



## In-service teachers' training needs in implementing life skills education in rural secondary schools in Lesotho

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**Abstract** – The teachers' preparation in teaching and learning Life Skills Education is crucial in the education system in Lesotho. This study explores the teachers' training needs in implementing Life Skills Education at rural secondary schools in Lesotho. The study adopted qualitative interpretivism and phenomenological research design. Eight LSE teachers and principals were chosen randomly from four schools. Telephonic semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The thematic results revealed that teachers were not trained to teach LSE and needed in-service courses. The findings yielded that the teaching and learning of LSE must be enhanced in secondary schools. Thus, it recommended that the Ministry of Education facilitate and broaden in-service training of LSE teachers and provide a framework for guiding the contents of LSE. The curriculum developers would find the research helpful as they reflect on the extent to which the objectives were achieved for the subject.

**Keywords:** Principals, Teachers, Implementation, Life Skills Education, and Teacher training needs

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### I. INTRODUCTION

FOR decades, research on improving teacher training, focusing on the practical implementation of LSE in educational psychology and inclusive education, has not been intensified. Many scholars are interested in addressing teachers' lack of expertise and requisite knowledge and skills to equip them LSE and to close the gap between quality standards in design and the realities of LSE implementation (Koloso and Makhakhane, 2010; UNICEF, 2012). However, few graduate teachers received short-term training on LSE from higher-learning institutions (Koloso & Makhakhane, 2010). Many countries have introduced Life Skills Education (LSE) as an intervention strategy for imparting psychosocial knowledge to learners (Koloso & Makhakhane, 2010; UNICEF, 2012). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010), LSE is a programme that equips students with adaptive and positive behavioral change. In Lesotho, LSE has been changed to Life-Based Sexuality Education due to the loopholes identified in the LSE curriculum. Such aptitudes are intended to enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges in the environment. LSE reduces the chances of social maladjustment and enhances learners' development and potential. It is worth noting that LSE plays a significant role in promoting the individual's development. According to Kumar (2017), LSE is not only foundational, but it also contributes to good character and personality development. Furthermore, LSE helps to develop psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and resilience skills (Kumar, 2017). LSE plays an essential role in strengthening individual abilities while at the same time addressing daily challenges and contributing productively to the community (Behrani, 2016).

Progress in implementing LSE has reportedly varied between developing and developed countries. Developed countries have succeeded in implementing LSE while developing countries face challenges from the lack of systematic implementation, evaluation, and

monitoring systems (Aring, 2012). Schools are among the most important forums for reaching out to the young population (Srikala & Kishore, 2010). Therefore, UNICEF (2012) emphasised a holistic approach to the roles of the school, the family, and the community, all of which are key to providing LSE implementation. Traditional teaching and learning methods have proved ineffective, thus leaving children vulnerable (UNICEF, 2012).

Teachers are an essential ingredient for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, teacher training enhances teachers' knowledge base (Rohmah, Tanzeh, Qomar, & Fitri, 2023). However, Koloso and Makhakhane (2010) revealed a lack of training for teachers offering LSE classes. Lack of training may hurt teachers, including their passion for teaching LSE. Teachers' passion for any teaching subject is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment. It also inspires learners beyond the classroom environment. As Samuels (2012) observed, common support systems such as subject syllabi and teaching resources are instrumental in teacher training, and without them, there would be ineffective implementation of LSE. LSE should be imparted through such activities as brainstorming, classroom discussions, role play and simulation, story-telling, debates, educational games, situation analyses, and case studies in classroom settings. However, such techniques have appeared problematic because most of the teachers assigned to teach LSE were found to be unfamiliar with such teaching methods (Srikala & Kishore, 2010).

The successful implementation of LSE requires resources and input from different stakeholders. These include schools, education authorities, the development of teaching manuals, and ongoing support of teaching programs (Dinesh & Belinda, 2014). In addition, integrating LSE into the regular school curriculum would help nurture good mental health among learners. Once equipped with such skills, learners are empowered and can gain confidence and confront different challenges. Subsequently, they may become fully functioning societal contributors (Prajapati, Sharma, & Sharma, 2017). According to Alam and Shakir (2019), teachers are central to effective learning, thus creating a foundation for quality education in modern society. Against this

background, the research explores the in-service training needs of teachers for implementing Life Skills Education, with rural and urban secondary schools as the case study. Indeed, teachers are enablers that administer students' creativity, critical thinking, and independence. Thus, there is a need for adult continuing education geared towards improving teaching skills and keeping teachers abreast of the growing demands of LSE.

### Teaching LSE at schools in Lesotho

LSE has been introduced in selected schools in Lesotho to effect behavioural change and engender the ability to become resilient to social problems. In Lesotho, LSE is called Sexuality-Based Education. Initially, LSE was introduced in secondary schools. However, it has continued to high school. It is worth discovering if further preparations were made for it to be taught at the high school level. Knowing the culture of Basotho, the researcher will also find out teachers' and principals' attitudes towards LSE in schools. The reason is that Basotho culture might make it difficult for teachers to discuss sexuality topics with learners.

In the same way, students are also likely not to be free to discuss such topics with teachers. Initially, Basotho reserved sexuality education for young people reaching marriageable age. Such education was only done in traditional initiation schools and during some outskirt activities, such as collecting wood, to discourage interference by the community (Khu, 2012). From this, we can draw that the family was not responsible; hence the transition from traditional to formal schools has left sexuality information inaccessible. LSE implementation in schools was a solution to providing sexuality education. The assumption at this stage is that although the subject has various benefits, inadequate preparations were made. Teachers are assumed to be capable of teaching LSE through the general training they receive. This training will instill teachers with the skills needed to implement LSE and understand what needs to be improved. For this study, teachers and principals were interviewed to share their experiences since LSE demands teachers educate students to improve their psychosocial skills. Behrani (2016) referred to psychosocial asserts as competence is a person's capability to handle the demands and challenges of everyday life. Teachers can deliver LSE properly if they have developed their psychosocial abilities.

