



Teachers' and principals' challenges in implementing Life Skills Education at secondary schools in Lesotho

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Abstract—Lack of training complicates the teaching and learning process. This study explores teachers' and principals' challenges in implementing Life Skills Education (LSE) at secondary schools in Lesotho. Few graduate teachers received short-term training on LSE; hence, most teachers already practising in schools cannot teach LSE. The findings also revealed that teachers encountered challenges implementing LSE in Lesotho secondary schools. The results indicated that teachers feel troubled when teaching LSE for multiple reasons. These include the lack of skills of unqualified teachers and teachers' lack of confidence and interest. As a result, teachers turn to inappropriate teaching methods. The results indicated that sexuality education and HIV and AIDS could challenge the delivery and implementation of LSE schools. Thus, teachers need to acquire appropriate training and teaching methods in LSE.

Keywords: Life Skills Education, Principals' challenges, Teachers' challenges, Secondary schools

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I. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING a new programme requires teachers to participate in a competitive situation regarding their existing knowledge, abilities, and strength. It is a fact that teachers receive training before they get to practice in schools. However, the training was provided for general teaching and their area of specialisation. Life Skills Education (LSE), as a new programme, was designed specifically to address the current psychosocial issues that have a direct negative impact on learning. Its requirements place teachers in a position where they are considered incompetent to teach LSE due to inadequate training. Literature has demonstrated that teachers encounter various challenges due to a lack of training in LSE, which hampers the successful implementation of LSE in secondary schools (Moorosi, 2013). Some teachers find themselves with multiple challenges, including the following: teachers are unqualified, teachers are students, teachers lack confidence, teachers lack interest, and inappropriate teaching methods.

Teachers' challenges encountered in implementing LSE at secondary schools

Teachers' unqualified

It is known that the field of education, by nature, keeps evolving. In this regard, unqualified is the inability to perform multifaceted demands requiring utilising professional roles such as skills and attitudes in a context. The scores represented by Mirkamali, Thani, and Asadi (2019) revealed that most teachers were in the array of competent teachers, while few teachers were in the array of incompetent teachers. In this case, teachers who never underwent formal training followed by assessments are considered unqualified. In support of this view, MacPhail et al. (2019) highlighted that not all teachers have undertaken a teaching education qualification, either undergraduate or

postgraduate. Therefore, specialised courses are recommended to provide rich content and more suitable teaching methods (Mirkamali et al., 2019). According to Bozkuş and Taştan (2016), teachers' competency is determined based on work concerning teachers' knowledge and learned abilities. Therefore, teachers need adequate training in LSE to acquire new approaches suitable for delivering LSE. This concurs with Chemutai and Odongo (2015), who state that teachers who are not adequately trained will likely experience frustration. As a result, they cannot contribute towards quality teaching under the education objectives. Samuels (2012) states that poorly trained teachers cannot conduct well-organised lessons. Teachers may also have trouble becoming innovative in developing fascinating activities relevant to the programme. In addition, Bozkuş and Taştan (2016) asserted that teachers need to acquire qualities in planning instruction and its delivery while adopting a positive personality and the ability to monitor student progress. The mentioned requirements demand teachers put more effort into their professional development. The initiative will help them learn new instructional methods and strategies that they can employ to guide students in the classroom. That may include supporting students to be active and learn to gain understanding over memorising.

Teachers as students

Learning in this context refers to the involvement of teachers in learning specific knowledge and skills. Given that teachers are not adequately trained, they are in positions where they find themselves learning in the process of teaching. Teachers must learn the LSE requirements, including the content, teaching material, and delivery methods; through their teaching LSE, teachers can explore different teaching methods and identify the best methods in LSE. They also get to realise their roles in LSE implementation. Palmer et al. (2005, cited in Pillay, 2012) assert that teachers are expected to display the subject's

content because it is the main factor in successful teaching. This was confirmed by Rooth (2005, cited in Pillay, 2012), who found out that 30% of all teachers in her national study were not specifically trained in teaching Life Orientation.

