






Fostering an enabling environment for Learners with Special Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho

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Abstract – Successful inclusion of Learners with Special Educational Needs in mainstream teaching and learning is a challenge globally. This study explores fostering an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. Data for the study were collected using a qualitative approach using a case study design, and analysis was done through Thematic Analysis. Thirteen teachers from two primary schools in the rural community and two officials from the Ministry of Education and Training purposively were selected in Lesotho and participated in this study. Focus group discussions and one-on-one semi-structured interviews were used as instruments for data collection. Thematic results showed that teachers' inflexibility hindered the creation of an enabling environment in terms of infrastructure and poor allocation of resources, which were critical challenges to support LSEN in their daily teaching and learning activities. The results revealed that not enabling environments and the unavailability of relevant resources increase the number of dropouts in schools among LSEN. The results further revealed that the lack of pertinent training for regular teachers to help special education learners succeed effectively handicapped the education of LSEN in mainstream teaching and learning. Therefore, the study recommends that teachers be given continuous workshops by MoET and in-service training to fill the gaps in special education programmes and produce teachers who can be relevant in inclusive teaching and learning in Lesotho's primary mainstream schools, particularly rural schools.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Visual impairment, Academic performances, Enabling environment, Learners with Special Educational Needs

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I. INTRODUCTION

HISTORICALLY, the school systems did not include Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). They were kept indoors, and ultimately, they were socially excluded from acquiring formal education (Monne, 2021), thus depriving them of their social and economic freedom (De Leeuw, De Boer, & Minnaert, 2017), which does not go together with the laws and regulations governing special education. This also handicaps the world initiative towards effectively educating LSEN in regular classrooms (Bateman, 2017). The paradigm shift toward inclusive education is providing access to quality basic education for all learners, including LSEN, to mainstream educational institutions worldwide (Ramatea & Khanare, 2024). For example, "Everyone has the right to education", is a proclamation in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which has become a contentious topic and a growing concern across countries to make education free and compulsory for their citizens without any discrimination (Mosia & Phasha, 2020) and Lesotho has not been an exception in this move to leave no child behind. Through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), the government of Lesotho aligned the education laws and policies with the decentralisation of services to address the dynamics of inclusive education (Monyane & Kgothule,

2023). The country responded to 'Education for All' (EFA) and the United Nations commitments by providing Free Primary Education to all learners from the age of six in 2000, adopting the Education Act in 2010 (Mosia & Phasha, 2020; Ralejoe, 2021) and making education services provided by the Ministry available within a reasonable distance from every habitation. These reforms were a significant stride in including LSEN in enabling learning environments. Ramatea and Khanare (2024) concur that it was also a crucial and adaptable strategy to overcome their educational needs.

Furthermore, the Education Act (2010) promotes the education of all learners (MoET, 2018), ensures that a teacher provides LSEN with lifelong learning opportunities (United Nations, 2015) and facilities to enable learners to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy normal manner and conditions of freedom and dignity. One such opportunity is receiving a fee, equitable quality education, and support. While research shows that most schools believe that LSEN are entitled to inclusive education (Mateusi, Khoaeane & Naong, 2014), it also indicates that a cohort of Lesotho teachers experience several challenges (Mosia, 2014) because they lack the skills to support and integrate effectively LSEN into enabling environments, particularly in rural contexts.

The integration of LSEN into the mainstream has promoted various challenges in the teaching and learning of LSEN, thus stopping them from realising their potential. This includes a lack of relevant resources

depending on the different needs of LSEN, infrastructural development, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of relevant special education teachers who are trained to teach relevant learners with appropriate resources (Lebona, 2020; Ramatea & Khanare, 2021) to eliminate the dropout of such learners and help them to develop academically and move forward throughout the year. These challenges are substantiated by various authoritative documents such as UNESCO's reports and Salamanca statement (Ramatea & Khanare, 2024). This declaration confirms (Khoaeane, 2012; Lebona, 2020) that implementing IE in Lesotho may not reach its set goals and objectives. In this case, the researcher intends to explore the importance of fostering an environment that enables LSEN in primary schools in Lesotho.

