

**ENHANCING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LESOTHO**

By

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2020

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I, 'Mathabo Joalane Catherine Lebona, do confirm that the study entitled "*Enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho*", is my original work. This work has not been previously submitted for an award of an academic degree or examination at any other institution or University. All the sources used were indicated and acknowledged through completed references and failure to acknowledge is advertent. Besides, I worked hard to ensure that the work does not breach copyright laws and has not been taken from other sources except where it was originally cited and acknowledged within the text. This study rules and anti-plagiarism regulations of the University of the Free State.

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ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



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13-Aug-2019

Dear Ms Lebona, Matha'abo M.C

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Enhancing an enabling environment for Learners With Special Educational Needs (LSEN) in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2019/0850/1308

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Prof Derek Litthauer
Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

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LETTER OF EDITING

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To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Editor's Letter

The letter serves to outline the scope of activities that were done during editing of a master's dissertation by Mathabo Joalane Catherine Lebona titled:

Enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural schools in Lesotho

The following activities were done;

- Grammar check
- Sentence construction
- Spelling check
- Punctuation
- In-text referencing
- Document formatting

As a professional editor, I pledge that the above aspects of the write-up were, to the best of my knowledge, correctly and meticulously done at the time the work was sent to the candidate. I am not responsible for any corrections that were made after the editing process.

Faithfully,



Kemist Shumba (PhD)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBR	Community-Based Rehabilitation
CRC	Convention on the Right of the Child
ECS	Exploratory Case Study
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
LIEP	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
LSEnS	Learners with Special Educational Needs
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
SEO	Special Education Official
TA	Thematic Analysis
SEU	Special Education Unit
UFS	University of the Free State
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WCPT	World Confederation for Physical Therapy

DEDICATION

To my husband, Ntate Lelecha Hector Lebona; my daughter, Tebello, and my son, Thabo; you are a special gift from God Almighty, and you know I could not have done this without your love, constant support, and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

Following the introduction of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho in 2000, schools have seen an influx of learners who are eager to acquire education. Some learners experienced learning difficulties which inhibited their ability to learn in mainstream classes. This limitation is as a result of lack of implementation and a plethora of issues concerning infrastructure, resource allocation, overcrowded classrooms, training of teachers, and stakeholders' attitudes. This study aims to explore how an enabling learning environment can be enhanced for learners with special educational needs (LSENs) at the rural primary schools in Lesotho. Its objectives were (1) to explore an understanding of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho; (2) to investigate and explain the importance of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho; (3) to explore the resources that can be used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho; (4) to determine the challenges faced by teachers when dealing with LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho; and (5) to determine how to overcome these challenges by teachers when teaching LSENs. The philosophy of Ubuntu was used as a theoretical framework. This study adopts a qualitative approach and interpretative paradigm. An exploratory case-study was used as a design in this study. Focus Group Discussion and semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used as instruments for data collection. Participants were purposefully and conveniently selected from the rural primary schools in Lesotho. The sample size involved thirteen participants from two rural primary schools in Lesotho (N=13) [(School A: six teachers (n=6) and one principal (n=1) and School B: five teachers (n=5) and one principal (n=1) and two special education officials (n=2) from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training]. Four themes were developed through thematic analysis in the study. The findings revealed that an understanding and enabling learning environments for learners with special educational needs is a significant factor in enhancing the learning environment in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The results indicated that teachers faced many challenges in creating and enhancing an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. These include lack of infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, lack of resources, poor remuneration, and lack of coordination between all educational stakeholders. The implication of the results was discussed in this study to address the enhancement of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

Keywords: Enabling learning environment, inclusion, learners with special educational needs, rural schools, and mainstream school.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	ii
LETTER OF EDITING	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	ix
TABLE OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
CHAPTER 1	1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Rationale for the study	3
1.3 Problem statement	3
1.4 Theoretical framework	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.5 Research questions	4
1.6 Aim and objectives of the study	5
1.7 Overview of the research methodology and design	6
1.7.1 Research approach	6
1.7.2 Research paradigm	7
1.7.3 Research design	7
1.7.4 Data collection methods	8
1.7.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	8
1.7.4.2 Semi-structured interviews	9
1.7.5 Selection of participants	9
1.7.5.1 Population, sampling, and sample	9
1.7.6 Data analysis	10
1.8 Value of the proposed study	11
1.9 Ethical considerations	11
1.10 Definition of keywords	12
1.10.1 Enabling environment	12
1.10.2 Inclusive education	12

1.10.3 Learners with special education needs (LSENs)	13
1.10.4 Rural schools	13
1.10.5 Mainstream schools	14
1.11 The study delimitations	14
1.12 Layout of the dissertation	14
1.13 Summary	15
CHAPTER 2.....	16
LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 The conceptual framework.....	16
2.2.1 Inclusive education and the drive towards its implementation	16
2.2.2 Importance of an enabling environment for LSENs at schools.....	20
2.2.3 Challenges teachers face when dealing with LSENs in schools	24
2.2.4 Rural setting and how it impedes inclusive education.....	29
2.2.5 Teacher empowerment	30
2.3 Theoretical framework.....	34
2.3.1 Background of the theory of <i>Ubuntu</i>	35
2.3.2 Assumptions of the theory of <i>Ubuntu</i>	37
2.3.3 Relevance of the theory of <i>Ubuntu</i>	38
2.4 Summary	40
CHAPTER 3.....	41
METHODOLOGY	41
3.1 Introduction	41
3.2 Research approach.....	41
3.3 Research paradigm	42
3.4 Research design	43
3.4.1 Exploratory case study	44
3.5 Research setting.....	45
3.6 Procedure for the selection of participants	46
3.6.1 Sampling	46
3.6.2 Sample.....	47
3.7 Data collection methods.....	48
3.7.1 Focus group discussions (FGDs)	48
3.7.2 Semi-structured interviews	49

3.8 Data collection procedures	50
3.8.1 Focus group discussion 1 (FGD 1).....	50
3.8.2 Focus group discussion 2 (FGD 2).....	51
3.8.3 Semi-structured interviews	51
3.9 Data analysis	52
3.9.1 Thematic data analysis	52
3.10 Methods of data verification.....	53
3.10.1 Trustworthiness of the study.....	53
3.11 Ethical consideration	55
3.11.1 Permission to conduct the study	55
3.11.2 Informed consent forms	55
3.11.3 Confidentiality.....	55
3.11.4 Anonymity	56
3.12 Limitations of the study.....	56
3.13 Summary.....	57
CHAPTER 4.....	57
PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Biographical results of the participants.....	58
4.2.1 School A.....	58
4.2.2 School B.....	61
4.2.3 Special Education Unit Officials: Ministry of Education and Training.....	63
4.3 Thematic results	63
4.3.1 Understanding an enabling environment for LSENs	64
4.3.1.1 Safe, comfortable, healthy and inclusive environment	65
4.3.1.2 Equal and quality education to all learners	66
4.3.2 The importance of an enabling environment for LSENs	69
4.3.2.1 Flexibility of the curriculum	69
4.3.2.2 Training for special education teachers.....	71
4.3.2.3 Coordination between learners, teachers, and parents.....	73
4.3.2.4 Improvement of teachers’ salaries	75
4.3.3 Resources used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs	76
4.3.3.1 Importance of teaching and learning materials	76
4.3.3.2 Importance of infrastructural resources.....	79

4.3.3.3 Importance of flexible workforce (human resources).....	80
4.3.4 Challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSENs.....	82
4.3.4.1 Lack of teaching and learning materials and other resources.....	82
4.3.4.2 Rural school	84
4.3.4.3 Lack of adequate infrastructure	86
4.3.4.4 Teaching overcrowded and multi-grade classes	88
4.3.4.5 Inaccessible physical environment	89
4.3.4.6 Negative attitudes of learners, parents and teachers putting LSENs at risk.....	90
4.3.4.7 Inflexible curriculum.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3.4.8 Human resources and special needs education teachers.....	94
4.3.4.9 Poor remuneration for teachers	95
4.3.5 Overcoming the challenges teachers face in dealing with LSENs	96
4.3.5.1 Need to understand LSENs.....	97
4.3.5.2 Improvement of methods and approaches used by the teachers	98
4.3.5.3 Collaboration between teachers, learners without disabilities and LSENs.....	99
4.3.3.5 Specialised training facilities/educational resources.....	101
4.4 Summary	102
CHAPTER 5.....	103
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION	103
5.1 Introduction	103
5.2 The key research findings	103
5.2.1 Understanding an enabling environment for LSENs	104
5.2.1.1 Safe, comfortable, healthy and inclusive environment	104
5.2.1.2 Equal and quality education to all learners	104
5.2.2 The importance of an enabling environment for LSENs	105
5.2.2.1 Flexibility of the curriculum	105
5.2.2.2 Training for special education teachers.....	106
5.2.2.3 Coordination between learners, teachers, and parents.....	107
5.2.2.4 Improvement of teachers' salaries	107
5.2.3 Resources used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs	108
5.2.3.1 Importance of teaching and learning materials	108
5.2.3.2 The importance of infrastructural resources	109
5.2.3.3 The importance of a flexible workforce	109

5.2.4 Challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSEs	110
5.3 Recommendations of the study	115
5.4 Limitations of the study	118
5.5 Concluding remarks	118
5.6 Suggestions for further research.....	119
REFERENCES	120
ADDENDA.....	131
ADDENDUM A.....	131
ADDENDUM B: GATEKEEPERS' LETTER.....	132
ADDENDUM C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR THE PARTICIPANTS.....	133
ADDENDUM D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	134
ADDENDUM E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR EDUCATORS.....	138
ADDENDUM F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR PRINCIPAL.....	139
ADDENDUM G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION UNIT	140

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Classroom roof blown away by the wind in School A, showing inadequate infrastructure.....	87
Figure 4.2: Classrooms without ramps and roofs blown away by the wind in School A, showing a non-enabling environment	87
Figure 4.3: Classrooms with leaking roofs and broken windows in School B showing a non-conducive learning environment.....	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Biographical results of the participants (teachers).....	58
Table 4.2: Biographical information of participants (officers).....	63
Table 4.3: Overview of the themes and sub-themes of the study.....	64

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

The need to extend access to education is part of a worldwide agenda (Faroog, 2012). The history of special education is identified with learners with disabilities who had been very poorly served (Kauffman, Anastasiou, Badar, Jason, & Andrew, 2016). The reviewed literature depicts the inappropriate treatment of learners with disabilities in special classrooms, as appropriate education only occurs in general education classrooms (Kauffman *et al.*, 2016; Khanare, 2012). Traditionally, children with disabilities were not included in the school system; they were kept indoors, and ultimately, they were socially excluded from acquiring formal education, thus depriving them of their social and economic freedom (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007; De Leeuw, De Boer, & Minnaert, 2017). It is important to note that ignoring these realities can undermine the meaning of disability (Kauffman *et al.*, 2016), which is inconsistent with the laws and regulations governing special education and this impedes the world's initiatives towards effectively educating learners with special needs (Bateman, 2017). Educational inclusion should embrace an appropriate setting where effective instruction is imparted through tasks that are relevant and meaningful to the learners' future (Kauffman *et al.*, 2016).

Essentially, paradigms have been developed to embrace the integration of quality education in order to serve the needs of all learners, thereby socially accommodating learners with special educational needs (LSENs) (Khoaeane, 2012; Mateusi, Khoaeane, & Naong, 2014). Several educational, human rights, and human development policies have been promulgated by the United Nations and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to promote inclusive education (Mosia, 2014). These policies unanimously recommend the incorporation of learners with disabilities into mainstream schools (Mosia, 2014). The researcher asserts that this enables such learners to achieve their educational goals. Mosia (2014) argues that teachers in schools offering inclusive education (IE) should be trained to diversify their teaching approaches. Mateusi, Khoaeane, and Naong (2014) emphasise the

view that genuine inclusion of learners with disabilities should manifest in general education, with the support of school administrators, teachers, and all members of staff, learners, parents, psychologists/social workers, school board, education officials, community members, counsellors, local business leaders, chiefs, and the government, among others.