It has been debated that good teachers who are fit enough to handle current issues must adopt abilities that replicate determinants of education, worth in education, and talents in education (Kuusisto, Ubani, Nokelainen & Toom, 2021). Thus, teachers' knowledge will improve their ability to fully support students' learning while empowering them to excel in their schooling.

Lack of confidence

Teacher's confidence refers to the behavioral activity of self-assurance, which stems from appreciating individuals' capabilities. LSE teachers must be confident to set a good example before students. According to Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011), teachers have a direct and consequential lifelong influence over the students they teach. Teachers directly impact how students learn and interact with one another and within the community. Training is the major factor that contributes to individual confidence. Considering the degree of influence the teacher possesses in students' learning. It is crucial to explore all strategies that could encourage optimistic consequences in students' lives (Stronge et al., 2011). The feeling that a teacher has in his work may have a negative or a positive impact on his teaching abilities. As Samuels (2012) points out, untrained teachers lack the confidence to facilitate LSE, especially certain topics, including sexuality and HIV/AIDS-related education, thus restraining educational outcomes.

Teachers' lack of motivation

Lack of motivation simply refers to the lack of determination to perform a certain task. Teaching any subject or programme requires intrinsic motivation because it is a long-term activity that leads to achieving learning goals. Prinsloo (2007) stated that some teachers are not positive about the impact of LSE on students' lives; as a result, they put in less effort. Prinsloo (2007) further stated that principals were anxious that many teachers were not serving as role models in the community. Additionally, they reveal a negative attitude towards their work as they are often late or absent from school. As a result, students tend to lose trust and respect for teachers. Principals also observed that teachers are lazy and lack commitment to improving students' progress. However, the other literature revealed that some principals indicated it was difficult for them to support the implementation of LSE because many students in their schools are irresponsible and lack vision. Prinsloo (2007) stated that some principals lack commitment to implementing LSE in Kenya. The principals felt that LSE could have little impact on the students even if they provided some support for teaching the subject in their schools (Abobo & Orondo, 2014).

On the other hand, Abobo and Orondo (2014) reject the principals' defense for their lack of commitment to making the life skills programme successful in their schools. Hence, the principals only have a negative attitude and shift the blame on students in their schools for the problems for which they are responsible. It is, therefore, apparent that the successful implementation of LSE depends on teachers' attitudes toward work. Effective teachers act as a source of motivation as they provide a stable and positive impact on young people (Khan & Irshadullah, 2018). Teachers must understand their roles to support students and fully understand LSE and its teaching requirements.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study explores the challenges teachers and principals encountered in implementing LSE at secondary schools in Lesotho.

III. METHODS

Research approach

A qualitative approach was used in this study. The qualitative design is extremely useful for assessing participants' perspectives and presenting information collectively (Alamri, 2019). Thus, the approach

was found suitable to assist the researcher in gathering relevant information concerning inadequate training for LSE teachers. However, it is acknowledged that the information collected through the qualitative approach is subjective hence it cannot be generalised.

Research paradigm

This study employed the interpretive paradigm. According to Khaldi (2017), interpretivism is the approach based on people's views of the world and their life experiences. As an aspect of the qualitative approach, the interpretive paradigm helped the researcher interpret the study elements from participant's point of view. As Khaldi (2017) observed, human behavior is affected by several factors, most of which are subjective. Interpretivists believe in studying human behavior in participants' daily lives rather than in a controlled environment in each research context.

Research design

This study adopted a case study research design. As Thomas (2021) defines, a case study is a form of inquiry that explores the multiple perspectives and uniqueness of a project, policy, institution, programme, or system in a real-life context. This approach allowed information to be gathered from teachers through structured telephonic interviews. As Crowe et al. (2011) asserted, in case studies, data collection needs to be flexible enough to allow a detailed description of each case through discussion. Thus, the case study allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon's key characteristics, meanings, and implications (Thomas, 2021). Data were collected through structured telephonic interviews. Research has shown that the most significant advantage of using the telephone is saving time and cost (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). In this era of the COVID-19 pandemic, telephonic interviews are also safe. However, the interviewer is likely to miss the non-verbal communication of the respondent. According to Farooq and De Villiers (2017), telephonic interviews allow researchers to interview multiple interviewees over a shorter period while gaining in-depth knowledge of participants' experiences. Therefore, the interviewer allowed participants to share their experiences freely using this method.

