

Possible Solutions to Challenges of Including Learners with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classrooms



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As a major strategy towards the achievement of basic education for all, Lesotho introduced free and compulsory primary education, whereby many children were sent to school. The mountain kingdom of Lesotho implemented the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy in the year 2000 (McConkey&Mariga, 2011:18). The policy's main objectives are:

[t]o make basic education accessible to all learners; to make education equitable in order to eliminate inequalities; to guarantee that every Mosotho child completes the primary education and ensure that education is affordable to Basotho. (McConkey&Mariga, 2011:18).

By implementing compulsory education, even learners with special educational needs were seen in high numbers in schools. This has brought a challenge to learners with special educational needs to learn in the same classrooms with other learners without special educational needs. This paper aims to explore the possible solutions to challenges of including learners with special educational needs in Lesotho mainstream classrooms and The paper is guided by the question: what are the possible solutions to the challenges of including learners with special educational needs in Lesotho mainstream classrooms?

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This intellectual piece adopted Critical Pedagogy as a conceptual framing, to provide a philosophical stance that guides the conceptualization of constructs under discussions. Myriads of diverse gist of Critical Pedagogy have been theorized by various scholars, and all seems to amplify and trouble the notion of oppression as an operational element that calls for empowerment for transformation to be realized (see: Moreeng& Twala, 2014:495; Wink, 2005:1; and Kincheloe, 2005:157). However, in this intellectual piece, I align with definition of McKernan (2013:425) who defines Critical Pedagogy as a movement that involves relationships of learning and teaching whereby learners gain critical consciousness and social awareness; as a result, they take suitable measures against oppression is adopted. I track down the evolution of critical pedagogy (CP) as it traces its origin from the tradition of critical theory of the Frankfurt School and influenced heavily by the work of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire. He is the most celebrated critical educator, who is generally considered to be the germinal philosopher of critical pedagogy(McLaren, 2000:1).Critical Pedagogy was first described by Paulo Freire and further sophisticated by the likes of Henry Giroux and other scholars as a praxis-oriented educational movement, guided by passion and principle to enables learners to advance consciousness of emancipation, recognize tendencies of authoritarianism and connect knowledge of empowerment and find an intellectual space of taking a constructive action (McLaren, 2015:120).

Critical pedagogy as a conceptual framework automatically became an appropriate choice which is suitable for this intellectual piece as it recognizes lived experiences and social realities in which learners live. Thus meaningI considered the experiences and social realities of the participants in this study. According to Aliakbari and Faraji (2011:80), critical pedagogy's main concern is about transformation and empowerment to change the social stations of oppressive power that cause people to be oppressed. As the author of this piece I hold the view that people should be treated equally, with no one seen on the periphery and others holding the center stage. The choice of this conceptual framing assisted in defusing the dominant discourse which regard "other(s)" as superior above others.

In this study, all research participants were regarded equal and hence were referred to as co-researchers. Equality forms the base in this study and find prominence in order to trouble discourses of oppressive practices towards others. Important as well, was the view that all people should be free. It is clear, therefore, that critical pedagogy was therefore an automatic choice in this study.

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This intellectual piece amplifies the notion of emancipation to enable participants to communicate freely and partake with clear consciousness. Co-researchers were highly treasured and treated with respect, and they became highly committed to share their lived experiences with unconditional honesty. Freire's concept of praxis (Giroux, 1997:101) and the emancipatory nature of critical pedagogy assisted this study in encouraging active participation.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

For preparing teachers to accept and ensure participation of learners with special educational needs, Carrollet al. (2003:65) highlight that in Australia, revisions to teacher education programmes were advocated. Meanwhile, Browder, Wakeman, Spooner, Ahlegrim-Delzell and Algozzine (2006:394) state that in the United States, staff development seminars and workshops towards social models of disabilities were provided to school staff members in order to provide the necessary skills to practising teachers. According to Burlo (2010:207), in the United States, teachers undertake a two-year evening part-time course in inclusive education and attend training sessions discussing issues on inclusive education, setting instructional objectives, collaborative teaching, individual educational programmes and the implementation of peer preparation programmes. Also, a major commitment of school authorities and universities was to redesign teacher preparation programmes, with emphasis on psychology (Browder et al., 2006:394).