In 2000, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Lesotho introduced free and compulsory elementary education for all (EFA) learners from the age of six (Education Act, 2010). The rationale for this initiative was to facilitate the integration of learners with special educational needs into the mainstream educational system. The integration of these learners into the mainstream educational system might be interpreted as inclusive education (IE). Tshifura (2012) asserts that inclusive education is not merely about the inclusion of learners with special educational needs, but it also involves creating equal educational opportunities for marginalised groups with limited resources or no access to schooling. Many scholars have indicated that schools in rural areas often fail to respond adequately to the needs of children experiencing learning barriers (Khanare & de Lange, 2017).

Several challenges confront learners with special educational needs, thus preventing them from realising their full potential. These include poor resource allocation, infrastructural underdevelopment, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of trained teachers (Lebona, 2013). According to Lebona, the above-mentioned factors have prevented the implementation of policies that appeal to the physical and psychological statuses of all learners. Hence, there is a need for the creation of an enabling learning environment which constitutes an integral component of the overall efforts made by most developed countries to provide quality education and increase equal access to education to all learners (Kamper, 2008). This claim corroborates Khoaeane's (2012) argument that the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho may not achieve its predetermined goals and objectives if the conditions in the provision of primary education continue to deteriorate. It is against this background that the researcher intends to explore the environmental challenges impeding the implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

1.2 Rationale for the study

This study was prompted by the researcher's observations and experiences as a teacher, parent, and a community member. The researcher observed that in the school where she is teaching, in the community where she lives, and in her everyday general discourse with other teachers, learners with special educational needs do not seem to be catered for. They are not adequately attended to by most teachers. The researcher has taught in an inclusive school for some years, five of which have been spent working with the Lesotho Girl Guides Association and needless to say, learners with disabilities still constitute this group. The researcher has also dealt with several cases of children with various forms of disabilities as a parent and a community member. The researcher has also interacted with children with disabilities in church gatherings. Having scrutinised the plight of people with disabilities closely, the researcher noted that different communities, parents and even schools seemingly lack the knowledge on how to cater for the needs of these people. Even though the Government of Lesotho introduced free and compulsory primary education in 2000, which would enable children from the age of six to have at least basic education from Grade 1 to 7 irrespective of their disabilities (Education Act, 2010), some children with disabilities still do not attend school.

The researcher further realised that most teachers at her school lack training in the teaching of learners with special educational needs. The researcher is the only teacher in her stream with sufficient training in working with such learners; thus, prompting almost all teachers in the researcher's stream to transfer learners experiencing these challenges into the researcher's classroom. The researcher feels deeply concerned with the plight of children with disabilities. A lot still needs to be done to address the challenges facing learners with disabilities, which vindicates the rationale for conducting this study.

1.3 Problem statement

Learners with special educational needs face many challenges in different rural primary schools in Lesotho. Research has established that inappropriate learning environments, compounded by a lack of infrastructure, poor resource allocation, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of training on the part of teachers limit the implementation of inclusive education (Mosia, 2014; Seotsanyane &

Matheolane, 2010). Polat (2011) found that the unavailability of resources directly affects the emotional, behavioural, and academic achievement of learners with special educational needs. These challenges exacerbate the rate of underachievement and school dropout among learners (Machakaire, 2017).

Thus, the above challenges manifest in rural primary schools where the researcher observed the existence of poorly resourced schools with poor physical facilities such as ramps and inadequate special equipment and materials. Furthermore, specific learning needs, such as Braille, Sign Language interpreters, hearing aids and wheelchairs, are not accessible. The classrooms are overcrowded; teachers cannot appropriately attend to the specific needs of individual learners. Many teachers in rural primary schools lack relevant training in the teaching of learners with special educational needs, making it difficult for them to practise inclusive learning in educational environments where proper facilities are non-existent. This scenario has prompted the researcher to explore strategies for creating and enhancing an enabling environment to assist learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question is:

How can an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs (LSENs) be enhanced in rural primary schools in Lesotho?

The secondary questions are:

1. How can an enabling environment for LSENs be understood as an essential need in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
2. What is the importance of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
3. What are the resources needed to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
4. What are the challenges teachers face when dealing with LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?

5. What are the ways to overcome the challenges faced by teachers when teaching LSENs be determined?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

This study aims at exploring how an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs (LSENs) can be enhanced in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore an understanding of the importance of creating an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.
2. To investigate the importance of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.
3. To explore the resources that can be used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho
4. To determine the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.
5. To determine how to overcome the challenges faced by teachers when teaching LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study has been undertaken within the theoretical framework of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. The word *Ubuntu* is derived from the Nguni (IsiZulu) which says – *Umuntu, Ngumuntu, Ngabantu* – which translates to *Motho ke motho ka batho* in Sesotho, meaning that a person is a person because of others (Tutu, 2004).

Ubuntu is an ancient philosophy rooted in traditional African culture (Broodryk, 2006). Khoza (2006) describes *Ubuntu* as encapsulated in African cultural expression of compassion, cooperation, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining

community cohesion underpinned by justice and mutual care. Jolley (2011) asserts that *Ubuntu* is the humane way in which people should treat one another. Letseka (2012) corroborates the significance of the theory, asserting that almost all people living in communities guided by the philosophy of *Ubuntu* are usually committed to treating others with dignity, justice and fairness. The final synthesis depicts the philosophy of *Ubuntu* as embracing mutual respect and a non-discriminatory outlook. Members of a community guided by the philosophy of *Ubuntu* are not defined by their differences (whether physical, psychological, mental, financial, and so on), but are bound by socio-cultural phenomena. It follows, therefore, that the philosophy of *Ubuntu* recognises learners with special educational needs.

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* forms an appropriate theoretical framework for this study insofar as it embodies the society's morals, positive norms, values and caring culture. As an emancipatory paradigm, the theory of *Ubuntu* is therefore relevant as it enhances the provision of an effective strategy to implement inclusive education that accommodates learners with disabilities, particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho—using the philosophy of *Ubuntu* as a theoretical framework underpinning this study. The philosophy of *Ubuntu* is a suitable theoretical framework for this study because it accommodates the essential human qualities which ensure that an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs is created and enhanced.

1.7 Overview of the research methodology and design

1.7.1 Research approach

This study adopted the qualitative research approach. According to Mouton (2017), qualitative research demands that researchers take and keep field notes as they participate in fieldwork, further positing that qualitative researchers are more interested in how humans conduct themselves and how they interpret their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, to list a few. The qualitative approach assumes a relativist ontological standpoint that suggests the existence of multiple realities and that the researchers and participants co-create, co-construct and co-inform these realities and understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This study adopted the qualitative research approach because it allows the researcher to study

things in their natural settings rather than in controlled ones (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010). The qualitative approach typifies an inquiry-based process of understanding phenomena (Creswell, 2015). It draws heavily on linguistic rather than numerical data and quests for meaning rather than statistical forms of data analysis. Furthermore, the qualitative approach is naturalistic and allow for interaction between researchers and participants (Mouton, 2017). It allows participants to verbally contribute towards enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

1.7.2 Research paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) describe a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that determine human actions and behaviour. This study employed an interpretive paradigm which is a qualitative approach used to explore how an enabling environment can be enhanced for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The premise of the interpretive paradigm is that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language and shared meanings; hence knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation (Creswell, 2015). This paradigm is suitable for this study as it guides participants to create and enhance an enabling environment for learners with special needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. In interpretive paradigm, which is also known as the phenomenological approach, Mouton(2011) maintains that all human beings are engaged in the process of interpreting their worlds and continuously creating and giving meaning to it; defining, justifying, and rationalising on actions.

Maree (2017) asserts that in interpretive (naturalistic) paradigm, researchers mostly prefer data analysis (formulating themes emerging from the data), which assists them to identify the multiple realities potentially present in the data. Thus, the interpretive paradigm suits this study as it emphasises social interactions between the researchers and the world in which reality is socially constructed and understood through shared language and meanings.

1.7.3 Research design

This study employed an exploratory case study design; it is a qualitative design that fosters the exploration of ways needed in creating an enabling environment for learners with special

educational needs in Lesotho's rural primary schools. Maree (2017) defines a research design as a plan or strategy that integrates the underlying philosophical assumptions with the selection of specific participants, data gathering methods and the data analysis technique to be applied. The choice of research design is determined by the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspective, research skills and practices that influence how data are collected.

A research design is a set of methods and procedures that enable the researcher to collect and analyse data. Overall, it is a strategy that ensures that the components of a research problem are organised coherently and logically (Creswell, 2015); while case studies are usually qualitative and aim at providing an in-depth description of a small number of cases (less than 50) (Mouton, 2017). According to Maree (2017), a case study aims at developing an in-depth understanding of a single case or multiple cases. The case study approach includes experiments, actions, research, and surveys on a historical phenomenon. It seeks to identify critical issues and variables that foster a greater understanding of a phenomenon. This design is relevant to this study as it affords the researcher, and participants the opportunity to gain better insights into the ways and means that can effectively support learners with special educational needs, particularly in rural primary schools. Participants are expected to share their views and knowledge through discussions, detailing their perceptions on the improvement of the learning environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

1.7.4 Data collection methods

1.7.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A focus group discussion is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined phenomenon or area of interest; it occurs in a permissive, non-threatening environment. de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2018) explained that Focus group discussion is a research technique that enhances the collection of data through group interaction on a specific topic determined by the researcher. (Maree 2017) showed that the number of participants that

constitute a focus group discussion ranges from five to twelve, as it allows for the collection of in-depth, qualitative data solicited through a group's perceptions, attitudes and experiences on a defined topic. Participants are selected for having specific common characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group (de Vos *et al.*, 2018). Maree holds that this data collection instrument allows participants to build on other participants' ideas and comments to provide in-depth views, which may not be possible with individual interviews; the instrument enhances a better understanding of how people feel or think about an issue, product, or service while in groups.

1.7.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are organised around areas of particular interest, even though they still allow considerable flexibility in scope and depth (de Vos *et al.*, 2018). A semi-structured interview is usually based on a line of inquiry developed by the researcher ahead of the interview. Open questions are asked, followed by further probing and clarification (Maree, 2017) and the researcher ought to be attentive to the responses of the participant so as to identify new and emerging lines of inquiry that directly relate to the phenomenon being studied.

1.7.5 Selection of participants

1.7.5.1 Population, sampling, and sample

A population is a group of elements conforming to specific criteria or a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to de Vos *et al.* (2018), a population is the totality of persons, events, organisational units, case records, or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. Sampling involves the selection of people to participate in a research study; usually, a subset of the population (Stangor, 2015). While the entire group of people that the researcher desires to learn about is called a population, Stangor suggests that the smaller group of research participants is known as a sample. The population in this study comprises all learners with

special educational needs and all teachers teaching LSEN in two rural primary schools in Lesotho.

Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of participants for this study. According to de Vos et al. (2018), this technique is called judgemental sampling since it entirely depends on the judgement of the researcher in that a sample comprises elements that contain the best characteristics representative or typical of the attributes of the population that serves the purpose of the study.

The sample size comprises thirteen teachers (n=13) from two schools, namely; School A and School B; seven participants (n=7) from School A and six participants (n=6) from School B, one principal (n=1) from each school and two (n=2) Special Education Unit officials from MoET. These participants were selected from Grades 1 to 6 and had more than three years of experience. The research focusses on learners with special educational needs and the teachers who teach them in their respective classrooms; those who specialise in teaching learners with special educational needs while undergoing training, and those who underwent training or attended workshops on learners with special educational needs.

1.7.6 Data analysis

According to Mohlouoa (2014), data analysis is a process where a significant amount of data is organised, interpreted and summarised in a qualitative study. The researcher used the guidelines proposed by Clarke and Braun (2017) to analyse data generated in this study. Clarke and Braun aver that thematic analysis (TA) involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and the researcher identified the interesting ideas, ascertaining a coding arrangement that would allow the researcher to easily trace ideas within a text, extracting and categorising the ideas; the researcher then grouped the ideas into themes and sub-themes, and finally, discovered the meaning of the findings (Sharp, 2012). This method is regarded as the most suitable for a study that seeks to explore a phenomenon using an interpretation of events (Ibrahim, 2012).