Research shows that an enabling learning environment facilitates tailored interactions with learning materials, aligning with learners' specific objectives (Oliveira, Galvao de Barba, & Corrin, 2021). According to Lebona (2020) and Ramatea and Khanare (2021), the school environment should improve LSEN education in primary schools in Lesotho. The researcher asserts that the statement enables LSEN to achieve its educational goals. Furthermore, Mosia (2021) and Ntseli (2021) argue that the teachers in such schools offering IE should be trained to vary their teaching approaches. The literature review above shows a need for an enabling environment for IE to be relevant to all learners to suit their different learning needs to avoid the early dropout of LSEN at primary schools (Makatse, 2021). Mosola (2020) posits that it is through adequate support that all learners develop to their full potential; hence, this study explores the importance of an enabling environment in the rural primary schools in Maseru, Lesotho.

An inappropriate learning environment is a challenge among schools in rural areas. Lack of enough relevant resources, such as dilapidated infrastructures, scarcity of relevant teaching and learning resources, human and non/human resources, and lack of special education training limit inclusive education in the education sector from being relevant to LSEN (Mosia, 2014). Ramatea & Khanare, (2021) in their study highlighted that the scarcity of resources directly affects LSEN performances negatively. Therefore, it is a challenge for teachers to teach LSEN without relevant resources and relevant training of teachers. Moreover, there is a shortage of relevant teachers for LSEN with different disabilities who can suit their different needs in mainstream teaching and learning. However, the government of Lesotho made efforts to integrate LSEN into the mainstream so that they could learn with their age-mates and receive the same education (Education, Act, 2010, Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy, 2018). Therefore, this paper explores the importance of an enabling environment for LSEN in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners with special education needs

LSEN are those limited by the inability to participate in and benefit from the educational provision because of persistent physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional, and communication disorders or other conditions that result in a learner learning differently from another without a similar condition (Van Wyk, 2015). Most LSENs should have appropriate provisions made for them by their schools by working with their parents. Sometimes, the special educational team becomes involved in helping the school provide the support needed (Le, Janssen & Wubbels, 2018). Westwood (2015) states that the definitions of special educational needs vary across countries. Though countries differ across countries, there is a degree of commonality in policy in their recognition of an interconnectedness of services, encouragement of collaboration, and inclusion within many provisions.

Inclusion of learners with special education needs in the mainstream

There is an increase in research on including learners with special education needs in the mainstream, locally and globally. However, Scholars recently reported that students with disabilities are less likely to complete primary or Secondary school in many countries worldwide

(UNESCO, 2017; Makhate, 2020). Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) stipulates that countries worldwide must ensure that students with disabilities receive free, inclusive, or appropriate education at primary and secondary levels. With an increasing emphasis in policy, practice, and the enactment of IE internationally and nationally, there is now a greater focus on better catering for students with special educational needs & disabilities (Westwood, 2015). Inclusive education necessitates the transformation of schools into teaching and learning spaces where all learners are attended with no exceptions (Mosia & Phasha, 2020). The inclusion of LSEN affected the schooling framework and involved the family as a socialising agent (Vega & Garlin, 2012). Inclusive education is central to achieving quality education for all and developing more inclusive societies (UNESCO, 2017).

Inclusive education must play a major role in ensuring individual development and social inclusion, enabling the environment, children, and youth with disabilities to obtain the highest possible degree of autonomy and independence. In this frame, the school societies should try their level best to give support in full participation of LSEN in their lives on equal terms and in all conditions to realise how vital an enabling environment is for every learner to reach their full potential.

Teachers' challenges in teaching learners with special education in the rural areas

In rural areas, learners with special educational needs face challenges such as a lack of appropriate infrastructure, poor resource allocation, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of teachers skilled in teaching LSEN (Mosia, 2014; Seotsanyane & Matheolane, 2010~). The authors above indicated that Lesotho is not exceptional as a developing country. Machakaire (2017) mentioned that most teachers in rural primary schools lack relevant training to work with LSEN, negatively influencing learners' performance and eventual achievement. Teachers often feel that having disabled learners in the school would mean too much extra work for them, and many exhibit their lack of expertise as teachers. Then, equally, teachers working in special schools may perceive their jobs and work routines as being threatened by the placement of children with disabilities in ordinary schools (Van Wyk, 2015). Some learners even drop out of school because the environment is not enabling enough to accommodate their limitations. Quality has become a major bottleneck for the modernisation of rural compulsory education; to realise the high-quality development of rural compulsory education, all the stakeholders in the education system must break the bottleneck and build a professionally educated teacher team (Li, Qian, & Xing, 2022).