It is reported that in New South Wales, the need for their teacher training curriculum to include at least one compulsory course on special education has already been endorsed (Forlin, 2006). In the South African context, the South African Ministry of Basic Education emphasises that pre-service tuition in inclusive education should be prioritised (Motshekga, 2010b) and tuition should shift the focus from individual deficits to the environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers within society and institutions. Moreover, Selesho (2012:540) states that all the provinces conducted campaigns of awareness to educate communities about inclusive education.

Furthermore, educational institutes in South Africa began to prepare teachers to include a diverse range of learner needs in one inclusive system (Engelbrecht & Oswald and Swart (2003:300). In the same way, Oswald and Swart (2011:389) stipulate that modern teacher education in South Africa trains teachers how to accommodate diverse learners in mainstream classrooms. As a result, the attitudes and beliefs of teachers about children with disabilities have positively changed. Also, the specialists support the diversity in schools and the rainbow nation is seen in schools (Oswald & Swart, 2011:389).

According to Walton and Nel (2012:24) The South African Department of Education suggested that teachers should be re-orientated to new pedagogies through comprehensive tuition programmes. There is also notable evidence of teacher enrolment in workshops and short courses offered by various non-governmental organisations, and university-level courses offered for in-service teacher apprentices (Walton & Nel, 2012:24). However, Donohue and Bornman (2014:43) report that the tuition programmes that educated teachers on how to accommodate and teach learners with special educational needs were usually only a week or two long and, of course, that was too short. Stofile further (2008:109) announces that the programmes also focus on developing certain skills, whereas teachers often need far more comprehensive training programmes.

In trying to solve the issue of teachers' training, Lesotho introduced the Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in 1991 (Khoaeane, 2012:12); the Special Education Unit staff was to train teachers on developing positive teacher attitudes towards learners with special educational needs. In 1996, the Lesotho College of Education introduced Special Education in its curriculum, but lacked human resources to promote the programme, as there were no formally prepared lectures with extensive Special Education (Johnstone & Chapman, 2013:139).

Fortunately, in 2009, both the Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho started the special education programmes – a degree for the latter and a diploma for the former (Mosia, 2014:293). It is important to realise that in-service workshops, of which their effectiveness had been criticised as making little difference, were the main approach (Dickinson & Brady, 2006:84). Introduced also, was attitude training and basic disability awareness (Mariga & Phachaka, 1993:8).

In trying to come up with a solution to a curriculum that does not meet the needs of all learners, several attempts were made. In Lesotho, in the year 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training developed and published the Curriculum and Assessment Policy, aiming at:

- Determining the nature and direction of the national curriculum and its objectives;
- monitoring quality, relevance and efficiency of basic and secondary education;
- aligning the assessment methods to what is taught so that the necessary link between what is taught, learnt and assessed is established;
- addressing the emerging issues pertaining to new demands; and
- practices and life changes of the modern global world. (MoET, 2009:iv)

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The framework aims to cater even for learners with special educational needs, as it highlights relevance and addresses emerging issues pertaining to new demands. According to Raselimo and Mahao (2015:2), in Lesotho, different curriculum reforms have been put into place with minimal success. The aim was to achieve the goals of education for the development of the nation. The latest education reform that is currently used in Lesotho, is the integrated curriculum, which aims at moving away from the subject- and examination-oriented curriculum to a new dispensation where the curriculum is organised into learning areas that reflect real-life challenges (MoET,2009:vii). The integrated curriculum aims at equipping each learner with the necessary competencies to address life challenges. The overall goal is —to ensure access, quality, equity and relevance in the sector of education (Mariga& Phachaka,1993:1).

According to Walton (2011:341), in South Africa, there is no longer a separate curriculum for learners with special educational needs, but rather, all learners follow the same curriculum, with adaptations where necessary. According to Sharma, Loreman and Forlin (2012:15), in Australia, the infusion approach has been established, whereby the curriculum has been modified for students with special educational needs.

In order to respond to the challenge of pedagogic approaches in inclusive schools, more learner-centred methods, including cooperative learning, were implemented in order to help learners with special educational needs develop social skills and circumvent the issue of rote learning, teacher-learner ratio and negative attitudes of learners without special educational needs (Gillies, 2007:7). According to Tileston (2004:40), learners with special educational needs should be mixed with learners without special educational needs; both learners with and without disabilities benefit from cooperative learning.