The researcher described different aspects of the study, including settings, individual participants being studied, viewpoints of research participants, and the purpose of the activities that were carried out. Finally, the researcher interpreted and reported the results, explaining what was obtained during the inquiry process. The researcher presented the findings coherently to ensure clarity. The discussions were tape-recorded, transcribed, and translated from Sesotho to English. Data were then analysed, allowing the researcher to understand the participants' experiences from their viewpoint.

1.8 Value of the proposed study

Study hopes to be beneficial to educational stakeholders including policymakers, education officials, teachers, learners with special educational needs, researchers, non-governmental organisations, parents, school administrators and the Government of Lesotho. For example, findings may inform the government on strategies to improve on disability awareness campaigns in collaboration with village chiefs and community counsellors. This strategy educates parents, teachers, and other learners about the importance of supporting and accepting learners with disabilities. The study seeks to reveal the existing challenges hampering the creation of an enabling environment for the effective implementation of inclusive education in rural primary schools to improve the situation by proffering ideas on how best to design policies that enhance the effectiveness of its implementation. The results from this study will also add value to existing literature, bodies of knowledge and future research.

1.9 Ethical considerations

All the ethical processes and protocols prescribed by the University of the Free State (UFS) were keenly observed and adhered to. A letter was written to the focus schools and the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho, asking for permission to conduct the study. Pseudonyms were used to conceal participants' identity and confidentiality. The participants were informed of their liberty to withdraw from the study at any point, and consent forms were distributed to facilitate this process.

Trustworthiness of the data

Trustworthiness embodies the reliability of the researcher's data analysis, findings and conclusion (Maree, 2017). Maree further identifies four criteria that constitute trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility ensures that the study measures what it is supposed to measure; transferability borders on the applicability of the findings to another context; dependability ascertains whether the research will yield the same results if the same instruments are used; and conformability refers to the extent to which the findings are shaped by the participants' perceptions and not the researcher's prejudice, motivation or interests (Maree, 2017). The researcher ensured continuous engagement with the participants throughout the study to ensure that these criteria are adhered to (Botman, Greeff, Mulaudzi, & Wright, 2010).

1.10 Definition of keywords

This study defines various keywords such as enabling environment, inclusive education, learners with special educational needs, rural schools and mainstream schools.

1.10.1 Enabling environment

According to Chidindi (2012), an enabling environment provides a rich, varied, safe, and learner-centred space, a setting which allows children to play, explore, and learn. Chidindi further argues that such an environment should be child-centred for it to contribute significantly to children's learning and development in their early years. In this study, an enabling environment is that which is safe, comfortable, healthy and inclusive, and provides equal and quality education to all learners.

1.10.2 Inclusive education

This is an education system that includes all learners and seeks to respond appropriately to all their individual learning needs. This system applies the Education for All Principle (van Wyk, 2015). EFA is a principle applied in contexts that aim at including all learners in educational settings irrespective of their background, abilities, culture, or other factors. The EFA principle emerged as a global framework designed to meet the basic learning needs of previously excluded

and marginalised learners (van Wyk, 2015). In this study, inclusive education is understood as a system of education where all learners are afforded equal learning opportunities without considering their differences. Aspects that differentiate learners with special needs include gender, race, acuity, and the nature of disabilities as well as background, language, interests, culture, religion, and other aspects. In this study, inclusive education presupposes that all these factors are immaterial and that equal educational opportunities should be afforded to all learners.

1.10.3 Learners with special educational needs (LSEs)

Learners with special educational needs are those limited by the inability to participate in and benefit from the educational provision on account of persistent physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional, and communication disorders or other conditions which result in a learner learning differently from another without a similar condition (van Wyk, 2015). Disabilities put individuals at risk of marginalisation (Kauffman, Anastasiou, Badar, Jason, & Andrew, 2016). In this study, learners with special educational needs are those who are experiencing specific learning limitations that hinder them from being taught like other learners. To overcome these learning barriers, they will need support from parents, teachers, their peers and the general community.

1.10.4 Rural schools

Rural areas are characterised by various factors that negatively influence the delivery of quality education. Rural areas are relatively under-developed. As a result, many rural communities and schools are poor and disadvantaged, lacking necessary infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities, roads and other facilities such as transport, electricity and information and communication technology. These socio-economic realities put learners in rural schools at a disadvantage as illiterate and innumerate parents mainly reside in rural areas. Besides, many rural communities lack professional expertise and support, governance structures, and learning materials needed in providing the necessary support and care for learners (du Plessis, 2014). In this study, rural schools are conceptualised as learning institutions situated in places or villages exhibiting the characteristics mentioned above. Learners traverse long distances to and from school; their lifestyles are characterised by a lack of modern amenities such as running water and basic sanitation. They live communally, away from urban areas.

1.10.5 Mainstream schools

Mainstream schools are regular, standard, and ordinary schools that enrol diverse learners without providing care and support to learners with special educational needs (Dagli & Öznacar, 2015). Mainstreaming involves the 'fitting' of learners into a particular kind of system. Mainstream schools focus on changing learners' attitudes so that they can fit into a typical classroom routine (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). In this study, the mainstream school integrates learners with special educational needs into the same learning spaces with their counterparts without disabilities, taught by the same teachers, exposing them to the same curriculum that ensures quality and equal involvement for everyone.

1.11 The study delimitations

This research study is situated explicitly in positive educational psychology, which focuses on enabling the environment for learners with special educational needs; it uses the theory of Ubuntu within the rural school context. The study was delimited to two selected primary schools in Lesotho owing to time constraints for master's research work and the teachers' strike that started in Lesotho in August 2018 through 2019, as well as the high-cost of regular visits to the research sites to access study participants.

1.12 Layout of the dissertation

The layout of the dissertation outlines the chapters that constitute the whole study. This overview comprises five chapters which are outlined as follows:

Chapter 1 comprises the general introduction to the study. It includes the introduction, the background to the study, the rationale for the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, research questions, research aim and objectives of the study, an overview of the research methodology and design, the value of the proposed study, ethical considerations, and definition of keywords and layout of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relevant to the study. This chapter further provides the conceptual framework underpinning the study. It also presents the theoretical framework embedded in the theory of *Ubuntu*.

Chapter 3 articulates the research methodology and design. It describes the research methodology, which includes methods and techniques used to collect, analyse and interpret data. This chapter dwells on the specification of the study population and sampling techniques. The value of the study, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, research location and limitations of the study are also discussed in this section.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the study's findings. It interprets the results derived from the interviews and focus group discussions held with the participants. It presents the analysis and interpretations of the perceptions and perspectives of the participants in response to the research questions.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and recommendations. It concludes and proffers recommendations on how to enhance an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. It also provides a theoretical foundation for future research.

1.13 Summary

This introductory chapter presented a brief background of the study. The purpose and rationale for undertaking this study, the significance and critical research questions that guided the phenomena under investigation were presented. This chapter further gave an overview of the research design and methodology underpinning the study; prominent aspects included research paradigm and approach, research style, sampling technique, data generation methods and analysis, and ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter reviews the literature that contextualises and frames this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the general introduction to this study. This chapter reviews the relevant literature within the relevant conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The study's conceptual framework relates to inclusive education and its implementation, the importance of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs at schools, and the challenges confronting teachers when dealing with learners with special educational needs. This chapter detailed, developed the theoretical framework and concluded the review.

2.2 The conceptual framework

2.2.1 Inclusive education and the drive towards its implementation

The inception of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho in 2000 has given an impetus to the massive enrolment of learners in primary schools in Lesotho. The increase in the enrolments has also resulted in more learners with special educational needs being exposed to inequalities (UNESCO, 2005). Learners with special educational needs are those who are physically and emotionally impaired; they experience behavioural and communication disorders, resulting in learning deficiencies (Kryszewska, 2017). According to Mpofo (2012), children with special educational needs in early childhood development centres are taught by untrained teachers; the children are placed under foster mothers at these centres; the school curriculum and the physical environment are poorly crafted and inappropriate for them, making learning in these centres a very difficult and challenging experience. It is widely accepted that impediments to learning may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Inclusive education should not be seen as a change in the

way special education is provided, but as an opportunity to transform the school as a system (Dryer, 2017).

On the contrary, Schoeman (2016) makes a more positive observation as he posits that through adequate support and resources, every learner may develop to their full potential. The successful accommodation of learners with special educational needs requires relevant facilities, infrastructure, and devices (Khoaeane, 2012). Cosier, Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2013) assert that the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream schools remains a goal impeded by challenges for most educational systems worldwide. Research has shown that the lack of relevant facilities and materials is a major obstacle to the effective implementation of inclusive education (Beyene & Tizazu, 2010). Researchers further state that inadequate personnel training programmes further hinder successful inclusion. The services of such experts as educational audiologists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and communication support workers such as interpreters are not available in many developing countries. Lesotho is a case in point.

Inclusive education necessitates the transformation of schools into teaching and learning spaces where all students are attended to with no exception. This inclusion does not only affect the schooling framework but must also involve the family with its role as a socialising agent (Vega & Garlin, 2012). Inclusive education is central to the achievement of quality EFA students and in the development of more inclusive societies (UNESCO, 2008).

Inclusion involves educating learners who were previously educated in special schools, owing to their unique needs, in regular schools that provide the necessary support to ensure access to quality education. In settings where inclusive education is implemented, even the curriculum is reviewed and adapted. Amending and improving the teaching and learning content, pedagogy and structures of education determine the possibility of accommodating all learners (Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart, & Lyner-Cleophas, 2012). The debate on inclusive education has progressed from the stage of justification to that of implementation (Dyson, 1999). There are quite several publications internationally, and locally that discuss collaboration as part of the implementation of inclusive education, and these include Moran and Abbot (2002) as well as Nel, Engerlbrecht, Nel & Tlale (2014). South Africa is one country through which it's Education Department that

has decided on a systemic approach, one would foster collaborative efforts to implement inclusive education (Mfuthwana & Dryer, 2018).

Educationists, teachers, policymakers, and all stakeholders in education strongly advocate inclusive education. In 1990, delegates from 155 countries as well as representatives from some 150 governmental and non-governmental organisations agreed at the world conference on EFA in Jomtien, Thailand (5th – 9th March 1990) to make primary education accessible to all children.

The foundations of inclusive education were laid by the celebration of the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, which sought to foster full participation of all people with disabilities in society's activities. Since the early 1990s, the operation of EFA was launched at the World Conference that involved various international organisations such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. The main agenda for this conference was to enhance the EFA mantra in the entire world.

In June 1994, UNESCO summoned all the nations to converge in Salamanca, Spain, to advance the objective of EFA. The conference mainly deliberated on issues relating to the accessibility of education; or lack thereof, to all learners irrespective of their various physical, mental, emotional and socioeconomic disparities; to map the way forward towards enhancing inclusive education by enabling all children, particularly those with special educational needs, to access education (World Bank, 2000). In what later became the Salamanca Statement of 1994, the concept of equal and quality EFA was reinforced.

To further propagate the cause of EFA, nations converged again in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. In this forum, countries assessed the achievements, lessons learnt, and failures encountered. One of the resolutions adopted in Dakar was to ensure that all children, with particular emphasis on marginalised children, especially those with special educational needs, had the access to complete quality primary education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

However, inclusive education is presently a topical subject in the field of education (Udoba, 2014). Being a developing country, Lesotho has not been exceptional. Udoba (2014) further indicates that Lesotho has invariably been referred to as part of the global agenda as a new

educational paradigm and as an educational reform goal geared towards making societies inclusive. This initiative is underpinned by Landsberg, Kruger, and Swart (2011), who stated that an inclusive school welcomes all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or educational need. They learn inclusively, contributing, and partaking in all aspects of school life.

The National Council for Special Education [NCSE] (2011), defines inclusive education as a philosophy that brings students, families, educators and community members together to create schools based on acceptance and community belonging. Inclusive schools welcome, acknowledge, affirm and celebrate the value of all learners by educating them together in high quality, age-appropriate, and general education classrooms. Inclusive education is characterised by:

- a philosophy of acceptance and belonging within a community;
- a philosophy of collaboration between student, family, educator and community;
- celebrating the diversity and value of all learners;
- valuing and educating all learners in high-quality schools alongside their peers;
- educating learners in mainstream classrooms; and
- valuing and educating learners in schools located in their immediate community.