Looking at the nature of LSE, it is apparent that teachers first need to adopt a non-judgmental attitude to enable students to be free to approach them. According to Khu (2012), LSE was introduced in Lesotho in 2007 to provide preventative education on sexuality and HIV/AIDS education. Lesotho, as a developing country, was found to be the third uppermost in HIV prevalence around the world in 2009 (UNAIDS & WHO, 2010). The education system has therefore positioned teachers to lead the hard work to stop the spread of HIV among young people. Nevertheless, it has been largely recognised that teachers' natures toward sexuality are critical contributors to deciding their education approaches (Khu, 2012). Hence, there is a need to ensure that teachers and principals are adequately trained in LSE implementation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

LSE refers to a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills. Such skills help learners make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills to lead a healthy and productive life (Erawan, 2010). Consequently, life skills education is the most effective psychosocial intervention strategy for promoting adolescents' positive social and mental health. It is essential in various areas, such as strengthening coping abilities, developing self-confidence, and learning emotional intelligence (Prajapati et al., 2017). There is no doubt that LSE provides information that helps adolescents to make informed decisions. The information offered may help them avoid risky behavior that might negatively affect their life. As Prajapati et al. (2017) assert, LSE has great significance and needs to be integrated into the regular school curriculum and provided daily. Due to recent

challenges that lead to school dropouts, teachers or counsellors must provide LSE to enhance students' mental health and increase their chances of success. Recent studies have shown that LSE equips learners with better skills to face changing situations. LSE would help learners become fully functioning citizens and responsible individuals worldwide.

The successful implementation of LSE is hinged on various factors, which include the design of a learning environment, presentation of course material, assessment, student's involvement, and teacher's capabilities. LSE also demands the use of teaching methods that are new to teachers. Teachers in secondary schools were never adequately trained on LSE, which compromises the quality of its implementation. According to UNICEF (2010), the success of any programme depends very much on the availability of in-service training and efforts to include participatory learning methods in teacher training colleges.

The study is premised on the view that lack of teachers' training is the main factor affecting the effective implementation of LSE in secondary schools. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2012), teachers are the main drivers of the effective implementation of LSE. Thus, their training and utilization in LSE implementation require critical consideration. As Abobo and Orodho (2014) assert, despite introducing LSE in schools, challenges seem to affect its implementation in secondary schools. These challenges may reduce LSE's ability to achieve its intended objective. To better understand the nature of the problem in the study, teachers' experiences were scrutinized. Such teachers' experiences made it possible to identify gaps in implementing LSE. Previous studies revealed that there are differences in LSE implementation between developing countries and developed countries. Developed countries generally conduct more systematic LSE programs to promote positive behaviours with positive outcomes for the youths.

In contrast, in most developing countries, there is a lack of systematic implementation, evaluation, and monitoring (Aring, 2012). Therefore, teachers need to be well-trained for the effective implementation of LSE. As Akyeampong (2014) states, effective implementation of LSE needs to be accompanied by reforms in teacher education to improve their understanding of LSE facilitation. The study focuses mainly on the lack of in-service training for teachers in secondary schools. According to Akyeampong (2014), classroom teaching and learning must be adapted fundamentally to ensure that the youths benefit fully from including LSE in 21st-century secondary education curricula. Such reforms must include pedagogical practices that nurture communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

According to Abobo and Orodho (2014), there are two ways in which teachers could be trained. It could be offered as a pre-service and as in-service training. Pre-service training is provided to teachers before they start teaching, while in-service training is provided to teachers while they are already in the field. Given teachers' vital role in curriculum implementation, they need appropriate and relevant training to handle a new programme, including LSE.

### Teacher training needed for effective implementation of LSE in secondary schools

#### Teacher training needs

This research explored teachers' training needs of secondary school teachers for teachers' effective implementation of LSE. To gain more knowledge in understanding factors of teacher quality, attention is put on the relationship between teacher productivity and teacher training. That includes formal pre-service university education, in-service, informal training, and professional development (Harris & Sass, 2011). Untrained teachers are likely to use traditional teaching methods centered on teacher's exposition. Previously, teachers were there to transmit information and then expect students to give back the information provided to them. As Thaanyane and Thabana (2019) suggest, most policies encourage learner-centered methods. These methods are encouraged because they allow students to be more actively engaged than in the teacher-centered approach. According to

Samuels (2012), it is critical to train teachers. Not only do teachers need to be trained in sexuality and HIV and AIDS-related education, but also in LSE and ways of delivering these subjects using participatory and interactive approaches. There is also a need to offer ongoing support, mentoring, and capacity building for teachers. This was identified as a critical component in all the LSE programs reviewed in this chapter. Abobo and Orodho (2014) revealed that more in-service training programs are needed for teachers to understand and effectively implement LSE programs properly.

The current government programs for teacher education aim to provide qualified teachers and are central to ensuring quality education. Current teacher training programs cater to produce teachers for Early Childhood Development, primary, secondary, special, vocational, and technical education. Teacher education programs aim to develop communication skills, professional attitudes, and values that equip teachers with the knowledge and ability to identify and develop the child's educational needs (UNESCO, 2012). As Abobo and Orodho (2014) state, teachers are essential in teaching and learning. Their training and utilization, therefore, require critical consideration. The current government programs for teacher education aim to provide qualified teachers and are central to ensuring quality education. Teacher education programs aim to develop communication skills, professional attitudes, and values that equip teachers with the knowledge and ability to identify and develop the child's educational needs (UNESCO, 2012). It is recommended that adequate training can contribute to improved teachers' attitudes towards LSE and raise their value of commitment. The Ministry of Education, through the Kenya Institute of Education, should organize annual in-service courses for teachers of LSE to update them on new developments in the curriculum and teaching methodology (Awour & Chemutai, 2015). In addition, as Awour and Chemutai (2015) state, teachers' success largely depends on their context, personal efforts, and general personality. These characteristics can be significantly enhanced if teachers receive specialized training in methods of teaching LSE programme.