Previous studies highlighted that LSEN, in a rural area in Lesotho, comprised a lack of appropriate infrastructure, poor allocation of resources, not enabling environment, and a lack of teachers suitably skilled to teach LSEN (Mosia, 2014; Seotsenyane & Matheolane, 2010; Machakaire, 2017). The teaching equipment in the countryside is not yet perfect for teaching LSENs (Zou & Li, 2023). Machakaire (2017) and Lekhetho (2021) further stated that many teachers in rural primary schools lack relevant training, which means that the teacher strength of rural compulsory education is insufficient (Zou & Li, 2023) to teach LSEN, which negatively impacts learners' performance and eventual achievement. This leads to LSENs dropping out of school because the environment is not conducive to accommodating their limitations. Finally, the teaching concepts and methods are not coordinated with rural schooling (Deng & Jiang, 2023). Similarly, Khanare and de Lange (2017) suggested that rural primary schools in Lesotho are almost nonexistent. According to Lebona (2020), teachers seem to have limited knowledge of managing LSEN for learners with physical impairment in terms of school infrastructure and ramps. Some scholars argue that mastering teaching and learning in rural areas remains a challenge for all sections and levels of education (Hlalele, 2012; Jackson, 2020). Therefore, this hinders teachers from implementing inclusive teaching and learning of LSEN in the mainstream.

Education Act 2010 and Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018

have been milestones in supporting all Basotho Nation children to be educated in the mainstream with their peers, irrespective of their disabilities. Ramatea and Khanare (2024) found that building an enabling learning environment for LSEN- learners with visual impairment included in rural settings is intricate and fluid, contingent upon their diverse educational requirements. The researcher argues that it is within these enabling environments that comprehensive education for all learners becomes available (Bullard, Schroeker & Chernova, 2019; Cassum & Gul, 2016; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Again, studies looked over elements influencing the inclusion of LVIs, and LSEN included preferably exploring and visualising practical solutions to create an enabling environment for them (Ralejoe, 2021; Tseeke, 2021). Therefore, this present study aims to address the knowledge gap by exploring the importance of an enabling environment for LSEN in the rural primary schools in Lesotho. In this regard, this draws attention to LSEN in the rural primary schools in Lesotho that they should be educated in a healthy and safe environment to promote an enabling environment for all learners. It is, therefore, vital that MoET increase the non-human and human resources in primary schools to meet the needs of LSEN and make the school environment more user-friendly for every Mosotho child, irrespective of their different disabilities.

Creating an enabling environment for all in the mainstream teaching and learning

Experts use a set of pedagogical and psychological resources. Furthermore, it was argued that the professional support of teachers, the attitudes of teachers towards differences in ability, and the impact these have on the productivity of inclusive education. Therefore, Inclusive education classrooms should consider all aspects, such as capabilities, previous knowledge, skills, and interests (Lebona, 2020). Scholars indicated that the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) provides a framework that enables teachers to call to the unique needs of learners with developmental disabilities (Chindindi, 2012; Garcia, 2021). So, in the IEP, the teacher sets long-term and short-term goals and intentions.

The teacher adapts these goals to suit the needs of individual learners. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the teacher to set realistic targets for the learners to support LSEN and see how an enabling environment can be crucial to all education. Tugli (2013) described individual educational programmes as the fundamental component of special education programmes for learners with disabilities. The programme comprises individual elements that act as a road map, determining where the present state of the learner, what the learner needs to get, and how the learners are expected to get (Martin, 2020). Green (2020) highlighted that IEP needs to cover crucial information regarding the child's goals, which should be updated annually. Setting goals stipulates what the learner is expected to learn in the following year, academic skills, and any other necessary functional skills, with the importance of tailoring education to students with diverse learning needs and addressing the challenges to overcome (Carter, 2020).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study underpinned Ubuntu's philosophy as the theoretical framework. Broodryk (2005) indicated that different understandings of Ubuntu have emanated from worldwide literature over the past decades. Philosophers, politicians, academic scholars, and community leaders provided different interpretations and perspectives of Ubuntu (Khoza, 2006; Tutu, 2004). These scholars consider Ubuntu philosophy as an ancient African, globally based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring and sharing, respect, compassion, and associate values ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family. The theory of Ubuntu is an appropriate framework for this study because, in African cultures, Ubuntu is regarded as the capacity to express humanity, compassion, respect, dignity, and mutual caring (Bhengi, 2006; Letseka, 2012).