Inclusive education is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing the celebration and value of differences and diversity, and the consideration of human rights, social justice and equity, as well as the social model of disability and the socio-political model of education. It also engenders the process of school transformation with a focus on children's entitlement and access to education (Topping, 2012; Slee, 2011). The overall goal of inclusive education is to provide students with educational access and opportunities to participate in society (Gonzalez, 2011; Kozleski, 2011).

Salend (2011) dwells on inclusive education and identifies four fundamental principles through which the philosophy of inclusive education is practised. These include, firstly, providing all the impaired learners with an engaging and flexible general educational curriculum. Secondly, it involves embracing diversity and responsiveness to individual strengths and challenges. Thirdly, it relies on the use of reflective practices and differentiated instruction. Lastly, it is based on the

establishment of a community-based collaborative mechanism involving students, teachers, families, other professionals and community agencies.

The views on special education have changed across all societies. This move has variously been referred to as integration, mainstreaming, and, more recently, inclusion. Integration and mainstreaming are virtually synonymous with the placement of learners with disabilities into a familiar school environment with a regular and unmodified curriculum (Hammill Institute on Disabilities, 2010).

2.2.2 Importance of an enabling environment for LSENs at schools and inclusive education

An enabling learning environment is characterised by the absence of both physical intimidation and emotional anger, allowing for a free exchange of ideas by all members irrespective of their differences (Chidindi, 2012). Creating an enabling learning environment is the foundation on which to develop a process of educational transformation, which promotes the EFA regardless of individual learning characteristics. However, a series of difficulties must be overcome first for inclusive education to get underway. These challenges include lack of basic and ongoing training for teachers, insufficient coordination between teaching programmes and real demands, or the maintenance of general horizontal guidelines focused on a similar and unifying process (Chappel & Craff, 2011).

Chidindi (2012) argues that if the inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream learning is not justifiable, then nothing is; all learners, with and without disabilities, must learn together in the same classrooms. The teachers just need to be equipped with the relevant skills and a conducive environment that enhances inclusive teaching and the learning atmosphere. Appropriate support programmes in inclusive schools comprise the following:

- teaching and learning practices that include all children;
- creating learning environments with opportunities that are sufficiently available for everyone, so that all learners can participate in classroom life;
- creating a rich learning community rather than applying teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something ‘additional’ or ‘different’ for some who experience difficulties;

- differentiation achieved through the choice of relevant and appropriate activities for everyone;
- use of language that expresses the value of all children;
- believing that all children will make progress, learn and achieve;
- focusing teaching and learning on what children can do rather than what they cannot;
- grouping learners in ways that support everybody's learning and creating an enabling environment for every learner to participate in the learning process.

Furthermore, Florian and Spratt (2013) assert the view that teachers should cherish the belief that they have the capacity to teach all children and can promote inclusive education. Since the world is composed of inclusive communities with diverse people not only in terms of disability, but also in terms of race and gender, all students with and without disabilities must learn together in the same classrooms. The teachers responsible for teaching such diverse group of learners should be equipped with the relevant skills to create a conducive environment that enhances the teaching and learning of diverse learners (Chidindi, 2012).

The UN standard rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) hold the view that in situations where the general education system does not adequately meet the needs of all people with disabilities, special education may then be considered as a panacea for such learning disorders. The quality of such education should reflect the same standards, goals and ambitions as those of general education and should be strictly linked to it (WCPT, 2011). International policies such as The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), The Convention of the Rights of a Child [CRC] (1989), and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949) disapprove of any form of discrimination against children with special educational needs. The 1977 Tanzanian Constitution, with its amendments, stresses the equality and equity of all citizens.

Inclusive education must be understood as a process that increases learners' participation in curricula, culture and their academic future, while simultaneously shifting from exclusion (Mukuna, 2016). It is a paradigm shift that slowly opens the doors to tolerance towards learners through the development of efficient strategies and processes which promote individualised attention.

However, severe challenges impede inclusion despite the advocacy for it. Regardless of their challenges, learners with special educational needs also have a right to quality education in line with the principles of EFA (Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy,2018), so that they can also realise their full potential as citizens of Lesotho. Under these pronouncements, all stakeholders in the educational fraternity have to collaborate to ensure effective implementation of inclusive education.

The key players in the learning process are teachers and learners, and as such, their freedom of interaction, safety and respect should be guaranteed within the physical and emotive environments they find themselves. Failure to observe and create such an environment adversely affects the success of the teaching and learning process. This, especially, relates to the case of learners with special educational needs.

According to Mateusi, Khoaeane, and Naong (2014), inclusive education is an initiative that seeks to develop a classroom that caters to all children. Precisely, inclusive education refers to a situation when disadvantaged learners with learning barriers are equally considered in education and classrooms alongside other, more able learners. From the preceding definitions, it is apparent that inclusive education aims at creating opportunities for all learners through restructuring schools and learning institutions that include everybody, support learning and respond to individual needs. This also enables children with disabilities to be provided with educational opportunities and experiences equivalent to their counterparts.

Genuine inclusion does not mean merely placing students with disabilities into the general education class without providing support for teachers and students (Mateusi *et al.*, 2014). Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2010) also identify inclusion as an educational placement that promotes participation and social inclusion. The centrality of encouraging teachers in the successful implementation of an inclusive system should not be overemphasised, but they need time, ongoing support, and in-service training. Therefore, real change requires a long-term commitment to professional development. Further, educational inclusion requires full-time placement of children with special needs in regular schools to provide them with equal educational opportunities and experiences (Kauffman *et al.*, 2016).

Teachers are the determining factor in the provision of quality inclusive education (Mateusi *et al.*, 2014) and they can apply themselves to the transformation of schools (Babeli, 2013). Every

child has the right to education; unfortunately, thousands of children are deprived of this basic right. According to Nkoane (2006), physically impaired learners face challenges such as oppression, exclusion and marginalisation; they are perceived as objects of pity, deprived of voices. There are scanty support services for learners with physical disabilities (NEPI Report, 1992).

Generally, rural areas are conceptualised on the basis of what they do not possess. One case in point is the extreme differentiation within rural South Africa, and Lesotho is no exception in this situation. Hlalele (2012) concedes that the difference between rural and urban settings is inherent and inevitable, adding that rural education needs to embrace differences, shape demands and model social benefits on the basis of the realities of a particular rural setting. This implies that social justice should be perceived as a humanising process – a response to human diversity in terms of ability, socio-economic circumstances and rights.

The Government of South Africa views rurality as “a way of life, a state of mind and a culture which revolves around land, livestock, cropping and community” (Hlalele, 2014:102). Rural areas include traditional communal areas, farmland, peri-urban areas, informal settlements and small rural towns where people have several possibilities to live from the land. Rural development is about enabling rural people to take control of their destiny, thereby dealing effectively with poverty through the optimal use and management of natural resources. Rural development is a participatory process through which residents adapt their indigenous knowledge to their changing world (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2010, 2012). For Lesotho to effectively implement inclusive education, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has to embark on the Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) project. Inclusive education can be effectively implemented through the concerted effort of all people, their families, organisations and the relevant ministries manning healthcare, education, and social security (Maquelepo, 2008).

2.2.3 Challenges teachers face when dealing with LSENs in schools

The remoteness of rural locations and geographically large rural districts pose distinct challenges for special educators. In rural special education, the low incidence of special needs' populations often results in smaller caseloads. It could also mean a few special educators in these schools or districts. Worse still, they can even be the only special educators providing services in several schools. Special educators providing services in several schools in remote locations frequently report challenges related to professional and social isolation (Berry & Gravelle, 2013).

The successful accommodation of learners with special educational needs requires facilities, infrastructure, and assistive devices (Cosier *et al.*, 2013). Including learners with special educational needs in regular schools remain a goal hampered by challenges in most countries the world over. Scholarly evidence suggests that the lack of relevant facilities and materials is a major obstacle to the implementation of effective educational inclusion (Beyene & Tizazu, 2010).

Further, Beyene and Tizazu (2010) argue that inadequate personnel training programmes inhibit the implementation of educational inclusion in developing countries. Training programmes for support personnel, such as educational audiologists, psychologists, speech and language therapists and communication support workers, such as interpreters, are not available in many developing countries.

The challenges faced by learners with special educational needs, particularly in rural areas, comprise a lack of appropriate infrastructure, poor resource allocation, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of teachers suitably skilled in dealing with learners with special educational needs (Mosia, 2014; Seotsanyane & Matheolane, 2010). The above-cited authors also pointed out that the problem is not unique in developing countries like Lesotho. Machakaire (2017) further declares that a large number of teachers in rural primary schools lack relevant training to work with learners with special educational needs, which impacts negatively on learners' performance and eventual achievement. Some learners even drop out of school because the environment is not enabling and conducive enough to accommodate their limitations.

According to Mosia (2014), learners with special educational needs are currently placed into mainstream schools, full-service schools, or special resource schools, depending on their ability

and intellect, as stated in White Paper 6 (2001). The learners who manage to cope and pass through the educational system can continue with 'normal' life. In contrast, the majority of these learners are left struggling through the education system without any prospects. Mosia (2014) also claims that later in their lives, these individuals either have to remain at home without employment or be placed in special care facilities or places of safety, resulting in them becoming financial and emotional burdens to their families. Mosia further indicates that generally, education prepares learners through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, which enable them to lead successful and meaningful lives in their adulthood. Learners with special educational needs deserve support from the government. However, due to the inflexible curriculum in place, they are often marginalised and 'robbed' of a future and the ability to become independent.

The prevalence of disabilities among learners in rural schools affects the lives of teachers and caregivers. More than half of special education teachers have reported that these challenging behaviour increase their stress, impede the learning of these learners, and affect the learning of their classmates as well (Wrestling, 2010). Teachers often feel that having disabled learners in the school would mean too much extra work for them, and many exhibit their lack of expertise as teachers. Equally, teachers working in special schools may perceive their jobs and work routines as being threatened by the placement of children with disabilities in ordinary schools (van Wyk, 2015).

One other factor making it cumbersome to implement inclusive education in many schools is the insufficient knowledge and misconceptions people have about LSENs. van Wyk (2015) concurs, positing that professionals and policy-makers perceive disabled children as incapable of learning; capable of holding back other children in the class and that the already scarce financial resources would be better spent on children without disabilities who can contribute meaningfully to society. A lot more needs to be done if the society has to shed this negative mentality and value humanity equally. A helpful and caring principal actively promotes the special needs of children with disabilities and the problems experienced by teachers (Hornby, 2015).

Though inclusive education appears fundamental to the development of a nation's education, the researcher avers that various challenges inhibit its implementation. Mukhopadhyay, Nenty & Abosi (2012) believe that there is no shared understanding of the concept, as neither the

government nor academics have been able to engage critically with the meanings and relevance of the learner concept, which then stands as an impediment to its successful implementation. Several challenges prevent learners with disabilities from attaining their full potential, which then contributes to their social exclusion. This, according to Lebona (2013), borders on the implementation of the policies that cater to the physical and psychological environment of all learners. Therefore, an enabling teaching and learning environment is an essential component of the overall efforts made by most countries to improve the quality of education and equal access to schools by all (Kamper, 2008).

Mukhopadhyay *et al.* (2012), Kamper (2008) and Lebona (2013), confirm the existence of challenges, concluding that most schools still have overcrowded classes, lack physical space for learners' equipment, and do not have educational facilities and materials. Arguably, these conditions significantly contribute to the current 'not-so-successful' implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho. Torombe (2013) argues that these conditions not only prevent access to education, which is a fundamental human right but are in themselves not supportive of enabling learning environments; thus, affecting the implementation of various educational curricula. According to Khoaeane (2012), in Lesotho, more learners with disabilities are being integrated into mainstream classrooms. Though the increase is a giant step in the right direction, most teachers who man these classrooms are not equipped enough to manage this inclusion. The shortage of qualified teachers and overcrowding in the classrooms contribute to inefficiency and low-quality primary education. Mateusi *et al.* (2014) indicated that all children in Lesotho have an inalienable right to inclusive education. However, many barriers impinge on the realisation of this right in the lived experiences of these children and their families. Current efforts towards upholding the rights of all children are impeded by a lack of understanding and misrepresentation of the concept of inclusive education. Additional barriers include negative and discriminatory attitudes and practices, lack of supportive mechanisms to facilitate inclusive education and inadequate educational and professional development for teachers and other professionals (Colgan & Brannick, 2014).

