms. The researcher interviewed each participant for approximately forty-five minutes.

1.7.6 Data Analysis

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2014), qualitative data analysis is a procedure of organising data into groups and classifying patterns and connections among the groups and it is primarily inductive. This study found thematic analysis a suitable approach to interpret and analyze data for the current study. Thematic analysis is a technique for accurately identifying, examining, and making recommendations on the structure of meaning in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is also a process for describing data, and it aids in understanding the choice of codes and the emergence of themes. (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Kiger and Varpio (2020) further show that the development of knowledge through collaborations between the researcher and the respondents is made possible by thematic analysis, which can highlight the social, cultural, and basic contexts that can affect an individual's experiences. It also reveals the socially constructed meanings. It is

also a suitable and influential technique to adopt in order to have a clear understanding of experiences and beliefs through a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

1.7.7 Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers talk of trustworthiness, which basically explains if the results can be trusted (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The point of assertion in information is analysis and approaches adopted to guarantee the worth of a study; this is what Polit and Beck (2014) define as a study's trustworthiness. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are additional excellent criteria for all qualitative research, according to Korstjens and Moser (2018). Furthermore, reflexivity is an important concept that confirms the transparency and excellence of qualitative research. As a result, the researcher applied the above models throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

1.7.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are the principles for conduct that help people in distinguishing between what is correct and incorrect. They assist to choose amongst what is right and what is not (Rakotsoane, 2018). Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) say the focus of research ethics is on what is right or wrong when gaining access to data. Approval from NUL before going to the site to collect data was sought and provided. Then permission from MoET through CEO Secondary and District Education Manager (DEM) was given. This is annexed as proof that the permission was given for the researcher to undertake the study while the permission from the school principals was also provided to conduct the study. The participants completed consent forms designed by the researcher clarifying the intention of the study after being informed that participation in the study was voluntary. This was done as the ethical norm in research. As part of good ethics, the researcher revealed all the significant information together with the possible threats of sharing information, mainly questions about how the information obtained would be treated (Vanclay et al., 2013). The researcher guaranteed participants that their experiences and opinions would be shared confidentially, and everyone had the right to revoke their participation in the study at any time without punishment and it was not compulsory to share information they felt should not be revealed or were uncomfortable sharing. Pseudonyms were used when discussing the findings to keep the participants anonymous.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores the experiences of teachers of learners with VI in three secondary schools in Maseru. Firstly, the chapter discusses principles of the social constructivism theory as the vital lens for this study. It provides information on the roles performed by parents, teachers, and peers in fostering learners' growth. From there, the chapter discusses the challenges that learners with VI may encounter in learning in mainstream classrooms, describe the way teachers view their support to learners with VI and explain the degree to which teachers feel sufficiently trained to support learners with VI. Ways of efficiently supporting learners with VI in their studies at secondary level are suggested. A critical examination of Lesotho's inclusive education system for learners with VI concludes the chapter.

2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Globally, governments are mandated to implement the sustainable development goal (SDG) which emphasizes unbiased, quality and inclusive education (UNESCO, 2017). This gives rise to paying attention to how teachers react to the needs of all learners regardless of their diversity. Thus, the way in which teachers teach should be based on their social interactions with the learners as they have different capabilities, and special attention should be given to those with disabilities such as visual impairment. Thus, schools should respect each learner's individuality and provide a basis for them to create reality from their distinctive viewpoints (Rannikmae et al., 2020).

While there are theories that inform and guide the teaching and learning process, this study has adopted constructivism theory as the theoretical lens to unpack and understand teachers' experiences in teaching learners with VI. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is said to be the father of the constructivist view. John Dewey (1859-1952) is also known to have played an integral part (Glaserfeld, 1974). Then, in 1968, Lev Vygotsky, a proponent of social constructivism, developed his theory in an effort to challenge Jean Piaget's interpretations, which tended to emphasise cognitive growth as an individual practice, instead of a collective work (Martinez, 2010). Vygotsky (1978) indicated that the assessment of mental functions must be a collaborative not an independent activity. He emphasised that what learners could accomplish today in groups, they

can achieve without help tomorrow. The constructivism theory, which Jerome Bruner first proposed in 1966 (Olorode & Jimoh, 2016), usually affirms that people acquire a specific perspective and knowledge of the world through their experiences and thoughts on those experiences. As Wnet (2004) explains that when individuals experience new things, they must reconcile them with their preceding concepts and experiences, perhaps by removing the new information as inappropriate. Under any circumstance, we are real makers of our personal knowledge. While there are different constructivist theoretical assumptions, the current study is specifically positioned along the social constructivism theory.

Social constructivism is also different from Ernst Glasersfeld's (1974) radical constructivism which pays more attention on the impression that learners and the knowledge they create do not say anything factual, but only assist us to have purpose on our environment. On further expounding the work of Vygotsky on social constructivism, Akpan et al. (2020), and Saleem et al. (2021) highlight and concur that language and culture play a significant role in intellectual development and how people perceive the world. Thus, the constructivist perspective views knowledge as what learners with VI create on their own basing themselves on the experiences they get from their surroundings (Adesanya, 2009). The social constructivist understands knowledge as what learners do cooperatively with teachers, and their visually-abled peers (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Apparently, it involves several people to have language and culture to create meanings and ultimately knowledge which is also co-created (Akpan et al., 2020). In the long run, this makes the work of teachers easier.

Additionally, Kapur (2018) highlights that knowledge is socially constructed in a different contexts and ways. In a classroom setting, knowledge could be obtained in the form of group discussion, teamwork and sharing among learners. This accounts for the reason why social constructivism is also recognized as collaborative learning since it is established on interaction (Akpan et al., 2020). This teaching method permits for a variety of groupings and collaborative approaches. The key element underlying this theory is that learners with VI are better off working in groups sharing ideas, thinking trying to find out the cause and effect, responses to questions, or generating new ideas to add to the present knowledge during discussion (Omwirhiren, 2015; Kanno, 2018).

For the current study, social constructivism theory is contextualized in the collaborative nature of learning whereby learners with disabilities such as VI develop knowledge from socialising with

sighted learners, culture, and society as a whole. Thus, learners with VI depend on their sighted peers to help them to make their constructing blocks, and learning from them. Thus, they assist them to create individual knowledge and reality.

2.2.1 Principles of social constructivist theory and disability

Vygotsky says that specific skills are not acquired through learning and development, and these skills do not lead to further learning in other areas. He argues that we must examine the developmental levels to better understand a child's true learning and abilities, independently and dependently (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1986) argues that culture is important in shaping individuals' learning; that is learning is a two-way structure of social knowledge and principles. Vygotsky believed that to develop thought by shaping behaviour, private speech can be helpful, and he further shows that in understanding situations and overcoming problems, children can employ private speech (Vygotsky, 1986). Apart from that, the Vygotskian viewpoint stresses that dialogue is fundamental to the development of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986). Therefore, this is achieved more easily as learners with VI are supported in mainstream classrooms where they get opportunity to socialize with their sighted peers. Vygotsky (1978) presents mediation as a demonstration of tools that are engaged by the child to come up with a solution to a problem or reach an objective. Donald et al. (2010) describe mediation as the process through which the learner assumes control of the cognitive resources that make the construction of knowledge probable. The interaction of a person with society contributes to mental development, thus teachers should guarantee that learning is in some manner in line with a child's developmental stage throughout the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). In this way, teachers help both visually impaired and sighted learners by facilitating interaction among themselves and encouraging them to work in groups to get similar education. According to Vygotsky (1987), working together and interacting with peers who possess greater expertise is an active technique to acquire abilities and methodologies. Vygotsky (1978) also highlights that in the process of a child's development, both children and adults are vigorous agents. Verenikina (2010) emphasises how crucial it is for teachers to get involved in their students' learning. Nevertheless, the value of the teacher-learner interaction is more significant. Hence teachers of learners with VI should be people who are well trained to ensure the success of these students' teaching and learning processes.

Additionally, according to social constructivism, knowledge is created by learners through the production of social relationships, explanations, and understanding (Vygotsky, 1962). The social constructivist approach emphasises that others must play a part in how each person constructs their knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978); that is learning, in this paradigm, is mainly a social process (Shepard, 2000). Thus, learners with VI need their sighted peers to be in the same school with them. Again, constructivist learning orientations strive to comprehend how learners develop their knowledge concepts and what these imply for comprehending effects on mental processes. The nature of constructivist learning needs teachers of learners with disability to adopt a view that such learners construct knowledge in different ways and that these variations originate from the different ways that people obtain, choose, understand and organize information (Adams, 2006).

In addition, Easen and Bolden (2005) suggest that social constructivist strategies allow learners to interact with their own peers. Thus, the utilization of peer strategies to learning provides potential answers to the issues of motivating and supporting learners with disability to slowly take more control over their own learning. They further indicate that social constructivism does not get rid of the teacher instead; it expresses teacher involvement in creating a secure atmosphere where social mediation and learner knowledge production are essential. Such orientations call for teachers of learners with VI to appreciate the prerequisites and processes that learners take on their path to learning, which in turn might effectively be translated into the socio-cultural domain. Vygotsky (1978) adds that, teachers must scaffold students' learning as part of their job duties.

Moreover, constructivist-minded teachers use learners' prior knowledge as a framework for their instruction (Duhaney & Duhaney, 2000). Consequently, when teachers introduce a new topic, they firstly need to start by discussing some related concepts that are already conversant to learners. Consequently, learners with VI could benefit significantly from this practice due to their low self-esteem and constant experiences of failure. Again, if these learners could be given opportunity to start with something they already know, acquiring new knowledge would not be so difficult for them. One more principle underlying the constructivist style is emphasis on main concepts and the connections of these thoughts within the subject area (Grobeck, 1999) and across focus areas (Ellis, 1997). Ellis (1997) suggests that teachers should emphasise connections between significant concepts, which are the key ideas for the topic, rather than discrete facts, in order to put this theory

into practice. For instance, in mathematics, teachers might put emphasis on fractions and their correlation to decimals and percentages. Ellis (1997) further recommends that for learners with disability, teachers must prioritize to teach the most central facts related to key ideas so that learners are not astounded with memorizing as many learners with disability have memory problem. Duhaney and Duhaney (2000) posit that active learning is the main aspect of a constructivist approach to teaching. They further state that when learners participate actively in the lesson, they learn and recall the facts. As a result, through active learning, learners with VI can get help to understand and remember information as their teachers involve them fully in class activities.

2.2.2 The role of social constructivist theory in teaching learners with visual impairment

Social constructivism theory is the foundation for different teaching approaches used by teachers globally (Mohamed & Romli, 2021). According to Hein (1991), improvement is measured by one's level of educational attainment that the learner can achieve under the supervision of teachers or through interaction with others. This relates to scaffolding which is defined as the support provided to a learner fully and then regularly decreased so that the learner can complete a task on their own (Slavin, 1997). Teachers will also have to modify their teaching to match it with learners' level of understanding. To find success, teachers provide guidance during group discussion, interactive exercises, and open dialogues about what learners with VI require. As a way of adding more emphasis on scaffolding, Saleem et al. (2021) view social constructivism as a teaching method that highlights learners' input, discussion, and sharing and allows some groupings and collaborative techniques. The requirements of individual students for knowledge, information, and recognition of the social nature of learning, according to Saleem et al. (2021), should point to nondiscriminatory and inclusive learning institutions.

Apart from scaffolding, teachers should encourage learners with VI to develop creativity through social constructivist standards. Thus, teachers use raw information, key foundations, and cognitive expressions to teach learners, and learners' reactions are used to inform the teaching and learning development (Saleem et al., 2021). As learners with VI become inventive, they could develop knowledge on their own, and teachers should appreciate and comment on the learners for their own achievement. Furthermore, Van de Pol (2010) observes that the scaffolding concept entails

an explanation of numerous means and tactics of teacher support given to a learner. This includes but is not limited to calibrating the essential level of support, giving response, educating, searching and cognitive shaping of the problem being resolved (Van de Pol, 2010).

Furthermore, according to Morgolis (2020), scaffolding is the way of determining a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which translates to what a learner can achieve individually relative to the knowledge they could develop with a teacher's assistance. Vygotsky's ZPD could be conceptualized as the space between the concrete level of growth as determined by solving problems independently and the level of possible improvement as determined through problem-solving under the teacher's assistance, or through interaction with other skillful peers (Morgolis, 2020). For learners with VI, academic achievement may not necessarily be easy relative to their normal counterparts, but as Hatlen (1996) observes, educating them together with the sighted peers helps them to have constructive self-development and supports their characters, and most outstandingly, their social development enables them to live independently and productively as individuals within society (Kzlaslan,2020). Hence separating the learners with VI from their peers is reviewed by Scheiman et al. (2011) as a human right abuse and it deviates from the social constructivist idea of learning as a collaborative endeavour (Akpan et al., 2020).

Additionally, the constructivist theory is used to inform teaching methodologies or models. This theory is featured in how learners construct knowledge. This perspective assumes that knowledge is based on social knowledge and all origins of an individual are related, and education institutions should be non-discriminatory and responsive to learners' divergent needs (Saleem et al., 2021). According to Chang and Schaller (2002), learners with VI discover the chance to improve assertiveness and behaviours by means of inclusion in the learning procedure and instructive applications, and in other endeavors and through interrelations with able-bodied peers. On the other hand, Kizlaslan (2020) argues that inclusive education is required to enable sighted learners to be familiar with and accept their peers with impairments well and to make chances for participating in their education.

Accordingly, social constructivism and inclusive education run concurrently since inclusive education is the inclusion of children with SEN in regular education together with the able-bodied learners who display the expected growth (Gray, 2005). This does not deviate from further understanding that inclusive education should translate into the extension of instruction of learners

with VI in regular classrooms at various times with the particular assistance of staff who have been specially trained for them (Douglas & McLinden, 2005). Therefore, this requires teachers with special training. Moreover, the required devices, and alterations of surroundings must be completed for the learner to spend at least some part of his/her learning in a mainstream classroom (Dimigen et al., 2001). As Koenig and Ashcroft (1983) observe, educating learners with VI as practically secluded from the sighted learners makes it difficult for them to adapt to regular natural life and they could find it hard to adapt to the demands of the workplace in the future.

2.2.3 Summary

Through collaborative learning and engagement initiatives by teachers as proclaimed by social constructivist theory and inclusive education, learners with VI get the opportunity to develop their views and behaviours in the educational process through cooperating with sighted learners. In this regard, accommodation of learners with VI in mainstream classrooms is required to assist teachers to better handle and accept learners with VI and to generate opportunities towards their education.

2.3 EDUCATION FOR LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

It is estimated that 19 million children are blind worldwide (Altaf et al., 2017). Within this number, there are children with VI because of uncorrected refractive errors, and 1.4 million are permanently sightless and require therapy intervention for complete psychological and special growth (Altaf et al., 2017). Wilson (2016) argues that learners with VI encounter challenges of various types which hinder them from obtaining the chance for a complete social life, as well as quality education (Wilson, 2016). Therefore, this section examines the importance of vision in learning and a conducive environment for learners with VI. It also focuses on challenges faced by learners with VI in mainstream classrooms, teachers' perceptions, teacher training and strategies to address the needs of learners with VI.

2.3.1 Importance of vision in learning

According to Wilhelmsen and Felder (2020), teaching and learning is crucial for the individuals' complete life and for private, societal and professional growth and several people rely on education for economic and other social development. To Wilhelmsen and Felder (2020), a clear vision is significant for all learning and in all academic-related tasks. Visual efforts are involved up to 70%

of the time in classrooms worldwide; therefore, even small disturbances can lead to loss of the main points. Apart from that, Wilhelmsen and Felder (2020) point out that those visual efforts are needed for important visual intuitive skills. This means the identification of entities and people, comparing, matching, reading, and writing. Difference of opinion should also go along with objects and images and teachers should discuss with learners what they see and encourage their visual observation, and visual memory in different techniques through tournaments and designed trainings with a selection of age-appropriate materials (Wilhelmsen & Felder, 2020). Raiyn (2016) adds that visual learning also improves the visual thinking of learners, which is a learning strategy where the learner will comprehend and keep information recovered by connecting thoughts, words and theories with pictures.

Furthermore, Raiyn (2016) argues that visual evidence backs up human thought developments and sustains lasting memory and that 75 percent of all information managed by the brain is a resultant of visual formats. According to Raiyn, visual information is accessible in various presentations like diagrams, graphs, cartoons, colouring books, slide shows posters and games. The above-mentioned presentations can be used by teachers to demonstrate large amounts of information in ways that one can understand easily. Several studies indicate that when information is represented both visually and verbally, it becomes easier for learners to remember it. These approaches support learners of all ages to accomplish learning objectives and to succeed academically (Raiyn, 2016).

2.3.2 Type of environment requested for learners with VI

According to Colclasure et al. (2017) the best simple accommodations that embrace a wide range of learning settings for learners with VI consist of giving favoured seating and an atmosphere that does not have physical chaos, meaning learners with VI should be placed in an area towards the front depending on their needs. Direct light and gazes are not user friendly to the majority of these learners, therefore avoiding sitting next to windows and excessive bright lighting is regularly preferred for them. Conversely, giving sufficient lighting is also significant for some individuals with VI (Colclasure et al., 2017). Sefotho and Ferreira (2020) add that a user-friendly physical environment in the teaching of learners with VI is of great significance. There should be numerous aspects that can be considered and adapted. For instance, low vision learners should be placed in the front row of the class. Nevertheless, a learner who has a loss of vision in one eye could choose

to be placed to one side of the classroom but during group discussions, it is suitable for learners with VI to be seated closer to the teacher to get access to learning experiences and opportunities similar to their peers. Sefotho and Ferreira (2020) further indicate that some learners might want a personal desk lamp to help with an even light source. Teachers should confirm that a light in passageways and on staircases is sufficient. Apart from that, learners might need an extra writing table together with extra storage in the classroom, to place their devices and huge braille and large print materials (Sefotho & Ferreira, 2020).

Moreover, Colclasure et al. (2017) posit that protection is the topmost preference for all learners in the learning atmosphere. Learners with VI have extra well-being fears as they may possibly not be able to effectively see physical threats. Teachers should ensure that traffic paths are clear and available all over the area, along with the absence of trip threats like extension cord that learners with VI are uninformed of. The usage of different coloured tape to form traffic footpaths, elevation changes, and threats could be useful, but this depends on the degree of the impairment and the individual needs of learners (Colclasure et al., 2017). Sefotho and Ferreira (2020) state that if any furniture is shifted, learners with VI should be made aware and be informed about the new arrangements. On the other hand, Wilhelmsen and Felder (2020) say that to maintain the development of vision, learners require surroundings and activities which fuel their senses, as well as their visual sense, at an early age.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (VI)

In several countries all over the world, the opportunity of providing the educational quest of the learners with VI is not easy. Mwakyeja, (2013) says when teachers are unable to create suitable processes which are crucial for the establishment of education of the learners with VI, this will lead to various problems. Research found that the necessary support and resources are not available. The debates also focus on difficulty in studying science and mathematics, poor socio-economic background, environmental challenges, negative attitude of the community and cost of education and costly teaching materials.

2.4.1 Accessibility of resources

According to Fast (2018), in the United States of America, learners with VI have been supported in mainstream classrooms. Before the 1975 enactment of P.L.94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, currently acknowledged as IDEA, the academic achievement of learners with VI in regular schools was not assured. Johnson-Jones (2017) argues that even though IDEA promises learners with VI a proper unrestricted education, these learners still encounter several academic problems. He further emphasises that learners with VI do not have qualified teachers, and orientation and mobility professionals to give guidelines to learners (Johnson-Jones, 2017). Opie (2018) also found that learners with VI have subject teachers who have insufficient knowledge concerning vision impairment and limited access to professional Visiting Teachers (VTs). This becomes difficult for learners with VI to be accommodated in inclusive settings.

Otyola et al. (2017) and Sikanku (2018) postulate that learners with VI do not have equipment such as laptops and computers, Perkins braille machines and textbooks in braille format. This means that the process of teaching and learning for learners with VI becomes difficult without those resources, as a result, they cannot succeed academically. Mwakyeja (2013) states that learners with VI, who are from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds frequently, cannot afford to buy materials for themselves due to lack of funds. The parents from these societies are usually uneducated and do not have capabilities to improve their children's education. Therefore, they do not provide resources and other materials for them, then teachers fail to support such learners properly (Mwakyeja, 2013).