According to Allan (2003:175), in Australia, teachers are allowed to prepare and share, to develop appropriate methods and materials for lessons, and to network and exchange information. Similarly, it was recommended in Scotland that the system of assessing learners with special educational needs be reviewed and probably discontinued because of its inefficiency, iniquity and failure to meet the needs of the learners. Sharing the same sentiments, the South African Ministry of Basic Education put more emphasis on pre-service tuition in inclusive education; it needs to be prioritised and training should address the pedagogies that have been shaped by conservative philosophies and past practices of segregated special education (Naicker, 2005).

It is also highlighted by Walton (2011:241) that, in South Africa, the Education White Paper 6 envisaged the retention of special schools that would serve the needs of learners with moderate to severe support needs and also serve as resource centres for neighbourhood schools. In that way, the White Paper could foresee that about 500 ordinary primary schools would, over a period of 20 years, be converted into —full service schools, which would be equipped, through staff training, building adaptations, and collaboration, with a variety of support services to meet the diverse educational needs of learners in a community (DoE, 2001:22). Furthermore, courses were redesigned to incorporate more learner-centred methods, including cooperative teaching and learning (Frederickson, Warren& Turner, 2005:198). Nind (2006:118) also postulates that courses incorporated a number of innovative practices to help novice teachers improve their teaching techniques and attitudes towards disabilities. According to Majumdar, McAlister, Eurich, Padwal and Marrie (2006:999), pedagogical practices that are more learner-centred help learners develop social skills and circumvent the issue of rote learning, teacher-learner ratio and negative attitudes of learners about the inclusion of learners with special educational needs.

Implementing active learning whereby teachers and learners are actively involved in their learning and engaged in promoting social change within the education system (Bonner, 2010:178) helps learners with special educational needs enjoy learning. According to Bonner, 2010:178 in South Africa, pedagogy that is used in schools has improved in ways that respond positively to learner diversity. Furthermore, many technology devices were made available to be used by different people with different disabilities and are providing many learners with special educational needs with opportunities to be educated together with their peers without disabilities (Hasselbring& Glaser, 2000:105).

On the other hand, the Lesotho Ministry of Education developed and published a brief policy statement on special education in 1989. The policy statement set seven goals for the education of learners with special educational needs as follows: the integration of learners with special educational needs into the regular school system was to be encouraged; resource centres were to be established in order to assess the needs of such children and to prepare them for integration; learners with special educational needs were to receive a complete primary education and some vocational training; a team of specialist travelling teachers was to assist classroom teachers in their work with learners with special educational needs; and the Ministry of Education and Training would support the rights of learners with special educational needs with regard to access to services in general, and teacher training was to include an introduction to special educational needs.

Reasonable as these goals are, the statement is silent about the relationship between the schools and resource centres. In addition, in 2009 the ministry published the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework, which calls for a radical approach to

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teaching aimed at a pedagogy shift towards more methods that develop creativity, independence and survival skills of learners. Also, learners should assume greater responsibility for their own learning (MoET, 2009:viii).

According to Hornby and Witte (2010:774), the role of parents in improving educational outcomes for all learners, including those with special educational needs, has been recently recognised by the New Zealand government through publication of the Schooling Strategy (Peters, Johnstone & Ferguson, 2005:149), in which improving parental involvement is one of the priority areas. In South African schools, parents play a significant role in the management of the school, particularly the administration of school fees, by electing and serving on governing bodies.

Despite the implementation of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho, the Free Compulsory Primary Education Policy is silent about the role of parents in the school, except permitting them to participate in the feeding scheme (Morojele, 2012:38). In 2010, the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) developed and published the Education Act, 2010, which allows parents to be involved in the education of their children (Education Act, 2010:section 4(a)). The act emphasises that a parent should be involved in the development of the disciplinary policies of the school, should cause the learner to receive full-time education that is appropriate for his or her ability, aptitude and age, and is expected to provide the learner with the full opportunity and guidance to complete primary education (Education Act of 2010 Section 4(3) (a) to (d)).

To stimulate more active parental involvement, Sheldon and Epstein (2005:195) propose different levels of parental involvement in the education of their children. Epstein (1986:278) established four forms of parental involvement: the first level of parental involvement is basic obligations; the second level is school-to-home communications; in the third level, parents are involved at school; while in the fourth level, parents are involved in educational activities at home. Later, Epstein (1992:194) expanded and defined six levels for parental involvement in schools: the first level is helping parents with child-rearing skills; the second level is communication between the school and the parent; the third level is involving parents in school-volunteering opportunities; the fourth level highlights involving parents in home-based learning; while the fifth level illustrates how parents can be involved in school decision-making; and the last level is involving them in school-community teamwork.