Lesotho is arguably one of the developing countries in which learners with disabilities are not given the attention they deserve. UNICEF (2010) reported that "education should be for all and should cater for all." In addition, education should be accessible and available to every child.

According to the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy of (2018), Ministry of Education and Training should aspire to develop an inclusive education that caters to the needs of all learners' impairments.

Environmental contingencies such as inadequate facilities, little or no academic support services, and teaching personnel's lack of the needed classroom management skills to manage classroom diversity could inhibit the implementation of meaningful educational inclusion in developing countries like Lesotho (Khoaeane, 2012). This is probably why Khoaeane (2012) concluded that the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho might not achieve its predetermined goals and objectives if the deteriorating conditions in primary education continue.

In rural Lesotho, an enabling environment for disadvantaged learners in primary schools is almost non-existent. The researcher's experience bears testimony to this reality, as she observed that learners with special learning needs were not adequately considered when constructing school infrastructure. Some schools do not have ramps where the wheelchairs of learners with physical disabilities can easily move; teachers seem to have inadequate knowledge to manage and teach learners with low learning abilities and the psychologically and sociologically disadvantaged learners; autistic learners, among others, who are all classified as learners with special educational needs. Hlalele (2012) argues that mastering in teaching and learning in rural areas remains a challenge for all sections and levels of the educational aim.

In an inclusive education system, learners with disabilities are mixed with 'normal' learners and taught the same content. However, research indicates that the former cohort is not able to receive and enjoy the same support as the latter students. This presupposes that lagging learners need more support. Support is one of the most crucial components of successful inclusive practices because the needs of the disadvantaged learners are beyond the basic services available in conventional classes (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Polat (2011) reiterates the fact that the implementation of inclusive education in Southern Africa is hampered by the unavailability of human resources and infrastructure.

The challenges impeding the proper implementation of inclusive education are aggravated by the fact that even where there is appropriate infrastructure, the country's landscape is an impediment. Khanare and de Lange (2017) agree with Hlalele (2012) and Mahlomaholo (2012) on the point that rural communities, including schools, are isolated, cut off from main economic

activities, and referred to as needy, lacking resources and hard to reach. Children in rural communities are often caught up in a vicious cycle of vulnerabilities which include poverty, food insecurity, unsafe drinking water, and lack of proper sanitation (Cluver, Boys, Orkin & Sherr, 2013). The long distances they traverse from their homes to schools and clinics also contribute to school children lacking information as well as access to essential services, exacerbates their vulnerabilities (Martin, 2015). According to Hlalele (2014), excellence in teaching and learning in rural contexts remains a challenge for all sectors and levels for educational undertaking.

Access is more problematic in rural areas because children in these spaces are often subjected to multiple vulnerabilities and deprivations; for example, child poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (Hlalele, 2014). He further holds that children with disabilities residing in rural areas face more significant shortages of educational facilities than their counterparts in urban areas. Rural schools experience more severe shortages of infrastructure and learning resources such as libraries. Children in rural areas are less likely to be in possession of enabling identity documents such as birth certificates required for school enrolments. Rural development seeks to enable rural people to take control of their destiny, thereby dealing effectively with rural poverty through which they learn over time, through their own experiences and initiatives. In fact, they learn how to adapt their indigenous knowledge to their changing world (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2010, 2012).

Social problems also characterise impoverished rural schools and the small, isolated communities in which they are located. Most rural communities are characterised by lack of quality healthcare delivery system, post-secondary education opportunities, social services and hardships experienced by families, especially those with children living with disabilities, who desperately need those services. Unemployment also abounds for those who do not farm or those who are not employable in artisan industries. Also, these impoverished rural schools face a torrid time attracting teachers (van Wyk, 2015).

Nierengarter and Williams (2010) and Hlalele (2014) assert that the prevalent lack of a whole arrangement standpoint in dealing with rural education is noticeable. The researcher's further state that in addressing the challenges bedevilling rural schools, mandates are needed to consolidate, collaborate and cooperate an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. This implies that rural initiatives need to

be aligned with the needs of the community and should draw from various sources. For example, efforts to provide cooperative and collaborative staff development for teachers in rural areas may be negatively affected by long distances, therefore, elevating transportation costs. However, promoting a complimentary view of education and initiative in the provision of educational services in rural areas and providing a framework for the sharing of concerns, issues and experiences relating to education and training in rural areas may address the injustices affecting rural inhabitants. Some of the most significant challenges blurring on an understanding of rural education include limited awareness of rural diversity and the multiple definitions of rurality.

2.2.4 Rural setting and how it impedes inclusive education

The definition of the term ‘rural’ still eludes researchers owing to its ambiguity and the fact that the distinction between rural and urban is arbitrary. Thus, no concrete definition has been agreed upon (du Plesis, 2014). For this reason, this study subscribes to the general definition of the term, which perceives rural schools as those that are situated in the outskirts of the country.

According to UNESCO (2005), the profile of the rural school comprises poor access to information technology, transport, infrastructure, basic services and modern facilities (electricity, water and sanitation). These challenges border on the health, education and economic status of the community, access to lifelong learning services, social conditions in the community, and the activities of political and civil society organisations.

According to du Plesis (2014), rural areas are characterised by various factors that negatively impact on their socio-economic survival and development. As a result, many rural schools are poor and disadvantaged, lacking basic infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities, roads and transport, electricity, information and communication technology. The socioeconomic challenges characterising rural areas put learners in these learning spaces at a disadvantage. du Plesis (2014) further indicates that functionally, illiterate and innumerate parents are mainly resident in rural areas. Additionally, many rural communities lack professional help and government support structure, books and other learning materials learners need.

Many barriers existing in communities, particularly in poor communities, impinge on the implementation of a school-wide vision for effective and comprehensive educational reforms. Such barriers exist both in the school itself and in the community of which the school is a part

(van Wyk, 2015). Most rural schools are characterised by poverty, and classes consist of many learners without identified disabilities, who have fewer chances of succeeding at school. Society is constantly plagued with drug abuse, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, crime and deadly diseases. These social ills provide a framework that renders the gravitation towards whole schooling problematic (Gerber, 2015). van Wyk (2015) concurs with this assertion, adding that barriers in rural schools and communities include among others: loss of hope, limited fiscal resources, high levels of poverty, drug abuse, gang violence, crime and teenage pregnancy, an inadequate healthcare system, lack of transport, and high levels of stress.

The Constitution of South Africa (1996), the South African School Act (South Africa, 1996), and various policy documents stipulate that all South African learners should have access to the same quality of learning and teaching, similar facilities and equal educational opportunities. However, this is not yet the case as socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment negatively influence the quality of education availed to LSEs and the role the administrator should play under these circumstances. According to Berry and Gravelle (2013), it appears that special education teachers who work in small, rural communities may have fewer professional sources of support available to them.

2.2.5 Teacher empowerment

Capacitating teachers so that they participate in determining school goals and policies and exercising professional judgement on what the school curriculum should entail could constitute an important aspect of empowerment. According to No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) legislation has placed a greater emphasis on all teachers to empower them to address the needs of all children in inclusive classrooms. School districts across the United States of America ensure that in-service teachers are able and ready to serve all students. Educational institutions must also assume part of the responsibility of preparing their pre-service teachers (Spring, 2012). Bateman (2017) emphasises that good teachers fill classroom walls with relevant information that provides students with visual cues or teaching and learning strategies that help them accomplish their learning tasks.

In inclusive education, two major aspects constitute the role of special schools. First, they provide special education for children living with the most severe levels of disabilities, whose

needs cannot be adequately met in mainstream schools. Secondly, they provide guidance and support that assist mainstream schools to effectively educate children with moderate disabilities (Ekins, 2012).

According to Salend (2011), special schools, therefore, do not just practise mainstream education. They have an innovative and supportive role to play in the development of inclusive practices that utilise the expertise and resources of special schools to effectively meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of needs within mainstream school settings (Salend, 2011).

Special schools are placed to fulfil the second aspect of their role because mainstream schools typically lack the expertise, resources, or the infrastructure specialised in dealing with the challenges of learners with special educational needs. This, then makes the collaboration between special and mainstream schools a critical factor in ensuring that the goals and objectives of a non-discriminatory education system are achieved (Ekins, 2012).

In a study on multi-dimensional attitudes towards inclusive education, Allan (2010) found that the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities are influenced by both past experiences and newly acquired knowledge. This finding sparked a debate around the view that one useful way of preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms should begin with the identification and understanding of how these teachers' beliefs are accumulated and become embedded in the teaching and learning process. It is through teachers' positive or negative attitudes that learners either develop a sense of belonging or exclusion (Charmbers & Forlin, 2010).

Regarding school-based educational inclusivity, White Paper 6 (The South African Department of Education, 2001) provides that the emphasis for change should be directed towards the system and its environment rather than the learner. This implies that teachers should try to create a learning environment that is sensitive to and accommodative of learners' various educational needs rather than expecting the learners with special educational needs to adapt to whatever is availed by the teacher. Inclusive education is a paradigm that obliges teachers to employ learner-centred teaching and learning approaches, which dictates that teachers identify and promote the learning potential of every learner (Runhare, 2014).

Teachers' attitudes towards educational inclusion vary across the educational spectrum, and numerous studies have examined teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Some of these studies used the terms *integration* and *mainstreaming*, whereas others used *inclusion*. Despite the different terminologies, all seem to refer to a situation in which a class, a school, or an educational system tries to attend to the needs of students with special needs (Hammill Institute on Disabilities, 2010).

Teachers need to develop positive attitudes that enable them to explore their ability to cope with diversity (UNESCO, 2005). Such positive attitudes may enable inclusive classroom teachers to become mentally and emotionally ready to render every child adequate support (Chidindi, 2012). Chidindi further recommends that inclusive classroom teachers must, therefore, be prepared to embrace learners with developmental disabilities as full members of the class by conveying clear messages welcoming them to the inclusive classroom. Positive attitudes and perceptions of inclusive classroom teachers may enable them to thoroughly plan for all students in the inclusive class, including those with developmental disabilities. Mukuna (2016) expresses the view that if the learning environment and style are not motivating and tolerant of the factors such as the learner's culture, language, gender differences and general ability which may engender the smoothness of the learning process and lead to academic success, social interaction with peers might be affected.

Teaching learners with developmental challenges in a regular classroom pose communication challenges. Teachers need to open communication channels with learners. Learners need to converse freely with teachers about their educational endeavours, sharing their experiences and capabilities. While language delay constitutes one of the characteristics of learners with disabilities, communication problems have to be minimised by using various communications channels. The language understood by the learner ought to be the medium of communication (Mukhupadhyay, 2014). The learner's mother tongue should also be regarded as poised to successfully connect learners to new concepts as they usually find them easy to understand and manipulate (Chidindi, 2012). Teachers' positive attitude towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities who may have been integrated into the general education facility creates an effective way of effecting social integration for many categories of learners with special educational needs since they do not only receive high-quality education but also successfully socialise and become

integrated into the environment along with their peers with similar needs. Learners appreciate the fact that they are subjected to the same requirements as the rest of the learners (Gabdrakhmanova & Guseva, 2016).

The attitudes of acceptance or non-acceptance towards the values of a social phenomenon play an essential role in influencing teachers' readiness to interact with learners with special educational needs. Values act as a conduit between an individual's inner world and the reality that constitute his or her surroundings. Such realities dictate behavioural acts and the implementation of regulatory functions, which manifest themselves in all areas. Consequently, the development of teachers' values regarding educational inclusivity should be one of the fundamental tasks of all education departments and personnel (Hitryuk, 2013).

Research indicates that the success of inclusive education is predetermined by the expert use of a set of pedagogical and psychological resources (Liventsova, 2011). It is further argued that the professional support of teachers, the attitudes of teachers towards differences in ability and the impact these have on the productivity of inclusive education as well as changes in curriculum structure and space in the classroom need to be integrated to meet the needs of diverse learners (Liventsova, 2011).