In addition, Belay and Yihum (2020) conducted a qualitative study in Ethiopia on the challenges and opportunities of learners with VI in inclusive education. They indicate that library accessibility is one of the most significant aspects which make teaching and learning activities in the school effective. But the study also revealed that learners with VI do not like the library specifically when it is time to prepare for their examinations and when doing homework (Belay & Yihum, 2020). A library is helpful to educators and learners by offering resources which provide additional knowledge of varied matters. With reference to the accessibility of special resources, Belay and Yihum (2020) reported inadequate supply of required special resources such as audio recorders and handouts, modules and other braille materials in the library. This makes such learners to feel excluded.

2.4.2 Accessibility of Curriculum

According to Fast (2018), conditions in mainstream classrooms are unsatisfactory and inconvenient for learners with VI hence they cannot excel academically. He further emphasises that the human and basic special needs of learners with VI to education and appropriate accommodation are restricted (Fast, 2018). A study by Butler et al. (2017) paid more attention on comprehension of graphical challenges (obstacles) that are not met by learners with VI. Besides that, they also focused more on the use of visual representation of information which may include maps, tables, charts, plots and diagrams since they form a very important learning experience for learners. The results revealed that a key obstacle to several learners with VI is to access the graphical materials (Butler et al., 2017). This means that learners with VI cannot study subjects such as Geography, Mathematics and Science; therefore they do not access the same curriculum as to their peers. Whitburn (2014) conducted a study in Australia on the experiences of learners with VI, where five learners were participants. The findings revealed that learners with VI were treated unfairly in mainstream schools, and they felt discriminated against.

According to Temesgen (2018), the other challenge that learners with VI face is related to lesson modification. The study revealed that pictures and diagrams are drawn by teachers on the chalkboard, and they place charts on the classroom walls as well, but they show disregard for the requirements of learners with disabilities in that they do not give enough explanations on their teaching aids for easy access for learners with VI. A study by Belay and Yihum (2020) revealed that the most difficult subjects for learners with VI are chemistry, physics, and mathematics because they often require visual imitation. Mubunga and Penda (2019) add that learning science involves rigorous skill in the usage of the senses, mainly the eyes to be a good viewer. Nevertheless, learners with VI struggle to use their eyes because teachers do not adjust their teaching to accommodate such learners (Mubunga & Penda, 2019).

Moreover, Omed (2015) indicates that many mathematical, geographical and scientific concepts such as colours, rainbows, and sky in higher grades must be taught with modified materials because some are completely visual. Some concepts such as a building, mountain ranges, and oceans are too huge to experience fully. Other objects such as small insects, snowflake, or an item under an optical microscope are too small to understand through touch. Some objects cannot be explored

through touch. For instance, wild animals or toxic substances. Therefore, these kinds of experiences can impede social and academic development (Omed, 2015).

Furthermore, Butler et al. (2017) revealed that learners with VI encounter problems on diagrams and arrangement of letters or words and found that over 70% of them did not have the enlarged materials. This study indicates that insufficient light in the mainstream classrooms affects learners with VI while brightness from reflections also affects other learners who are sensitive to light. Maindi (2018) shows that this brightness could firstly bring uneasiness and, where surface glare is high, it can disable vision. Therefore, it becomes difficult for teachers to help these learners.

In addition, a study by Opie (2018) on the experiences of learners with VI in mainstream secondary schools in Victoria found that learners with VI encountered different challenges in mainstream settings. This includes, limited Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) which is not easily accessible for learners with VI (Opie, 2018).

2.4.3 Environmental Barriers

Mitchell (2017) views inclusive education in Africa as segregating and unsatisfying for learners with special needs as the required aid for relevant inclusion is insufficient. Otyola et al. (2017) conducted qualitative research investigating the challenges faced by learners with VI in Uganda. The findings revealed that the learners have a list of problems around the university surroundings which occur during lectures, and these relate to mobility, daily livelihood and social issues. All these ultimately affect their school progress. Respondents with VI have described the existence of environmental limitations in going from one classroom to another as a challenge (Otyola et al., 2017). In connection with this, Temesgen (2018) indicates that learners are unable to move from playgrounds to buildings safely due to the presence of environmental barriers. There were haphazardly erected poles, open ditches and heaps of stone which were discarded during the previous constructions and these hinder learners with VI to learn with their peers and contribute socially in events outside the classrooms (Temesgen, 2018). Similarly, Omed (2015) indicates that learners with VI do not access education in several institutions of higher learning; there are factors such as complex storey buildings with spiral staircases, uncovered gullies, bad restroom and bumpy surroundings which restrict free movement of these learners within the school.

Results from studies by Sikanku (2018) and Belay and Yihum (2020) found that the actual surroundings and conditions were not user friendly for learning, and accommodation was inadequate for learners with VI. They could not go from one place to another without assistance. The confinement of the housing area affects the mobility of those with VI because it was full of sighted learners during recess time. Another barrier was caused by huge trees which limited their mobility on their own from class to class (Sikanku, 2018; Belay & Yihum, 2020). These became obstacles to the mobility of learners with VI in the school compound as they encountered unexpected objects which might hurt them leading to injury requiring medical attention, which in turn could prompt the teacher to leave other learners and take them to hospital (Sikanku, 2018; Belay & Yihum, 2020). On the other hand, a qualitative study by Hewett, Douglas and McLinden (2017) on the creation of comprehensive learning environment for learners with VI in Higher Education institutions (HEI) found that HEIs made some modifications to support learners with VI access education but there was shortage of protective adaptations which still created limitations for such learners.

2.4.4 Attitudes towards learners with VI

According to Otyola et al. (2017), learners with VI face several social problems like being undermined by their peers and educators as people who cannot perform well academically and hence get discriminated against. Another challenge faced by learners with VI in the views of university administrators relates to difficulty during registration which at times is on internet or online which they cannot access. Even some of their peers have negative attitudes towards them by not rendering any assistance to them (Otyola et al., 2017).

In addition, Temesgen (2018) conducted a study in Ethiopia and found that learners with VI were receiving poor attention from directors. When the learners requested information on extra funding and provision of braille equipment, the principals normally told them there was no budget for that. Most learners with disabilities were from rural and underprivileged families. Therefore, the provision of essential learning materials is not easy for them. The study also found that the schools did not handle learners with VI the same way they did with sighted learners and did not even cater for their special needs. There was a shortage of resources such as slate and stylus, abacus, white-cane and tutors for them, but their sighted peers were provided with chalk, chalkboard, ink printed

books and all other things (Temesgen, 2018). A study conducted in Nigeria by Omed (2015) revealed that educational materials for learners with VI are not produced locally unlike in the advanced countries such as Japan, Australia, and the USA. They only manage to attain some of these materials through the assistance of governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Sikanku (2018) also asserts that there are some barriers during dictation of notes in lectures since these learners cannot see what correct spellings are written on the chalkboard by the lecturer.

According to the study of Khochen-Bagshaw (2013), one of the requirements for learners with VI to be admitted into higher education (HE) is to have certain skills that will allow them to manage the demands of HE. These include ICT skills, time management, organizational and communication skills, as well as a sensible level of independence.

Moreover, Mwakyeja (2013) postulates that learners in inclusive schools are assessed by tools and equipment which are not flexible and adaptable. Learners' assessment is based on their performance in class tests and homework instead of being assessed based on their individual capability and special educational needs. In most cases a normative assessment is preferred in these classes. In several countries, this has been the main obstacle concerning inclusive education (Mwakyeja, 2013).

2.5 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LEARNERS WITH VI

Educational support for learners with VI centres on mobility training, written policy on including learners with VI, a conducive environment and resources. Debates also focus on accessibility of teaching and learning resources in schools to enable learners with VI to learn independently. On the other hand, research seems to suggest that these learners do not have enough support. This is happening in most cases but is an even bigger challenge for most schools in developing countries.

Dagnew (2013) and Lewis (2009) found that insufficient school support for learners with disabilities is a widespread problem. In both mainstream and special schools for learners with SEN, there was shortage of staff, inadequate resources, and generally the schools were in urban areas (Dagnew, 2013). In addition, Temesgen (2018) found that in primary schools, learners with visual disabilities did not have access to both financial and material support from their own schools except

the grant offered by the regional bureau. Findings by Niyisabwa et al. (2018) revealed that, only adjusted contrast chalkboards and other materials such as visual devices and large beamed hats were available in all seven regular universal primary education (UPE) schools. There were no textbooks written with large print, thick pens and there was shortage of simple braille materials in all the ten participating schools. The study further found that learners with VI were not eligible for comprehensive eye care facilities provided by a project located where the study was conducted, hence they were denied access to optical devices in regular UPE classrooms. This project offered eye care facilities only to learners with VI registered in recognized integrated schools excluding the regular UPE schools. The eye care facilities offered by this project incorporated diagnosis of eye conditions, treatment, provision of optical devices, and equipping teachers with skills to assist learners on how to use the optical devices (Niyisabwa et al., 2018).

A study by Belay and Yihum (2020) on the challenges and opportunities for learners with VI in inclusive education found that most of the teachers do not support learners with VI. They never worked with them, except providing them with braille, slate, and stylus; they were never given special support in school. Learners with VI were treated like sighted learners by most teachers. They further reported that all types of learners (learners with VI and learners without impairment) who attend in the same grade level write the same examination. While the able-bodied learners write examinations in the classroom, learners with VI take examinations on the passages. Therefore, the chances of being disturbed by the noise are very high. The school never organized examination classrooms and extra time for learners with VI (Belay & Yihum, 2020). On the other hand, it has been indicated by Habulezi and Phasha (2012) that a school that was used as their research site provides learners with VI with extra 25 percent of the time given during examinations. Rest periods were provided for learners, although it depended on how severe their disabilities were. The invigilators for learners with VI were special teachers, who were knowledgeable in braille to attend braille queries, give necessary assistive devices to learners and start to transcribe immediately after the learners had finished writing (Habulezi & Phasha, 2012).

According to Habulezi and Phasha (2012), while other learners are seated towards the back of the classroom due to their long sightedness, learners with VI are positioned in the front row closer to the teacher to maximize reception. Apart from that, learners with albinism are protected from any

form of light by placing them next to the wall because they are photophobic. They further point out that class sizes in classrooms which have learners with VI have been reduced to 40. Learners with VI were also permitted to have afternoon study separately from other sighted learners. The purpose was to provide extra support which mainstream classrooms do not offer. Sighted learners help them with the dictation of notes and sometimes teachers help over the weekends particularly during examinations (Habulezi & Phasha, 2012). Manyumwa's study (2018) revealed that certain lecturers and other employees of a university's support service provide social support which makes these learners feel accepted and secure. On the other hand, a study by Bodaghi et al. (2016) explained how the absence of a written policy regarding the social support should have made learners with VI fearful that the library employees might be irritated if they were in need of assistance.

Moreover, Fast (2018) found that that early childhood teachers who support learners with VI in their classrooms can invite a teacher of students with VI and an orientation and mobility (O&M) instructor to help with technology and expanded core curriculum (ECC) skill that general teachers cannot handle (Fast, 2018). Habulezi and Phasha (2012) postulate that learners with VI receive orientation and mobility in their first arrival at school. They are helped in groups but later individually. They are taken to crucial places such as toilets and the library. This task is performed by the Orientation and Mobility instructor. Nevertheless, the instructor indicated that there were insufficient assistive devices like white canes among others which are obtained after a very long time because of the governmental procedures followed in purchasing equipment for the schools. A request was also made for the laboratory to have scanners and computers that were modified. In addition, teachers support learners with VI by making special alterations to the teaching and learning materials offered by the Department of Education; however the modifications were not applicable in practical subjects like Mathematics and pure sciences (Habulezi & Phasha, 2012). Nees and Berry (2013) confirms that the learning procedure is more manageable for learners with VI because of the use of assistive technology. A few studies also point out that the educators' and support services' social assistance promotes the development of peer relationships (West et al., 2004), the development of approaches of recognition (Bodaghi et al. 2017; Manyumwa, 2018), and resolving problems in challenging social circumstances (Datta & Palmer, 2015). Conversely, the majority of learners with VI are sometimes not pleased with the social care they get (Bodaghi

et al., 2017) and as a result, they recommend that there should be teachers' training and promotion on disability awareness.

According to Fast (2018), an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is an authorized manuscript intended to pay more attention to the education program of a child with SEN, as well as learners with VI, within school settings. The study found that inside the IEP, children aged between 3–21 are assisted within native school platforms by the people employed inside these educational programs. There are also educational professionals who are specially qualified to assist learners with VI directly. Apart from supporting these learners, these professionals also work hand in hand with teachers, administrators and families, to make individualized plans intended to meet the distinctive needs of learners with VI (Fast, 2018).

Laskar (2017) conducted a research in India and Japan to investigate their system of educating children with blindness. The study found that learners with VI are supported in Tokyo; all three schools that accommodate these learners had braille lines inscribed on the floor. Learners were made to follow the braille lines while walking. This helped in their mobility training. There are also some stairs to reach their classrooms and the schools had handrails not only along the walls of the staircase but also along the walls of the entire school. This allowed learners with VI to identify their classrooms independently. Apart from that, learners with VI are given opportunity to participate in extra mural activities, for instance, they run relay races, small hurdle races, and participate in long jump and high jump but, they were not taught discus, javelin throw and swimming (Laskar, 2017).

According to Heyer (2015), people with VI are employed in different places in Japan due to their role in specialized categories associated to healing, massage, and music ever since the Edo Period (circa 1603). Heyer (2015) revealed that from the time of the Second World War, a generation of people with VI rights advocates ensured that there are schools and universities that accommodate learners with VI, to assist them to have the same professions as their peers. However, the Japanese disability rights association has slowly moved away from these organizations. The attention is now on the same accessibility of public spaces and services, together with integration into the “mainstream” education structure (Heyer, 2015).

2.6 TEACHERS' TRAINING

Teachers' training is similarly vital in the educational process at all stages (Belay & Yihum, 2020). Hence teachers can properly plan to meet the needs of learners with VI with sufficient knowledge, support, and acknowledgement of the unique needs of these learners. In this section, research centres on insufficient training of teachers to accommodate learners with VI. Debates also focus on lack of appropriate teaching methods, skills and inclusive teaching itself. Teachers of learners with VI also do not know braille and are incompetent to use some of the devices that support these learners.

2.6.1 Inadequate training of teachers

A qualitative study conducted in Ethiopia on the school challenges of learners with VI by Temesgen (2018) revealed that teachers do not have sufficient competence to teach learners with VI due to inadequate training. Similarly, Belay and Yihum (2020) reported that most of teachers are not trained in special education and concluded that this has contributed to poor performance of learners, particularly those with VI. They further found that general teachers have unsuitable skills and knowledge necessary to meet the various demands of learners with VI. According to the information collected from both sources, the teachers did not have enough skills to motivate and inspire learners with VI as well as comprehend their difficulties throughout the teaching and learning process. This entails endorsing learning and enhancing events, using different teaching methods, and adapting teaching to accommodate all learners. Teachers only pay attention to sighted learners. It is difficult for them to handle and teach learners with VI. For instance, it was found that they use words like "The table indicates", "Look at page...." when teaching in the classroom. Those words indicate that the teachers did not have skills to teach learners with VI (Belay & Yihum, 2020). Temesgen (2018) adds that it is also important to express how inadequate training of teachers has affected the provision of education for these learners. UNESCO (2005) also realized that specifying the policy of a school concerning learners with SEN and producing teachers who are well-trained is of great importance because it ensures quality education for learners with SEN. Thus, the lack of teacher training adds more challenges on the attainment of education by learners with VI (Mwakyjeja, 2013).

2.6.2 Inadequate knowledge of braille

A study by Niyisabwa et al. (2018) found that most of teachers in established integrated schools had braille skills, but teachers in all the seven regular UPE schools did not know braille. They further found that all these teachers who had knowledge of braille only know Grade I English braille and three quarters were experts in simple mathematics braille (Niyisabwa et al., 2018).

Learners would encounter some challenges in the classroom, specifically when teaching strategies are inappropriately used and if teachers have insufficient skills and capacities to handle learners with VI. (Mwakyeya (2013) found that in some institutions of higher learning and inside the mainstream classrooms, the teaching techniques are not properly used. Teachers do not have suitable skills to handle the following: braille materials, tactile diagrams and maps. The teachers themselves face challenges of inclusive teaching (Mwakyeya, 2013). On the other hand, Sikanku (2018) conducted a study in Ghana and the results found that teachers are supposed to be trained to assist them to cater for the needs of learners with VI. For instance, teachers do not only need in-depth knowledge of the braille codes but also to understand the approaches for the development of reading ability. This matter emphasises a significant concern regarding the skills that teachers need to effectively support learners with VI in inclusive settings (Sikanku, 2018). Otyola et al. (2017) argue that most teachers are not trained as special needs teachers, not trained in braille language and even interpreting braille instruction. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to accommodate learners with VI in regular schools.

2.7 INTERPRETING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

There should be strategies employed in order for classroom interaction to be beneficial for all learners. Erbas (2017) says that integrating approaches into the learning atmosphere results in an improvement in the rate of engagement and participation, both intellectually and socially.

Furthermore, Maindi (2018) posits that for learners with VI, time restrictions need to be stretched so that they can be provided with enough time to search for the appropriate resources visually and tactually before getting the item directions, particularly when the learner is requested to point or label things. Apart from that, teachers of Physics should assume an inductive experimental method when teaching the subject to learners. The scripts, work sheets, directions and in-depth practical

procedures should be given to learners in advance before the practical or the lesson so as to improve the effectiveness of this method (Maindi, 2018). Teachers are expected to detect and consider learners' capabilities when doing Science practical lessons in an inclusive classroom like tactile activities, residue vision and the intellectual level. In this case, capabilities of learners with VI will inform teachers about the nature of curriculum adjustment for practical science lessons in various Science subjects. The curriculum for learners with VI needs to have the medium of instruction in braille and prescribed textbooks should also be in braille. Again the curriculum stresses additional time of 25 percent provided to such learners during examinations due to the fact that the principles of the curriculum and the nature of Science practical instructions need that learners with VI are educated utilising the remaining senses (Mubanga & Penda, 2019). Fast (2018) adds that classroom teachers should treat learners with VI in a different way from their sighted peers.

Encouraging self-reliance and decision making from the initial stage will be helpful. Teachers should not be hesitant to provide VI learners with an additional time to study and explore. Conversely, Sahasrabudhe and Palvia, (2013) indicate that in order to help learners with VI to understand the concepts of geometry, the following are very important: enlarged diagrams, a chessboard, a woolen thread to make a raised tactile coordinated plane, use of spreadsheet applications and row and column structure while spur wheel is used to draw geometric information. They further indicate that when the learners with VI face challenges in solving mathematical problems, then they are assisted by math slate, Taylor frame, and abacus or talking calculator. In accounting problems, then the usage of spreadsheet application installed software called screen reader is used for learners to get support. These resolution approaches are very effective and useful to learners with VI, specifically when they are motivated towards learning, and have enough understanding of how to use those devices and when they are attentive when the teacher is teaching in the classroom (Sahasrabudhe & Palvia, 2013). Mubanga and Penda (2019) argue that if multisensory learning methods are used, learners with VI will learn Science practicals better, for instance, making use of sense of hearing, touch and taste together with the learning techniques such as independent learning approach, collaborative and dependent style of learning. Teachers' responsibility is to assist learners attain skills and information by interacting with their peers in the classroom and also inspiring them to use the learning approaches they prefer. As a result, teaching

techniques should be adapted to accommodate the learning approaches of learners so as to create meaningful learning for such learners (Mubanga & Penda, 2019).

In addition, Mapepa and Magano (2018) state that the main responsibility of teachers is to inspire learners by using suitable teaching techniques and lively learning styles. Effective teaching and learning in schools are considerably aided by learner-centered methodologies. Therefore, learners with VI can be advised to work hand in hand. Temesgen (2018) adds that to understand inclusion, the use of flexible teaching-learning approach is also required. He further indicates that accessing the curriculum is so far more than merely supporting a learner with disability in mainstream classrooms, that is, the efficient way of organising the classroom, and also takes into consideration the arrangement of teaching aids when educating learners with disability (Temesgen, 2018). Habulezi and Phasha (2012) argue that accommodation of learners with VI needs a modified curriculum and proper teaching techniques as well as collaboration among teachers and learners and among learners themselves.