Data collection instruments

This study employed semi-structured interviews to collect data. These techniques were suitable for answering specific questions (Rheams, 2018). Each interview session lasted for an approximate duration of 40-60 minutes. The data were collected using an interview guide as a data collection instrument. The researchers used a digital audio recorder, which made it possible to refer to the data collected. Furthermore, field notes were taken to supplement audio recordings. Following research ethics, the participants' consent to participate in the study was sought, and the researchers were permitted to audio-record their responses.

Participants

In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants. Mishra and Alok (2011) defined purposive sampling as a method that consists of the purposive selection of population items to represent the population's characteristics. This study selected two LSE teachers and one principal from each school. Therefore, the total number of participants added to twelve.

Research sites

The study was conducted at two urban and two rural secondary schools. The schools in urban areas are busy and easy to access. Meanwhile, those in rural areas are found in far places without traffic. The schools in rural areas are not easily accessible due to difficult transportation. All schools selected for the study were government schools.

Data analysis

Thematic data analysis was employed, and the findings were analysed in themes to make it possible to understand teachers' perspectives regarding adequate training in LSE. Thematic analysis (TA) is a technique that is used to classify, examine, and deduce patterns of meaning known as themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun,

2017). Themes provide a framework for organising and reporting the researcher's critical interpretations by identifying key data features guided by the research question (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017).

The researcher, therefore, considered all the pillars of trustworthiness to ensure that the methods used provide quality data. Data was presented in a way that demonstrated dependability to show the consistency and reliability of the study. Additional procedures, such as familiarising oneself with the data, will be used to increase the study's credibility.

Ethical considerations

The researcher first acquired ethical clearance from the University of the Free State to adhere to ethical requirements. The ethical clearance certificate obtained was submitted to the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to get permission to conduct research from the secondary schools. The researcher was therefore provided with a letter from MoET, which was used in schools to get permission to conduct interviews. The researcher provided the participants with the full information about the study. That included details of the study, including what the research was about and its aims. The researcher assured the participants of their privacy. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms instead of the real names of the participants and the schools.

IV. RESULTS

Teachers' challenges encountered due to teachers' lack of LSE training of LSE

Lack of training creates some complications in the teaching and learning process. The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that teachers encountered various challenges in implementing LSE in Lesotho secondary schools. This was gathered when teachers stated that they feel troubled when they must teach LSE. Their reasons for this state of feeling varied from one teacher to another. These include teachers' unqualified, teachers finding themselves as students, teachers' lack of confidence, teachers' lack of interest, and inappropriate teaching methods. It is worth noting that LSE demands different approaches from those previously used. Thus, teachers should be trained to acquire appropriate teaching methods in LSE. Given the sensitive nature of topics on sexuality education and HIV and AIDS, some topics in LSE can be considered difficult to deliver.

Unqualified teachers

In this study, unqualified teachers mean teachers lack adequate skills to perform teaching roles properly. The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that teachers in Lesotho are chosen randomly to teach LSE; hence they lack the required skills. Therefore, teachers who were never trained are considered unskilled because they have not gone through training to capacitate them with suitable skills. In this regard, untrained teachers will likely fail to deliver quality LSE because they have not acquired appropriate skills. This is how participants responded to the interview sessions:

"At my school, for instance, there are only three of us; the other is a secretary. She is just called to assist when she is not busy. So even their impact on students makes no difference; you see students considering LSE as one subject, which relieves them during a hard day, and not that they see it as important. They think it is used to push a day and do not see its importance" (Principal 1).