#### *Pre-service training in LSE*

Well-trained teachers are viewed as experts in classroom management. Teachers must form good relationships with students differently, including treating students respectfully and managing the classroom effectively. Skilled teachers develop student learning by facilitating interactive instruction, active learning, analyzing, questioning, and class discussion (Dibapile, 2012). According to Awour and Chemutai (2015), 33% of teachers had attended in-service course on LSE, whereas 67% had not attended any in-service course. Thus, teachers had limited training on LSE. These findings militate vehemently against the appeals of curriculum developers who advocate for the preparation of teachers in handling any curriculum. Although teachers are professionally qualified, they cannot be entrusted to handle any programme without proper training. Lack of pre-service and in-service training in LSE is the main factor affecting the effective implementation of LSE in secondary schools (Awour & Chemutai, 2015). Abobo and Orodho (2014) maintain that providing in-service training for teachers is a key factor for the successful implementation of life skills education. He argues that the training at colleges is inadequate to enable teachers to deliver LSE as anticipated. Kolosoa and Makhakhane (2010) introduced LSE course in teacher-training colleges and the National University in 2006 to enhance graduate teachers' capacity. The first cohort trained in delivering LSE in schools graduated in 2009. However, the content of the course was inadequate, and its duration was too short. The course was offered at the teacher training college within the first year of enrolment. It was presented as a semester course for pre-service learners. In contrast, at the university level, the course was delivered to student teachers only in a two-day workshop at the end of their final year of study.

#### *Lack of training in LSE*

There is a shortage of literature on teachers' capacity to implement LSE effectively. Only a few studies have covered the introduction of LSE

in schools. However, the 2005 policy has revealed unqualified teachers in schools. Most of this field research aims to identify teacher-training needs to improve the quality of LSE education and its implementation at secondary schools in Lesotho. The policy has shown that 27% of teachers studied LSE at the college level, while 73% of them did not study it at the college level. The findings illustrate that although LSE teachers were professionally qualified, most were not trained to handle the subject.

The main problem with LSE implementation is that few graduate teachers received training at college, and it was offered as a short course (Koloso & Makhakhane, 2010). Mugambi and Muthui (2013) discovered that most teaching life skills education teachers have not undergone in-service training to implement the program. Thus, their incompetence affects this implementation. Teachers need proper training because LSE covers the varying needs of the students. Adequate training could capacitate teachers with skills that will enable them to support and persuade students and parents to understand LSE and its role in the general development of adolescents. According to Khoaeane and Naong (2015), the shortage of qualified teachers, as well as overcrowded classrooms, is among the factors that contribute to the low quality and efficiency of education at all levels. It is further stated that the total number of teachers increased steadily in 2002 and moved from 4,139 to 8,908 (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015). However, the number of qualified teachers has not increased. In the case of LSE implementation, teachers were not fully engaged. Teachers already in schools did not get any form of training relating to LSE. This has a direct negative effect on the quality of LSE implementation. According to Thabane and Thabane (2019), some uncertificated teachers are not professionally trained. He explains that this widens the gap between curriculum implementation and the world of work. Hence, any successful curriculum implementation requires professionally well-prepared teachers to satisfy its demands. In other words, schools must ensure that teachers possess sufficient pedagogical skills before engaging them in teaching. For LSE to be effectively implemented, teachers need to acquire content knowledge in LSE through proper and frequent training. Well-trained teachers are in a position to transform classrooms into a place where learners can learn efficiently. Mirkamali, Thani, and Asadi (2019) asserted that there is a need to provide teachers with technical developments in various fields of education to help them adjust to new students' needs by acquiring knowledge and changing their attitudes and skills. It is also suggested that teachers should be provided with specialized training courses based on educational needs, rich content, and attractive ways to develop their teaching abilities.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### *Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory*

This study is based on Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the main theoretical framework underpinning the study. The theory has been widely adopted in the field of Psychology. According to Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppeneimer, Vega-Molina, and García Coll (2017), Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development is one of the most frequently recognized theoretical frameworks across different fields of practice in the social sciences. Depczynski (2018) defined ecological theory as studying human development within an environment. According to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), the theory identifies systems that classify the school environment as a mesosystem. At the center of this structure is an interaction, which a teacher initiates. Bronfenbrenner's theory originates from the publication named *The Ecology of Human Development* in the 1990s (Bronfenbrenner, & Evans, 2000). From the ecological systems framework, the school is an immediate context shaping children's learning and development. The school influences learning through instruction, relationships with teachers, peers, and general school culture. Connections between home and the school are complex to provide united support for children's learning. Schools and

teachers are said to fulfill critical secondary roles in educational development. Therefore, there is a need for smooth interaction between the schools and the family.

Consequently, Schools and teachers should work together to support the primary relationship and create an environment that welcomes and nurtures families (O'Toole, 2016). According to Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond, and Krone (2019), practices can create environments that support students in all areas of their development. In addition, they emphasized that educators could help students acquire transferable knowledge, skills, habits, and mindsets that support ongoing learning. Hence, these requirements were not included during the development of the previous system.