Inclusive classroom practitioners have to consider aspects such as the capabilities, previous knowledge, skills and interests of all the students. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) provides a framework that enables teachers to cater to the unique needs of students with developmental disabilities. In the IEP, long-term and short-term goals, as well as intentions, are set by the teacher. The teacher adapts these goals to suit the needs of individual learners. It is incumbent upon the teacher to set realistic targets for the learners (Chidindi, 2012). The IEP initiative must be evaluated as it is implemented before the final evaluation is made. This is important to determine if there is any progress towards the achievement of set goals and objectives. If no progress has been made, the IEP has to be modified or even discarded altogether and develop a new and more realistic one. When every learner has achieved the set objectives, they feel motivated to achieve more (Chidindi, 2012).

Selesho (2012), one of the proponents of inclusion, supports a philosophy that recommends that all learners, including those with disabilities, be placed into the same general education class and receive appropriate educational services and all the necessary support and assistance.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The word *Ubuntu* is derived from Nguni (IsiZulu) aphorism: *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which can be translated as ‘a person, is a person because of or through others’ (Moleketi, 2009; Tutu, 2004). *Ubuntu* can be described as the capacity by the African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities based on justice and mutual caring (Tutu, 1999; Khoza, 2006). Tutu (2004) further qualifies *Ubuntu* as “a person is a person through other persons”, adding that none of us comes into the world with anything. For example, an individual would not know how to think, walk, speak, or behave as a human being had they not learned it from other human beings. Simply put, an individual needs other human beings in order to be human; therefore, this framework is suitable and relevant to this study because learners with disabilities are vulnerable and need support from all stakeholders in the education system and the philosophy of *Ubuntu* embodies all these forms of support.

The concept of *Ubuntu* encapsulates the values the people of Southern Africa subscribe to. It embodies the tradition shared by the vast majority of the African people. Research on African people and African philosophy revealed that *Ubuntu* had been imparted to non-Africans, who later adopted it (Metz, 2011). Several researchers agree to the view that the concept of *Ubuntu* embraces unity, and in particular, a sense of community thereby promoting the spirit of oneness, sharing and empathy towards one another, which in turn, enhance human value, trust, and dignity (Letseka, 2011; Khoza, 2005; Metz, 2011). If the government were to embrace this philosophy, it would enhance an enabling environment for all learners, including learners with special educational needs, irrespective of their disabilities.

As a traditional African philosophy, *Ubuntu* shows inclusion of the marginalised groups. These groups include the poor, people with disabilities and all the disadvantaged groups. The researcher further substantiates the call for an understanding of *Ubuntu* as part of a broader spectrum of inclusion (Metz, 2011). Mapaure (2011) posits that *Ubuntu* resonates with several Bantu languages, manifesting an African philosophical worldview, in which each person is regarded as a human being capable of engaging in all processes of knowledge. Metz (2011)

further asserts that an individual with *Ubuntu* lives a genuinely human way of life, whereas the lack of *Ubuntu* is tantamount to missing out on human excellence or living like an animal.

According to van Niekerk (2013), one is highly praised based on possessing qualities of *Ubuntu*; thus, such an individual is regarded as generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. Persons with *Ubuntu* share what they have, are open and available for others; affirming of others, do not feel threatened by the fact that others are able and good, for they have self-assurance (Tutu, 1999).

The philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* is associated with the ‘being’ of a person, which is determined by his or her association with other persons in the inter-subjective community (Van Niekerk, 2013). Likewise, Letseka (2005) regards *Ubuntu* as normative in that it encapsulates moral norms and virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, respect and concern for others. It profoundly implies the inclusion of all. Inclusive education resonates well with the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which presupposes that “the suffering of one is the suffering of all”.

According to Ramose (2002), *Ubuntu* speaks to an elevated judgement of the community in African thought and practice, which is greater than that of the individual. In existential terms, a person is a person in the community, and his or her individuality is excised through others in that community. This attests to a culture of mutual relations characterised by sharing and caring for others. It follows that the underlying principle of *Ubuntu* emphasises the sense of communality, which exhibits an opportunity for inclusion in which everyone is included in deliberation. Waghid and Smegers (2012) affirm that the philosophy of *Ubuntu* represents a form of human activity that can create a space for an enabling environment. Within this framework, equality of voice ought to rest on a person’s ability to be attentive to observable reality and what is spoken in the world around. In order to establish one another’s intelligence, people have to listen attentively to other people’s points of view, and in Africa, this can be done through an education system that includes everyone, treating them as equal partners.

2.3.1 Background of the theory of *Ubuntu*

The theory of Ubuntu underpins this study. According to Gade (2011), *Ubuntu* appeared in writing for the first time in 1846 in the Southern part of Africa. Gade (2011) further states that *Ubuntu* was used in South African writing at a conference held in Durban in 1990. As early as 1994, Nelson Mandela stressed the need for understanding rather than vengeance, and reparation rather than retaliation. He advocated for *Ubuntu* rather than victimisation. These views encompass some of the distinctive characteristics and objectives of *Ubuntu*.

According to Bolden (2014), the origins of the concept of *Ubuntu* can be traced to the Bantu peoples of Southern Africa. However, the philosophy has permeated across much of the African continent. It is perhaps best understood as a social philosophy based on principles of care and communality, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness, which express the fundamental inter-connectedness of human existence. It has been described as a philosophy of peace (Broodryk, 2006). It is perhaps the best known guiding concept of the African Renaissance spearheaded by post-colonial and post-Apartheid South African leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Thabo Mbeki, who called on Africans to re-engage with African values. It has been an essential concept in the reformation of educational curricula and public services in post-Apartheid South Africa and offered a framework for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that bore witness to the injustices of the Apartheid era from the perspective of both perpetrators and victims (Bolden, 2014). The concept of *Ubuntu* is an alternative to individualistic and totalitarian philosophies that embody other cultures. *Ubuntu* is a Zulu/Xhosa word, with parallels in many other African languages. The term can be directly translated into English as 'human'. Its sense, however, is perhaps best conveyed by the Nguni expression *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which means a person is a person through other people (Bolden, 2014). The fact that this study focuses on lobbying for support for learners with special educational needs correlates with this concept.

Venter (2004) characterises *Ubuntu* as a concrete manifestation of the inter-connectedness of human beings and an epitome of African culture and lifestyle. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, with Mandela's assumption of the presidency in 1994, the term has become more widely known outside of Southern Africa, notably popularised to English language readers through the *Ubuntu* Theology of Desmond Tutu. One can, therefore, note that *Ubuntu* can be

defined from a purely African perspective: the social currency of an African and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the soul.

According to Mbigi (1995), *Ubuntu* denotes the collective solidarity of the poor concerning survival issues in addition to conformity, respect, human dignity and unity as its core values. From Mbigi's (1995) definition, one appreciates the idea that *Ubuntu* underscores aspects such as oneness and unity. Khoza (2005) associates *Ubuntu* with communalism, which he defines as a concept that views humanity in terms of collective existence and inter-subjectivity, serving as the basis for supportiveness, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity. People view themselves and their goals as equally representative of others of themselves (Mabovula, 2011).

The majority of African communities, especially rural communities, still hold on to the adage and belief that "it takes a community to raise a child", meaning that every adult within a community has to take part in ensuring the proper inculcation of good values in every child; every parent is a parent to all children. Mbeki (1999) sees the values of *Ubuntu* as being reclaimed in African communities. In his efforts to revive the spirit of *Ubuntu*, which refers to the African Renaissance, Mbeki adds a vital value derived from *Ubuntu* – the aspect of selflessness. The concept of the African Renaissance encourages one to look beyond the present to a better future. Mbeki (1999) further relates the aspect of selflessness to the sacrifices people made to attain freedom and democracy in post-Apartheid South Africa. He further reminds Africans that for any initiative to be sustainable, they need to adopt a holistic approach cognisant of the society's most treasured morals, attitudes and values. Gianan (2011) also relates *Ubuntu* to selflessness, and in his definition, he emphasises the notion that the philosophy calls on everyone to act responsibly towards the humanisation and attainment of peace with oneself, peace with others and the world.

2.3.2 Assumptions of the theory of *Ubuntu*

Ubuntu can be considered as a descriptive account of value systems to which much of sub-Saharan Africa subscribes; hence, it is helpful in understanding and contextualising research and practice in this part of the world. It is also a normative philosophy of how people should relate to one another. Both perspectives comprise several assumptions and implications that are relevant to researchers and practitioners from the perspective of Action Research. Whilst these points are

relevant to those conducting work with, and for Africans, they may also have the inherent potential to influence the process of research and inquiry elsewhere (Bolden, 2014).

According to Letseka (2011), *Ubuntu* embodies normative implications in that it captures morals, norms and values such as generosity, benevolence, courtesy, respect and concern for others, which emerged from a political period marked by civil strife, racial segregation, discrimination, subordination and exclusion. Himonga and Tayloy (2013) stress the view that *Ubuntu* has key interrelated attributes which are embedded in the principles of communality, solidarity, responsibility, interdependence, dignity and a profound striving for commonality. Gouws and van Zyl (2013) subscribe to the same perspective as they argue that the task of the school is to get learners to fight injustices and work together towards transformation. Thus, school administrators need to focus on ensuring that inclusion in schools is implemented effectively, particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* will be used as the lens to examine the strengths and effectiveness of an enabling environment for learners with specific educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The concept is therefore suitable and relevant for this study as it expresses compassion, reciprocity, social justice, harmony, dignity, humanity and hope in the interest of the rehabilitating, emancipating and empowering the oppressed [and the less advantaged], as well as maintaining and strengthening the community (Letseka, 2012). This framework constitutes a milestone in the achievement of valuable experiences that pave the way for developing an enabling environment for learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Lesotho to embrace inclusivity.

2.3.3 Relevance of the theory of *Ubuntu*

According to Bolden (2014), *Ubuntu* is collective in orientation as it expresses the value of collaboration, cooperation and communality. It espouses an ethos of care and respect for others and the importance of solidarity in the face of adversity. *Ubuntu* is an inclusive approach that gravitates towards participative and cooperative inquiry, where the researcher develops a close relationship with participants and actively engages them in the research design as well as the interpretation and application of research findings as co-investigators. Adopting *Ubuntu* means

that the ‘equalisation of voice’ is consequently enhanced as learners exercise their voice and listen attentively without considering gender or group disparities in making a claim. Africa needs to educate its citizens on such attributes. If all human beings indeed have equal intelligence, then an environment in which all learners can exercise their equality through voice is created (Ranciere, 1999). Polat (2011) maintains that the principle of inclusive education requires all schools to embrace all children and respond to their diverse needs. Polat (2011) further argues that access without quality leaves the education system vulnerable as this tends to affect education systems negatively, resulting in low pass rates. Focusing on access to and achievement in education while failing to uphold equity and justice, does not create an appropriate environment for inclusive education (Polat, 2011).

The aim here is to create an enabling environment for learners with disabilities without compromising the quality of education they access. According to Bennett (2011), *Ubuntu* helps educators to understand educational and classroom practices as well as political, social and economic issues underlying their social world. He further argues that *Ubuntu* explains the origin of everyday practices and problems in education. It is not merely explanatory as it is committed to enabling change towards better relationships and a just and rational society. Therefore, *Ubuntu* is relevant to the study and can be used to enhance the provision of an effective strategy to implement inclusive education that supports learners with disabilities, particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

The concept of *Ubuntu* needs to be shared and valued by all. As such, effective implementation of inclusive education in schools needs to be cognizant of the community since these learners with challenges come from the community. The researcher subscribes to Gianan’s (2011) idea that learners with special educational needs should not be treated in isolation, but according to the philosophy: *Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang*, a Sesotho proverb implying thus, “An injury to one is an injury to all.” Effective implementation of inclusive education needs school principals or administrators to form joint partnerships as one of the cornerstones of an inclusive school community; build collaborative partnerships with other principals, the Special Education Unit, school governing boards and communities as well as parents because they have intimate knowledge about their children. Finally, building and maintaining a functional, inclusive education requires interdependency, which is one of the core tenets of *Ubuntu*.

2.4 Summary

It is important to understand that humanity is expressed in terms of the relationship between an individual and others. LSENs come from a community, and applying the principle: “it takes a village to raise a child,” carries overtones of inclusivity (Swanson, 2007). The fact that individual persons need and depend on one another is consistent with the tenets of *Ubuntu*. Thus, it is everyone’s responsibility to embrace others. Members of a community that accommodates *Ubuntu* are not defined by their differences (whether physical, psychological, mental, financial and so on) but are bound together by socio-cultural phenomena. It follows, therefore, that learners with disabilities fit within the *Ubuntu* philosophy.