In this regard, when a teacher is said to have Ubuntu, it means a teacher is kind, generous, compassionate, and willing to help all learners in the classrooms, particularly LSEN, who are at risk and struggle to reach

their potential. Therefore, as an emancipatory paradigm, the theory of Ubuntu is relevant to enhance the provision of an effective strategy to implement inclusive education that accommodates LSEN in the rural areas of Lesotho. The philosophy of Ubuntu is a suitable theoretical framework in this study because it fits in with the human qualities of a teacher that are necessary for ensuring that the environment becomes user-friendly for LSEN, and that the environment should be created and enhanced for all learners in the teaching and learning in rural primary schools. Phasha (2016) highlighted that inclusive pedagogy, like Ubuntu, has the potential to promote respect, cooperation, and solidarity among learners and teachers. In this way, all learners will feel a sense of belonging and acceptance; therefore, when teachers understand and embrace Ubuntu values, it will likely empower teachers to fight exclusion and engage pedagogies that aim to reach all learners in the classrooms. Phasha (2016) further emphasised that Ubuntu pedagogy rejects exclusion, marginalisation, and inequity in the teaching and learning spaces.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the fostering of an enabling environment for LSEN in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

V. METHODS

Research approach and paradigm

This study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is ideal because it captures first-hand information about the phenomenon being studied in the natural setting (Mhlongo, 2017). Maree (2017) stated that the objective of the qualitative approach is to explain events and experiences but never to predict them. This research adopted an interpretive research paradigm. The paradigm was helpful because it enabled the researcher to use meaning-oriented methodologies, such as interviewing the participants that relied on a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants' subjects (Khaldi, 2017) and examining the effects of a similar event taking place in different contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). The paradigm was relevant to this study because it guided the study.

Research Design

The study adopted a case-study design as a widely accepted means of qualitative research methods in the social sciences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2022). According to Maree (2017), a research design is a set of methods and procedures that enable the researcher to collect and analyse data. This design was essential as it helped to organise the research problem's components coherently and logically. It offered conclusions regarding the meaning derived from the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study focused on two primary schools in rural areas in the Maseru District.

Research sampling

Fifteen participants were involved in this study, including thirteen teachers and two MoET officials. These participants agreed to be interviewed. However, some did not feel comfortable to be audio-recorded. The study was conducted in two mainstream primary schools where learners with special educational needs learn with their counterparts without special educational needs. All participants were purposively selected from two primary schools and the Special Education Unit from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). The study was conducted in two rural schools in the Maseru District. The participants were purposively selected using purposive sampling. In this case, the target group involved only teachers who taught LSEN, attended workshops and were trained to teach LSEN. This system enabled the researcher to choose relevant participants who were prepared to participate in the study. The school's participants were P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, etc.

Data collection methods

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) is a simple and effective way to

assess the outcome of an intervention. In FGD, people from similar backgrounds and experiences discuss a specific topic of interest (Hennink, Kaiser, & Weber, 2019). De Vos et al. (2018) explained that FGD is a research technique that enhances data collection through group interaction on a specific topic determined by the researcher. It is used frequently as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. This method aims to obtain data from a purposively selected group of individuals rather than from a statically representative sample of a broader population (Nyamba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). FGD also aims to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes by using group processes to stimulate responses and gain insights through participants exchanging views, questioning, and challenging each other (Nyamba et al., 2018). They are often perceived as a cost- and time-efficient way of collecting information from multiple participants; therefore, they show efficiency. The discussion among the participants took about 60 minutes to collect data per visit.