From the perspective of ecological theory, an individual does not construct meaning in isolation but through being part of a community of learning such as school. Teachers have proven to directly influence students' thinking for their forthcoming careers at different levels of schooling. Repeatedly, highly effective teachers contribute to improving students' daily lives with long-lasting educational and career goals (Khan & Irshadullah, 2018). Turan and Ulutas (2012) state that the LSE teacher should be regarded as one structure within many other sub-systems. Other systems include the learners, the school, and the wider community. All of these systems interact and influence one another. Based on these premises, LSE teachers and learners do not construct meaning in a vacuum but in particular bio-ecological environments that continually interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1987; Donald et al., 2002). The understanding of bio-ecological systems theory and social constructivism is relevant to this study as it highlights the interaction and interdependence of LSE teachers, learners, and other stakeholders in the school community.

#### **Principles of the theory**

The child's ecology is recognized as the environment in which learners live. The systems identified are the main contributors to a learner's development. Compared to other aspects of schooling, well-trained teachers have the most significant impact on learner achievement. According to Depczynski (2018), the ecological environment comprises four systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro-system, and chronosystem. The ecological theory of development is shown below.

##### *Microsystem*

According to Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017), the microsystem contains relations between the individual and the immediate environment surrounding the individual, such as one's home and school. For instance, the school consists of teachers, the learning environment, and the instructional methods. Therefore, the school is identified as an immediate environment that contributes directly to the child's development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Thus, teachers should be in a position to play their roles in supporting a learner, not leaving aside other structures surrounding a learner, including the family and the community. According to O'Toole (2016), parents' negative or positive beliefs about education and learning can also be internalised by students. Thus, a student's performance is likely to be influenced by the nature of family support. Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) state that schools and teachers must work together to support the primary relationship and create a learning environment that welcomes and nurtures families. According to Depczynski (2018), this level creates relationships that impact two directions. The environment influences a learner's behavior, while at the same time, a learner could affect the environment. Depczynski (2018) stipulated that bi-directional influences are at the center of microsystem level. Since they are the strongest influences, they impact the child the most. It is worth noting that interactions at outer levels potentially affect the inner structures (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Teachers are expected to provide well-designed collaborative learning opportunities encouraging students to question, explain, and elaborate their thoughts and develop solutions.

##### *Mesosystem*

The mesosystem entails the interactions between the central

surroundings covering an individual. According to Bronfenbrenner, and Evans (2000), the mesosystem comprises the connection of communication and interaction between the different microsystems that impact an individual. Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) state that such links include home, friends, school, neighbourhood, and church. It is mainly about understanding an individual within his culture. As Atilola (2017) observes, in recent times, the model has presented a framework for understanding and addressing the larger context of social issues affecting children, like safe schools (Hong & Eamon, 2012). In this study, LSE teachers guide students toward acquiring life skills. However, teachers' personalities or attitudes may have a positive or a negative impact on learning. From this point of view, it is apparent that teachers play a huge role in students' academic completion. However, Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017) elucidated a need to consider other supporting factors since the child's capacity to learn is not only influenced by the teacher's competence. Still, it is motivated by the excellence of the relationship between the school and home. If the relationship between the school and home is not friendly, then the child is less likely to be supported to perform school duties, which is likely to affect the students' performance negatively.

##### *Exosystem*

This level defines the bigger social system the child does not interact with directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structures. O'Toole (2016) considered context as an essential factor in learning. Parent workplace schedules or community-based family resources are examples. The child may not be directly involved at this level, but they feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with their system.

Every individual becomes functional when the environment is peaceful and supportive. According to Six (2020), the exosystem embraces the social structures and the major institutions of society, such as the world of work. These social structures do not necessarily contain the developing person, but they contribute towards the immediate settings within which such a person is found. Teachers need to be trained for them to be able to pay attention to these kinds of factors while interacting with students. Teachers also need to understand the effect of malfunctioning those systems on students' academic performance.

##### *Macrosystem*

This layer may be considered the furthest layer in the child's environment. It has to do with factors that are not immediate to the child. This layer contains a specific culture's cultural values and norms, including the laws (Berk, 2000). The effects of larger principles defined by the macro-system have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. According to Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017), culture can define and organize microsystems. Thus, it becomes part of the essential routes toward human development. Culture is seen as an ever-changing system that includes daily practices of the social communities. In this case, behavior implies that inter-psychological functions between cultural group members become intra-psychological.

O'Toole (2016) emphasised that the general supports and development relations available to children become internalized, creating the basis of self-efficacy principles. However, as Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017) further observe, culture has been placed in the macro-system and considered to play a part in the interdependence of the systems. The gap exists as no clear explanation exists on how culture was operationalised. As much as the cultural factors are seen not to be having a direct impact on students, indirectly, they have a potential for positive or a negative impact on learning. Any dysfunction that occurs within the layer has an impact on learning. For instance, the lack of teachers' training in LSE negatively influences learning because teachers are not competent. Analyzing the composition of these ecological systems and interactions is crucial for understanding the developmental outcome of a learner. Fernando and Marikar (2017) assert the constructivist approach highlights that social and cultural factors inform learning. This emphasis raises discussions on whether teachers

should consider socially constructed knowledge. On the other hand, a traditionalist might dispute that the student's social and cultural presumptions are personal; therefore, they should be left out of the classroom, and the learning experience should be coherent and objective.

#### *Chronosystem*

This system encompasses the elements which occur at certain times. Such factors include biological changes or the loss of loved ones. Aging may bring different reactions to environmental changes (Guy-Evans, 2020). Teachers must be trained to understand such factors' effects on students' learning. That will enable teachers to offer a supportive environment to students experiencing difficult times. The support may help students deal with unpleasant situations while still positive toward the future. Teachers are therefore expected to be understanding of all the situations their student's families may be undergoing, including social and economic, as they form part of the various systems (Guy-Evans, 2020).