This chapter presented the literature review and theoretical framework. It reviewed the literature related to inclusive education and the drive towards its implementation with a specific focus on enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs. In addition, *Ubuntu* theory is positioned in this study to influence the development of rural schools in line with inclusive education. The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the literature review and the conceptual and theoretical framework that informed the study. This chapter provides insight into the methodology that was adopted in conducting this study to achieve the set objectives. It includes an overview of the research approach and paradigm. Furthermore, the techniques of data collection and the strategies used to select participants, conduct data analysis and interpretation are discussed in this chapter. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were applied are also analysed. The last part of the chapter focuses on the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to elicit views on enhancing the enabling environment for LSEs in selected rural primary schools in Lesotho. In the broadest sense, qualitative research refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experience, or perceptions. Mouton (2017) asserts that qualitative research relies on linguistic rather than numerical data, and employs meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data-analysis. As Maree (2017) states, all qualitative researches are naturalistic as they focus on natural settings where interaction occurs. In other words, viewing social life in terms of processes that occur rather than in static terms is what influences qualitative researchers to become more interested in how humans arrange themselves and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth. Mouton (2017) states that in natural settings, it is idiographic, holistic and aims mainly to understand social life. It involves identifying the

participants' beliefs and values that underlie the selected phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, it is reasonable to note that the qualitative research approach allowed the researcher in this study the opportunity to employ multiple methods in describing and understanding social life rather than explaining or predicting human behaviour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In the next section, the researcher discussed the research design adopted in conducting this study.

3.3 Research paradigm

This study is located within the contours of the interpretive paradigm. Cohen *et al.* (2011) explain that the interpretive paradigm aims to understand individuals' interpretations of the world around them and their experiences. Similarly, de Vos *et al.* (2018) assert that an interpretive paradigm is an approach that aims to understand people. This research approach differs from the critical paradigm, which seeks to transform society and from other researchers' argument that there is no reality in it (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). However, the paradigm is suited in this study as it aims to maintain that all human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their world and continuously interpret, create, give meaning, define, justify and rationalise daily actions (de Vos, 2018).

This process of engagement, therefore, allows the researcher to understand and examine human behaviour within their world in which they occur (de Vos, 2018). This is in line with the context of the current study that the researcher often uses participant observation and field research, which are techniques where many hours and days are spent in direct contact with participants. Transcripts, conversations, and audio-tapes may be studied in detail to gain a sense of subtle non-verbal communication or to understand the interaction in its real context. Considering the focus of this study, the interpretive paradigm is suited to this study as it enables the researcher to listen and discover accurate and in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon of interest in maintaining the engagement and enablement of LSENs' environment for learning in a selected primary school in Lesotho (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, the interpretive paradigm served as a guide to understand people's perceptions of their activities to enhance the learning environment for learners with special educational needs.

3.4 Research design

Mohlouoa (2014) views a research design as a logical procedure or a master plan that gives light about how research should be constructed. For Maree (2017), the research design is a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data-gathering methods to be used and the data analysis to be done. The choice of a research design is based on the researchers' ontological and epistemological perspective, research skills and practices that influence how the researcher collects data. According to Maree (2017), there is currently an extensive range of research designs from which researchers may select one that is congruent with their research questions and philosophical assumptions as well as the most appropriate for generating the kind of data required to answer the research questions posed. The research design was selected for this study because of the following reasons:

It guides participants in discussing their experiences with the aim of exploring how an enabling environment can be enhanced for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. These include objectives such as (1) To explore an understanding of an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. (2) To explain the importance of an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. (3) To explore resources that could be used to enhance an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. (4) Challenges faced by teachers on how to teach LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. (5) How to overcome these challenges.

All case-study research designs start from the desire to get close to and gain an in-depth understanding of a single or small number of "cases", set in their real-world context (Maree, 2017). The closeness aims to produce a comprehensive understanding that will result in new learning about real-life behaviour and its meaning. Secondly, by emphasising the study of a phenomenon within its realistic context, the case-study method favours the collection of data in natural settings. Using a qualitative approach provides researchers with tools such as interviews, observation, documents, among others to study complex phenomena within their contexts. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses, which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. This is called triangulation, and it was used in the current study. As in any other qualitative study, data collection and data analysis occur concurrently.

3.4.1 Exploratory case study

This study was conducted using an exploratory case study (ECS). It is an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (for example, a case, set within the practical, real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident) (Maree, 2017). The case is a phenomenon occurring in a restricted context. It is thus apparent that a “case” is generally a bounded entity (a person, organisation, behavioural condition, event, or another social phenomenon). Still, the boundary between the case and its contextual conditions, both spatial and temporal dimensions, may be blurred. Several authors have suggested that placing boundaries on a case can prevent the researcher from going too broad and becoming unfocused in the research (Yin, 2014). Suggestions on how to bind a case include: (a) time and place (b) time and activity, and (c) definition and context (Creswell, 2014).

According to Maree (2017), the purpose of exploratory case-study research may be exploratory, descriptive or interpretative. Exploratory case-study is the preferred strategy mainly “when”, “how” and “why” questions are posed. One of the advantages of this design is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, which enables participants to share their stories.

Another vital feature of exploratory case-study research design is that it tends to be researcher-centred; often involving the observation of participants and attempting to provide a holistic portrayal and understanding of the research setting (Cousin, 2005). Maree (2017) states that irrespective of the purpose, unit of analysis, or design, rigour is a central concern in case-study research. Further, while proponents of multiple-case studies may argue for replication, using more than one case may dilute the importance and meaning of the single case. However, there is a difference of opinion on whether case study research should be based on single or multiple cases.

An exploratory case study design is used when the researcher explores those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. The exploratory case study design uses multiple methods for data collection and analysis (Hamilton, Corbett & Whittier, 2013). Exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual (Blaikie, 2000). Often, the need for such a study could arise out of a lack of necessary information on a new area of interest. Therefore, this research design is

suitable for this study because it enables the researcher to have a deep understanding of the research setting. Maree (2017) asserts that the objectives of exploratory case-study research design are to identify critical issues, key variables and to gain a greater understanding of a phenomenon, a group of people or social setting. A case study approach provides ‘rich data’, as it offers the researcher insights into a range of perspectives and experiences within this particular context. Denscombe (2010) suggests that the use of exploratory case study is fundamental when dealing with the emotions, feelings, attitudes and relationships of participants. In this case, the exploratory case-study design is used in this study as it does not always depart from a fixed theoretical framework, but often works towards building a new understanding of enhancing an enabling environment for LSENs.

3.5 Research setting

In this section, the researcher describes the research setting. Two rural primary schools located in the outskirts of Maseru District, Lesotho, where teaching and learning for LSENs take place constituted the study setting. The two selected schools are named School A and B, and their officials are labelled O1 and O2. School A is about 10 kilometres from the Maseru Main Circle. School B is located about 25 kilometres from the Main Circle in Maseru District. At the same time, the offices of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) are situated opposite the Royal Palace of Lesotho. Mhlongo (2017) points out that the school location must be nearby for the convenience of all participants and the researcher as there may be financial and logistical implications.

The two schools belong to the Roman Catholic Church, which gets funding from the Lesotho government. The researcher chose these two schools and MoET officials because participants in this study had training, attended workshops on inclusion, or they were experts in the field of special education. The researcher considered the schools to be relevant to the study because these two schools are the schools in the rural areas, which have learners with special educational needs (LSENs). Hence, the participants were interacting with LSENs daily.

School A

The researcher’s visit was in the morning on 28 October 2019. The researcher met the principal and was told to visit the following week. The principal wanted to have a meeting with teachers

and discuss the purpose of the researcher's visit. She told the researcher they had routine meetings on Mondays at 1:30 p.m. The second visit was postponed by an hour; the meeting started later because a storm was experienced during that weekend, which took off the principal's office and the grades one and two blocks. During the introductory meeting, the researcher was allowed to explain the purpose of the visit. During the second visit, the weight of contribution became stronger. One participant thanked the researcher for the type of discussion they debated on. She indicated that at the beginning of the discussion, she was not interested, but later realised that she benefited from the discussion as this kind of discussion was academic.

School B

The researcher visited the principal with all the documents to be given to her. After discussing the purpose of the visit, the principal called a child to call the deputy principal, she (principal) told the researcher that this type of visit concerned both of them, and she was not supposed to deal with them alone. They discussed and agreed that a researcher should arrive the following week.

MoET officials

The researcher met the officials at their offices. They discussed the purpose of the meeting in the resource unit, which was chosen as the discussion room for enhancing an enabling environment for LSEN in rural primary schools in Lesotho. MoET officials asked the researcher to give out her phone numbers so that they could call her when they were free. They (officials) later called to set interview appointments with the researcher. In all the interviews which took place, both Sesotho and English were used as mediums of communication.

3.6 Procedure for the selection of participants

3.6.1 Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit participants in this study. In the context of education, purposive sampling typically involves selecting individuals or schools to provide rich information based on a specific purpose (Maree, 2017). Creswell (2014) further asserts that in purposive sampling, participants are deliberately chosen because of their relevant knowledge. In

this regard, the selection of participants is affected by several factors in any study (Selepe, 2016); some of which are as follows:

- The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research.
- The sample should have the potential to generate rich information that is relevant to the phenomena of interest.
- The sample should enhance the transferability of the findings.
- The sample should produce credible descriptions/explanations (in the sense of being true to real life).
- The sample should take ethical preconditions (such as vulnerability, informed consent, among others) into consideration.
- The sampling should be feasible in terms of money, time and practical issues of accessibility.

3.6.2 Sample

A sample is a subset of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population (Maphoke, 2017). Two rural primary schools and two officials from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) were purposively selected. Therefore, the research sample size of the study comprised fifteen participants. These were six teachers and one principal from School A, five teachers and one principal from School B, and two officials from MoET. Since sampling should meet specific criteria, the two schools were selected on the following bases:

- All participants were chosen purposively, including teachers and principals from the mainstream schools, which have admitted learners with special educational needs (LSENs).
- Teachers were selected because they were trained in special education and operated at the rural primary schools with more than three years' experience teaching LSENs from grade 1 to 6.
- The officials were also chosen to provide in-depth and detailed information because they were working under the Ministry of Education and Training in the Special Education Unit.

3.7 Data collection methods

This section discusses the methods that were used to collect data in this study. According to Maree (2017), methods of data collection are tools that researchers use to collect data. These tools enable the researcher to gather data about social reality from individuals, groups, artefacts and texts in any medium. It is important to remember that the methods used are influenced by the research questions, ontological position and theoretical framework. Maree argues that research methods for a particular project may include interviewing, observation or the collection of textual or visual data. Research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used (Mouton, 2017). Therefore, the current study employed two data collection methods. These were focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

3.7.1 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

In this study, data were collected through focus group discussions (FDGs). de Vos *et al.*, (2017) define FGDs as carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, and non-threatening environment. It is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic pre-determined by the researcher. FGDs are different from focus group interviews because they are a means of understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product, or service (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Cohen *et al.* further explain that in FGDs, participants are selected because they have certain common characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group. In this case, the group is focused in that it involves some kind of collective activity. The researcher then creates a tolerant environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes, and concerns without pressurising participants to vote or reach consensus (de Vos, 2017).

An understanding of group dynamics is consequently important to focus group researchers in two aspects of this study. Firstly, it helps the researcher to identify conditions that promote interaction and open discussions regarding participants' views and experiences within groups. Secondly, it can assist the researcher in the analysis of the data through an understanding of what

was happening in the group as well as why it has happened. The current study employed FGDs as a primary data collection method. Within FGDs, participants can build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view, not attainable in interviews. Unexpected comments and new perspectives can be explored easily within the focus group and can add value to the researcher's work (Maree, 2017).