Semi-structured interviews

According to Maree (2017), semi-structured interviews are naturalistic conversations between viewers and participants. Interviews provide a rich description of practices and experiences from the participants' perspectives. Maree (2017) holds that as a researcher, one must be attentive to the responses of one's participants to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied. Then, one-to-one interview questions were used. The researcher allowed research flexibility among the participants to enable the academics to raise their views relevant to this study. The participants discussed their views at their pace in which they felt comfortable raising their ideas (Rahman, 2019) on the impact of enhancing an enabling environment for LSEN in the rural primary schools in Lesotho. One-to-one interviews took place in the principals' offices in their primary schools, while interviews with the special education officials took place in their offices. The interviews lasted about sixty minutes. With School A, the interview took place in the mornings, while in School B, the principal, the interview took place after school, whereas with the Ministry of Education Officials, the meetings took place in their free time, which they would call when they were free. The interviews took about ninety minutes. The principals agreed to be audio recorded, while MoET officials said they were uncomfortable being recorded; therefore, the notes were taken. Thus, the researcher conducted all interviews using both English and Sesotho as two officials used in Lesotho.

Data analysis

Data were analysed through thematic analysis using a six-phase method (Braun & Clarke, 2017). In this study, the researcher familiarised with the data by re-reading the transcripts and verbatim participant quotations. After that, the researcher generated coding and searched for themes. These followed the review of themes and subthemes, and data was analysed. The researcher defined themes and wrote up the findings. To ensure the quality of data analysis, the general observation was compared with data analysis from data and verbatim quotations were used to support the study's findings. To find regularities in the data, we compared different sources from two schools' teachers as participants. The two advanced patterns and themes were then used to report teachers' experiences teaching LSENs in rural primary schools. The participants' anonymity was protected by using pseudonyms in the presentation of the results.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State (UFS), (Ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2019/0850/1308). Therefore, all ethical processes and protocols laid down by the UFS to ethics were keenly observed and followed. It is important to note that research ethics play a vital role in any research because it acknowledges participant confidentiality and protection (Resnik & Shamoo, (2015). Resnik and Shamoo (2015) explain that research ethics are norms for conduct that present the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Therefore, the

research is directed to protect the participants from any harm. In this regard, this process is a research procedure. Before the research was undertaken, permission was also obtained from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Maseru District, Lesotho. Besides, consent was obtained to guarantee that the participants knew the research processes' characteristics before the study began. Additionally, the forms were written in English and then explained in both English and Sesotho (Sesotho being their mother language and the researcher's first language). All research participants were allowed to withdraw from the study if anticipated inconveniences.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fostering an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools

Flexibility of the curriculum

The participants highlighted that the flexibility of the curriculum is fundamental to promoting an enabling learning environment for LSEN. They believed the curriculum structure is vital in embracing an enabling environment if it suits the learners' needs or capacities in an inclusive school. The following sections are taken from the interview responses.

"A mentioned that it is very important to have a flexible curriculum that suits every learner's needs, whereby everyone can be allowed to learn independently at their own pace, and it can be realised if the assessment is structured to cater to each learners' capacity" (P3 FGDs).

"The curriculum for LSENs should be relevant to their needs to make learning appropriate to learners' lives, and there should be adequate materials to meet all learners' needs to make the learning quite meaningful to the learners' lives, capacities and also their needs." (PO1 and PO2)

It can be argued that the perceived aspiration is to create opportunities for LSEN to access the general curriculum. Any failure to accomplish this can arguably ruin their chances of building authentic competencies in the said areas. The participants declared that the curriculum should be flexible and inclusive enough to meet the needs of all learners (Matobako, 2021). Participants understand that there should be adequate provision of resources that can allow for the creation of an enabling environment for all. The findings of this study align with Ramate and Khanare's (2024) study, which states that an enabling environment prioritises the equitable and accessible education of all learners.

"The curriculum standard level is higher than the level of rural primary learners. The syllabus needs learners who are versed in technology." (FGD, P3).

Unfortunately, teachers were less trained; they were only trained for a short time by the time the new curriculum was implemented in the schools and had not yet grasped it properly. Thus, most teachers find it challenging to convey the curriculum to learners when they struggle to understand it.

"The participants had cold shoulders about the curriculum because they believed that training and the time awarded to its implementation were insufficient." (FGD, P3).

When teachers engage in curriculum design by focusing on critical elements of effective learning, they gain clarity about what they are teaching, why, and discuss. Thus, Matobako (2021) indicates that promoting ongoing interaction between education and the curriculum promotes an enabling environment. In this case, we sought to explore the flexibility of incorporating these voices into the curriculum development process to enhance educational outcomes.