#### **Relevancy of the study**

The systems mentioned above are central to the child's educational development. In this view, teachers should strive to improve learners' academic performance, which would translate to developing non-cognitive skills. There are several reasons why the theory has been used throughout the study. One of the most important reasons is that the theory holds that learning does not occur in a vacuum. According to Smith (2012), effective students actively participate in bidirectional interactions within the environment. However, O'Toole (2016) argued against treating individuals and cultural practices as separate factors. In this view, individuals and the environment are regarded as existing separately, although a relationship occurs hierarchically.

Hence, human development involves continuous, joint accommodation between an active, growing human being and the advancing factors of the immediate settings where a growing person lives. Smith (2012) stipulated that Learners must interact with the outside world to acquire new knowledge. Through acquired skills such as organising and planning, teachers should be able to create a conducive and innovative learning environment. Similarly, Smith (2012) emphasised that strengthening human relationships within supportive environments increases learning development and positive outcomes. Furthermore, ecological system theory holds that children's knowledge is informed by multiple factors such as cultural patterns, ideas, values, and political and economic systems. On this basis, teachers must be well-trained to consider students' cultural knowledge and link it with new knowledge. Students are therefore considered active in their development through interaction. Guy-Evans (2020) believed that educational practice requires teachers and parents to work cooperatively to reinforce the development between different layers of ecological systems. Good relations between parents and teachers have contributed positively to the child's development. For this reason, it is instructive to explore teacher training needs to enhance the implementation of LSE. The chosen theory is used to understand successful learning depending on the proper functioning of different systems.

#### **IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to explore the training needs of in-service teachers for the effective implementation of Life Skills Education in secondary schools in Lesotho. The research question was: What are the training needs of in-service teachers for the effective implementation of LSE in secondary schools in Lesotho?

#### **V. METHODS**

##### **Research approach**

This study adopted a qualitative approach through an interpretive paradigm. According to Kuckartz and Radiker (2019), qualitative research is an umbrella term for all non-numerical and unstructured

data used in social sciences. Unlike the quantitative approach, which is numerical, the qualitative method focuses on obtaining data through open-ended questions and conversational communication (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019). Thus, the qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study because it was about what people think and why they think the way they do (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019).

Qualitative research also explores attitudes, behaviours, and experiences through various methods, such as focus groups and one-on-one interviews (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019, 2019). In this study, the qualitative approach was appropriate to help the researcher explore the nature of the problem and how such a problem could be solved. As Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh (2011) asserted, the qualitative approach makes it possible to generate an in-depth and multifaceted understanding of a complex issue by unpacking and relating it to the real-life context. This approach has influenced various disciplines, mainly the social sciences. As Chawla and Sodhi (2011) observe, qualitative data is indicative, not evaluative. Thus, it should not be used for generalisation as it also covers a small sample (Chawla & Sodhi, 2011). This study used a case study design to explore the training needed for in-service teachers in implementing LSE in Lesotho secondary schools. According to Thomas (2021), a case study is an in-depth search from several viewpoints of the complexity and exclusivity of certain events. It aims to gain more knowledge in the real-life context. Its primary purpose is to generate a research-based platform that may contribute towards policy development, professional practices, and other civil community actions. As Thomas (2021) observes, a case study is an exploration that turns to understanding the situations contextually. One of the most significant advantages of a case study is that it creates an opportunity to understand the complexity of life by breaking it into digestible parts (Thomas, 2021). In addition, case studies scrutinize persons, events, and decisions, looking at the current situation and trying to understand occurrences from a historical point of view (Thomas, 2021). The researcher believes that gaining insights into teachers' experiences contributes to identifying teachers' training needs in LSE.

##### **Method of data collection**

The data were collected through telephonic semi-structured interviews. In the prevailing circumstances of Covid 19, many educational institutions were mobilised to adjust their teaching approaches and hold face-to-face interactions. Therefore, Universities had to adjust to this situation by restructuring their teaching methods, including online classes, while continuing to provide quality education (Franchi, 2020; Srinivasan, 2020; Walensky & del Rio, 2020). Azad, Sernbo, Svärd, Holmlund, and Björk Brämberg (2021) observe that the COVID-19 pandemic has created varied changes in the world of data collection, as telephonic interviews turned out to be the safest way for data collection. The telephone was advantageous because it saved time and cost (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). Its disadvantage was the lack of visual signals, which forced the interviewer and interviewee to communicate the messages they needed to understand.

Similarly, Azad et al. (2021) reiterated that telephonic interviews lead to forceful listening, technology inconveniences, and environmental disturbances. Verbal and non-verbal communication were captured to get insight into it. The researcher used semi-structured interviews. This subjective interview explores individual experiences using similar structured questions (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). As Rheams (2018) observes, structured interviews are suitable for answering specific questions about their individuals' biographies, experiences, and opinions concerning the issue being explored. This technique consists of three sections, including biographic details of participants. Section A was related to gender, age, and whether the participants were teaching LSE. Section B focused on the questions related to the participants' teacher-training needs to implement LSE in secondary schools effectively. Section C focused on teachers' experiences implementing LSE and how it could be improved in secondary schools. Each interview session lasted about 20-30 minutes. The interviews were recorded with

participants' approval. Although interviews could be so rewarding, they are time-consuming as they require time to be transcribed (Rheams, 2018).

#### Procedures

The researcher first approached the Ministry of Education and Training for permission to collect data from the high schools. Upon obtaining the letter from the MoET, the researcher approached the school principals face to face to explain the aim of the research verbally and provided the letter from MoET. Some principals were not found but were contacted telephonically. Approval letters were obtained from schools as required, and the appointment date was set to meet the principals who were not available. However, the researcher met the principals in two schools on the same day. The principals contacted the teachers and provided the researcher with their contact numbers.