Furthermore, assistive devices such as magnifiers, microscope, telescope and lenses are useful for viewing regular print materials whereas other learners with low vision need their work to be translated into braille. Modern copy machines can be used to make large print materials while long texts like novels might also be accessible on audiotapes (Maindi, (2018). In a similar way, Sikanku (2018) points out that barriers that hinder the inclusion of learners with VI can be removed by using assistive devices. Learners with VI can become independent in learning. He further shows that the accessibility of Perkins brailers will assist learners with VI to write quickly compared to when they use frame and stylus and also the close circuit television will be helpful for partially impaired learners when reading printed materials by increasing the size of the font. Tape recorders reduce the amount of work done by learners with VI because they enable learners to record lessons (Sikanku, 2018). Sahasrabudhe and Palvia (2013) suggest that it will be very helpful when one has difficulties reading the printed material to use the following: braille, magnifying glass, and human reader, audio cassettes, scanning and reading software. Apart from that, the presence of peer narrator can help learners with VI to acquire written information on the whiteboard. Another strategy is to make these learners to sit closer to the whiteboard, in order to understand by paying attention to what teachers are saying. Again, when the learners are unable to capture what is written

on the board, a laptop which has screen reading software can be used and if they face some challenges when they write examinations, they can be provided with a human scribe and magnifying glass (Sahasrabudhe & Palvia, 2013). Similarly, Andrew (2015) adds that the teaching of the learners with VI involves adequate resources, both human and material such as personnel development, talking books, optical aids, optacon, Perkins brailers, writing frame, typewriters embossed braille machine and others.

Mwakyeya, (2013) suggests that the learning atmosphere within educational institutes should be user friendly for learners. The classrooms should have adequate equipment such as tables, heating and cooling equipment and teaching and learning aids. Learning among students can be improved by accessibility of appropriate resources; conducive surrounding and facilities. Andrew (2015) argues that the learning atmosphere should not have architectural obstacles and environmental destruction. There should be sufficient mobility facilities and assistive devices like guide dogs for the blind, the laser cane, white cane, the path sounders, the sonic guide, and mowat sensor which are all essential in teaching learners with VI. In contrast, Fast (2018) suggests that teachers should keep chairs, tables and particular learning areas in their original places. This can help learners with VI with their classroom placement and setting of preferred seats within the surroundings. Learners should be notified if the furniture is shifted and be given chance to explore and become satisfied with their environments (Fast, 2018). Fast (2018) further indicates that there are several aspects that can also be taken into account when preparing a conducive learning environment for learners with VI. There should be proper lighting specifically for low vision learners or learners who are sensitive to light and also, the sound inside classrooms can be adapted to guarantee that all learners can differentiate class time from break time.

Belay and Yihum (2020) conducted a qualitative research on the challenges and opportunities of learners with VI in inclusive education. The study revealed that there must be a well-equipped resource room with the required teaching aids to provide the facilities for learners with special needs. The training for teachers is also crucial as it nurtures teachers' approaches and provides them with sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to work with learners with VI. Teachers should receive the proper training to advance their understanding of various teaching techniques in order to handle the various learning demands and educate in conformity with their capabilities.

(Belay & Yihum, 2020). Temesgen (2018) argues that to ease the feeling of being incapable that teachers may have, there should be creation of awareness concerning the kinds and needs of learners with VI. In addition, sufficient training for both teachers and head-teachers could also develop a constructive attitude concerning learners with VI. Two different studies also suggested staff training and disability awareness as the required conditions for the development of collective support (Bodaghi et al., 2016; Bodaghi et al., 2017). Fast (2018) adds that teachers who have learners with VI should be assisted by professionals who have been trained to work with such learners and have qualification in inclusive education. These professionals will confirm that all learners in the inclusive setting are safe. Again they will develop positive self-confidence and have high expectations for all learners by using peer interactions. On the other hand, Sikanku (2018) points out that those general classroom teachers should also be equipped with some basic braille skills so that they can support learners with VI in their classrooms when special teachers are absent. Parents and teachers must work cooperatively in inclusive classrooms to plan the child's individualised education plan. As a result, parents can assist teachers to learn about their children with VI because parents give crucial information about their children to teachers (Sikanku, 2018).

According to Fast (2018), learners with VI must learn through experiences meaning that they must do things so as to master the skill. They should use their hands as tools to gather the information they need without the use of the eyesight as their crucial sense. Teachers should permit them to smell, feel, and move objects using all of their senses and should also provide multiple inputs for learning, that is, they should be provided with actual objects to touch, hear, and smell when completing lessons. A teacher could bring a portion of peeled fruit so that they can smell and taste. This could be a greatly richer practice than watching a photo or touching a model (Fast, 2018).

2.8 INCLUSIVE LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN LESOTHO

Lesotho has been trying to practise inclusive education lately but there is inadequate research which focuses on teachers' experiences in teaching learners with VI. An overview of the legal policy framework will be done in this section. In this regard, the Lesotho education system is anchored on complete legal and policy framework but there is still a lot that needs to be proven as to how this assists learners with VI. Some policy documents on special education suggest that MoET has attempted to normalize the education of learners with special educational needs (LSEN)

over the years. Lastly, inclusive education and how learners with VI are taught in Lesotho will also be discussed.

2.8.1 Over view of legal and policy framework

The Education Act of (2010) Section 4. (2), (b) part II, says that MoET has devoted itself to ensuring that learners with special educational needs are offered exceptional care, education and the attention which is essential for their conditions (MoET, 2010). In 2011, the government of Lesotho presented the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (2011), whose purpose was to ensure protection concerning access to education for all Basotho learners irrespective of their infirmities. Hence, Section 11, (1) has mentioned the child's right to access education. Again, Section 13 continues that a child with a disability has a right to education and teachers should be trained to assist such learners to appreciate a full life and attain the ultimate stage of independence and social assimilation. After that, the Education Sector Plan of (2016) together with the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) (2018) were also introduced. The Education Sector Plan (2016) was introduced to provide all schools that have learners with special educational needs with relevant teaching and learning materials, such as brailled textbooks, stylus and slates and to support learners with VI to obtain proper skills of life and access to better education. Additionally, the LIEP of (2018) was put into place in order to make it easier for learners with disabilities to be fully included in the Lesotho's school systems, which in turn makes them to work and be independent and partake positively in terms of social and economic growth. As a results, this will enable inclusion of learners with VI and assist teachers to know how accommodate them.

The Lesotho government has unveiled a great initiative regarding the support in educating learners with disabilities as well as learners with VI in mainstream schools, despite the fact that these policies were originally presented with the aim of providing access to education for learners with disabilities in Lesotho in the Education Sector Plan (2016) and the Children's Protection and Welfare (2011). According to Eriamiatoe (2013), the government of Lesotho is to ensure that children with different impairments are supported in the general educational system and they get similar education as their able-bodied peers. Nevertheless, in the Education Act of (2010) and the LIEP of (2018), there is no section that states how learners with VI should be accommodated to assist them to reach their full capabilities in inclusive settings so that they will function and live

autonomously in the society and participate confidently to both social and economic growth as a means of supporting inclusive education in Lesotho. In connection with this, Tseeke (2016); Ralejoe (2016) say MoET also contributes in hindering enactment of inclusive education in Lesotho. Mosia (2019) also emphasises that LIEP is unclear since it does not state how assessment and support protocols for learners with various disabilities should be handled in regular schools so as to improve their academic work.

2.8.2 Inclusive education in Lesotho

Independent studies on inclusive education in Lesotho have shown that MOET is struggling to implement inclusive education. For instance, Matlosa and Matobo (2007) point out that in Lesotho, learners, regardless of being disabled or not, are treated the same even though the disabled require special attention and equipment. This is because there are no teachers at secondary schools who received extensive training to accommodate learners with disabilities in Lesotho (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007). Research indicates that the enactment of some goals of the policy statement was hindered because of inadequate resources (both human and material) for inclusive education in Lesotho (Eriamiatoe, 2013 & Mosia, 2014). Another hurdle that prevents the active adoption of inclusive education is bullying. It includes insults, teasing and threats, and it limits the victims from participating completely in their education because of the threats made by their tyrants (Lekena, 2016). Therefore, it is difficult for MoET to execute inclusive education effectively when the general education system is unable to deliver quality education to all learners (Eriamiatoe, 2013). Similarly, Shelile and Hlalele's (2014) study also revealed that MoET does not offer continuous professional training for teachers because of shortage of funds, and the huge workloads for teachers. The study mentions that the MoET should make a program for continuous professional staff development. They continue to note that the MoET does not know the difference between inclusive education and integration. This has been the reason why teachers are poorly trained in schools that accommodate learners with disabilities (Shelile and Hlalele, 2014). In line with Tseeke (2021), the study found that secondary school teachers who accommodate learners with VI have inadequate knowledge about inclusive education. They become confused, demotivated and frustrated to deliver content for learners with VI in inclusive classrooms. Hence, teachers should be trained to have skills on inclusive education because this might assist them to formulate proper teaching approaches for learners with VI and improve the academic performance of such learners. Adwan and Khatib (2017) postulate that inadequate training in inclusive

education leads to incompetent teachers who are unable to handle different learning aptitudes of learners with VI in their classrooms. Therefore, this leads to teachers' negative attitude in supporting learners with VI in mainstream classrooms.

2.9 TEACHING LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN LESOTHO

A few more studies specifically talk about how the education of learners with VI is provided for. Matlosa and Matobo (2007) found out that the kind of services that are available to the learners with VI at both National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lesotho College of education (LCE) are not satisfactory, though the institutions are making attempts to accommodate them. At the NUL, the computers are available even though they are not enough but at LCE, there are no computing facilities for such learners. In both institutions, learners with visual impairments had no guides to different places and the study revealed that lecturers are not trained to teach them. Mosia (2014) says that learners with VI encounter similar challenges in both primary and secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI. These learners are included physically but they are not provided with brailled textbooks, and there is a delay of tests and examination feedback for these learners. They get it two months after other learners received theirs. The study found that some teachers use teacher-centred methods which exclude learners with VI in their lessons; they usually forget that they exist in the classroom (Mosia, 2014). As a result, the focus of this study is on examining teachers' experiences of teaching learners with VI in secondary schools.

Matlosa and Matobo, (2007); Mosia and Phasha (2017) as well as Mosia and Phasha (2020) conducted qualitative studies on learners with VI but focus was on access to higher education for students with disabilities in Lesotho. The studies revealed that learners with VI encountered various challenges that limit them from gaining access to higher education at tertiary level. They found that it is not possible for learners with VI to enroll in programs that demand Math and statistics as prerequisites. Furthermore, the support they get is very poor since they are not familiar with the services institutions offer for them. They use obsolete computers, and the library does not have brailled books. They use computers and internet to download study material and rely on audio-recorded lecture notes. Mosia and Phasha (2017), as well as Mosia and Phasha (2020) add that at secondary and tertiary level the needs of learners with disabilities are compromised in Lesotho because these learners are restricted from accessing teaching and learning materials, information

and communication technological resources. The National University of Lesotho lacks resources like projectors, so the learners with partial sight are obliged to cope with lecturers' handwriting. Those partially sighted do not get enlarged question papers from all lecturers during examinations and some lecturers point at things not bearing in mind that learners with VI cannot see what is written on the board and would need them to verbalise their demonstrations (Mosia and Phasha, 2017; Mosia and Phasha, 2020). On the contrary, Mosia and Phasha (2020) posit that learners with VI have mobility problems because of the poor paving. Mosia (2014) also shows that one teacher in mainstream school in Lesotho keeps the learner with disability busy while teaching others by giving that particular child a cellular phone to play with.

In addition, many studies on IE have been explored at primary level but still, IE enactment in Lesotho still remains as a problem irrespective of MoET's initiative to gradually spread it all over the country. Macheli (2008) investigated challenges encountered by learners with VI in mainstream primary schools in Lesotho. The results showed that teachers lack the necessary teaching and learning resources and they do not have skills of teaching learners with VI. In order for learners with VI to comprehend the information presented and to complete the given task, they need a lot of time, so this makes teachers unhappy. Therefore, teachers focus more on sighted learners (Macheli, 2008). A qualitative study conducted by Phethoka (2020) identified four barriers that limit access to education for learners with VI namely, lack of teaching and learning materials, teachers' workload, irrelevant teaching approaches and inadequately trained teachers for inclusive education. Both studies focused on primary education level while the current study will explore experiences of teachers in secondary schools.

The studies by Ralejoe (2016; 2019 and 2021) as well as Tseeke (2016) have similar results regarding the obstacles limiting effective inclusive education for learners with VI at inclusive secondary schools in Lesotho. This calls for further research to find out about the experiences of teachers from different secondary schools that accommodate learners with VI. Tseeke (2016); Ralejoe (2016); (2019) and (2021) indicate that teachers have inadequate knowledge and skills to successfully implement inclusive education and did not know how to adjust their teaching in order to support learners with VI. They found that teachers' insufficient abilities in modifying the curriculum is also revealed in learners' disclosure that those with VI are not given the chance to

study physical science, only because it is anticipated that they would not handle the experiments. In addition, they state that teachers complain about their curriculum demanding them to teach a lot of content within a short period of time so as to help learners to be ready for the for examinations and also think that other teaching strategies would consume a lot of time while others would need material they do not have. Apart from that, it seemed most of the special teachers did not have qualifications in special education; however they learned some special education skills (such as braille) at work. Tseeke, (2016); Ralejoe, (2016); (2019) and (2021) further indicate that even though teachers are trying their level best to do their work, they did not know which teaching strategies and techniques are appropriate to accommodate learners with VI in their teaching hence these learners depend on other students to catch up with school work (Tseeke, 2016; Ralejoe, 2016; 2019 & 2021). Mosola (2020) adds that sighted learners also contribute substantially in supporting learners with VI; teachers of these learners also get support from this. Learners with VI also get assistance from sighted learners because they read or dictate for them, while learners with VI use their Perkins brailers to type the notes. According to Mugambi (2012), insufficient training leads to teachers who are not competent enough to stand in front of the learners. Mosola (2020) argues that teachers understand that to enhance their self-confidence, they have to be provided with adequate training designed specifically for learners with VI. She further emphasises that they understand that if they are not well trained, it will not be easy to support learners with VI because lacking the required knowledge and skills to teach learners with VI is same as flickering in darkness (Mosola, 2020).

Tseeke's (2016) as well as Ralejoe (2019) highlight that the participation of learners with VI is hindered by shortage of teaching and learning material such as brailed textbooks, magnifying machines, computers with JAWS software, Perkins, embossers, slates cube talking calculators and drawing materials. They further indicate that this lack of resources is worsened by the government of Lesotho by not paying school fees in time. The late payments affect learners' academic work because they are often expelled from school for not paying. Furthermore, participants also concur that the use of teaching and learning material is significant for all learners, not only those with VI. Therefore, this interferes with teaching because learners with VI sometimes do not participate actively in the classroom activities such as class work and assignments (Tseeke, 2016 & 2021; Ralejoe, 2019). They also observed that the school had a library for learners with

VI; however there are no relevant brailled books. Those that are placed in the library are dated and irrelevant to the syllabus hence they are not useful to learners with VI. Tseeke (2016) indicates that there are also no books in large print, thus learners with low vision use brailled books like blind learners. The Perkins are available for learners with VI, although not enough to accommodate the number of learners. However, they are used outside the classroom at the resource centre because some of the teachers and learners complain about the noise caused by them (Tseeke, 2016). In line with this, Ralejoe (2019) agrees that the embossers make a lot of noise when they are in use, and also the Perkins do the same when learners with VI are writing class work, and this troubles other learners most of the time. As a result, teachers had a feeling that learners with VI could be supported well in special schools where, they believe, learners could have access to more useful resources. However, they concluded that mainstream schools must have appropriate equipment in order to support all kinds of learners (Ralejoe, 2019). Tseeke (2021) also states that a shortage of teaching and learning resources not only affects the teaching and learning process of learners with VI in mainstream schools but it also makes teachers to have low self-esteem (Tseeke, 2021). In this regard, lack of these materials lead to poor quality of education for learners with VI and this can affect teachers' ability to adapt instruction for these learners.

Moreover Tseeke (2016; 2021) and Ralejoe (2019) postulate that heavy workload results in negative attitudes concerning the accommodation of learners with VI .The findings revealed that support teachers are faced with the challenge of a heavy workload, therefore they are unable to teach their classes effectively because at the same time they have to pay attention to the needs of learners with VI. Besides teaching two or more classes, they have to brail for learners with VI, transcribe for regular teachers, prepare examination papers and read for learners with VI before or after the class. They have to use drawing wheel to trace simpler diagrams for learners with VI to access them. They further show that MoET does not give enough support to schools by employing other special teachers in order to reduce the workload and also does not offer in-service training for mainstream teachers. Therefore, this heavy workload detracts teachers' attention from addressing the academic and social needs of learners hence resulting in poor performance of learners with in VI in their final examination (Tseeke, 2016, 2021; Ralejoe, 2019). Additionally, Tseeke (2021) posits that if teachers' workloads are reduced, they will have enough time to prepare for the lessons and they will be motivated and come up with innovative ideas which in turn, may

possibly encourage teachers' sense of self-efficacy. On the other hand, Ralejoe (2019) also found that braille interpretation takes longer time, so teachers adopted a technique of permitting learners with VI to read ahead of other learners. This technique seemed to work excellently for them. Therefore, the availability of strengthened support structures from MOET can motivate teachers of learners with VI in their work.

The findings of Tseeke's (2016) and Ralejoe's (2019; 2021) studies revealed that infrastructural problem is a big issue for learners with VI meaning that the environment and infrastructure are not friendly to learners with VI. The studies highlight that factors such as stairs, big stones, and big trees in walking areas, uncovered holes and teachers' cars restrict free movement of learners with VI. They are unable to walk safely and independently to find their way around the school campus. The space for resource centres is not enough to accommodate the total number of learners with VI, and the windows are too small and, in some rooms, too high, the walls are dark and the main room does not have enough desks and chairs for learners to sit and learn comfortably (Tseeke, 2016; Ralejoe, 2019, 2021). As a result, Ralejoe (2019; 2021) recommends that infrastructural barriers should be addressed by the administration of the school in order to build physical surroundings which are harmless and conducive to all learners in the school. Mosola (2020) also agrees that it is necessary to modify the environment to completely support the mobility and different learning abilities of learners with VI, and to increase teachers' self-efficacy.

Ralejoe (2021) sought to understand the inclusion of learners with and without visual impairment and found that the accommodation of learners with VI in school has played an important role by slowing down the teaching pace and allowing slow learners without VI to gain clearer understanding of the content. This agrees with Lamichhane's (2017) results in Nepal, where teachers go closer to learners who seem like struggling to understand. They also teach them separately, teach them at a low pace, taking into account that those with VI require a lot more time as they use braille when writing.

Tseeke (2016) concludes that though there are some government efforts to support education for learners with disabilities, the majority of learners with VI do not access education in secondary schools, and for those who have access, their performance is not satisfactory in their Lesotho

General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) Examinations, and that prevents these learners from pursuing their studies at tertiary level. Mosola (2020) argues that teachers of learners with VI are supported by government although the support is not directed to target them, but the support the learners get definitely makes an impact to all stakeholders. The study found that the bursaries offered by the government help these learners to pay school fees, apart from providing them with modern assistive devices that help in the process of teaching and learning, thus assisting teachers of these learners, to be well organised (Mosola, 2020). Nevertheless, there are some factors that limit teachers to be effective in their work. For instance, destructive attitudes, underachieving managers, abilities of learners, and under-utilized equipment are some of the hindrances impeding the real support for learners with VI (Mosola, 2020). Therefore; all these issues hamper teachers' capability to resolve the educational and social needs of learners with VI in mainstream setting.