Various practices were implemented across the world in order to improve the learning environment for successful inclusion. According to Datta (2015:237), in Australia, learners with special educational needs participate in all areas of school life. Australian government education departments established internal support systems, which enable them to help teachers and learners, rather than expecting assistance to be provided in the form of additional staff, resources or services (Westwood & Graham, 2003:4).

Apart from that, each school setting has been made to become more self-sufficient in terms of support provided for both teachers and learners (Westwood & Graham, 2009:4). School-based special education teachers, support teachers and state-wide visiting teacher services for learners with vision and hearing special educational needs are employed. Also, peer tutoring, school service officers and paraprofessionals, who perform the role of classroom aides, working under the supervision of the teacher, are some of the internal support systems developed by individual schools (Westwood & Graham, 2009:11).

Korea built new mainstream schools which were established to accommodate learners with special educational needs; the government employed special education tutors and placed them in mainstream classrooms to strengthen inclusion and the curriculum was modified and supplemented (Kim, 2013:80). Similarly, Ajuwon (2008:12) highlighted that, in Nigeria, when learners with special educational needs were brought to mainstream schools from special schools, teachers from special schools were allocated to mainstream schools and both general and special education teachers plan together in order to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of each learner.

According to Stubbs (2008:2015), in South Africa, inclusive schools are characterised by ubuntu, the African philosophy that says, I am because we are, or I am fully human in relationship with others. This emphasises cooperation among people and the sharing of whatever is available. Notably, the schools did not have all the resources they needed to become inclusive; they also did not use a lack of resources as an excuse of not being inclusive; their resource base grew as they gradually became more inclusive.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This intellectual piece adopted participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological approach, which was a means of operationalizing the critical pedagogy (CP) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used in analyzing the data. Included in the study were the school principal, four teachers, three parents, two learners with special educational needs and one learner without special educational needs, all from one school in which the study was conducted. The reason for choosing all co-researchers from one school was to contextualize challenges of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. Participatory action research (PAR) can be referred to as an alternative to scientific and traditional social research, as it moves an investigation from a linear cause and effect perspective to a more participatory framework that considers the context of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:480). PAR allows the participants to be actively involved in solving their problem.

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Co-researchers become actively involved in the quest for ideas and information to guide their future actions, rather than being passive (Whyte, 1991:21). According to Telford, Koch and Kralik (2006:459), collectively, the researcher and the co-researchers engage in social investigation and take action with the purpose of improving a problem or situation. PAR recognizes the need for people being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases of any research that affects them (Vollman, Anderson & McFarlane, 2004:129). Thus, PAR is a process of investigating a problem, using social methods whereby the affected people are involved in posing and solving their problem. In PAR, co-researchers, together with the researcher, actively participate throughout the research process. The definition of Kearney, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt(2013:115) that PAR involves the participants as equal partners in all phases of the research “designing, implementing, acting and evaluation” will be used in this study.

PAR was a methodological approach of choice because it enables the stakeholders to take ownership of the process of transforming their own social reality (Cargo & Mercer, 2008:327) and share their experiences with regard to inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. In PAR, the researcher is free to include people who face and are affected by the problem at hand.

The researcher acknowledges that the alliance of individuals with varied knowledge, skills and expertise advances the sharing of knowledge development. Stakeholders in education help advance a more compelling and a clearer agenda for social research by incorporating ethical concerns and projects for social transformation into educational research and practice (Kompridis, 2006:390). PAR is suited for research with side-lined individuals (MacDonald, 2012:40). However, in this study, the focus was on learners with special educational needs who are regarded as a side-lined group. PAR acknowledges people with special needs; hence it was regarded a suitable methodological approach to conduct this study of challenges of learners with special educational needs in Lesotho mainstream classrooms. PAR, as a methodological approach, was followed because it recognizes the voices of oppressed and marginalized people (Mahlomaholo, 2009:225). It commits the researcher to work with members of communities that have been oppressed and exploited in an effort to bring about social change (Nkoane, 2012:100).

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSIONS

Data were presented under the following main intellectual elements: collaborative teaching; curriculum adaptations; learner-centered approaches and parents as active members of the school community. These constructs form the foundation of solving the challenges of including learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms.