First of all, the interviewer introduced herself and explained the study area. It was communicated that participation is voluntary and the participant has a right to withdraw at any time. When the participants agreed to participate, appointments were then set to continue with telephonic interviews with the principals and teachers. Five schools were initially approached. However, one principal who had insisted on using emails for communication later failed to respond to the emails. Another school had to be found as a substitute.

Consent forms were issued to the participants to sign before interviews were held. It is noteworthy that most interviews did not occur on the first appointment. They were postponed several times due to teachers' commitments. However, they were finally carried out successfully. Before conducting an interview, the researcher asked the participant if they could continue with the interviews. In the case where the interviewee was not in a position to be interviewed, the appointment was postponed until the time when the interviewee was ready.

#### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of teachers and principals from four selected schools in Maseru and Mhale's Hoek district in Lesotho. The two schools are in the urban area, while the others are in the rural area. This study considers LSE teachers and principals the most knowledgeable and reliable informants. Therefore, they form part of the main target groups. This study employed the purposive sampling technique to identify participants. Purposive sampling is beneficial because it allows researchers to make generalizations from the sample being studied (Rai & Thapa, 2015). There are high chances of getting knowledgeable people on the information required (Rai & Thapa, 2015). However, one of the disadvantages is that the necessary knowledge of the population may not always be obtainable if the researcher fails to use the method accurately (Rai & Thapa, 2015). In this study, participants were teachers and principals from secondary schools in Maseru and Mhale's Hoek district in Lesotho. They were Basotho and had experience in teaching LSE at secondary schools and had experiences in the overall implementation of LSE. The study was conducted in four secondary schools: school 1, school 2, school 3, and school 4. The sample comprised twelve participants, eight LSE teachers, and four principals. There were two teachers and one principal from each school. All participants resided in both urban areas and rural areas. Participants were Basotho from Lesotho. They were teaching LSE during the study.

#### Data analysis

This study used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data. According to Clarke and Braun (2013), thematic analysis refers to a method that identifies themes and patterns of meaning across data collected, responding to the research questions. Thematic analysis is used to interpret data to detect and identify common issues generated by the participants. Therefore, the participants' interpretations are significant (Alhojailan, 2012). As Kiger and Varpio (2020) assert, analyzing includes grouping statements according to their similarities to make sense. As Javadi and Zarea (2016) state, the other step in the thematic analysis includes defining and refining the theme during analysis. While identifying new meanings and a list of new ideas, codes

begin to be discovered. In this study, the approach enabled the researcher to make meaningful units to seek different standpoints to gain insight into the teachers' training needs to implement LSE effectively. Thematic analysis organised components toward data breakdown and allowed inductive and deductive methodologies (Alhojailan, 2012). For instance, with an inductive approach, most of the collected data starts with detailed content and then changes to wide generalisations that may lead to theories.

Nonetheless, thematic analysis has weaknesses, including weak or unconvincing themes that might occur because the interpretation was not done accurately (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). According to Connelly (2016), the trustworthiness of a study simply means the level of confidence in the data collected, its interpretation, and the methods employed to warrant the excellence of a study. Trustworthiness is also seen as a voluntary action of choosing not to take advantage of the participant's vulnerable position (Ozer & Zheng, 2017). As Amankwaa (2016) suggests, each study should create the procedures required for a study to be well-thought-out by readers. Although trustworthiness is needed, literature has raised arguments for further clarification (Leung, 2015). In this study, credibility as one of the trustworthiness components has been enhanced by following all ethical steps required before data collection. According to Polit and Beck (2014), the study's credibility is about the assurance of the study's reality and the findings discovered.

#### Ethical considerations

The researcher first acquired ethical clearance from the University of the Free State in this study. The schools selected for the research were approached for permission to conduct interviews for data collection. The principals first briefed the participants on the study and asked them to participate voluntarily. The researcher also repeated the briefing later telephonically. The researcher also provided the participants with information about the study, including what the research was about and its aims. The researcher gave assurance to the participants concerning confidentiality. To observe confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms for the names of the participants and the schools. It was explained to participants that they were free to withdraw from the research interviews whenever they felt like it. The researcher also followed the following ethical guidelines. The researcher has ensured that other authors' ideas are accurately referenced. The reason was that failing to reference other people's ideas is considered unethical. Participants were selected in a way that no biases could occur. They were not chosen according to their values. The selection was determined by the requirements needed for the information needed to answer the research questions. Personal practices and values were not taken into consideration. Therefore, the researcher remained non-judgmental and respected participants' views. Once participants consented to participate in the study, they were provided with consent forms through emails to sign before interviews. The consent forms included the researcher's personal information, such as the name of the institution where the researcher is studying and the faculty. It also included full information concerning the study and what the topic covers, including the purpose of the study.

## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biographic results

#### Table 1: Biographic results

#### In-service teachers need training in the implementation of LSE

The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that some LSE teachers at secondary schools in both Maseru and Mhale's Hoek districts have undergone training before teaching LSE. However, some teachers were never trained in LSE implementation. Teachers who never went for training should be provided adequate training to provide quality teaching in LSE. The study highlights a need to educate teachers to be proficient enough to reflect on their efforts while teaching in classrooms, as it would help them recognize where they need improvement. Teachers will also be able to recognize their own beliefs,

which might become barriers to teaching. Laurell et al. (2021) stated that teachers are challenged to create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for encountering diversity in values, religion, and culture.