"That teacher does not go all out to reach what students need to achieve according to the objectives because the teacher is also gaining confidence while teaching. The untrained teacher is a challenge himself" (Principal 2).

"The biggest problem would be their approach because sensitive issues are discussed in LSE. If the approach is wrong, that could be dangerous to students. The setting of our classes also needs trained teachers since we have overcrowded classes" (Principal 3).

The findings have echoed that some schools do not allocate qualified teachers to teach LSE. Thus, a teacher allocated to teach LSE without adequate training experiences a knowledge gap during

implementation. Teachers without appropriate training may not understand the content deeply, leading to narrow instruction and possible misrepresentation. On the other hand, teachers who are not well trained may find it challenging to meet the diverse needs of students since they are not likely to recognise and address students' mental health issues. Hence, they may be incompetent to support needy students, mainly those with exceptional educational needs. In that case, lacking the know-how may cause harm to students instead of empowering them.

Teachers as students

The findings showed that teachers are students. The teachers' active process of familiarising themselves with suitable teaching methods. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that lack of training positions LSE teachers in a learning situation because they were not trained in LSE. Untrained teachers are bound to improve their knowledge or seek support from trained teachers and principals. The following responses from the interview sessions support this.

"As I have said, a teacher who was not trained is also learning, which puts a lot of pressure on teachers" (Teacher 1).

"You find teachers avoiding it because they do not want to face a new challenge. That challenge is that he will learn together with students whereas if there were enough preparations, it would be a relief for teachers who would do the work properly" (Teacher 1).

"Untrained teacher won't be able to plan and follow a syllabus as he does not know it, meaning he will teach whatever he likes. That person will be teaching what is beyond the syllabus" (Principal 1).

"If you are not trained, you are going to digress; therefore, you are not going to reach the objectives. My main challenge is to teach something you do not know" (Teacher 7).

"Untrained teacher will not be creative enough; he will only rely on a book, and he may fail to use teaching aids" (Principal 2).

The findings show that LCE is allocated even to individuals who do not have teaching qualifications and have not undergone the necessary training and experience to pass knowledge to students. Lack of training in various instructional strategies can limit a teacher's capacity to engage students effectively. That may lead to poor classroom dynamics and reduced motivation.

Teachers' lack of confidence

The findings indicated that a lack of confidence could affect the implementation of LES at schools. Participants mentioned that individuals do not feel courageous enough to perform certain tasks. In this case, teachers lack the skills to deliver LSE in secondary schools. Most participants have intimated that lacking relevant LSE training affects their self-confidence. Thus, teachers maintain that training will improve their self-assurance as they will be well-equipped with information. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"The challenge is that other teachers who teach other subjects like English have a problem because they think they are not competent enough to teach LSE" (Teacher 2).

"If LSE is taught by someone who is not a teacher, obviously he does not have good qualities of a teacher" (Principal 1).

"Yes, just like I have said. You did not train me; therefore, it is straightforward to consider me incompetent. Even if you are capable at first, you tend to believe you are incapable, and that attitude is transferable to students. As a result, students may lose interest" (Principal 4).

"If you give LSE to any teacher without training, he tends to believe that he does not know. He is not sure about what he must do. That state of not knowing will first torture you as a teacher, and we consider ourselves incompetent for teaching LSE" (Principal 4).

Teachers without comprehensive training may feel unprepared and less confident handling classroom situations, including student behaviours. Teachers lacking relevant training may not employ best practices in their instruction, resulting in less effective learning experiences. The findings indicate that teachers' confidence and knowledge in LSE determines the outcome of lessons in students' learning experiences.

Lack of motivation

The findings suggested that a lack of motivation could affect the implementation of LSE at schools. Participants reported putting all the processes influencing one to act in certain ways. They revealed that teachers assigned to teach LSE have specialised subjects to teach. As a result, they show little interest in LSE implementation because they do not feel it is their responsibility to teach LSE. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"Similarly, even teachers with their specialised subjects show little interest in LSE. Regarding LSE. He does not prepare anything; he just looks at topics he is comfortable with or can easily discuss" (Principal 1).