Collaborative teaching as a solution towards teacher tuition Collaborative teaching, which is commonly called team teaching or cooperative teaching includes two or more teachers working as a team and educating learners in a classroom (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2008:5). In collaborative teaching, teachers share responsibility in planning, teaching and evaluation. It is not one teacher teaching, followed by another one teaching a different subject, or one teacher teaching while the other is marking (Villa et al., 2008:6). According to Friend and Cook (1992:14), collaborative teaching in inclusive classrooms includes interaction with colleagues, paraprofessional, parents and others, where all members are equal. Collaborative teaching and implementation of peer education programmes were found to be solutions towards the challenge of teacher tuition and pedagogical practices. The best practice was seen to be placing special education teachers in regular classrooms to work collaboratively with general teachers in order to strengthen inclusion.

During our discussions, the co-researchers suggested that teachers, both special and general teachers, should work cooperatively, to solve the challenge of teacher tuition:

Mr Kokolia made the following suggestion: I suggest that special educators and general teachers work together so that they can exchange ideas on how to help learners with special educational needs in an inclusive setting.

Mrs Lebusa held the view: I think not only teachers should be involved in the learning process, I suggest that even the community members or parents should be used as resource persons in classes.

Ms Tsebo added: Teachers can sit and do their lesson plans together after school.

Mrs Tau emphasised: Teachers can also read and search for best ways of including learners with special educational needs. I mean, even common sense tells you that a teacher can write with bigger letters for learners who can partially see.

The excerpts of Mr Kokolia and Ms Tsebo suggest that teachers work together. The idea raised by Ms Tsebo that teachers can sit and do their lesson plans together after school is understood to mean that all teachers should stay after school and do their lesson plans together, rather than doing them individually. It can be portrayed from this response that Ms Tsebo might be aware that teachers do not plan their work together. Mr Kokolia's term special educators is understood to mean teachers trained in special education and general teachers is understood to mean teachers who are not trained as special teachers.

In this school, it is normal to refer to some teachers as special teachers and others as general teachers. The phrase “teachers work together”, in this context, is understood to mean collaborative teaching. The phrase “so that they can exchange ideas on how to help learners with special educational needs in an inclusive setting” is understood to mean that both special and general teachers

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can help each other on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. Similarly, Mrs Lebusa's reference calls for collaborative teaching. He aspires for all stakeholders to be included in the teaching of learners. The phrase "not only teachers should be involved in the learning process" is understood to mean that people other than teachers should be involved in the process of learning. The statement, "I suggest that even the community members or parents should be used as resource persons" is understood to mean that parents and the community members should also be used in the teaching and learning process as resource persons. It is normal in this school that teachers work individually. Each teacher plans, implements and assesses the learners alone; hence members of the research team suggested collaborative teaching. They might be aware that the individualised working of teachers does not help in an inclusive setting and that no man is an island.

Another solution that was brought forth was curriculum adaptations as a solution towards curriculum as a challenge. Curriculum adaptations, according to Makoelle (2016:28), are permissible changes in the curriculum that allow learners equal opportunity to access the curriculum. The curriculum can be adapted differently: how instruction is delivered; how the learner responds; the time allocated for the completion of the task; the level of difficulty; the level of support; the number of items to be learnt; the degree of participation; and materials and instruction in order to meet the needs of learners (Okumbe&Tsheko, 2010:6). This means that a learner with special educational needs actively participate in all activities with other learners in the classroom, but with different objectives. For example, a learner may express their thoughts through drawing, rather than in writing. Using the same curriculum for all learners, with adaptations where necessary for learners with special educational needs, was indicated as the solution towards curriculum as a challenge.

In the same manner, during our discussions, members held the opinion that the same curriculum should be adapted in order to best suit each learner.

Mr Pule stated: The issue of curriculum is simple because as long as the teacher knows the needs of the learners and the content to teach, then curriculum can be adapted to meet each learner.

Mr Andreas held the view: Teachers should design the class work according to the abilities of each learner.

Mrs Ntsonyana also believed: If teachers can be patient and design the work according to the needs of learners, then even learners with special educational needs can enjoy learning.

The references of Mr Pule and Mrs Ntsonyana emphasise the needs of the learners. In this context, learners' needs are understood to mean the strengths and weaknesses of learners, while Mr Andreas talks about the abilities of the learners, where abilities of each learner is understood to mean what learners are capable of doing. The phrase "curriculum can be adapted" is understood to mean that curriculum can be modified to suit all the learners.