2.10 SUMMARY

The chapter, among other issues, discussed experiences of teachers of learners with VI in secondary schools. It has highlighted the challenges faced by learners with VI. These barriers involve the following: absence of inclusive policies in several countries, inaccessible curriculum and environment, inadequate resources, irrelevant teaching strategies used by teachers and negative attitude of both teachers and able- learners towards learners with VI. It has highlighted teachers' perspectives in supporting learners with VI in inclusive classrooms. Teachers' inadequate training also remains a worldwide problem in teaching learners with VI. Furthermore, the chapter focused on the strategies which could be useful in the education of learners with VI.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter explains research methods and methodology adopted to address the identified problem in this study. First, it describes the research paradigm namely, interpretivism which seeks to provide the researcher a chance to collect data from respondents in particular contexts and appreciate their understanding of the world around them. Secondly, it explains the qualitative approach used when gathering and analysing data on the experiences of teachers teaching learners with VI. The research site, population sampling, characteristics, and the size of the sample together with data analysis process are other aspects that are explained. Finally, the chapter discusses ethical considerations and measures of trustworthiness adopted in conducting the study.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Howell (2013) methodology is the theoretical framework for the methods selected. It is a perspective taken on the research, which dictates how it is approached (Howell, 2013). Remenyi et al. (1998) agree that, research methodology describes the logic of the process used to construct the theoretical framework within which the study is carried out. Schwardt (2007) adds that, it also entails analysing the presumptions, guiding concepts, and methods used in a certain line of investigation. In addition, he asserts that methodologies explain and define the types of problems that are worthwhile researching; what constitutes a researchable problem; testable hypotheses; how to frame a problem so that it can be investigated using specific designs and procedures, and how to choose and develop suitable data collection methods (Schwardt, 2007). Adaptability and a focus on keeping rich meaning while analysing data are common traits of qualitative research, which is used to understand how people experience their surroundings (Eze, 2023). As the purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' experiences of teaching learners with VI, qualitative research methodology was relevant for this study as it replicates the comprehensive description of participants' feelings, views, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions (Denzin, 1989 & Eze, 2023).

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study has employed the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is a model in which researchers try to study how individuals recognize the world they live in, and appreciating the special meanings to the world ending in not one but an intricacy of opinions (Creswell, 2014). When speculating, Goldkul (2012) stated that the interpretivists' fundamental belief is to deal with certain meanings that already existed in order to accept their presence in the social world. The purpose of all interpretive research is to investigate how followers of a social group, through their input in social processes, endorse their unique individual realities and provide them with meaning, and to indicate how these meanings, theories and plans of the members assist to organize their action (Goldkuhl, 2012).

Methodologically, interpretivists seek thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study by drawing on a range of methods, tools and procedures (Denizin & Lincoln, 2011). Apart from that, Rehman and Alharthi (2016) say interpretative methodology requires that social phenomena be seen through the perspective of the participants, rather than the researchers, who understand it in their context. Therefore, interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this study as it assisted me to form in-depth local understanding of the life experiences of teachers, and of the principles of the school and classroom perspectives and also helps the researcher to understand the world around the participants (Taylor & Medina, 2013). The study describes entities, individuals or procedures and attempts to describe them in the context of society (Pham, 2018). It searches for authenticity through the perceptions, context, and knowledge of the participants (Yanow & Schwrtz-Shea, 2014). Interpretivists understand reality as factual to respondents who experience it; therefore, it is essential for the study to investigate the experiences of teachers at secondary schools in Lesotho (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study has used a qualitative approach. Rakotsoane (2018) says that qualitative research is about recording, analyzing and trying to reveal the in-depth idea and importance of human conduct and experiences, together with challenging views and emotions. Kabir (2018) adds that qualitative data frequently does not include numbers and statistics in their definition traits and are generally descriptive in nature. This means that the information gathered is explained with words and

sentences. Roller (2018) indicates that the usage of qualitative research is regularly strengthened by the assertion that qualitative methods allow the researcher to extend beyond quantitative statistical information to comprehend the implication and inspirations that is why it is linked with specific approaches and activities. Flick (2014) agrees that qualitative research compacts with personal meaning or the social construction of problems, procedures and practices by gathering non-standardized information and exploring texts and pictures rather than figures and statistics.

Creswell (2014) states that a qualitative research approach initiates with suppositions and interpretive theoretical frameworks that enlighten the study of research problems addressing the suggestion individuals or groups assign to a human problem. Green and Salkind (2014) posit that the main purpose of qualitative research is to study human behaviour in the social, cultural and political backgrounds in which it takes place. The practical research that is influenced by the qualitative techniques of analysis asks details of meanings and understandings through the personal observations of the participants (Akinyode, 2017). This means that qualitative approach provides a thorough analysis of the opinions and descriptions of the participants. As a result, this study is qualitative as it tries to find in-depth interpretations and experiences of teachers of learners with VI from selected secondary schools.

When gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data from graphical and written materials, this approach frequently makes use of interviews, classroom observations, and open-ended questionnaires. (Zohrabi, 2013). McMillan and Schumacher (2014) say qualitative data mostly identifies patterns and interactions among the categories. Thus, this method is more appropriate for this study because it tries to respond to queries about experiences, meaning and perceptions, specifically from teachers' of learners with VI (Hammarberg et al., 2016). This approach can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater degree due to its flexibility structure (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, difficult questions can be understood easily (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

Moreover, qualitative approach is suitable for this study because it provides abundant data about real life people and situations because this current study explores the experiences of teachers of learners with VI (De Vaus 2014, Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Thus, the use of qualitative approach was a means of providing an insight into teachers' experiences and attitudes about the

accommodation of learners with VI in inclusive secondary schools during teaching and learning mediation.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Cohen et al. (2018), a research design is an approach that establishes the research and ensures it is realistic to answer research questions based on evidence and explanations. Hence, this current study has used a case study design.

3.5.1 Case study

Creswell (2014) explains case study as a flexible form of qualitative analysis most appropriate for a complete and detailed study of a difficult matter in context, where the limit between the perspective and topic is not clear and has numerous variables. Karlsson, (2016) says depending on the goal of the case study, a case may be any size. Case might be a nation, a town, a social group, a company, a family, or a single person; as a result, case study design is appropriate for this study.

The vital aim of case study research is to understand the issue from the viewpoint of the participants and to investigate a profound analysis of a problem within its context (Yin, 2014). Creswell (2014) adds that collaboration among participants and the researcher is necessary to provide information, which is a sign of the researcher's level of connection and engagement with the field. For the reason, constructivism and interpretivist usually infuse the enactment of this research design. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). The importance of using case study, as Yin (2014) indicates, starts from one's inspiration to irradiate understanding of difficult incidents.

Kothari (2014) also adds that a case is a social unit with a divergent behaviour, and may be an experience, problem, process and activity, but according to Devi (2020), it is a restricted system that has the limitations of the case. As a result, case study is a rigorous exploration of the particular component under study. The fields of psychology, education, sociology, and political science employ it most frequently. Its purpose is to find a comprehensive and in-depth description of a social event of a social unit. Data for a case study can be collected from a variety of sources utilizing any qualitative data collection technique, such as interviews, observation, and

documentation. (Devi 2020). Devi (2020) further indicates that the main emphasis in a case study is constantly on the construction of verbal explanations of behaviour, that is, it is more of a qualitative method rather than quantitative method. Therefore, the current study has employed a case study design to focus on three secondary schools that accommodate learners with VI in Lesotho. They were taken as cases to see the differences between the contexts of inclusion of learners with VI.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS SELECTION

This study has employed a non-probability sampling in the selection of participants who provided the information for its context. As a result, purposive sampling was used to choose three secondary schools in Maseru which are the only ones that support learners with VI at this level was also used in this study because the purpose was to get the cases that could generate rich information about the topic of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) state that purposive sampling is type of non-probability sampling where questions with certain characteristics are selected. On the basis of a researcher's understanding of the subject matter, a conclusion is made about which questions should be selected to answer the question of the research (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014). On the other hand, it is a sampling where the participants are included by the researcher in the sample because she believes they would give data to address the research problem (Taherdoost, 2016). Etikan and Bala (2017) say in purposive sampling, the researcher's focus should be on those people who have the necessary information and are keen to share it.

The three secondary schools were selected on the basis of supporting learners with VI in the country. School A has 36 teachers of which 7 of them are support personnel; school B has 45 while school C has 25. According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling is a non-random method which does not use basic concepts or a fixed number of participants. This consists of identifying and choosing individuals or groups of individuals that are skillful in an important phenomenon. Therefore, this influenced me to select twelve participants, that is, the data was collected from three general teachers per school who were teaching learners with VI in 2022 and also three support teachers from the school that has a long history in supporting learners with VI. Femininity and masculinity were not considered when selecting participants but their experience of teaching learners with both partial and VI at secondary school was considered. Participants had

a minimum of four years' teaching experience in classes which accommodate some learners with VI. These teachers were considered to have detailed and relevant information. Neuman (2014) adds that purposive sampling goes for cases with a particular reason and distinctive cases that are especially helpful hence selection of three secondary schools that accommodate learners with VI. Etikan et al. (2016) add that this type of sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select the instances that have a lot of information for the most accurate use of accessible resources. Therefore, teachers who have knowledge or experience were selected to share information (Etikan et al., 2016) hence selection of these secondary schools. Again, this sampling method was based on the fact that I desired to learn, understand and gain perception on teachers' experiences of learners with VI, and thus had to select a sample from which the maximum could be knowledgeable and also wanted to explore patterns of support between the three secondary schools. In addition, Creswell (2012) expresses that the intention in qualitative research is to explore a central phenomenon in detail but not to generalise to a population. So, in order to understand the phenomenon, I purposively selected individuals and sites that could best assist me to understand the phenomenon.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

According to Green and Salkind (2014), qualitative researchers use various approaches and procedures to collect data. These comprise in-depth interviews and analysis of documents and materials. For data collection, this current study has used semi-structured interviews.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

The study has employed semi-structured interviews to get detailed information from the participants, meaning that interview guides were used, which generally assist in the valuable aim of exploring many participants more systematically and carefully while also keeping the interview concentrated on the preferred line of action (Jamshed, 2014). Creswell (2012) emphasises that a qualitative interview takes place when one or more participants are asked general open-ended questions by the researcher and the responses are recorded Palaiologou et al. (2016) show that semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions, and their purpose is to share academic viewpoints with real life conditions to encourage participants to reflect on and discuss their analysis of the interview.

A semi-structured interview is appropriate for this study as it gives the researcher a chance to search for a detailed assessment of respondents' reality through a sequence of questions trying to address the purpose of the study and the investigation that encourages them to give extra information (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Additionally, direct interactions permitted teachers who were participating to express how they experience teaching learners with VI in mainstream classrooms (Ryan et al., 2016). Hence, this gave me the chance to interpret non-verbal signals by observing body language and facial expression to better comprehend what the participants were attempting to explain (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Again, semi-structured interviews give room for free responses from the participants. (Deterding & Waters, 2018). They also provide a richer context (Paz-Soldan et al., 2014). Interviews allow thorough information concerning the participants' experiences and views of a specific area (Grey, 2014). Thus, it is appropriate for the current study to obtain comprehensive information about teaching and learning of learners with VI in mainstream classrooms from teachers' viewpoints. More specifically, the interview is useful in the flexible situation process and responding to sub-questions in the study. Hence, the teachers of learners with VI from the selected secondary schools were given opportunity to share their experiences while teaching learners with VI in the same classroom with the able-bodied peers.

In addition, a well-organised semi-structured interview can perfectly pull upon the participant's internal voice when vigorous input from the researcher and the participant is in progress, specifically if all issues expressed by participants during the semi-structured interviews were conducted in their natural forms (Kakilla, 2021). At each school, interviews were conducted in quiet places that were free from disruption by non-participants. They were held when the selected teachers were free from teaching lessons. The period of the interview for every teacher lasted for 45 to 50 minutes. The interview was conducted mostly in English language, however using Sesotho and code switching were allowed in situations where the participants felt like doing so. Each interview was audio-recorded to capture all information uttered by the participants. Creswell (2012) explains transcription as a process of changing audiotape records into manuscript data, therefore the responses of the participants were transcribed verbatim and where the responses were made in Sesotho, I translated them to English. Then, the transcribed data were presented by me to all participants for validation and read several times along with all the field transcripts while

explanations on subjects emerging from the collected data were made on the left side of the interview scripts. The data from the interviews were organized as per headings on the interview schedule.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), qualitative data analysis is an inductive process that divides information into groups and identifies patterns and connections between the groups. This study has employed thematic analysis approach to interpret and analyse qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a technique for describing data, but it also comprises interpretation when choosing codes and building themes. (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Kiger and Varpio (2020) further show that thematic analysis can indicate the social and important perspectives that impact the experiences of the individuals, allowing the growth of knowledge that is constructed through communication between the researcher and the participants and clarifying the beliefs that are constructed socially. It is also a suitable and influential technique to adopt when trying to comprehend the established experiences and views through data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Thematic analysis involves six steps that must be followed to analyse data thoroughly and they are as follows: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the manuscript. Therefore, data analysis for the current study commenced once the data were available as this helped additional data collection, that is, I analysed every interview before proceeding to the next participant. In the first step, I familiarized myself with the whole data set, which needed to be read repeatedly (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Secondly, I started to write notes on probable data items of interest, relations between data items, and other primary concepts. This part of work generates codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The third stage includes analysis of the coded and organized data excerpts to search for possible themes of extensive meaning. This helped me to construct themes by analyzing, combining, comparing, and even clearly drawing how codes are related to one another. The fourth step is reviewing themes. Throughout this process, I kept detailed notes concerning my thought processes and conclusions drawn about how themes are developed and adjusted. Those notes also assisted me to make relations amongst themes and also assess the trustworthiness of the results (Nowell et al., 2017). Kiger and Varpio (2020) say the thematic plan should obviously reveal how

themes correlate and how they respond to the question. In order to achieve this task, I read the whole data set again to re-examine themes and to re-code added data that belong under the themes that had been lately generated or altered in this stage, then the thematic plan was revised consequently. Again I defined and named themes in step five, that is, the definition and narrative explanation of each theme were created (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This also includes why it is essential to the broader study question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the sixth stage, I wrote up the final analysis and described the findings (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

This approach is appropriate for this study because it offers researchers a great deal of versatility in terms of the kind of research questions they can ask from individuals' experiences and views in several social contexts. It also gives researchers the capacity to analyze data with inductive, data-driven method or an empirical, theory-driven method (Clark & Braun, 2013). Braun et al. (2016) add that it gives the researcher logical tools to understand data. It can be used with different types of theoretical frameworks, and it does not require any specific methodology, for instance, how sampling is being done, or data collection. This offers the researchers great flexibility in how thematic analysis is used. Besides the fact that thematic analysis is a moderately accessible qualitative investigative procedure, these features make it an exceptional method. Kiger and Varpio (2020) also posit that at the same time, thematic analysis is an influential process for analyzing data that permits researchers to review, focus on important features and understand an extensive collection of data arrangements (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). On the other hand, the findings of this method can be understood by people who are not educated (Javad & Zarea, 2016).

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Qualitative researchers speak of trustworthiness, which explains if the findings can be reliable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Polit and Beck (2014), trustworthiness of a study means the step of assurance in data; analysis and approaches used to guarantee the excellence of a study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) further state that credibility; transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the quality standards for all qualitative research. Additionally, reflexivity is an important part of confirming the limpidity and value of qualitative research. As a result, all these concepts were applied by the researcher when gathering and analysing data.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility was adopted as it provides the research results that embody acceptable information obtained from the participants' original data and guarantee accurate interpretation of the participants' original perceptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, the researcher confirmed that the participants were identified and well described. In this regard, once I had transcribed data, it was given to the participants to attest if their opinions were captured well (Polit & Beck, 2012). Harper and Cole (2012), add that participant inspection is a significant quality control procedure in qualitative research and, in so doing; participants possibly will get a satisfaction. Again, to ensure credibility in this study, participants were asked to clarify their statements with examples during interviews and follow-up questions were also asked during interviews, participants were requested to provide instances to support their statements, and additional questions were also asked. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9.2 Transferability

Polit and Beck (2012) say transferability discusses the degree to which the results can be applied to other situations or groups. They further show that it depends on the understanding that results can be generalized or shifted to other situations (Polit & Beck, 2012). Korstjens and Moser (2018) add that it is a degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be applied to different settings and include different participants. On this point, strategies that were used in the collection of data and analysis for this study were described systematically in Chapter One under the methodology section to help other scholars to make their individual conclusions and assess appropriateness of the approaches to their settings. To show transferability, I took in-depth field transcripts and used the audio recordings to confirm accurateness in the data collected and check if the findings were still the same. Apart from that, a rich interpretation of descriptive data was given in Chapter One, including the context in which the research was conducted, its setting, participant's selection and data collection methods (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability speaks of the consistency of data over a certain period and in many contexts (Polit & Beck, 2012). Dependability involves explanation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as acknowledged from participants of the study (Korstjens & Moser,

2018). Dependability also involves the form of consistency. The analysis procedure was checked if it matched with the accepted standards for a case study by the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher provided review track on the activities that took place during collection of data and data analysis procedure in this study. The participants were quoted verbatim to reflect their interpretations, for the reader to have an understanding of what the participants believed and related that with interpretation of the perceptions I made as the researcher. To show dependability is to confirm whether the results of the research are trustworthy and could be recurring (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thus, the current study attained dependability by thoroughly explaining each procedure in the study to the participants, enabling outside researcher to duplicate the investigation and get the same findings.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the fairness, meaning, and the possible connection between two or more independent people about data's accurateness, significance or meaning (Polit & Beck, 2012). In other words, the results of this study were checked by other researchers. Confirmability focuses more on creating the data and interpretations of the results which are not fabrications of the inquirer's imagination, but resulting from the data. Confirmability concerns the aspect of impartiality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to comply with this principle, the researcher confirmed that the study's common approaches and processes were defined thoroughly and that the results were clearly related with presented data (Miles et al., 2014). Finally, the findings were constructed on the participants' answers rather than the individual beliefs of the researcher to endorse confirmability. Moon et al. (2016) assert that to attain confirmability, researchers must show that the findings are undoubtedly connected to the conclusions in a manner that can be followed and, as a practice, replicated. Therefore, the transcriptions and audio records were kept for proof of the concluding results. Again, the researcher clearly made a difference of the authentic reports and opinions of participants in the manner in which they were presented.

3.9.5 Reflexivity

It is the activity of critically introspecting oneself with regard to the researcher (personal prejudices, favourites), as well as the research connection (connection to participants and how that connection affects participants' responses to questions). (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As a result, I

acknowledged the significance of being reflexive about my personal role in the process of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation and in the presumed suppositions, brought to the research since I work in one of the selected schools where the research was conducted. I am not only employed as general teacher in this school but also work directly with learners with VI as a support teacher. This has not influenced the findings because I concentrated on what the participants were saying rather than what I know.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are the customs or codes for conduct that assist people to differentiate between right and wrong (Rakotsoane 2018). To ensure ethics, the researcher requested a letter from NUL to present to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to allow her to conduct the study in three secondary schools. Then the letter of permission from the MoET to carry out the study by interviewing teachers in three secondary schools was given to the principals. The principals also permitted the researcher to conduct the study in the form of a written letter. Research ethics focus more on what is morally correct or incorrect when involved with participants or when gaining access to data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Arifin (2018) asserts that it is vital in all research studies to protect human subjects, through the application of proper ethical principles. To ensure that the data collection, analysis, discussion, and dissemination did not invade participants' rights, the study used five ethical considerations. These include informed consent, confidentiality, beneficence, the right to withdraw and protection from harm

3.10.1 Informed consent

This is where participants are supposed to be sufficiently informed to know about the research, understand the information, and have the authority to decide whether to contribute or not (Arifin, 2018). Therefore, informed consent consists of the following: the identity of the researcher, the aim of the study, the data that will be collected from participants, the data collection method, the threat of participation in the study, the participants' right to use their information, and the right to pull out at any time from participating. (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) further state that the informed consent procedure is an agreement between the researcher and the participants. According to Cohen et al. (2018), consent keeps and respects the right of autonomy and puts accountability on the participant if things do not work accordingly in the

research. Informed consent normally includes access (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012), for instance, to people, official papers, organizations, surroundings and information.