#### Pre-service training in LSE

The in-depth interviews revealed that some teachers had undergone training before teaching LSE in Lesotho secondary schools. Some participants mentioned that they had studied relevant courses, such as Counseling and Special Education. Few of them mentioned that they had attended training in workshops to gain knowledge in teaching LSE, while others revealed that they received training at the tertiary level as a short course conducted in three months. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

*"Yes, mam! I have not been given classes in the timetable, but I have been teaching it last year"* (Teacher 2).

*"Yes! I studied a course in South Africa where we were studying Life Orientation; that is where I learned LSE"* (Principal 1).

*"The kind of training I attended was in the form of workshops, though they were not so serious. I was considered because I did school career guidance and counselling. But right now, I teach English Language and Literature. I also graduated with a postgraduate certificate for career guidance and special education from Fort Hare"* (Principal 1).

*"I studied LSE as a course during the fourth year at the tertiary level, which was offered as a semester course and lasted about four to five months"* (Teacher 4).

#### Lack of training in LSE

The research findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that some teachers have never been trained before teaching LSE at secondary schools in Maseru and Mhale Hhokoe districts. This implies that some teachers are allocated to teach LSE yet have not received any training. Teachers are assigned to teach LSE depending on their load of work. In this case, teachers are not given any option other than teaching LSE, regardless of how comfortable and ready they feel. The findings thus militate vehemently against the policy's objectives, which aim at providing quality education. The policy, therefore, fails to advocate for the set goals, stressing the importance of teachers' preparation in handling any curriculum.

The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

*"Academically, I have not studied LSE, but I have studied a degree in Counselling and Education"* (Teacher 5).

*"LSE training ends at the College of Education (LCE) those in schools were never trained"* (Teacher 1).

*"Untrained teachers tend to make their own decisions, and learners tend to be more comfortable with us than with other teachers. Even when students get to the staffroom on issues that concern other teachers, they prefer to talk to us alone so that we can pass their issues to concerned teachers. Therefore, training is needed because some teachers complain that we mislead learners"* (Teacher 4).

*"LSE implementation is very poor, that is what I can say. Teachers were not trained in LSE, which is given to teachers far from it. It is not even given to people who studied any causes related to human behavior"* (Principal 1).

Some participants have mentioned that any other teacher not trained for a specific programme is considered incompetent. The following responses from the interview sessions support this:

*"That means if someone is not trained, he is considered not knowledgeable in that subject, so he would not be comfortable"* (Teacher 1).

*"I have never taught LSE. Basing on experience in teaching, I do not think I would have a problem. However, currently, I do not attend classes frequently"* (Teacher 8).

*"I have not taught LSE but would be 100% comfortable teaching it since its content draws from our life experiences, so I do not think it is a problem"* (Principal 4).

These responses have revealed that some participants have acquired teaching experiences in LSE over the years and are now comfortable with the subject. The following responses from the interview sessions further support this:

*"By the time teachers started teaching LSE, they were learning along with*

*learners because they are not trained"* (Teacher 1).

*"I am just trying to understand it along the way. I do not know how to go into details, you know, for any other subjects, you get trained for more than four years. I only do it because I am bound to"* (Teacher 7).

However, it is essential to note that teachers without training need more attention and special training to get used to LSE. For instance, mathematics teachers may take longer to understand LSE requirements than religious studies teachers.

## VII. DISCUSSION

The research findings have revealed that teacher training could still be essential for teachers who have undergone training before implementing LSE in secondary schools. It has been found that although there was some training in the form of workshops, they were too short. Thus, teachers do not feel confident that they are trained well. The kind of workshops provided were not comprehensive enough to equip teachers with all the skills necessary in LSE. Few teachers mentioned that they studied relevant courses during their tertiary training.

Therefore, teachers need to be provided with consistent training opportunities to enable them to perform to their best capacities. This concurs with the findings from related literature. Simona (2015) revealed that the main reasons for supporting life skills development are teacher involvement at 50%, materials, and financial support at 27%, and support for management at 23%. Also, Behrani (2016) affirms that training is provided to teachers following the guidelines proposed by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on teaching learning and assessment practices of the Life Skills education programs. According to Mavuru and Pila (2021), many researchers regard pre-service teacher training as the foundation of education. Teachers are expected to own various areas such as detailed knowledge, curriculum knowledge, learners' development, and pedagogical content.

The research findings have revealed that there is still a considerable gap in teacher training needs. Providing training for principals and teachers could be essential for teachers who remain untrained in implementing LSE in secondary schools. For teachers to master any subject, they must undergo relevant training. According to Behrani (2016), improving teachers' capacity to deliver quality education remains a priority for all programs, including LSE. Andringrum et al. (2019) mention that quality education could be achieved by teachers who complete their planning tasks to acquire knowledge and practical skills. It has been found from the study that some teachers are being assigned to teach LSE, yet they have never attended any training nor have studied any relevant course during the tertiary level. It has been found that some teachers who are not trained cannot be trusted to handle students' social issues. This was raised by other participants concerned that untrained teachers fail to listen to students so much that students avoid consulting them when they have social issues. Most teachers have emphasized that a teacher is considered incompetent if he is not trained in a specific field. This concurs with the findings from related literature. The previous research conducted by Makindi and Gikui (2015) in Kenya reveals that there was never a proper orientation in 2008 after issuing LSE syllabus. Most participants admitted that their first encounter in LSE was challenging as they were also learning. However, with time, they understand LSE and how it should be delivered. As Behrani (2016) emphasizes, teachers need to be trained to improve their understanding of the support they need to equip children in LSE programs.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This research recommends that there is a need to provide ongoing support to improve knowledge. It could be provided in the form of short-course training and audio-visual aids. Hoa (2013) observes a need to construct situations that meet new demands of teachers' professional improvement. Principals and coordinators are expected to conduct step-down training. However, this was not happening in secondary schools