Mr Pule's assertion that teachers should adapt the curriculum to meet each learner's needs, shows that he might be aware that, in this school, teachers do not make adaptations to the curriculum; as a result, the needs of other learners are not met. It is normal in this context that the curriculum is presented as it is, without any alterations made to it. Similarly, the phrase "teachers should design the class work according to the abilities of each learner" demonstrates that Mr Andreas might also be aware that class work is not designed according to the abilities of the learners. Therefore, when class work is not designed with reference to the abilities of each learner, some of the learners might be oppressed or excluded. In the same manner, the assertion of Mrs Ntsonyana that if teachers can be patient and design the work according to the needs of learners, then even learners with special education can enjoy learning, denotes that she might be aware that teachers are not patient. This declaration may also indicate that Mrs Ntsonyana might be aware that learners with special educational needs do not enjoy learning. The fact that learners might not enjoy learning is depicted from the phrase "even learners with special educational needs can enjoy learning".

When teachers have developed critical consciousness about learners with special educational needs, they are inclined to treat them equally, both with and without special educational needs. They are able to alter the curriculum in such a way that it meets the needs of different learners. Above all, they treat each learner with care and respect. It therefore says when teachers are involved in the development of curriculum, they can feel respected.

Learner-centred approach to learning is also seen as solution towards pedagogical practices. Learner-centred approaches to teaching encompass methods that focus on learners, rather than on teachers (Cornelius-White, 2007:120). In order to overcome the challenge of pedagogic approaches in inclusive schools, more learner-centred methods are stressed. In the same way, during our meetings, pedagogical approaches that are more learner-centred, including cooperative teaching-learning and peer tutoring, were suggested as solutions towards pedagogical approaches:

According to **Mr Pule**: Time has changed, teaching is no more teacher-centred, and therefore teachers should stop acting as if they are the only ones who know. For example: when I first taught, I told my learners that I did not come to teach them, but we are going to teach each other.

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Mrs Moyo also suggested: Teachers can be innovative and come up with other ways of meeting the needs of all learners, not only those with special educational needs. Teachers should use different approaches so that all learners fit in the mainstream classrooms.

Ms Nthabeleng added: This issue of pedagogical approaches takes us back to the fact that we should know the needs and abilities of the learners. When teachers know the needs of all the learners, then he or she can use teaching and learning approaches that meet their needs.

Mr Pule's excerpt "[t]ime has changed, teaching is no more teacher-centred" is understood to mean that he is aware of methods other than teacher-centred methods that may be used to teach. "[T]eachers should stop acting as if they are the only ones who know" is understood to mean that Mr Pule is aware that teachers are using teacher-centred methods, whereby they are the only active members in the learning process. The phrase "should stop" sounds authoritative, as Mr Pule is one of the special teachers in the school. It sounds as if this teacher is dictating to other teachers what to do. It is normal in this school that the special educators are the ones who know best about inclusion. The example that Mr Pule gave, "I told my learners that I did not come to teach them, but we are going to teach each other", depicts that this teacher might be aware of learner-centred methods that were not used in the school.

Teacher-centred methods treat learners as passive participants in the learning process. Moreover, the citation by Mrs Moyo, the principal, that "teachers can be innovative" is understood to mean that teachers can come up with new ways to avoid teacher-centred methods. Mrs Moyo, as the overseer of the school, might be aware that teachers in this school are not innovative and are still oppressing learners, using traditional teacher-centred methods. The saying "meeting the needs of all learners, not only those with special educational needs" gives an idea that most of the time, when talking about inclusive education, people think of learners with special educational needs only. The emphasis on "not only those with special needs" confirms that teachers might concentrate on learners with special educational needs only and, as a result, exclude learners without special educational needs.

In corroboration with what Mrs Moyo said, Ms Nthabeleng postulated that if teachers knew the needs of all learners, they could use methods that meet their needs. This response suggests that different methods will be used; as a result there will be a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred methods. This response shows that Ms Nthabeleng too might be aware that, in this school, the needs of the learners are not considered when choosing the methods of teaching; as a result, the needs of other learners are not met. When learners with special educational needs are treated in a humane way, they are allowed to actively participate in learning.