"Hey! Talking of myself specifically, I do not have challenges, but people who have challenges are the students because they are being oppressed; they are allocated to be taught by teachers who do not like LSE. They hate it, so they do not make enough effort to master it" (Teacher 4).

"Okay! Yes! The fact that they do not like it means they do not accept it at all. They do not find it important. Since they lack interest, they are not familiar with its content. Some do not attend its classes when they must" (Teacher 5).

"Teachers who are not trained are likely to develop a negative attitude towards it. They ignore it even when it is not being taught because they know it might be allocated to them once they mention to the principal that it is not being taught" (Teacher 6).

The findings reveal that untrained teachers may feel less confident in their teaching abilities, affecting their morale and enthusiasm for LSE teaching. Lack of suitable training can result in teachers' low self-efficacy, making them doubt their ability to educate and manage students successfully.

Use of Inappropriate teaching methods

The findings indicated that inappropriate teaching methods could affect the implementation of LSE at schools. Participants mentioned that inappropriate teaching methods simply mean improper methods of instruction while facilitating new knowledge for students. They stated that teachers not trained in LSE implementation are forced to use traditional teaching methods. Such methods are teacher-centered. Training teachers will help them shift to a student-centered approach while teaching LSE. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

"There is a need for all teachers to be trained and made aware because I see them using old strategies. They do not consider students' views. They tend to make decisions without listening to students' side of the story. As a result, students tend to be more comfortable with us than with other teachers" (Teacher 4).

They must be trained because the required approach differs slightly from other subjects.

"Yes! That is why I think they need to be trained in LSE, as I have mentioned that they need to be trained in making lessons and how they must present it because it is different from the common way of teaching" (Teacher 2).

"Yes! Like any other subject being taught, teachers must be familiar with LSE content and methods of assessing achievement of objectives, meaning they have to be familiar with LSE objectives. Again, they should be familiar with its importance and teaching methodologies. All those must be covered and prepared before the class starts. That is all I see" (Teacher 8).

"Teachers need to be trained to clearly understand that LSE is not mostly based on the book, thus enriching their thinking. They need to be helped to be creative enough to engage students in practical activities. They should also be assisted with approaches that will help them to reach out to every student" (Principal 3).

From the above findings, teachers who are not adequately trained in LSE are not familiar with the appropriate teaching methods needed to implement LSE successfully. Ineffective teaching methods may negatively affect classroom management, leading to a less controlled learning environment. In that way, the methods that untrained teachers may use may not be suitable for LSE content, and that may not be helpful to students. That may cause long-term negative effects on students' learning.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings have revealed that teachers and principals face many challenges in implementing LSE in secondary schools. Such challenges include feeling incompetent, teachers as students, teachers' lack of confidence and motivation, and inappropriate teaching methods.

The findings have revealed that teachers who are not trained lack professional competency. Some participants have revealed that untrained teachers are considered unknowledgeable. Lack of training in LSE contributes to incompetent teachers because they have not acquired the necessary skills related to LSE implementation. Putri et al. (2019) state that teachers must be competent enough to support students by creating scenarios to help students engage in critical thinking and problem-solving.

The study attempts to address this negative impact, which could result from a lack of teachers' training in LSE. This concurs with the findings from related literature. Research has shown that LSE requires a sensitive approach, especially where there is a need to offer psychological support to students who might be having problems (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014). Professional teachers are responsible for showing skilled expertise in providing clear educational instructions through teaching, guiding, directing, and assessing students (Putri et al., 2019).

A new approach is consequently needed to improve teachers' training in secondary schools' LSE. Most teachers concur that untrained teachers cannot reflect on their teaching practices because they do not know how to teach LSE. That makes it difficult for them to improve where necessary. That is also likely to affect students negatively as they may lose interest in the programme.