Training for special education teachers

The collection of data indicated that creating an enabling environment for LSEN is influenced by many tutors. Among these, teacher training should be dominant. The participants also believed that an enabling environment should be crucial for LSENs in Lesotho rural primary schools and that teacher training should be essential for realising the environment. This point was discussed as follows,

"I think the government of Lesotho should restore the special education programme at LCE, which should be pursued after the completion of the teacher

diploma certificates. The programme should be compulsory for every student teacher. Thus, the curriculum implemented in primary schools is inclusive, and in this regard, teachers who understand how to teach in an inclusive classroom need to be trained. This will equip primary teachers with skills and approaches needed to assist LSENs; workshops and in-service should be offered when teachers are on long breaks" (FGD, P4).

The findings compare with Iserby, Ward and Li's (2017) qualitative study, which recommends the need for workshops in professional development.

"An enabling environment demands that teachers be trained in special education to teach in an inclusive classroom. Teachers should be workshoped and equipped with the necessary skills for teaching LSENs. Therefore, the curriculum offered at teacher training colleges should be inclusive, so that when teachers complete their studies, they should be able to teach every learner irrespective of the learners' disabilities or not" (GFD, P6).

"...training is imperative for teachers to identify where and how to improve to be able to upgrade their skills needed in helping LSEN." (FGA, P1)

It was encouraging to hear FGD, P4 stating that,

"Learners should be encouraged to enhance their self-efficacy."

The participants believed that with proper and relevant training, teachers easily identify learners with disabilities.

"... with relevant training, teachers will feel empowered, their self-esteem will improve, and they will be able to impart knowledge to all learners. The government still has much to do to train teachers on imparting knowledge and skills to LSENs and how to use the resources needed to execute this task. On the other hand, data also revealed some negative options" (FGD, P4).

These appeared to stem from the challenges teachers encountered in the teaching process.

"At the inception of the current inclusive syllabus, teachers were summarily trained, and this was not enough because we will face hurdles in our interpretation of this new syllabus, which we have not understood to date" (FGD, P3 & P7).

While, FGA, P7, highlighted that,

"The government, through inspectors in the Ministry of Education and Training, should make proper follow-up and school visits to ensure that teachers are coping successfully because some teachers are still facing challenges in teaching LSENs".

Participants believed that an enabling environment suits every learner in the education sphere. An environment enabling LSENs, and their teachers should be suitable for all in the education sector, both environmentally, academically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually (Lebona, 2020).

Coordination between learners, teachers, and parents

The participants' responses illustrated that understanding the tripartite system may impact negatively on the learner if not carefully coordinated. This is what the participants had to say about the issue. The responses from the participants showed that some parents are overprotective about their children.

FGD, P4 and P6, indicated that,

"...coordination between learners and parents is critical in creating an enabling environment for LSENs".

One participant (P2) responded that,

"Other parents are so overprotective that they keep their children at home because of the nature of their disabilities LSENs have. If teachers could be vigilant and take care of such learners, parents would be prosecuted because the Lesotho Education Acts (2010) demands that every child from learners aged six to thirteen years of age should be attending and should complete their primary education irrespective of their disabilities."

This resonates with the study of Shale (2015), who acknowledges the rights of people with disabilities who should be given equal access to education and others. As a result, Monne (2021) shows that the challenges of families of children with disabilities are rooted in the fact that they are impoverished. They cannot afford basic needs, so the costly modes of public transport used in Lesotho are inaccessible. Therefore, families of children with disabilities need extra support to lessen the load on their shoulders and an enabling learning environment that allows learners to interact with learning resources and activities in ways

customised to their learning goals and approaches.

Improvement of teachers' salaries

All participants raised concerns regarding the remuneration of teachers who shoulder extra responsibility in teaching LSENs. One participant pointed out that teachers' salary structure should be reviewed progressively.

"When teachers are hungry and stressed by their financial issues. It affects an individual teacher but also compromises learners' participation. Therefore, teachers' dissatisfaction can result in school performance" (FGD, P3).

This is not the case in Lesotho, and the challenge seems to cover schools in Africa; in Uganda, over some years, poor performance of teachers has been reflected in the dismal performance of students in Uganda National Examinations Board (Muguzi, Mujuni & Dafiewhare, 2019). Concerned with the poor job performance of teachers, the government has given attention to uplifting the welfare of teachers, believing that their morale will improve and enhance their job performance.