In addition, the right to pull out from the research is consistent with the principle of deliberate participation (Vanclay et al., 2013). As a result, it is virtuous for the participants to be informed of this right in order to decide whether to share information or not. Vanclay et al. (2013) indicate that the participants have a right to know that they can decline at any time to participate in the study and request the researcher to remove the information they have shared from the analysis. The researcher should also not threaten them when they apply this right. Hence, in this study, the participants' right to withdraw was explained to them before the interviews began and before they agreed to participate in the study. This was done to ensure that the participants were aware of their rights.

The researcher then met the teachers to introduce herself and clarify the purpose of the study. The participants were given a chance to decide whether or not they would participate in this study before the commencement of the interview. They were asked to participate voluntarily. After that, the researcher disclosed all significant information by explaining to the participants the intention of the study and data collection methods that were going to be used, the risks involved and that there was no incentive for their input as the study was only meant to contribute to how education for learners with VI can be improved in secondary schools (Baine & Taylor, 2013). Above that, participants' agreement to take part in this study was attained only after an in-depth clarification of the research procedure (Arifin, 2018). I therefore asked them to allow me to record the interview and guaranteed them that their experiences and opinions would be treated confidentially. So, every participant was asked to sign the consent form to show their enthusiasm to participate in the study. The audio recorder was used to record the responses.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means sorting out or altering any individual identifying information given by respondents from the data and it is sustained in qualitative researches (Coffelt, 2017). Therefore, being a qualitative research, this study employed the code of confidentiality by using pseudonyms for participants and their location in the collection of data and analysis. Again the names and

identities of the participants were not mentioned in reporting the findings of the study. Apart from that, in this current study, all the data that the participants asked not to be exposed was not used so as to show confidentiality. In order to hide the identity of participants in this study, pseudonyms were also given (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). Lastly, the interviews transcriptions and audio-records were kept in a way that protects the identities of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). They are concealed at home in a locked drawer where nobody may easily get them excluding the researcher. This was done to safeguard the participants' will and privacy.

3.10.3 Protection from harm

Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) posit that the research design must take into account the likelihood that the participants, the researcher, the larger community, and the organization would suffer harm. The harm can lead to resource loss, emotional distress and reputational damage. The techniques used to eradicate, separate, and minimize the risk must be applied in descending order when reflecting the potential harm, and the participants must be informed of the hazards. Vanclay et al. (2013) say it is necessary that the participants must not only be exposed to risk in the progression of the research, but then again, there must be no hostile concerns to an individual because of his or her contribution in the study (Vanclay et al., 2013). Given the topic under study, harm to participants can be in various forms: from disappointments to self-confidence or "looking ruthless" to others, to fears, to one's interests or to loss of subsidy for a study, up to being charged or prosecuted (Miles et al., 2014). However, I ensured that the participants had no discomfort and that there was no humiliation at the time of the interviews by asking open-ended questions which required reflections of the school practices than interviews that expose their personal practices and their efficiency. Before the commencement of the data collection process, the supervisor and I discussed interview questions extensively and there were no anticipatable harm identified. However, I was prepared to take the participants to counsellors if the topics discussed could affect their emotions negatively.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has outlined the processes followed for data generation and analysis. The explanations of the methodologies in this chapter were applied in the three secondary schools under study. The research designs which were described mapped out the entire study and paradigm, approach used

and tools used to collect data that were presented at the end. There was also the explanation of the context of the study, that is to say the three secondary schools in the district of Maseru, for someone who wants to know where the study was conducted. For data collection, interviews were used in three secondary schools where twelve participants were interviewed to assist the researcher understand and explain views about the area of study. To conclude, data analysis within the qualitative research context was done through thematic analysis because it helped the researcher make sense of the findings. Lastly, the ethical issues that the study considered, together with measures to verify trustworthiness, were also explained.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study seeks to address four research questions namely, 1). What challenges do learners with VI encounter in their studies? 2). How do teachers perceive their support to learners with VI? 3). To what extent do teachers feel adequately trained to support learners with VI? 4). which strategies can be employed to improve support to learners with VI? The first research question was addressed through a review of literature from global, regional and local contexts. This chapter presents and discusses the research findings relating to questions 2 to 4 which the study sought empirical answers to. The presentation and discussion of findings are organized around themes identified during the analysis of data generated from responses to the three questions. The following themes were derived from the data analysis:

- 1) Teachers' perceptions concerning support to learners with VI;
- 2) Challenges facing inclusion of learners with VI;
- 3) Teachers' training; and
- 4) Strategies employed to support learners with VI).

The participants' words have been quoted verbatim to enable readers to have first-hand interaction with the participants' views. Additionally, neutral descriptors, other than names, are used in sharing quotes to ensure the confidentiality of research participants. These are: SAP1, SAP2 and SAP3 used for school A, participants who were employed as general teachers and SAST1, SAST2 and SAST3 used for school A, support teachers who were specifically employed to support learners with VI. Apart from that, SBP1, SBP2 and SBP3 are used for school B participants while SCP1, SCP2 and SCP3 are used for participants from school C.

4.2 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH VI

Although there is no written policy in three secondary schools, each participant seemed to be aware that learners with VI need to be supported to acquire quality education just like their sighted peers.

4.2.1 Perceptions about school policies and practices

The participants in all the three secondary schools state that their schools have not developed a policy that enables inclusion, yet these schools have learners with VI. They felt that providing concessions to learners with VI, accessing resources and giving them an opportunity to choose front seats in the classrooms is practicing inclusion. The following are their responses:

“I do not think we have a policy in this school because policy is something written on paper but what I know is that we have a copy of national policy in our school and we were told that if we want to read it, we can go and take it at the principal’s office” opines SAST3.

“I know about the national inclusive policy which was sent to me through email, but I have never read it because I am always busy. I am not sure about the school policy but if it is there, I know nothing about it” claims SBP2.

“There is no policy that enables inclusion in this school, but I have a soft copy of Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy of 2018, I think I will try to create time to see what it entails” narrates SBP3.

“I do not know anything about school policy, but what I know is that the school values high education of visually impaired learners. The school advocates that all children including children with VI have the potential to learn and should be given necessary support” clarifies SAP2.

Although some participants from school A indicated that they had never seen inclusion policy in their schools, they revealed that their school vision and mission statement state that the school accommodates learners with VI. Their views are expressed as follows:

“I really have not yet familiarized myself with the school policies; I just know that the school vision somehow states that we are an inclusive school” claims SAST1.

“The school in its mission and vision has included learners with VI. The school does not have a clear written policy about the learners with VI” asserts SAST2.

The above responses demonstrate that in all three secondary schools, there is no inclusion policy, and although participants know about the national policy, they do not know what it entails. However, participants from school A stated that they are guided by their school's mission and vision statement mentioning the concept of inclusion.

Even though the study found no school policy that enables inclusion, efforts are made by all three secondary schools to be inclusive.

“...learners with VI are admitted without being discriminated” expresses SBP2.

“Learners with VI are part of normal classes; they can partake in any school activity including sports, trips, and beauty contests” explains SAP3.

“In terms of sitting arrangements, they are given opportunity to sit in front in class and in the science laboratory they occupy the sit that is near the demonstrator to see what is being done since they are partially impaired” States SBP1.

“I allow them to sit in front....” states SBP2.

Three participants had a different experience as expressed below:

“The accommodation in class does not favour learners with VI, in most cases they find other students in class where they have chosen comfortable seats; they just pick the remaining seats even if they are not comfortable, so this leads to poor performance. Most people do not consider this as important but truly speaking it is a very sensitive issue” explains SAST2.

“Positioning themselves where they are comfortable is a problem” comments SAP3.

“In most cases, we as teachers think that every learner who is visually impaired is supposed to sit in front, so you will find that sometimes they are not even comfortable to sit there” comments SCP2.

While some participants noted that sometimes learners with VI are not comfortable to sit in front other suggested as follows:

“Learners with VI should be placed appropriately in the classroom in the front seat” narrates SAST1.

“They should be given opportunity to sit where they are not going to be distracted specifically in front seat” narrates SCP3.

The findings imply that learners with VI are admitted in all three secondary schools. In reflecting about partially sighted learners, participants indicate that these learners benefit a lot in class if they occupy the front seats during class activities. This practice assists them (only partially sighted learners) to use assistive devices like magnifiers without being distracted by their sighted peers; even for those who have recorders, it becomes easier for them to record what the teacher is saying. However other participants indicated that learners with VI are not given priority to choose the seats that they are suitable for them; they just pick the remaining seats after their sighted peers have chosen better the ones. As a result, other participants indicated that learners with VI should be given opportunity to choose front seats to make their learning easier.

4.2.2 Academic support

Academic support is important because it enables learners to accelerate their learning standards, or generally succeed in school. Therefore, learners with VI should also be supported to prepare them for independence and work in the future. Teachers' views on how they support learners in mainstream classrooms are as follows:

“I normally repeat main points when teaching and sometimes dictate notes for them. Again, I explain the diagram of discussion before talking about it to all the class members” informs SAST1.

“From the very stage of lesson preparation and planning, the content is modified to cater for easy accessibility. This often includes collaboration between the subject teacher and the support teacher is assigned such responsibility” stipulates SAPI.

“I do support learners in my class; I do more speaking than writing and whatever I write on the board, I say it out loud....” emphasises SCP1.

“There are so many measures that are taken into consideration to include learners with VI. For instance, the school provides learners with visual impairment with large print question papers, we print notes with the correct format for them but this one of printing notes is not compulsory, it depends on the individual teacher” expresses SAST2.

Other teachers improvise to support learners with VI.

“I improvise for totally blind, I normally make them touch things, for example, if we are doing shapes, I make them to touch a table to have a feeling of how rectangle looks like” states SAST3.

“...for instance construction is wheret you have to use your visuals. So with such a subject we should improvise a lot, especially for those who are totally blind. The visual concepts should be described to a visual imagination, that is, making visual description so that learners with VI can imaginalize what we are doing” indicates SAST3.

“I use tangible examples or object to make a concept clear and allow other students to explain to them in my presence” postulates SAP3.

Teachers believe that remedial classes are very useful in teaching and learning of learners with VI. Their views are the following:

“I do remedial classes after school and they seem to be very interested” indicates SBP2.

“Apart from that, after class we make arrangements to do a remedial class if they did not understand in class, especially in topics like directed and creative writing because they cannot see the formats on the board like sighted learners. In most cases you will find that they get bored if they do not understand it as quickly as other learners, so if they do things with their pace during remedial class, they show a great interest in learning” adds SAST2.

“Having learners with VI is a serious challenge but I do whatever it takes to include and whatever I teach, I do not leave them behind. I make sure that I track them along, if I find it’s difficult for them to grasp a content, I make an extra lesson for them so that in the next lesson they are on the same level with others” declares SAST3.

Two teachers had different views:

“As a support teacher, it is not easy to provide remedial classes because of the teaching load I have” informs SAST1.

“There are no remedial classes because of the workload that I have and I also do not focus more on them because I have a syllabus to cover, hence I do things as fast as I can” notes SCP3.

While other participants noted that their work does not allow them to provide remedial classes, others suggested various strategies such as remediation and other teaching and learning strategies that can assist teachers of learners with VI. The following are some of their views:

“There should be remedial classes and teachers should give learners extra time to write until they have finished” postulates SBP2.

“Learners with VI should be given remedial classes and be motivated to show them that we still care” adds SAST2.

Participants mentioned other strategies as indicated below:

“They need to have tests papers way ahead so that they can write at the same time with classmates” clarifies SAP3.

“They should be given an immediate feedback” asserts SAST1.

“...transcription should also be fast tracked, to list but a few” reflects SAP1.

Participants indicated that some techniques should be avoided when dealing with learners with VI:

“The teaching methods and the language that we are using in class do not help these learners, for instance, demonstration is not suitable for them because they cannot see, so we should visualize the concepts. The selection of words should also be considered, we cannot use words such as, “do you see this,” this makes them offended” clarifies SAST3.

“Teachers should try to minimize gestures when teaching and whatever they write on the board should be said out loud so that they can hear” adds SCP3.

Two participants spoke of a different strategy in which learners with VI should be assisted in the mainstream classroom where there should be collaboration between general and support teachers. Their views are as follows:

“Learners should not be taken out of the class for help, a support teacher should go to class with general teacher at the beginning of the class to support learners with VI because the general teacher cannot keep both normal and disabled learners at the same pace” clarifies SAST2.

“If the school can have the fixed classroom set up for them within the normal classes and subject teacher should go to class with a special teacher to assist if there is a need. This can work well for these learners” adds SAP3.

Participants think that discussion method is one of the efficient teaching methods that enable inclusion in secondary schools.

.... “I use the discussion teaching method more to enable every learner to take part. Also, at the end of most of my lessons, I advise learners to sit in groups to discuss together and ask questions if any. This gives learners with VI an opportunity to mingle with other learners” explains SAST1.

“We also encourage other learners to include learners with visual impairment in their discussion groups, apply all effort to support them and make them feel they are part of the society” adds SCPI.

“I prefer discussion, it is more appropriate with them. Any strategy is appropriate with them because they are low vision students” asserts SBP1.

“Peer teaching can be encouraged as this will help them to share ideas” points out SAP2.

The findings reflect that teachers of learners with VI in the three secondary schools try their best to support them. They highlighted the importance of repetition. This helps learners who come to class with their Perkins and braille note touch to write what the teacher is saying because these learners struggle to write quickly when using that equipment. Core planning and discussing some concepts before class, ensuring that learners with VI participate in group and class discussions are also mentioned. Teachers believe that this method helps learners to develop social learning through teamwork. The study indicates that teachers use whatever can be found to make the difficult concepts clearer to learners with VI. This helps these learners to be more creative and more open to other perspectives. Again, teachers also provide learners with remedial classes where there is a need. They also suggested other various strategies that can be helpful in accommodating learners with VI. However, there are some participants in the three schools who are unable to assist learners because they are overloaded with work.

4.2.3 Provision of concessions

A concession in tests and examinations is also very important for learners with VI as indicated by some teachers.

“Learners with VI are given extra time during tests and examinations. This extra time depends on the individual teacher; there is no specific time or percentage allocated for them” expresses SBP1.

“During examinations, they are allocated extra time. Totally blind students are given 100 percent extra time while low vision students are given 25 percent of the given time to make them feel that they are part of the community” notes SAST3.

“When writing tests I still allocate the same time as others but if they fail to finish on the given time, I allow them to submit later” indicates SCP3.

Although most teachers gave concessions, it seems to be individuals who do so. Some of schools B and C respondents do not provide learners with VI any extra time.

“The learners are not given extra time during tests and examinations” points out SCP3.

“...apart from that during examinations, there is no specific percentage for extra time; we do not even know whether we give them sufficient extra time or not. Sometimes I even forget to remind the invigilator to give them extra time during examinations” states SBP3.

The findings reflect that among the teachers’ responses from the three schools, the practices are different since one school accommodates both blind and partially impaired learners while the other two have only partially sighted learners. Teachers provide concessions for learners with VI to compensate for the lack of pace in their writing while few in two schools that accommodate only partially sighted learners do not see the importance of giving learners that opportunity. In school A, teachers are obliged to give such learners extra time during tests and examinations while in other schools it is done voluntarily.

4.2.4 Accessibility of resources to support learners with VI

In responding to the question regarding the accessibility of resources, the participants highlighted the importance of variety of resources, including human resources to support learning for VI learners.

“I allow the use of magnifiers and I usually use charts for teaching aids, so they are able to see them clearly because of magnifiers” reflects SBP1.

“I allow them to use magnifiers and voice recorders to record the lesson even though it is something that I don't like” notes SCP1.

“I normally allow them to come with braille note touch and Perkins in class so that I can engage them in class activities just like their sighted peers, but for those who are partially impaired I allow them to use magnifiers and sometimes I use markers during class work so that they do what others are doing” postulates SAST3.

However, the majority of teachers felt that available resources were not sufficient in their schools. They gave these responses:

“The devices are not enough, the other visually impaired learner even dropped out of school because the devices that we have were not helpful to him, his vision was very low” postulates SCP1.

“There is a shortage of devices and even the current ones are old. The big magnifiers are not placed in the classrooms, so when they want to use them, they are taken out of the classroom, so this excludes them” notes SCP2.

“We have another challenge in Grade 9, we have an Albino who is also visually impaired but she does not have assistive devices just like other learners who are in Grade 11. She struggles to see what is written on the board and even the spectacles are not helping because they have expired. When doing ledger and cash book, he just mixes columns and writes on the lines” opines SBP3.

“Some of the teaching aids are too technical, for example, newspaper in braille format and books are not accessible for learners with VI” postulates SAST2.

“The reader that we have does not read Sesotho, it only helps in subjects that are instructed in English, so in most cases, you find that Sesotho books are the ones that are written with small print” postulates SCP2.

“It is very challenging because these kids are from vulnerable families; they do not have equipment, we have asked the school management to buy brailled text books but even today there is no such a thing” indicates SAST3.

“There is a shortage of resources, 9 teachers share two embossers. So if you want to braille a question paper, you find that they are all occupied and sometimes find that the other one does not have stationery. You can even stay there the whole day waiting for your colleague to finish. This becomes a barrier to our work, especially during June examination when we are supposed to do many question papers” narrates SAST2.

Lack of resources makes teaching and learning of Maths and Science difficult as indicated below.

“Learners with VI have so many needs, for instance, it’s not every subject they can study especially maths and Science. In maths, they need talking calculators and they do not have them, we have graphs, they do not have any facility to draw their graphs. In Science there is no visual periodic tables, it involves many drawings so it is not easy for such learners without facility that can help them draw” expresses SAST3.

“They do not have access to computers to do topics like graphs and plotting” indicates SBP2.

“The school has computers and other devices but it would be easier if they are installed applications that can allow learners to do graphs” postulates SBP2.

While participants stated that learners do not have enough resources, the majority felt that the use of assistive devices can be helpful in the teaching of learners with VI.

“We should use magnified materials and brailled text books” indicates SAP2.

“I think if the school can have the following: “Perkins machines, braille note touches, audio aids, tactile aids and moving models, these learners can be taught easily” expresses SAST1.

“Magnifiers, voice recorders, and readers that can decode both Sesotho and English textbooks can be very important in supporting learners with VI” notes SCP2.

“Equipping them with computer skills will ensure their ability to access and fully use the latest technology meant specifically for this consumption, thereby facilitating efficient learning” argues SAP1.

“They need reader machine to access books without depending on other students. I think every learner should have his own recorder and reader so that they can take hard copies and use them comfortably even after school. Software like jaws can also help them to read” claims SAST2.

“Applications that can make teaching and learning of Maths and other practical subjects should be installed in computers to assist in supporting these learners. The school should buy spectacles and talking calculators for these learners” states SBP2.

“The school can buy stencils because they are very cheap compared to graphic machines, so if the school cannot afford graphic machines, they can opt for them. They can also use modern technology, computers and modern soft wares that support learners with VI. They can make their life easier, it’s true we still have few soft wares that support them but they are expensive and rarely found” indicates SAST3.

“Learners should be given opportunity to use devices more than writing on the paper because I realise that they struggle a lot and strain their eyes when using exercise books” states SBP2.

“... examination question papers be printed with large print to be suitable to cater for their needs” narrates SCP3.

One participant spoke differently about the use of magnifiers:

“I think they should be given large print textbooks rather than magnifiers to read before the class is taught” argues SBP3.

Two teachers from school A noted:

“The school through the help of Ministry of Education and Training has employed supporting teachers to support learners with VI with things like transcription” claims SAST3.

“...there are support teachers who help in supporting these learners by brailleing question papers and transcribing braille into normal print for general teachers to mark them” asserts SAST2.

On the other hand, one teacher has noted:

“We lack teachers who are skillful on how to accommodate learners with VI, so this leads to poor performance. These kids do not achieve to their best ability” adds SCP2.

A participant from school A suggested as follows:

“I think they need someone who has specialized with computer to help them with Maths symbols or at least they should be given something of an equal value that can be helpful to them if they are not doing graphs” SAST3.

Learners with VI need an environment that is welcoming and accommodative. Teachers stated that the environment is not user friendly for learners with VI. Their views are expressed as follows:

“Environment is not suitable for them; mobility is the problem, to attend a class for some of the learners. They depend on others to access the toilets, office, dining hall and others” states SAST2.

“The environment affects their movement around the school campus. I wish a volunteer could come and assist with the environment; there are steep stairs everywhere, even the staffroom, trees and furrows that hinder their movement. The toilets are also not in good condition for them, they also have steep stairs but fortunately they are guided by their peers when they want to go the toilets” asserts SCP1.