The findings have revealed that some LSE teachers find themselves learning while, at the same time, they are teaching students. Thus, teachers should be knowledgeable before they teach students. However, failing to train teachers in LSE has placed teachers in a position where they become students while teaching students. Teachers who can at least cope with teaching LSE without training are tasked to learn and research LSE programmes before teaching. This allows them to acquire more knowledge, thus giving them the confidence to teach LSE in secondary schools. Therefore, teachers unwilling to allocate their time to learn about LSE are likely to reveal negativity and resistance to LSE implementation. This concurs with the findings from related literature. According to Dockett, Perry, and Whitton (2010), unlike previously, when education delivery was teacher-centered, teachers are currently seen as students because they must ensure that the environment is conducive to learning. The study reveals that some teachers do not take LSE seriously to the extent that they do not bother to prepare for the lessons. Some teachers are considered selective and choose to teach topics they are comfortable with.

In this study, learning for teachers shows that teachers were not well trained. Putri et al. (2019) stressed that teachers must keep learning because their role requires them to become innovative. Therefore, Teachers are expected to translate their previous experiences productively to develop new ideas that enable students to deal with their problems.

The findings have revealed that lack of training contributes to a lack of confidence. A teacher who perceives himself as unknowledgeable has a high chance of lacking confidence in teaching LSE. The training provided to teachers raised their self-assurance and allowed them to use their teaching abilities. Thus, the knowledge teachers acquire becomes easily transferred to students through interaction. Concerning LSE implementation, a lack of training puts teachers in a situation where they lack confidence. How teachers respond to this kind of experience differs from teacher to teacher. Some teachers may work towards improving themselves, while others may not and rather choose to avoid teaching LSE. This concurs with the findings from related literature. As Anderson and Putman (2020) assert, less confident teachers must be assisted with professional development broken into small chunks of practice and allowed to practice more often.

The research findings have revealed that LSE is assigned even to people who are not teachers. Hence, some teachers do not try to improve their teaching skills in LSE, including preparing for LSE lessons. Thus, students become victims as teachers fail to provide students with the quality education they are entrusted with. This concurs with the findings from related literature. According to Putri et al. (2019), teachers have a vital role and responsibility to provide excellent education and guidance to students. Thus, teachers who are not trained show a negative attitude towards LSE to the extent that they never volunteer to teach it even when they know it is not being taught. Training all teachers then remains a huge task to be completed to avoid putting teachers in stressful situations.

The findings have revealed that untrained teachers use the old teaching methods in teaching LSE, while the subject requires more interactive approaches. If teachers are not trained in LSE, they will likely practice inappropriate teaching strategies. Some participants have intimated that teachers who are not trained in LSE are bound to use old teaching methods because they are not well-equipped with relevant methods in LSE. Moreover, LSE requires a teacher to play multiple roles: teacher, friend, and counsellor. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative enough to create activities that attract students' participation. Teachers can identify learning gaps from the interaction between students and teachers. Trained LSE teachers would be able to support students who are experiencing learning problems and any other social issues. The study has further revealed that teachers who are not trained lack abilities to become creative while teaching LSE. Such teachers may fail to understand the concept of LSE, which is mainly about reaching out to students as individuals. This concurs with the findings from related literature. As Behrani (2016) states, teachers must be trained to adopt the new informal approach based on the activity method. Activities are merely suggestive, and a resourceful teacher can think of many more activities to encourage life-skill experiences.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that LSE implementation would never be successful without training. There is a need to provide proper training because some principals and teachers are still not well informed about LSE requirements. Inadequate knowledge, which some principals and teachers have, may negatively affect the implementation of LSE. Although training has been provided, research has revealed that most teachers were never trained, while those who were trained still feel they did not get proper training. Principals were all trained so that they could conduct step-down training for teachers. However, Mirkamali et al. (2019) assert that careful consideration should be taken while engaging and training school principals. He further stipulates that engaging individuals with high-level skills is imperative to be responsible in providing training to others.

VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The study does not have any conflict of interest.

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