For instance, the government tried to improve the remuneration of teachers' salaries and overtime teachers' salaries, and there has been support for Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) (Talemwa, 2016). Despite the effort to enhance remuneration for teachers, their performance remained low. It is concluded that low remuneration to teachers impedes high job performance of teachers, especially when basic pay is low, and there is a lack of bonuses and allowances (Zikanga, Anumaka, Tamale, & Mugizi, 2021). Therefore, it is known that more resources increase student performance, and teachers are the most important performance factors in the school to create an enabling environment (Jackson, 2020; LaFortune, Rothstein, & Schanzenbach, 2018).

VII. CONCLUSION

This research set out to determine and understand teachers' perceptions regarding fostering an enabling environment for LSEN in the rural primary schools in Lesotho. The researchers emphasise that the flexibility of the curriculum, coordination between learners, teachers, and parents, and improvements in teachers' salaries within the school environment are the most important approaches to achieving successful inclusion of LSEN. It has become clear that there is a dire need to integrate/include LSEN into the regular school system to promote their learning to be more fruitful like their peers in the future because education is a significant issue affecting people's livelihood. A gap in rural education development is mainly reflected in education resources, infrastructure, teaching quality, and overcrowding. It is, therefore, certain to encourage joint performance in rural schools, provide the rural schools with educational resources, solve the problem of the teaching quality gap from the root, increase the public interest in education policies, and build up awareness of free and compulsory education to all learners in primary schools irrespective of children's differences to improve the quality of rural residents.

This study underscores the importance of training teachers on imparting knowledge and skills to LSENs and how to use the resources needed to provide education to LSENs successfully. This may lead to an understanding of LSEN as individuals. It is important to note that teachers of LSENs need to provide appropriate and adequate support to ensure equal education for all and avoid discrimination associated with LSEN. It is crucial for the government through MoET, the school Boards in government schools and Private Schools, the head teachers in government schools, Church schools, Community schools, and Independent schools, and all the stakeholders in the education sectors to revisit teachers' remunerations and revise the means to enhance the remuneration of teachers' salaries for the betterment of an enabling environment and the quality of education for Basotho children in particular in the rural primary schools, where mountain allowance can motivate teachers to be more hands-on and be productive to the learners in the journey of their long term learning.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommended enhancing an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools. The results indicate that in Lesotho, an enabling environment in rural primary schools is not satisfactory for enabling education for LSEs. Therefore, it is recommended that support from all education stakeholders be provided to create a user-friendly environment for all learners in primary schools, irrespective of their children with disabilities, in the case of human and non-human resources. The government of Lesotho, through MoET, should give support to primary teachers in all ten districts of Lesotho in urban and rural areas by providing them with continuous in-service training programmes so that teachers should be equipped with all pedagogical skills on how best to teach LSEs in all different angles of life that can make their lives enabling. The government of Lesotho should fund different schools that admit LSEs with relevant resources in demand at their school to create an enabling environment for all, and the government should also introduce ongoing workshops during schools' holidays. The workshops should be tailored-made to suit children's impairments in primary schools in Lesotho to enable the environment to suit every child in the school environment. The results benefit all education stakeholders globally and in Lesotho, where the research study occurred. It is anticipated that the findings will investigate how to enhance an enabling environment for LSE in the rural primary schools in Lesotho to benefit the successful scholarly performance of LSE in Lesotho. The results add value to the LSE, their peers, parents, the community, the school community, all the education stakeholders globally, and the discipline of psychology worldwide.

From the gaps identified in the current study, it is identified that in the current research Study. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on in-service programmes in special education to equip primary teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach inclusive classrooms confidently. A similar study can consider a larger scale than one focusing only on rural Maseru district primary schools. As this study focused on LSEs, the researcher suggested that a study on the parental voices toward an enabling environment for their children with SENs in rural primary schools would be more interesting in Maseru Districts and southern African countries.

IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The two rural primary schools selected in this study were selected. The limitation of this study is that the sample selection covers only one district with two schools in Maseru District. Therefore, the sample cannot be generalised to all greater rural primary schools in the ten districts in Lesotho.

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XI. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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