in Lesotho. They must be assisted in conducting step-down training to help other teachers acquire more information on LSE. Teachers' attitudes need to be changed. This research recommends that teachers be trained and supported to change their attitude towards LSE and students. The implication is that teachers must be able to transfer and demonstrate the same range of effective life skills their students intend to learn (UNESCO, 2012). This can only be achieved by facilitating teacher development programs to enhance teaching competencies. This research recommends that the government provide basic resources such as class syllabi, posters, and storybooks. The research findings have revealed that each school has one book as a guiding material that teachers share. One of the principals mentioned that they have one tablet, which the whole school uses for students to acquire information in LSE requirements. There is a need to have resources that accommodate students with special needs because the education system has adopted inclusive education. According to Jaya, Haryoko, and Suhaeb (2018), broadcasting should be designed to fit the characteristics of children with special needs. Indeed, there is a need for special devices. There is a need to increase the number of classrooms in overcrowded schools. Samuels (2012) observes that the physical environment is a challenge in classrooms, especially in developing countries with a high prevalence of HIV. This research recommends involving the family in the implementation of LSE.

The main reason is that students are not likely to practice whatever the family does not support. Teachers often raise their concern that parents' practices mostly conflict with the schools' values (Smith & Harrison, 2013). However, further research is recommended to include the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as parents and school administrations. As An and Reigeluth (2011) stated, one of the challenges is that students and parents often perceive school learning as irrelevant to their personal and real-life needs. The research findings have revealed that although LSE is being examined, it does not contribute toward a passing mark for students. This is one of the reasons why teachers do not take LSE seriously because they consider it a waste of time. According to Kurtdede-Fidan and Aydogdu (2018), teachers have pointed out that the education system is problematic because its main focus is on the examinations. However, Smith and Harrison (2013) mentioned that where LSE has fully occurred, there is a reasonably successful increase in knowledge about HIV/AIDS and reported continuous condom use. LSE must be reviewed to weigh its possibility of being included in the pass mark. This research recommends that teachers have to be trained in the necessary teaching methods in LSE for them to be able to shift from formal education to informal education. As Makindi and Gikuihi (2018) asserts, given the traditional approach to teaching and learning in many developing countries, training is provided for individual teachers to improve their teaching and practical skills.

UNICEF (2012) noted that teachers should be told that innovation in the curriculum is the key factor in LSE implementation. This research recommends the need for ongoing supervision by school principals and inspectors. Classroom teaching and learning supervision allow principals to conduct assessments to identify if teachers require improvement in their LSE professional competencies. This was emphasised by UNICEF (2012). The study conducted by Colognesi, Nieuwenhoven, and Beusaert (2020) showed that school principals take on the role of mentors to offer ongoing support and control within the school. The government needs to engage specialized qualified teachers for LSE. Allocating teachers according to their workload has a negative effect as most teachers are not satisfied teaching LSE. It can also be suggested that there is a need for proper teacher training, and winning parental interest should be included in the further establishment of the programs. Given this, there is an urgent need to provide quality training and ongoing support to life skills teachers and instructors (Behnani, 2016). In this study, various aspects were identified in underpinning the LSE implementation in secondary schools. The main focus has been understanding the preparations

developed and exploring teachers' and principals' views. The research findings have revealed that there was not enough preparation, including providing training for teachers and principals. As Behrani (2016) suggested, proper regulations, such as teacher preparedness, must be included to strengthen programs. Because of these challenges, the government needs to address teachers' needs concerning the availability of resources. However, teachers also have to work on their attitude to allow themselves to understand LSE and its importance in students' social and psychological wellbeing. Above all, teachers must understand their role in ensuring a healthy student environment. The information gathered contributed constructively towards the recommendations made. The data collected could also generate more valuable knowledge for policy development and other community action-based activities.

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Participants	Gender	Age	Trained in LSE	Residential areas	Highest qualification	Experience in LSE	Marital status	School districts
Teacher 1	Female	41	Yes	Rural	Hons PC	2 years	Married	School 1, MD
Teacher 2	Female	50	Yes	Urban	BA HEE	4 years	Married	School 2, MD
Teacher 3	Female	35	No	Rural	Hons Ed	3 years	Married	School 1, MD
Principal 1	Male	52	No	Urban	Hons Ed	0	Married	School 2, MD
Teacher 4	Female	22	Yes	Urban	BEd SE	<1 year	Single	School 3 MHD
Teacher 5	Female	34	Yes	Urban	PGDE,BA PCC	4 years	Married	School 3, MHD
Teacher 6	Female	47	Yes	Urban	BA Ed	4 years	Married	School 2, MD
Teacher 7	Female	51	Yes	Rural	BAEd & Hon SGS Ed	4 years	Married	School 4, MD
Teacher 8	Female	47	No	Rural	Hons SGS Ed	4 years	Married	School 4, MD
Principal 2	Female	50+	No	Rural	Bsc Ed	0	Married	School 1, MD
Principal 3	Male	50+	Yes	Urban	BA Sed	0	Married	School 3, MHD
Principal 4	Male	50+	No	Rural	BA Ed	0	Married	School 4, MD

BA Ed: Bachelor of Education, BA Ed: Bachelor in Art in Education, Hons SGS Ed: Honours in School Guidance & Special in Education, PGDE: Post-Graduate Diploma in Education, Bsc ED:

Bachelor in Art, Science, and Education, Bed SED: Bachelor in Education, Special Education, BA HEE: Bachelor in Human Ecology in Education, Hons PC: Honours in Pastoral Care, BA: Pastoral Care and Counselling, MD: Maseru district, MHD: Mohale’s Hoek District