Parents as active members of the school community are seen as possible solution to the challenges of including learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. In many countries, the challenge of parental involvement was solved by allowing parents to be actively involved in schools. The significant role parents play in most South African schools, is in the management of the school, where they serve on governing bodies. The team members thought it was of utmost importance for parents to take a more active role than just serve in the management of the school:

Ms Tsebo: I suggest that the school should educate parents on how to cooperate with teachers for the success of their children.

Mrs Ntsonyana: I suggest that we form a teacher-parent association so that teachers and parents can work collaboratively for the benefit of the learners.

Ms Lebo, on the other hand, suggested: During parent's meetings or open days parents should always be reminded that learners differ, therefore even their performance differs.

Mrs Ntsonyana: I suggest that there should be a school policy that clearly states how parents should be involved in the education of their children.

Mrs Moyo put forward: Parents should sign every home work given to their children as a proof that the child was guided to do the homework. The suggestion of Ms Tsebo that the school should educate parents on how to cooperate with teachers is understood to mean that the school should train parents to collaborate with teachers in the education of their children. This is further strengthened by Mrs Ntsonyana's suggestion that "teachers and parents can work collaboratively for the benefit of their children". Ms Tsebo might have made her assertion because she might be aware that parents do not cooperate well with the teachers. The phrase "for the benefit of the learners" reveals that Ms Tsebo might be aware that learners are affected by parents who do not cooperate with teachers.

The act of parents who do not work collaboratively with teachers negatively affects the academic performance of their children. In corroboration with Ms Tsebo's assertion, Mrs Ntsonyana's excerpt that there should be a teacher-parent association so that teachers and parents can work collaboratively for the benefit of the learners is understood to mean that learners benefit when teachers and parents work collaboratively. Mrs Ntsonyana might have seen that learners in schools where there are teacher-parent associations benefit from the collaboration of parents and teachers. In addition to these references, Ms Lebo's citation that "there should be a school policy that clearly states how parents should be involved in the education of their children" is

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understood to mean that there should be a blue print of what and what not is expected of parents in this school. This statement indicates that there might be no document in this school with regard to how parents should be involved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the recommendation with regard to teacher tuition is that the initial teacher tuition institutions should prepare all teachers for inclusive education. The case of separate teacher programmes, where some teachers are prepared for special education and others are prepared for general education only, should be revisited. Important also is the recommendation that student teachers should be allowed to interact with special educational needs during their tuition. They should be exposed not only to theory, but also to practical ways of putting inclusion into practice. For teacher apprentices who are doing their work-integrated learning (WIL), it is therefore recommended that teachers in the general and special streams should work collaboratively with them. This could be realised through an exchange of ideas on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. In-service programmes and workshops are also recommended for teachers in order to improve their skills and knowledge on inclusive 143 education. Similarly, the study recommends that teachers should work with other teachers from different places to build collaborative networking.

It is recommended also that teachers, as the implementers of the curriculum, be the developers of the curriculum. The curriculum should be decentralised so that it can respond to the real-life needs of the learners, as emphasised in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (MoET, 2009:9) that education programmes should include cultural activities and values compatible with learners' development. All learners should be presented with the same curriculum, with some adaptations for learners with special educational needs where necessary. It is also recommended that other modes of assessments should be used, apart from the paper-pen assessments that are usually used. The study recommendations are informed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy, Lesotho (MoET, 2009:vii), which discourages a one-size-fits-all assessment strategy.

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that learners should contribute to the decisions about curriculum. According to Kincheloe (2005:328), the learners' knowledge, experiences and realities of the context where learning takes place, should be considered when framing the curriculum. It is also recommended that real materials should be used in the learning process (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:80). Following this, the study recommends that curriculum should be flexible, leaving space for adaptations based on the needs and interests of the learners.

Parental involvement is highly recommended as it was found important. Schools where parents and the entire community are allowed to fully participate in the education system are another condition necessary for inclusive education. It is recommended that schools should take the initiative of educating parents about inclusion, so that they are seen as inclusive parents. It is also recommended that the community be actively involved in the education of learners. Communication among the stakeholders is very important. According to Degener (2001:55), creating a dialogic environment where all stakeholders have an equal right to speak and question, empowers them. An environment where parents and the community are tolerated, is recommended. In final consideration, it is crucial to recommend that the school form a stakeholders' committee, so that both the school and the society work interdependently and interconnected towards inclusive environment. The stakeholders' committee can also constantly follow up whether the school is leading to full inclusion. In the same way, programmes like teacher-parent associations are recommended (Will, 1986:415).

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