“The environment is not conducive for them because there are so many passages and tress all over” opines SCP1.

However one teacher from school B indicated that learners with VI are able to access the environment.

“The environment is also conducive for them because all of them have low vision, they are not totally blind” argues SBP1.

While other participants indicated that the environment was not accommodative, others suggested as follows:

“...and the environment should be conducive” postulates SCP1.

“Classrooms should have enough light and be spacious to allow free movement” emphasizes SAP2.

The responses demonstrate that in the three secondary schools, the resources they have (voice recorders) play an integral part in supporting learners with VI as learners can play them back and write notes during their spare time. Magnifiers save time for teachers because there is no need to read what is written on the chalkboard as they enable learners to see clearly what is written. In addition, participants indicated that the use of modern technology can help in supporting learners with VI. Teachers mentioned voice recorders, magnifiers, brail note touch, readers, talking calculators and computes with software that help to support these learners especially in practical subjects. One participant from school A mentioned the importance of using tactile aids and moving models. A teacher from school A suggested that a curriculum should be modified where it does not accommodate learners with VI to be part of mainstream classroom fully.

The availability of support teachers in school A makes the work of both general teachers and learners with VI easier as they are the ones who assist with braille and transcription. Nevertheless, the available resources are not adequate; this threatens the inclusion of learners with VI. Another concern was about teaching and learning of Maths and Science which causes frustration to teachers when learners are supposed to do graphs. The study also reveals that there are no support teachers employed specifically for them except in school A. Teachers mentioned that learners struggle to find their way safely and independently around the school campus due to various factors such as steep stairs, trees and unprotected holes. However, one participant from school B indicated that there is no factor that hampers the movement of learners around the school campus because they do not have blind learners.

4.3 CHALLENGES FACING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH VI

Although these three secondary schools accommodate learners with VI, they still face various challenges in the inclusion of learners with VI. The study identified that learners do not access lessons fully, there is a negative attitude towards supporting these learners, there is inadequate resources and psychosocial support is not provided. Support teachers also encounter some challenges in supporting these learners.

4.3.1 Accessibility of lessons

Having equal rights in education means all learners should access 100 percent of the content taught in schools. Teachers have outlined the following views:

“They access my lessons to a certain extent because their academic performance is not satisfactory. The majority of them do not perform well because of grammatical problems in English. They are not competent at all” indicates SAP2.

“Learners do not access 100 percent of my lessons because some of the Maths signs are not known in braille” comments SAST3.

“When we are doing class work, it is like they are accessing the lesson fairly, but during examinations, I see a different story, their performance is not satisfactory. When they do graphs, they struggle a lot, but I allow them to treat that work as an assignment” expresses SBP2.

“To a certain extent because we are still new in this concept of inclusion of learners with VI, we are trying to learn on to handle these kids. Even those who have attended the trainings are not still perfect. So, they do not access my lessons fairly because sometimes their vision deteriorates, so on that particular day, they will not be able to do some given tasks properly. They just listen without writing” postulates SCP2.

Teachers from schools B and C mentioned the challenge of handwriting as outlined below.

“Their handwriting is really bad, so it’s a challenge to read their work even though it’s not all of them” reflects SCP3.

“In most cases, they struggle to see the correct spelling on the board, if you check what they have written, most words are misspelled. Sometimes I dictate the notes for them, that’s where I find that they have misspelled the words” contributes SCPI.

“Sometimes they forget to charge their magnifiers, so this leaves them behind because my handwriting is not so good, they struggle to see what I have written on the board. Their pace of copying the notes on the board is slow, so sometimes I erase even before they can finish” posits SBP3.

Other teachers noted:

“They are accessed fairly because everything that is written on the board, I try to see that they have captured it with their magnifiers. I try to see that they are engaged in all class activities. The magnifiers have calculators, so they can use them when making calculations because Accounting involves a lot of numbers” indicates SBP3.

“My lessons are accessed fairly because even during covid 19 pandemic, the learners used to rotate but it was not the case with learners with VI because they were given opportunity to attend with all the groups, even their performance is satisfactory. They were to come every day” stipulates SBP1.

“To a large extent, but it also depends on the individual learner’s ability. Generally, they are accessed by the learners with VI, especially as they benefit from their fellow learners’ contributions through participation” continues SAPI.

The responses demonstrate that learners with VI do not access 100 percent of the lessons. There is challenge in Maths and Science because learners cannot study certain topics which require drawings. The problem of incompetency in English is also highlighted. Teachers from school B indicated that they have recently accommodated learners with VI; as a result, they are still learning how to master the concept of inclusion. The findings also reflect that learners with low vision do not access the lessons without the assistance of the magnifiers, especially if the activity is performed on the chalkboard. However, two teachers from school B and one from school A believe that the learners access lessons fully through the help of assistive devices which they have in their schools and the collaboration between learners with VI and their peers seems to work for them.

4.3.2 Teachers’ attitude towards supporting learners with VI

The negative attitude of teachers keeps learners behind and from attaining their actual ability, meaning they cannot succeed in school. Teachers have negative attitude towards accommodating learners with VI as outlined below:

“Learners with VI need a lot of time which I do not have. We have a syllabus to cover and I still have other learners who need my attention, so I cannot concentrate on them only” states SCP3.

“Sometimes I focus more on finishing the syllabus than helping them especially if the time is not on my side” adds SAST2.

“...also, the board we are using is not big enough, you will find that I just overlook them and continue as if they do not exist just because I want to finish the planned work for that day” expresses SBP3.

“The main challenge lies with pace-keeping, especially when dealing with abstract subject material, it does cause a drop in the pace of a learner with VI though the details can be rather time-consuming” claims SAP1.

“It is time-consuming to include learners with VI. Most of the time you will find that we do not finish the syllabus within the planned time because most of the concepts, we track them very slowly so that they can be included” explains SAST3.

“Teaching learners with VI requires a lot of time which is not provided in the school allocation” states SAST1.

“The practical work endangers their lives, especially when using chemicals in laboratories they cannot understand what is happening in front of them, so it takes a longer time to understand what is going on when are supposed to push the syllabus” emphasises SAP3.

Although teachers support the inclusion of learners with VI within the three schools, there are negative attitudes amongst teachers which are also influenced by various factors. They indicated that because of the curriculum that is examination oriented, they cannot waste their valuable time to explain concepts for these learners who require more time to be accommodated. They focus more on sighted learners to finish the syllabus.

4.3.3 Teachers' views on VI learners psycho-social needs

Staying away from the parents and guardians is a great psychosocial distress for learners with VI. On this issue, the participants said the following:

“I think the psychosocial support is neglected. Thus, most of our learners with VI are not interested in learning and they also isolate themselves from others and that does not help them hence their low performance” notes SAST1.

“...and also because of lack of psychosocial support, one would find that they are not listening. Even if they had a chance of bringing the devices to the classroom it is still a problem because they do not concentrate because of their personal problems” emphasizes SAST1.

“It is not easy to involve their parents because we admit learners from all ten districts of Lesotho, so you will find that they do not stay with their parents so it’s not easy except if we use phones. Sometimes they drop out without informing parents. They even bunk classes because of the personal problems” expresses SCP2.

“Sometimes they are affected emotionally when they do a class activity for a very long time” notes SBP2.

Other participants suggested that parental involvement can be helpful because the parents know their children better as stated below:

“We should also involve their parents in whatever they do so that they do not feel neglected” stipulates SCP2.

“The time they are admitted in this school their parents should be called because we should know them, know their needs that is, whether they are totally blind or partially impaired” notes SCP2.

The study in the three schools found that learners with VI lack interest in learning because their psycho-social needs are not catered for. Teachers indicated that this affects their education negatively and leads to isolation. The issue of missing classes intentionally and dropping out of school is mentioned. As a result, it is not easy for teachers to meet their parents as there are no schools for learners with VI except in Maseru district. Another participant believes that the lives of these learners are not safe since there are dangerous chemicals in laboratories especially when there is no person who is in charge to ensure their safety because teachers do not always have time to go to laboratories with learners. Participants from school C encouraged parental involvement.

4.3.5 Support teachers’ experiences

Support teachers also experience challenges in accommodating learners with VI. They expressed their concerns as follows:

“As support teachers, we do not have a clear job description in our school because we are used anywhere where there is gap, it’s us who are closing the gap and that compromises the quality of our work. Like now, I have 28 periods a week which is a full teaching load, I cannot support learners with VI with two periods” informs SAST3.

“...by the time you think you can help them, they have another class to attend, and the teaching load that I have is too much also. When they are free you will find that I have another class to teach” expresses SAST2.

“The other challenge is that other teachers that we want to support are not interested in inviting us to their classes. I think there is a fear of being observed. They are very reluctant to talk to us; sometimes you pick a problem when you talk to a student that their teachers do not tell them where we should support them” emphasizes SAST3.

“...Sometimes teachers do not modify the question papers, so this consumes a lot of time to braille such question papers” declares SAST1.

“In most cases, teachers forget to give us the work to braille in time. They only remember when distributing question papers in class that they have learners with VI, so such learners will be send to you or a teacher himself bring the question paper and ask you to braille it within such a short notice. So, you cannot leave a class that you are teaching just because you are going to braille question papers for visually impaired learners. The administration can be angry at you because everything that involves supporting learners with VI is expected to be done during your spare time. This is a great challenge because it’s like supporting learners with VI is a secondary responsibility while the main priority is to teach sighted learners. This means that meeting the needs of learners with VI is not a primary responsibility for us as support teachers but unfortunately this hinders the progress of such learners” postulates SAST2.

“Their transcribed papers take long to prepare, and they get feedback later than their peers who are sighted” comments SAP3.

The findings of the study reveal that the greatest challenge the support teachers encounter in including learners with VI is that they are overloaded with work. They noted that not only do they have to braille texts, transcribe for general teachers but they also must teach more than one class.

There is also no collaboration between support teachers and general teachers; late submission of class work and tests papers is also highlighted. The roles of support teachers seem undefined, and this has resulted in poor progress of these learners. A participant from school A pointed out that there is still discrimination because there is a delay of feedback for learners with VI as compared to their peers.

4.4 TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher training equips teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, approaches, methodologies and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. It is very crucial for teachers to be equipped with skills on how to teach learners with VI. So if they do not have enough knowledge and skills, the learners will suffer.

4.4.1 Views on training for supporting learners with VI

Although all participants teach learners with VI, some have not received any training on accommodating these learners while others have. The following are their views:

“I have not attended any formal training about accommodating learners with VI; it is just the experience and being hands on. I have learned braille; even in class I can help students instantly with braille skills or mark class work on my own” expresses SAST3.

“Honestly none, it is true some of the teachers were given that opportunity of being trained but as for me, I have never attended any workshop. What I know is that one of the organizations of the visually impaired persons once visited our school to learn about the challenges that we encounter in accommodating learners with VI” indicates SBP1.

“There are no teacher training programmes to address teaching and learning of learners with VI” narrates SAP2.

“We are not capacitated with skills, we do not attend workshops, we help those kids according to what we think it’s best for them, I think experience helps us a lot” reflects SAST3.

“No training but some of our colleagues attended workshops” reflects SCP3.

Across all three schools, some teachers have received training on accommodating learners with VI.

“Mainly through workshops and short visits for observation at schools with such learners” clarifies SAP1.

“I just went twice for training at Mohloli oa Bophelo during winter holidays” clarifies SCPI.

“I attended few trainings, I remember the one that was held by LNFOD. They were trying to help us on how to deal with the people with VI” explains SAST2.

“I have received training on inclusive education and braille. It was offered by Lesotho National League for the Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP). This one of braille was offered by Mohloli oa Bophelo. It was held during winter holidays for 3 consecutive years. This one of inclusive education is held twice a year, in June and October. It started last year and we were told that it’s going to take 5 years” narrates SCP2.

Conversely, two teachers were taught some skills through pre-service training at the National University of Lesotho.

“I have qualification in Special Education, the course equips teachers with skills on how to best deal with learners with special education needs, looking at the needs of every student as an individual and how to include them” emphasizes SAST1.

“I studied inclusive education at NUL; the course was about braille and also on how to use technology that helps in accommodating learners with VI. However, I am not sufficiently trained because when you come into the field, it is only when you realize that there are some concepts that are new, so you are not familiar with” opines SAST2.

As the results of perceived inadequate training, participants made observations that include inappropriate attachment, failure to prepare well, use of inappropriate teaching methods, failure to help them to use their assistive devices as noted below:

“I have emotional attachment towards them and also pitying is what I do in most cases. I answer and allow others to answer before they are ready” notes SAP3.

“Effective teaching does not happen because I lack appropriate teaching methods when dealing with learners with VI and some concepts are not explained fairly. For instance, when I try to use demonstration, you will find that it does not work for them. Therefore I do not achieve some of the objectives when it comes to learners with VI, as compared to their peers” opines SAST3.

“Sometimes I do not know how to support them, I even encourage them to do core not extended” argues SBP2.

“Learners do not achieve to their best, they lose interest in their learning and drop out of school because I lack skills and knowledge of supporting them. So if I have been sufficiently trained, there could not been such, I still need more training” emphasizes SCP2.

“I cannot offer any assistance if learners struggle to use their assistive devices, they get bored because we teachers in most cases fail them. They end up having negative attitudes towards other subjects” adds SCP1.

“My training has been too superficial for it was to give me enough skill and confidence to adequately serve and meet the learners’ needs well. Hence it is difficult to understand and appreciate the learners’ needs and challenges; also not easy to align lesson approach to individual learners’ learning style” narrates SAPI.

Conversely, other teacher has a qualification in special education, thus she felt that she is confident about skills on how to support learners with VI as stated below:

“Yes I have been sufficiently trained to support learners with VI, so I do not encounter challenges” points out SAST1.

While teachers have different opinions on whether they have been trained to support learners with visual impairment, it is clear that they are currently ill-equipped. Some teachers have not received any training on accommodating learners with VI while others have basic training that they have acquired through workshops offered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Amongst twelve participants, only two teachers from school A have received training at university level. This implies that continuous professional development is required for teachers to support learners with VI in mainstream classrooms. The findings also reflect that all participants from the three secondary schools encounter difficulties when accommodating learners with VI. The difficulty

emanates from lack of knowledge and inadequate training according to them. They indicated that they do not know how to adapt their teaching to accommodate learners with VI and which methods and techniques are appropriate to enhance their understanding and improve their performance. One teacher from school A though, seems to be confident about skills and knowledge of inclusive education.

4.5 STRATEGIES TO BE EMPLOYED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH VI

The study found that there are various strategies that can be employed in educating learners with VI. These include recruitment of special teachers and teacher training for inclusive education.

4.5.1 Recruitment of special teachers

Due to challenges teachers face in the mainstream schools, participating teachers felt that human resource is needed in order to master the education of learners with VI. Their views are as follows:

“There should be more support teachers who are well trained, have enough skills to deal with learners with VI and should know the content of the area or subject where they will be helping such learners” reflects SAST2.

“There should be a teacher who is specifically in charge of their educational needs, a support teacher who can help even outside of the classroom” comments SCP3.

“In addition, more supporting staff should be employed and people under special education department who know computer or who are always ready to help these learners, this can work well for both teachers and learners” reflects SAST3.

One participant spoke of the provision of orientation and mobility instructor for learners to access the environment easily as stated below:

“The school should employ someone who can train learners to move efficiently from one place to another because the school environment is not user friendly” points out SAP2.

Teachers believe that teaching and learning of learners with VI can be more efficient if more special teachers are recruited. This can allow special teachers to pay more attention to these learners. Therefore, the special educational needs of each learner can be catered for. One

participant mentioned the importance of employing orientation and mobility instructor as a strategy that could help learners with VI to access the environment.

4.5.2 Teacher training for inclusive education

Teachers are the key factors in educational excellence, whether in the past or today. That is why they need adequate training to master their work. Training is essential because it assists teachers to connect with learners, understand them as individuals, hold learners' attention and ensure better classroom results. Therefore, teachers in this study felt that more training is needed in order to master the education of learners with VI. The following are their views:

“There should be induction programmes for new teachers on disability because wherever they are going to teach, they might find children with different disabilities” points out SAST3.

“All teachers should be given training since we do not have support teachers. Every year or quarterly, there should be some workshops for all teachers to change their attitude towards teaching learners with VI” explains SCP3.

“I strongly believe that all teachers should be trained or be offered short courses on Inclusive Education. It should not be one teacher because eventually when she decides to leave the school or gets a new job, the remaining teachers will not be able to handle such learners” contributes SBP1.

“Teachers need to be equipped with skills and be taught braille. On my side, I need to be equipped with laboratory skills on how to teach learners with VI because in Biology, observation is needed more than anything else. So learners with VI are being compromised if they are unable to observe and visualize structures” adds SBP1.

“Training should be done for all teachers and be taught how to use devices for learners with VI. We do not even know how to operate them, even a mere voice recorder. So it becomes a problem when a person who has been trained to help them is absent, we cannot help the learners” states SCP1.

“Teachers should be trained together with the management to cooperatively support these learners and there should be people who make follow up on whether the practices that are taught in workshops are being put into practice” expresses SCP2.

“We just make it known to our colleagues who did not receive any training to be aware that we have such learners and give them little knowledge we have on how to handle them but it is still not enough because this comes to them as secondary information but we are still trying to raise awareness in our school” opines SCP2.

Moreover teachers felt they needed formal pre-service training to master the education of learners with VI. They expressed their views as follows:

“In my view, inclusive education should be included into teacher training curriculum because now that our country has shifted into inclusive education, we can have learners with special needs everywhere. Every teacher should know how to handle these learners” narrates SAST3.

“In institutions, all teachers should take course in special education, just like life skills. It should be compulsory for all student teachers in all institutions” emphasizes SBP1.

“Since learners with disabilities are all over the country, there should be a compulsory course on special education in NUL and LCE” claims SCP2.

“Teachers training programmes should focus more on practical skills because majority of teachers do not know braille” explains SAST3.

One participant from school A felt that other schools which support learners with VI could pay a visit to their school to see how these learners are supported and also student teachers majoring with special education can benefit a lot.

“Mostly again, the schools that have these learners and those who are trained as special education teachers should visit schools that accommodate learners with VI see how teachers do things because the student teachers that are placed in this school seem to lack knowledge of braille. We still teach them everything as if they are not taught” expresses SAST3.

Across all three schools, the findings of the study reveal that the initial training of teachers had not prepared them sufficiently to support learners with VI. Hence, the need for continuous professional development so that teachers can be able to display competence in accommodating those learners. One participant suggests that there should be a knowledgeable person on special education who visits schools regularly to check if teachers are implementing inclusive practices or not. One

teacher from school C believes that to raise awareness about inclusion of learners with VI can be useful to all teachers. Other participant from school A highlighted the importance of collaboration between the three secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI.

4.6. SUMMARY

The findings of this study reveal that in all three schools, learners with VI are supported even though there is no clear written policy of inclusion. Teachers believe that practices that enable inclusion are there in their schools because learners with VI are admitted without being discriminated. Additionally, there is a provision of concession for them to compensate for the lack of pace in their writing while few teachers do not see the importance of giving learners that opportunity. Teachers support these learners academically; they do whatever it takes to explain the taught concepts to make these learners understand. They use teaching method such as discussion because they believe it helps learners to develop social skills irrespective of the impairment. Participants in the three schools suggested remediation and improvisation as helpful strategies.

The findings revealed that learners with VI are able to access resources even though they are not enough for them. There are several challenges including teaching and learning material, human resources and infrastructure which restrict both teachers and learners with VI from doing their work efficiently and effectively. The responses demonstrate that teachers agree that in three the schools they do not have adequate resources to fully support and provide meaningful equal education to learners with VI. Teachers suggested that the use of modern technology can help in supporting learners with VI specifically in practical subjects and also, learners should access a conducive environment so as to move effectively and efficiently from one place to another.

Teachers also mentioned that learners do not access 100 percent of the lessons; there are challenge in subjects such as Maths and Science. These practical subjects require them to draw which is not easy for learners with VI. The other challenge stated by teachers from school B is that they have recently admitted learners with VI, so they are still learning on how to deal with such learners. Conversely, two other teachers felt that learners with VI access lessons to a large extent through the use of devices, such as magnifiers and voice recorders. Teachers noted that psycho-social support and negative attitude towards supporting learners with VI is a great challenge in supporting learners with VI. Support teachers indicated that there is no collaboration between them and their

colleagues, so this affects learners' work badly. It seems that they are overloaded with work, so it is difficult to give individual attention to learners with VI.

The findings of the study reflect that some teachers have basic training on accommodating learners with VI while others did not receive any training at all. There are only two teachers who have qualifications in special education amongst all these twelve participants but they are not confident enough about their skills. Teachers are unable to meet the needs of learners with VI and the teaching methods that they employ in their respective classrooms do not promote active learners but passive ones. This leads to learners who have negative attitudes towards learning.

There are strategies employed to support learners with VI. Teachers believe that recruitment of special teachers in inclusive schools can make the work of both learners with VI and general teachers easier since they are the ones who help with transcription.

Lastly, the study reflects that the inclusion of inclusive education courses at NUL and LCE as well as in-service training can help in mastering education of learners with VI in mainstream classrooms at secondary level. Induction programmes are very crucial for new teachers and there should also be an officer from the Special Education Unit who will visit schools to ensure that teachers are implementing inclusion practices after their trainings. Other participants from school A noted the importance of collaboration between the three secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI in order to share the experiences of including learners with VI in mainstream classrooms. This could assist them to overcome any challenge related to the education of learners with VI. All participants concurred that training is important to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in order to include learners with VI in their teaching.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Supporting learners with VI in mainstream schools gives both teachers and sighted learners an opportunity to know and understand each other better thus endorsing the right of learners with VI to equal education and to be accommodated socially. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings focusing on the main aim of the study which is to investigate experiences of teachers in schools that include learners with VI. A reflection is made on the importance of the findings for the adopted theory. The discussion is guided by themes identified from data analysis in chapter four namely, teachers' perceptions on their support to learners with VI, challenges facing inclusion of learners with VI, teacher training and strategies employed to support learners with VI. Next, the chapter draws conclusions from the findings, describes limitations of the study and provides recommendations for improvement of education of learners with VI in Lesotho.

5.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

This section presents the discussion of the study focusing on the concepts from the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two.

The findings of the current study reveal that learners with VI are admitted in all the three secondary schools which participated in this study. The findings compare with Gray's (2005) research which indicates that social constructivism and inclusive education run concurrently since inclusive education is the inclusion of children with SEN in regular education as well as the sighted learners who display the expected growth. Similarly, Hatlen (1996) indicates that teaching learners with VI together with the sighted peers assists them to have positive self-development and supports their characters, and most importantly, their social development allows them to live autonomously and efficiently as individuals within society (Kzlaslan, 2020). Thus, separating the learners with VI from their peers is viewed by Scheiman et al. (2011) as a human right violation as it deviates from the social constructivist idea of learning as a collaborative effort.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that across all the three secondary schools, teachers face challenges when supporting learners with VI. The difficulty stems from insufficient knowledge

and inadequate training. Teachers do not have skills on how to adapt their teaching to accommodate learners with VI and lack strategies and techniques suitable to develop learner's understanding and to improve their performance. These findings contrast principles of constructivism as explained by Adams (2006) which states that the nature of constructivist learning obliges teachers of learners with disability to put into practice the idea that such learners will construct knowledge differently and that these dissimilarities stem from the different methods that people attain, choose, understand and shape information. Vygotsky (1978) argues that teachers must use the scaffolding technique, which is defined as providing full support at first and gradually reducing it so that the learner can complete an assignment independently (Slavin, 1997). Verenikina (2010) also emphasises that the teacher's involvement in children's learning is significant and the value of the teacher-learner interaction is more important.

The study found that in school A, there are support teachers who are employed to help both general teachers and learners with VI with braille and transcription to make the process of teaching learners with VI easier. However, they do not do their work effectively because of the heavy workload they have. The findings compare with Vygotsky (1978) who indicates that the assessment of psychological functions must be two-way not a self-regulating activity. He emphasises that what learners can do collaboratively today, they can do on their own in the future.

The findings revealed that teachers improvise to clarify difficult concepts for learners with VI. They believed learners become more innovative when they are exposed to other perceptions. Again, the results indicate that learners with VI are offered remedial classes if they are not on the same level with their sighted peers. Teachers use other various strategies that are helpful in accommodating learners with VI. These findings compare with Mohamed and Romli's (2021) study which indicates that social constructivism theory is the establishment for different teaching approaches used by teachers.

The current study found that there is core planning and discussion of planned topics amongst teachers before attending their classes. They also ensure that learners with VI participate actively in group and class discussions. The results concur with Liu & Matthews (2005) who shows that social constructivists understand knowledge as what learners do cooperatively with teachers, and their visually-abled peers. The findings also compare with Akpan et al. (2020) who argue that more

people are involved to have language and culture to create meanings and ultimately knowledge which is also co-created. Hence, this makes the work of teachers easier.

5.3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WITH VI

This section presents a discussion of the study based on the perceptions about school policies and practices, academic support, provision of concession and accessibility of resources to support learners with VI. These subtopics are discussed below:

5.3.1 Perception about school policies and practices

The study revealed that there is no inclusion policy in all three secondary schools. However, the participants are aware that there is a national policy even though they have not read it. Participants indicated that this makes the process of teaching and learning difficult for both teachers and learners with VI. The findings echo results from previous research such as Bodaghi et al. (2016) which explain how the absence of a written policy regarding the social support of learners with VI threatens them such that they may not get essential support. In addition, UNESCO (2005) realized that being specific about school policies regarding learners with SEN is of great importance as this guarantees quality education for learners with SEN.

LIEP of (2018) was put into practice to ensure that all learners with disability participate in Lesotho's school system and become independent in society and fully function in the socio-economic growth of Lesotho. However, in the LIEP of (2018), nothing has been said about how learners with VI should be included to help them to reach their full potential in inclusive settings so that they will function and live independently in the society and take part in social and economic escalation as a way of supporting inclusive education in Lesotho. Similarly, Mosia (2019) argues that LIEP is too general as it does not state assessment and support procedures for learners with different disabilities. For example, there is no section stating how the needs of learners with VI must be met in mainstream schools to enhance their academic potential.

The current study found that in all the three secondary schools, administration working hand in hand with teachers, tries to implement inclusive practices even if there is no inclusion policy that guides them on how to handle these learners. These three schools accommodate learners with VI without discriminating them, and partially impaired learners are placed in front rows in class, and get academic support from both teachers and administration. Moreover, there is a provision of

concession and availability of resources even though they are not adequate. The results are consistent with Matlosa and Matobo (2007) who found that the kind of facilities that are offered to the learners with VI at both the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lesotho College of Education (LCE) are not pleasing, although the institutions are making efforts to accommodate them. At the NUL, the learners can access computers even though they are not sufficient but at LCE, there is no accessibility of computers for such learners. Mosia and Phasha (2017) as well as Mosia and Phasha (2020) add that at secondary and tertiary levels in Lesotho the needs of learners with disabilities are not taken into consideration, because there is inadequacy in the availability of teaching and learning materials such as information and communication technological resources for such learners. These findings also concur with Mosia (2014) who argues that learners with VI face the same challenges in both primary and secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI. These learners are included physically but brailled textbooks are not accessible to them.

The findings of the current study reveal that across the three secondary schools, learners with VI are accommodated physically but educational support is not enough. The results compare with Mosia's and Phasha's (2017) study which found that the support learners with VI get at tertiary level is not satisfactory since these learners are not conversant with the facilities institutes offer for them. Again, the current study found that in schools B and C, only partially impaired learners are supported while school A supports all kinds of learners. The findings are in line with Heyer's (2015) study which reveals that from the time of the Second World War, a generation of people with VI rights advocates ensured that accommodation of learners with VI in schools and universities allows them to have the same professions as their peers. However, contrary to the findings of the current study, the Japanese disability rights association has slowly moved away from these organizations. They are now focusing on the same accessibility of public spaces and services, as well as integration into the "mainstream" education structure (Heyer, 2015).

Moreover, sitting arrangement has been identified as one of the crucial factors that should be taken into consideration in inclusive classrooms. The current study found that learners with VI were placed anywhere in classes and were disrupted by sighted learners when using their devices such as magnifiers and voice recorders. This shows that unlike other places as the literature revealed, schools in Lesotho do not support learners with VI fully in mainstream classrooms. The findings of this study are consistent with Habulezi and Phasha (2012) who indicate that placing learners

with VI in the front row closer to the teacher maximizes reception while others are at the back of the classroom due to their long sightedness. Again, the findings echo Sahasrabudhe and Palvia (2013) who noted that teachers should ensure that partially sighted learners sit closer to the whiteboard, to understand by paying attention to what teachers are saying. The provision of a human scribe and a magnifying glass are helpful when they occupy front seats.

5.3.2 Academic support

The findings of the current study have identified remedial classes as an important strategy that teachers use to help learners with VI. However, they are provided by certain individuals (in both schools A and B only) because some teachers are overloaded with work. These findings are not in line with Habulezi & Phasha (2012) who claim that learners with VI were allowed to study apart from regular sighted learners in the afternoon. The intention was to offer additional help that mainstream schools do not give. This allows learners with VI the chance to enhance their work and catch up to their sighted classmates.

The findings of the study indicate that teachers find discussion method useful in accommodating learners with VI. Some teachers believe that this method encourages social learning through teamwork amongst learners. This also assists learners with VI to intermingle with their sighted peers and know how they perceive them. As a result, the academic work of both sighted and visually impaired learners improves. The findings support Kapur's (2018) theory that knowledge is socially constructed in various settings and in various ways. In a classroom setting, knowledge could be acquired in the form of group discussion, teamwork and sharing among learners. This is the reason why Akpan et al. (2020) considered social constructivism as collaborative learning since it is established on interaction. The results of the current study are also in line with Kanno (2018), as well as Omwirhiren (2015) who argue that the key element underlying social constructivism theory is that learners with VI are better off working in groups sharing ideas, thinking and trying to find out the cause and effect, answers to questions, or come up with fresh ideas to supplement what is already known during discussion. For this reason, according to Vygotsky (1978), throughout the learning process, teachers need to scaffold students' learning. The findings are also similar to Mapepa and Magano (2018) who claim that the main responsibility of teachers is to inspire learners by using suitable teaching techniques and lively learning styles.

Furthermore, the study found that teachers improvise considerably in the process of teaching learners with VI. Teachers were of the view that learners are more innovative and more open to other perceptions. The results are consistent with Fast (2018) who declared that learners with VI rely on their hands as tools rather than their eyesight as a primary sense to collect the information they need. Additionally, teachers offer various tools for learning and allow learners with VI to smell, feel, and move objects utilising all their senses. That is, they give them real objects to touch, hear, and smell when completing lessons. This is greatly enriching practice as opposed to watching a photo or touching a model.

In addition, the study revealed that teachers use different teaching methods when supporting learners with VI in inclusive classrooms. They try their best to use teaching methods that accommodate all learners irrespective of their impairment. They highlighted the significance of repetition, class discussion and core planning. The results are in line with Duhaney and Duhaney's (2000) assertion that the primary component of a constructivist teaching strategy is active learning. They go on to say that when learners actively engage in the lesson, they learn and remember the information. Therefore, as teachers involve them fully in classroom activities, learners with VI can benefit from active learning by receiving assistance in understanding and remembering material. In a similar way, West et al. (2004) point out that support services and social assistance from teachers help learners develop peer relationships. The findings are also compare with Mubanga and Penda (2019) who noted that teachers' responsibility is to help learners attain skills and knowledge by interacting with their peers in the classroom and encouraging them to adopt their preferred learning strategies. Teaching strategies should be adjusted to accommodate various learning styles in order to ensure that these students are learning in a meaningful way.

5.3.3 Provision of concessions

In the preceding section, the study found that teachers use appropriate teaching methods to support learners with VI but not only that, but they also provide concession to support such learners academically to submit complete work just like their sighted peers.

The findings revealed that most teachers from the three participating schools provide additional time during class activities and when giving examinations to learners with VI. In school A, learners

who use large print question papers are given extra 25 percent while those who use brailled question papers are given 100 percent during examinations. These findings compare with the research of Mubanga and Penda (2019) who state that the curriculum emphasises giving such learners an additional 25 percent time during examinations because the curriculum's guiding principles and the nature of science practical lessons demand that learners with VI be educated using the remaining senses. Again, the findings are in line with the study of Habulezi and Phasha (2012) which indicates that the school they chose as their research site, gives VI students an additional 25 percent of the time allotted for examinations. Rest periods are provided for learners, although it depends on how severe their disabilities are. The invigilators for learners with VI are special teachers who are proficient in braille to respond to questions about braille, provide learners with the required assistive devices, and begin transcribing as soon as the learners have finished writing (Habulezi & Phasha, 2012).

As much as the literature and findings indicate that concession is provided to learners with VI, a study by Belay and Yihum (2020) reveals that while the sighted learners, in the schools they studied, write examinations in the classroom, learners with VI take examinations on the corridors. This demonstrates that the school never prepared examination classrooms and extra time for learners with VI. Therefore, the chances of being disturbed by noise are very high (Belay & Yihum, 2020). According to the findings of the current study few teachers from schools that support partially impaired learners do not give concession to such learners. They stated that due to availability of the devices such as magnifiers and voice recorders, partially sighted learners do not struggle when writing. Therefore, it is not necessary to provide extra time during class activities and examinations. The findings of the current study are consistent with Mosia and Phasha's (2017) study which revealed that support mechanisms like time concessions in examinations and tests may encourage inequality regardless of being examples of measures that enhance access.

5.3.4 Accessibility of resources to support learners with VI

The current study found that the accessibility of resources in secondary schools that accommodate learners with VI are very crucial in the teaching of these learners even though they are not enough to support such learners fully in inclusive settings. They only have computers, magnifiers (which are helpful for partially sighted learners) and voice recorders which can be played back while they

are not in class to listen to what teachers were saying. In school A, they also use Perkins and apex machines to write. Conversely, in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) of (2016), the MoET pledges to provide suitable teaching and learning materials, such as braille textbooks, styluses, and slates, to all schools with students who have special educational requirements. It also commits to support learners with VI in obtaining the necessary life skills and gaining access to better education. However, MoET is slow to fulfil its commitment because the schools are still struggling to fully support learners with VI in mainstream classrooms due to unavailability of resources. Nees and Berry (2013) also confirm that assistive technology is used to make the learning process more flexible for learners with VI.

The study found that the participation of learners with VI in mainstream classes is threatened in three secondary schools by insufficient teaching and learning resources. Teachers believed that the lack of teaching and learning resources prevented learners with VI from actively participating in class. The study also showed that there is a lack of human resources, yet support teachers are employed in school A to take care of these learners' unique requirements. Similarly, Dagnew (2013) and Lewis (2009) found that there is no sufficient support in schools for learners with disabilities. In both mainstream and special schools of learners with SEN, there is shortage of staff, inadequate resources, and usually the schools are situated in urban areas. In connection with these findings, Temesgen (2018) also found that in primary schools, learners with visual disabilities are not eligible for financial and material support from their respective schools except the grant offered by the government of Ethiopia. Therefore, lack of resources impedes social constructivism which indicates that, teachers should promote the creative development of learners with VI using social constructivist principles. In this way, learners with VI are unable to be creative or to acquire knowledge independently (Saleem et al., 2021).

From the current study, partially sighted learners were not provided with enough computers and magnifiers. Teachers indicated that there is only one magnifier which is shared by all learners. Research by Mosia and Phasha (2017) and Mosia and Phasha (2020) indicates that Lesotho's secondary and postsecondary education systems fail to adequately meet the needs of disabled students due to a lack of resources for information and communication technology and limited access to teaching and learning materials. Both studies also show that learners with partial sight

must deal with lecturers' handwriting when they do not access aids like projectors. According to According to Tseeke (2021), the way learners with VI are taught in mainstream classrooms is impacted by a lack of teaching and learning tools. In this regard, a lack of these resources results in low-quality instruction for learners with VI, which may influence teachers' capacity to modify their lessons for these learners.

The current study found that the schools do not have technological tools to aid education of learners with VI and teachers deemed modern technology such as voice recorders, braille note touch, readers, talking calculators and computers as useful. Similarly, Sahasrabudhe and Palvia, (2013) note that math slate, Taylor frame, abacus and talking calculators are used to help learners with VI who are having trouble answering mathematical issues. For students to receive assistance with accounting challenges, a spreadsheet application with installed software called screen reader is used. These resolution approaches are very effective and useful to learners with VI, specifically when they are motivated towards learning, and have enough understanding of how to use those devices and when they are attentive when the teacher is teaching in the classroom.

Apart from that, the findings on the importance of modern technology are also similar to Maindi's (2018) study which stresses that assistive devices such as magnifiers, microscope, telescope and lenses are useful for viewing regular print materials. Modern copy machines can also be used to make large print materials while long texts like novels might also be accessible on audiotapes. Sikanku (2018) points out that barriers that hinder the inclusion of learners with VI can be removed by using assistive devices which make learners with VI become independent in learning. For instance, the use of voice recorders reduces the amount of work done by teachers because they enable learners to record lessons.

Furthermore, the findings from the current study revealed that the environment is not conducive in both school A and C for learners with VI. Learners are restricted from walking freely from one place to another due to different factors such as steep stairs, trees and unprotected holes. These findings concur with Temesgen (2018) who indicates that learners with VI cannot be full accommodated when they are prevented from reaching some places. This hinders learners with VI to learn with their peers and contribute socially to events outside the classrooms. The findings

from the current study compare with the studies of Tseeke's (2016) and Ralejoe's (2019; 2021) in the context of Lesotho, who also found that infrastructural problem is a big issue for learners with VI meaning that the environment and infrastructure are not user friendly to learners with VI. The studies highlight that barriers such as big stones and big trees in walking areas, uncovered holes and teachers' cars hamper free movement of learners with VI. These lead to limitation of movement around the school campus. On the other hand, a study by Laskar (2017) found that accommodating learners with VI in Tokyo entails accessibility of the braille lines inscribed on the floor. These learners are instructed to walk in accordance with the braille lines. To get to their classrooms, there are also some stairs, and the schools installed railings on both the walls of the staircase and the walls of the entire building. This enables learners with VI to locate their classrooms on their own.

5.4 CHALLENGES FACING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH VI

Teachers mentioned some challenges to inclusion of learners with VI, and these are discussed below.

5.4.1 Accessibility of lessons

The current study found that accessing lessons fully for learners with VI just like their sighted peers is a great challenge specifically in subjects such as Maths and Science because they involve drawings and diagrams. The findings of the current study echo Habulezi and Phasha (2012) who argue that teachers accommodate learners with VI by making special alterations to the teaching and learning materials offered by the Department of Education. Nevertheless, those adaptations are not relevant in practical subjects like Mathematics and pure sciences. Temesgen (2018) also stresses that learners with VI encounter challenge of lesson adaptation. The study revealed that teachers place charts on the wall of the classroom, and they draw pictures and diagrams on the chalkboard. In support to this, Omed (2015) opines that some concepts such as a building, mountain ranges, and oceans are too huge to experience fully. Other objects such as small insects, snowflake, or an item under an optical microscope are too small to understand through touch. Therefore, these kinds of concepts can delay social and academic progress.

5.4.2 Teachers' attitudes towards supporting learners with VI

The findings of this study show that, despite teachers' best efforts to encourage the inclusion of learners with VI within the three schools, some teachers still have unfavorable views toward helping learners with VI for a variety of reasons, such as the examination-focused curriculum. They indicated that it is time consuming to explain concepts to these learners when they are supposed to complete the syllabus. Teachers only ensure that sighted learners are equipped with enough knowledge for the examination. In support, Otyola et al. (2017) show that socially, learners with VI face quite a lot of challenges like being undermined by sighted learners and teachers as people who are not gifted academically and hence getting discriminated by these people. In addition, Temesgen (2018) found that administrators give learners with VI very little attention. When they request about additional funding and provision of braille equipment, the principals normally tell them that there is no financial plan for that. So, this is an indication that these learners are marginalized and discriminated against.

5.4.3 Teachers' views on VI learners' psycho-social support

The study in the three schools found that learners with VI are not interested in studying due to their psycho-social needs that are not prioritised. Teachers indicated that this is harmful to their learning and leads to loneliness. Consistent with the findings, Bodaghi et al. (2017) identified that some learners with VI are sometimes not happy with the social care they receive and as a result, they suggest that there should be teacher training. Additionally, the findings reflect that parents' contribution should be taken into consideration in the education of their children. Sikanku (2018) as well as Fast (2018) suggest that parents, administrators and teachers must work hand in hand in inclusive classrooms to make individualised plans with the goal of serving the distinctive requirements of learners with VI. As a result, parents can assist teachers to learn more about these children because parents know them better.

5.4.4 Support teachers' experiences

The findings of the study reveal that support teachers are overloaded with work, even their roles are unclear, and this has led to poor academic work for learners with VI. Tseeke (2016; 2021) and Ralejoe (2019) corroborate the findings of the current study as they point out that heavy workload results in negative attitudes concerning the accommodation of learners with VI. They indicated

that support teachers are faced with the challenge of heavy workloads; therefore, they are unable to teach their classes effectively because at the same time they have to focus more on the needs of learners with VI. Their findings further showed that heavy workload weakens teachers' attention from addressing the academic and social needs of learners hence resulting in unsatisfactory performance of learners with in VI in their final examination.

5.5 TEACHER TRAINING

Insufficient training prevents teachers from having an impact on effective teaching and learning. As a result, both the findings of this study and the literature have shown that teachers are not trained to teach in inclusive setting as discussed below.

5.5.1 Views on training for supporting learners with VI

The findings of the current study indicate that teachers need more training in how to instruct learners with VI. Most teachers of learners with VI did not receive extensive training, either pre-service or in-service. However, a few teachers have basic training that they have attained through the help of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This implies that teachers need ongoing professional development to accommodate learners with VI in inclusive schools. In connection with these findings, Temesgen (2018) revealed that teachers do not know how to teach learners with VI due to lack of training. Similarly, Belay and Yihum (2020) reported that majority of teachers did not obtain special education training, and concluded that this has contributed to unsatisfactory performance of learners mainly those with VI. They further found that general teachers do not have appropriate skills and knowledge to address the various needs of learners with VI. In connection, Otyola et al. (2017) also argue that most of teachers do not have qualifications in special education, and do not know how to read and transcribe braille. Therefore, it becomes challenging for teachers to support learners with VI in regular schools.

Mwakyēja (2013) also found that in some institutions of higher learning and inside the mainstream classrooms, teachers are unable to use teaching techniques properly. They do not know how to handle braille materials, tactile diagrams and maps. They struggle with teaching inclusively themselves. Consequently, the lack of teacher training adds more challenges on the achievement of education by learners with VI. Additionally, the study by Tseeke (2021) reported that teachers in secondary school that accommodate learners with VI are not familiar with inclusive practices. Teachers become confused, discouraged, and frustrated when they are supposed to teach learners

with VI in mainstream classrooms. Hence, teachers should receive training to acquire skills on inclusive education because this might help them to formulate proper teaching methods for learners with VI and improve the academic performance of such learners. In a similar way Belay and Yihum (2020) state that teachers lack skills to encourage and inspire learners with VI as well as understand the difficulties of those learners throughout the process of teaching and learning. This involves endorsing learning and enhancing events, using different teaching methods, and adapting teaching to accommodate all learners. Teachers' focus is on sighted learners only; it is challenging for them to teach learners with VI.

Additionally, Khatib (2017) argues that insufficient training in inclusive education leads to incompetent teachers who are unable to handle different learning aptitudes of learners with VI in their classrooms. Therefore, this leads to teachers' negative attitudes in accommodating learners with VI in mainstream classrooms. Mosola (2020) adds that teachers understand that to boost their self-confidence; there is a need for adequate training intended specifically for learners with VI. The study further emphasises that teachers should understand that if they are not well trained, supporting learners with VI will be challenging since failing to possess the information and abilities necessary to teach such learners is the same as flickering in darkness.

5.6 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH VI

In inclusive schools, special education teachers have the vital task of ensuring that children with SEN receive high quality education. Again, professional development training can help teachers of learners with VI to become better at planning their time and supporting such learners fully in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, this section discusses the importance of recruiting special teachers and teacher training for inclusive education.

5.6.1 Recruitment of special teachers

The findings reflect that teachers believe that to meet the special needs of learners with VI, there should be recruitment of special teachers to make the learning more efficient. In school A, special teachers are employed even though they are unable to do their job effectively because they have heavy teaching load and at the same time have to support learners with VI. Teachers suggested that orientation and mobility instructors should be employed so that learners' movement cannot be limited around the schools. The findings concur with Fast's (2018) study which found that early childhood teachers who accommodate learners with VI are free to ask assistance from a teacher of

students with VI and an orientation and mobility (O&M) instructor to help their learners with technology and expanded core curriculum (ECC) skills that are not easily handled by general teachers. Omed (2015) adds that adequate human resources such as personnel development in the teaching of the learners with VI is required.

5.6.2 Teacher training for inclusive education

The current study found that teachers require constant training so that they can develop the capability in accommodating learners with VI. Teachers suggested frequent visits to schools by experts in special education to ensure implementation of inclusive practices are being followed by all stakeholders. The findings are in line with Fast (2018) who shows that experts in inclusive education should help teachers who support learners with VI in their classes. These professionals will ensure the safety of all learners in the inclusive environment. Similarly, Shelile and Hlalele (2014) add that MoET should ensure that a programme for continuous professional staff development is provided.

According to Belay and Yihum (2020), teacher training is important because it helps teachers become more focused and gives them the knowledge and abilities; they need to collaborate with learners who have VI. They also suggest that to address the diverse learning demands and educate in accordance with their potential, teachers should receive the right training to expand their understanding of using a variety of teaching approaches. Additionally, Bodaghi et al. (2016) and Bodaghi et al. (2017) emphasise that adequate training for both teachers and head teachers could also develop a positive attitude regarding learners with VI. According to the results of the current study, higher education institutions' curricula need to be updated to provide student teachers with the necessary information and expertise regarding inclusion principles. Again, teachers concurred that training is important to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills to include learners with VI in their teaching. One of the suggestions made by teachers is the importance of collaboration between the three secondary schools which accommodate learners with VI.

The study found that raising awareness about inclusion of learners with VI can be useful to all teachers. Similarly, Temesgen's (2018) as well as Bodaghi et al. (2016) and Bodaghi et al. (2017) suggest disability awareness as an essential condition for the development of collective support to ease the feeling of being incompetent which teachers raised.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of teachers of learners with VI in secondary schools. The conclusions are drawn from the objectives that directed the whole study and the discussion of the findings. The first objective was to explore the challenges learners with VI encounter in their studies. The study concludes that learners with VI face various challenges during the process of teaching and learning. Amongst the challenges that these learners face in mainstream schools, there is shortage of resources to support them to acquire quality education like their fellow students. There is also the infrastructural issue that restricts the movement of these learners. The other issue is the accessibility of lessons and curriculum especially practical subjects like Maths and Science which are not modified easily to accommodate learners with VI. Teachers believe that the psycho-social needs of these learners are neglected. Again, the study concludes that both sighted learners and teachers have negative attitudes towards learners with VI. The findings further showed that in school A, support teachers are faced with heavy workloads which detracts their attention from addressing the special needs of these learners and this leads to poor performance of these learners.

The second objective reads as follows: “Describe the way teachers view their support to learners with VI.” Although learners with VI are admitted, there is no inclusion policy that states how these learners should be supported in all the three participating secondary schools. Teachers only know that there is a national policy, yet they do not know what it entails. Nevertheless, the practices of inclusion are observable in the three secondary schools. Teachers support these learners academically; they use teaching methods such as discussion because they believe it helps learners to develop social skills irrespective of the impairment and other various teaching strategies to meet the special needs of such learners. They believe that providing concessions and placing learners with VI in the front seats is participating equally in the education system. They make good use of learning material that must support these learners even though they are not enough.

The third objective was to explain the extent to which teachers feel adequately trained to support learners with VI. The findings of the study revealed that teachers do not have sufficient competence to teach learners with VI due to lack of training. A few teachers have received pre-service training at tertiary level while others only have basic skills that they acquired during workshops. The

conclusion is that teachers do not meet the needs of these learners; as a result, this leads to teachers' negative attitudes in supporting learners with VI in mainstream classrooms.

Finally, the fourth objective was to suggest ways of supporting learners with VI efficiently in their studies at secondary school level. Based on the findings of the study, teachers believed that special teachers should be employed in inclusive schools to support learners with VI effectively in inclusive schools. For instance, orientation and mobility instructors should be hired to help learners to walk freely from one place to another. Additionally, the study also discovered that it is crucial for teachers and principals to engage in continuous professional development for them to be capable of assisting learners with VI. Their findings reflected that the inspection visit by the responsible officer from MoET to inclusive schools could help in ensuring that inclusive practices are being followed by all stakeholders. They believe pre-service training could enable them to address the needs of such learners. Teachers also mentioned the importance of collaboration between the three secondary schools that accommodate learners with VI. Disability awareness is also highlighted as an essential condition that can help teachers to support these learners collectively.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A few limitations can be cited in relation to this study. The study has used only interviews for data generation and analysis. Consequently, the study was totally depended on teachers' views only, not on observations to confirm whether teachers execute what they claim to do in the classrooms. The study has also excluded learners with VI who could have provided the researcher with in-depth information concerning their education in mainstream classrooms.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are made based on the discussions and conclusions of the current study. To give teachers the skills they need to accommodate learners with VI in inclusive settings, a number of challenges must be resolved.

The Government

- MoET should evaluate how Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy launched in 2019 is executed to support learners with VI in Lesotho.
- Continuous professional development should be offered to equip teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge to address the needs of learners with VI in mainstream schools.
- MoET should assist inclusive schools with the necessary tools to facilitate the instruction of learners with special educational needs.
- Moreover, MoET should employ special teachers in schools which accommodate learners with disabilities to support those learners fully in mainstream schools.
- MoET should raise disability awareness for teachers, parents, learners and society at large in order for them to support those learners academically and socially.
- Nurses should come to address health needs of learners with VI at school

The administration of the schools

- The school administration should ensure that learning materials and assistive devices such as computers, magnifiers and voice recorders are available even during spare time to learners with VI.
- The management of the school should ensure that the school surrounding is safe and user friendly, that is, there are no obstacles that can limit the movement of learners with VI.

General and special education teachers

- There should be collaboration between both general and special teachers to help in the process of teaching and learning of learners with VI.

- Teachers should develop a good relationship between themselves and learners (both abled-bodied and disabled learners).

- Further research is required to determine how Special Education Unit officers contribute to the instruction of learners with VI in inclusive schools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter from NUL to the Ministry of Education and Training

National University of Lesotho
Educational Foundations Department
P.O. Roma 180

25th April 2022

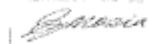
Chief Education Officer, Secondary
Ministry of Education and Training

RE: Anna Mamohlahlobi Selialia (200703784)

This letter introduces **Anna Mamohlahlobi Selialia** as a student registered in the Faculty of Education for M.Ed. in Inclusive Education. She is in the final stages of her study and must collect data. Her topic is: **"Investigating teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment at three secondary schools in Maseru"** and she wishes to interview teaching staff at three schools in Maseru. She will share with you the following, information letter for participants detailing the objectives of the study and ethical protocols that would help them make informed consent and a draft letter of introduction to the school principal similarly stating the topic of the study and intended objectives.

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

Yours Sincerely



Paseka A. Mosia (D.Ed.)
Associate Professor of Inclusive Education
Head of Educational Foundations Department
National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Cell: +26658969867
Email: pa.mosia@nul.ls / mosia296@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Researcher's letter of request to Chief Education Officer, Secondary.

The National University Lesotho
P.O. Roma
Roma 180

16th May 2022

Chief Education Officer, Secondary
Ministry of Education and Training
Maseru

Dear Sir/madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA IN THREE INCLUSIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR MASTER'S DEGREE


With this letter, I request to be granted permission to collect data in three inclusive secondary schools in the district of Maseru and they are as follows: 'Mabathoana, St Catherine's and Life. I am a registered postgraduate student in the Faculty of education at the National University of Lesotho. For my thesis, I am investigating '**teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment**'. This is because teachers of learners with visual impairment seem to be faced with challenges in supporting such learners in mainstream classrooms.

The information which will be collected from these schools will strictly be used for academic purposes which contribute to the fulfilment of Master's degree in inclusive education. The information obtained from these participants will be treated as confidential and under no circumstances will it or their identity be revealed without their permission. Participants will also be free to withdraw from this study at any time during or after data has been collected. I wish to interview twelve teachers, six females and six males, three general teachers per school who are teaching learners with both partial and visual impairment this academic year and also three support teachers from St. Catherine's high school.

I have attached introduction letter from my supervisor, letter to the principals of the schools for permission, information letter for participants, informed consent form and interview schedule.

I will highly appreciate your support.

Yours Faithfully


Mamohlahlobi Anna Selialia

The researcher

selialiaanna@gmail.com / 62553577/50382938

Appendix 3: Authorization Letter from District Education Manager



THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

23rd May 2022

District Education Manager
Maseru

Dear Madam,

Re: Permission to Conduct Research in schools in Maseru District

I write to request your office to facilitate the process of issuing Ms. Anna Selialia a letter of introduction and permission to collect data

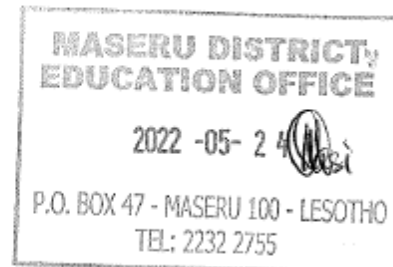
Her research topic is **“Investigating Teacher’s Experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment in the three sec/high schools in Maseru”**. Please remind the researcher to observe research protocols during the period of data collection. She should also be advised not interrupt the instruction in schools. Data will be collected from the following schools:

1. Mabathoana High School
2. St. Catherine's High School
3. Life High School

Please give her the support she needs.

Your sincerely,

Mabakubung B Seutloali (Mrs)
CEO-Secondary- MOET



Appendix 4: Letter from the researcher to the principals

The National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma
Roma 180

24th May 2022

The Principal
.....
Maseru

Dear Sir/madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR MASTER'S DEGREE

I am a registered postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education at the National University of Lesotho. For my thesis, I am investigating '**Teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment**'. This is because teachers of learners with visual impairment seem to be faced with challenges of supporting such learners in mainstream classrooms; therefore this makes their work difficult.

The information that will be collected from this school will be used for academic purposes which contribute to the fulfilment of Master's degree in inclusive Education. If permission is granted, I will inform those I am intending to interview about this study and they will be recruited for voluntary participation. The information obtained from these participants will be treated as confidential and under no circumstances will it or their identity be revealed without their permission. Participants will also be free to withdraw from this study at any time during or after data has been collected.

I have chosen the school for this study to collect data from, so I am therefore seeking permission to collect data from this school in May 2022. I have been allowed to collect data by the Faculty

I have chosen your school for this study to collect data from, so I am therefore seeking permission to collect data from your school in May 2022. I have been allowed to collect data by the Faculty of Education. Please feel free to contact my supervisor should further information be required on the project.

Your co-operation in this regard will be highly valued.

Yours Faithfully

Mamohlahlobi Anna Selialia

Email: selialiaanna@gmail.com

Cell: +266 62553577

+266 50382938

Supervisor

Professor Paseka A. Mosia

The National University of Lesotho

Email: mosia296@gmail.com /+266 58969867

Appendix 5: Letter from the principal to the researcher



ST. CATHERINE'S HIGH SCHOOL

P.O. Box 17, Maseru 100.
Lesotho, Southern Africa.
Fax/Telephone: (+266) 22322452

09th June, 2022

To whom it may concern

Permission to conduct research

We confirm that Mrs. Mamohlalobi Anna Selialia, a teacher at our school and a graduate student of the National University of Lesotho has been granted permission to conduct her research work at St. Catherine's High School.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. N. Xana', written over a horizontal line.

Rev. A. N. Xana - PRINCIPAL

ST. CATHERINE'S
HIGH SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 17, MASERU 100
LESOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA
TEL/FAX: 22 322 452

Appendix 6: Letter from the principal to the researcher

Mabathoana High school

P.O Box 2135

Maseru 100

24th May 2022

Dear Madam

Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR MASTER'S DEGREE

This letter follows your request to interview teachers about their experiences in teaching learners with visual impairment in mainstream classrooms.

You are therefore granted permission to interview teachers as long as it does not interrupt teaching and learning process.

Thanking you in advance for your understanding.

Yours Sincerely



Appendix 7: Letter from the principal to the researcher



Life High School

P.O. Box 935
MASERU 100
LESOTHO
(+266) 22322977

DATE: 30-05-2022

LESOTHO INSTITUTE FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

Dear Madam

Re: Request For Permission To collect data
For Master's Degree.

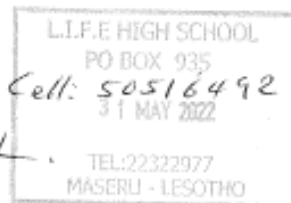
This letter serves as an acknowledgment of your letter dated 19th May, 2022, requesting to run interviews and to investigate, Teachers Experience of teaching learners with Visual impairment.

It is therefore with great gratitude that I inform you that you are welcome to pursue that exercise, and we promise to provide the utmost support to your exercise where needed.

Faithfully yours

MAKIBALI A. KHABA (nr) Cell: 50516492

Acting Deputy Principal.



PRINCIPAL:

DEPUTY:

Appendix 8: Letter of information for consent to participants

P.O.Box 11155
Maseru 100

24th May 2022

RE: LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH.

Title of the study: **Teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment.**

Dear fellow Research Participant

I, Mamohlahlobi Anna Selialia, I am a registered M.Ed. student in the Faculty of education, Department of educational foundations, at the National University of Lesotho. With this letter, I am cordially inviting you to participate in a study entitled as above. The purpose for conducting this study is to satisfy requirements of obtaining a Master's degree in Inclusive Education.

In this study, I am exploring teachers' experiences of learners with Visual impairment and the strategies that can be used to improve their education. This information can be used to improve the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho secondary schools, while at the same time can contribute to Lesotho relevant literature about inclusive education. There are no risks anticipated beyond these experienced during an average conversation.

Should you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other participants as individuals or as a group by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. I will analyse the data while also ensuring that your responses remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript so as to confirm accuracy of our discussion and to add or to clarify any point. Anonymous quotations will be used in reporting the findings of the study. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked room.

during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked room.

I look forward to professionally co operating with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact me on +266 62553577/ +266 50382938 or via email at selialiaanna@gmail. com.

Yours sincerely

Mamohlahlobi Anna Selialia

Participant's signature and date.....

Appendix 9: Informed consent form

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study titled: **Teachers' experiences of teaching learners with visual impairment.**

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio- recorded. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this study, my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Participant's consent statement

I have read the above information. I asked questions when I had them, and my questions were answered satisfactorily. I volunteer my consent for this study. I am aware that the discussion will be audio recorded and grant consent/ assent for these recordings provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to disclose any information that is shared in the group discussion to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's signature and date.....

Appendix 10: Interview schedule.

Teachers' interview questions

1. How do teachers perceive their support to learners with visual impairment?
 - a) What are your school policies and practices that enable inclusion of learners with VI?
 - b) How does your teaching and learning facilitation support learners with VI?
 - c) To what extent do you think your lessons are accessed fairly by learners with VI?
 - d) What challenges to teaching and learning come with including learners with VI?
 - e) What learning needs of learners with VI remain unattended in your school?

2. To what extent do teachers feel adequately trained to support learners with VI?
 - a) What training have you received on accommodating learners with VI?
 - b) Given your experience in teaching learners VI and their learning progress, do you think you have been sufficiently trained to support learners with VI?
 - What are some of the challenges caused by inadequate training?
 - How do you overcome these challenges if there are any?

3. How should learners with VI be supported?
 - a) In your view what strategies are efficient in educating learners with VI?
 - b) To what extent are these strategies easy to use in your school?
 - c) What learning material can help support challenges faced by learners with VI?
 - d) How should teachers be trained to master education of learners with VI in mainstream classrooms at secondary level?