3.7.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were also used in the current study as another method of data collection to complement FGDs. This helped to obtain a detailed understanding of each participant's beliefs about or perceptions on the topic under study. This method of data-collection gives the researcher and participants much more flexibility. The researcher can follow up on particular exciting avenues that emerge in the interview, and the participant can provide a fuller picture (de Vos *et al.*, 2017). Maree (2017) explains that a semi-structured interview is commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. It seldom spans an extended period and is usually based on a line of inquiry developed by the researcher in advance of the interview. In other words, certain open-ended questions are asked, and these are followed by further probing questions and clarifications. Mosia (2017) adds that guiding questions and open-ended questions are asked to elicit more information from the participants. Maree (2017: 96) also agrees with this view that "as naturalistic conversations between an interviewer and participants, interviews provide a rich description of practices and experiences from the participants' perspectives." Maree holds that as a researcher, one must be attentive to the responses of one's participants to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with the school principals and Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) officials. The researcher asked the participants questions that were relevant to address the study's objectives. The researcher formulated the research questions in English; hence the participants were given a choice to answer the questions in either English or Sesotho. This opened doors for every participant to have the freedom to express themselves in a way that they were comfortable in and were able to provide rich information. The officials did not give the researcher permission to audio-record them. Hence, the researcher relied on taking field notes during the interview sessions. The major challenge at this point in terms of data

collection was that several meetings had to be postponed due to the officials' busy schedules. The two officials were given the codes: O1 and O2.

3.8 Data collection procedures

The data collection procedures involved three steps; focus group discussion 1 (FGD 1), focus group discussion 2 (FGD 2), and semi-structured interviews.

3.8.1 Focus group discussion 1 (FGD 1)

The FGDs commenced with the researcher introducing herself and the topic of the study. The meeting was held in the principal's office during the first visit. When the researcher visited the school for the second time, the meeting was held in a Grade 5 classroom in a circular set-up. The researcher then briefed the participants about the purpose of the visit and gave them each a consent form that would ensure that they were not coerced to participate in the study and that they understood what the decision to participate entailed.

To ensure that study was ethically sound, the researcher summarised the key ethical issues and gave a consent form to each participant. The participants signed and returned the consent forms. The participants (teachers) responded to questions related to enhancing an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. When conducting a focus group, the researcher directs the discussion among five to twelve people to collect in-depth qualitative data about a group's perceptions, attitudes, and experiences on a defined topic (Maree, 2017). A popular format for the focus group interview is a "funnel structure," where the researcher starts with a broad and less structured set of questions to ease participants into the situation. Maree suggests that the goal is to hear participants' general perspectives and to ease them into a process where they will actively debate an issue.

The FGD lasted for 60 minutes, and discussions were recorded using a digital audio recorder, with the permission of the participants. Many researchers argue that focus group interviews produce rich data in detail and that is difficult to obtain in other methods (Maree, 2017). When using this method, a group of participants are asked a set of structured or semi-structured questions on a particular topic and are allowed to debate on the responses being generated. The

debate and even conflict that ensue are encouraged, and the group dynamics assist in data generation. This method created an exciting atmosphere, and the participants enjoyed it.

During the first visit, participants looked nervous and unsure as they did not say much during the FGD. However, on the following day, their contribution had weight – they shared ideas and built on each other's lines of thinking to produce in-depth information. The researcher allowed the participants to cool down and relax, through discussing issues that were not related to the study, for them to accustom themselves to the data collection environment. Therefore, data were collected in a free and relaxed environment. Hence, the participants were free to open-up, and express their views on the topic of interest. Data collection was done in a dialogic way, with data presented in the narrative form mostly as quotes to avoid bias. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants for their participation in the FGD process.

3.8.2 Focus group discussion 2 (FGD 2)

The second focus groups discussion (FGD) took place at the School B, on the 22nd of October 2019, with five teachers (two males, and three females), and one principal (female), at the selected school in Maseru District. All the meetings were held in the principal's office and the seating arrangement was in the form of a horse-shoe. The participants were told about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary. The researcher stressed the importance of anonymity and confidentiality and assured the participants that their contribution to the discussion was voluntary. In both schools, the allocation of time was between 45-60 minutes.

3.8.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Special Education Officials from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). The two principals were interviewed on the same day using face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted on the 13th of October 2019 in the participants' respective resource units. Scheduling was done three days before the interview date and confirmed in the morning of each interview date before the researcher travelled to the interview venue. The interview would start with the researcher introducing herself. The researcher also introduced the topic as she handed the consent forms to the officials and then

summarised the key ethical issues that guided the data collection process. Participants signed and returned the consent forms. The use of face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to clarify questions where and when it was necessary. The participants did not permit the researcher to record the interview proceedings; hence, field notes were taken as a way of capturing data. The interviews were conducted in a free and relaxed environment, and importantly, in a dialogic manner. Therefore, participants were free to express themselves and open up in all issues that were raised for discussion. They answered questions related to the topic, which is to enhance an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. Each interview took an average of 90 minutes. The interview ended with the researcher thanking the participants for their participation in the interview process.

3.9 Data analysis

According to Mohlouoa (2014), data analysis is the period when a significant amount of gathered data is broken down into handy themes, patterns, trends and relationships, which would be followed by analysing, summarising and interpreting, in a qualitative study. Thus, in qualitative research, data analysis is mainly done to understand various elements of data, which were established during the identification of the relationships between constructs and concepts (Mouton, 2014). In the current study, the data collected with participants from FGDs and semi-structured interviews were analysed thematically.

3.9.1 Thematic data analysis

In this study, thematic analysis was done as a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning, coding and classifying data (Nowell, Narris, White & Moules, 2017). Clarke and Braun (2017) point that thematic data analysis approach is the process of identifying the patterns or themes within qualitative data, analysing and interpreting those patterns to find meaning. Maree (2017) avers that this method is expedient in discovering feelings, views and opinions. Therefore, thematic analysis was suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to gather data about social reality, and it is influenced by the research questions and aim of the study. The researcher then followed steps towards presenting the findings of the research study coherently to ensure clarity. These were:

cleaning data, transcribing from audio-recorder, sorting data, coding, analysing and interpreting data.

When using thematic data analysis, the researcher reads to discover the meanings embedded within a text. This process involved the coding, where participants word by the word were acknowledged (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Each reader brings his or her subjective experiences to a text when studying it. The researcher tries to absorb the viewpoints it presents as a whole and then develops an understanding of how its parts relate to the whole. In other words, the true meaning is rarely simple or evident on the surface, one reaches it only through a detailed study of the text, contemplating its many messages and seeking the connections among its parts (de Vos *et al.*, 2018). In this paradigm, the researcher often uses participant observation and field research, which are techniques where many hours and days are spent in direct contact with participants. Transcripts, conversations and audio-tapes may be studied in detail to gain a sense of subtle non-verbal communication or to understand the interaction in its real context.

3.10 Methods of data verification

3.10.1 Trustworthiness of the study

Ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research study is essential as an indicator of the reality of the researcher's data analysis, findings and conclusion (Maree, 2017). Nieuwenhuis (2014) posits that when qualitative researchers talk about 'credibility and trustworthiness', they mean validity and reliability. Therefore, in a qualitative research project, trustworthiness is characterised by authenticity, credibility, transferability, dependability and the conformability of a study.. The aim of the research is to explore how enabling the environment for learners with special educational needs (LSEN) can be enhanced in rural primary schools in Lesotho. Therefore in ensuring trustworthiness in this study, four aspects of trustworthiness used in qualitative research were applied by the researcher as follows:

(i) Credibility

Credibility is when the findings of the research study show the origin of the data collected from the participants (Anney, 2014). Furthermore, Rafoneke (2017) confirms that to ensure credibility, the participants must be assured that special attention would be paid by carefully

listening to them during interviews. Therefore, the researcher addressed credibility in this study by seeking permission from participants for using audio-recorder in recording their discussions and interviews. This was meant to ensure that the researcher correctly captures the participants' experiences where additionally findings were communicated with the participants to determine if the findings reflect their experiences.

(ii) Transferability

According to Mohlouoa (2014), transferability is the degree to which the research findings can be transferred to other settings and contexts. In this research study, the researcher ensured transferability by describing all research processes and contexts to get a detailed, adequate description of methodology in terms of data collection and analysis, to enable other researchers to make judgements about the findings of this study and perhaps apply it to other research studies (Selepe, 2016).

(iii) Dependability

According to Selepe (2016), dependability in a study should provide an opportunity to be audited. The issue of dependability was addressed in this study by checking the similarities and the differences between the responses of the participants in FGDs and the interviews thoroughly. This also assisted the researcher to point out the contradictions between what the participants said and what they did towards enhancing an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. Maree (2017) confirms that dependability is also defined as the data stability over time and in a certain condition. As a result, there is a need for the researcher to be accountable for how the change in the research affected the way the study was approached (Mohlouoa, 2014).

(iv) Conformability

Conformability is the process that establishes whether the researcher has been biased during the research process and the stage at which the results have to be confirmed by others (Anney, 2014). The results will have to be checked throughout the study project. According to Mqulwana (2010), at the end of data collection, then audit and analysis procedures must take place. Judgements must be made about the potential bias or any distortion. Therefore, the researcher

addressed the conformability in this study by confirming the research findings with different resources to build the literature review and the research project.

3.11 Ethical consideration

Ethics are the moral principles, norms, or standards for conduct that distinguish between right and wrong (Mahlalela, 2013). All ethical processes and protocols laid down by the University of the Free State (UFS) about ethics were keenly observed and followed. A letter was written to the schools and the Ministry of Education and Training (Special Education Unit) in Lesotho for permission to conduct the study. Pseudonyms were used to afford the participants some confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were briefed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The researcher distributed consent forms to facilitate this process.

3.11.1 Permission to conduct the study

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State to conduct research in two rural primary schools in Maseru District, Lesotho. Permission was obtained from MoET and the school principals of the selected schools before the research was conducted (see Addendum A and B).

3.11.2 Informed consent forms

The researcher ensured that informed consent forms were distributed to all participants to allow them to give their voluntary consent to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were used when reporting the findings to maintain confidentiality and avoiding potential harm to the participants (Johnson & Christenson, 2014). Participants were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish to do so. They were informed of the final milestone of the research study that will be kept at UFS library archives for future use.

3.11.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a form of accessibility to information only to those who have the right and authority to have access (Maree, 2017). Printed copies of all documents related to the study were kept under lock and key, and all findings of the study (both soft and hard copies) were kept

entirely confidential; to be disclosed only to those who have the authority of access. During the FGDs meeting, the researcher and the participants agreed on confidentiality, thus rendering this study trustworthy.

3.11.4 Anonymity

The researcher used pseudonyms to ensure that there will be no identity of the participants' names, surnames, schools or villages to show the location of the school whatsoever. The researcher was observant and ensured that no participant was harmed in this research study. The participants were given consent forms and given time to go through them before they could sign. The researcher gave the participants access to the permission letters granted by the Ministry of Education and Training, allowing the researcher to conduct the study, clearly demonstrating that permission would not have been granted if there were any unethical practices involved in the study. The researcher then explained to participants the significance of the forms from the (MoET) and the stipulations of what was allowed or not allowed during the research process.

3.12 Limitations of the study

According to Mhlongo (2017), the limitations of the study are referred to as obstacles encountered by the researcher and cannot be easily controlled. To generate rich data, there is a need for flexibility and patience; hence the researcher had to exercise these. For example, some of the participants were shy to share their ideas. In school A, the researcher had to manage such situations by allowing each participant time to share their views as they were told in advance that there were no right or wrong answers. In school B, there were dominant participants who were eager to answer every question and denying others the opportunity to contribute. Therefore, the researcher had to allow the participants to participate in turns. The participants, especially officials, would postpone interview appointments because of their busy schedules. Then the researcher's schedule became disturbed. When it came to the schools' visits, it was also a bottleneck because teachers went for a strike countrywide for the government to attend to their grievances, so teachers' strikes were sustained for two months, which are August and September 2019.

3.13 Summary

In this chapter, the methodology employed in conducting this study was discussed. The approach, paradigm and design were also discussed together with the justification for choosing them. The issues of trustworthiness of data collection were considered. Further, the ethical considerations of the study were discussed. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research methodology and design and ethical considerations. This chapter presents, interprets, and discusses the research findings, including biographical and

thematic results. The chapter summary concludes the whole chapter. The data are presented in alignment with the following study objectives:

- To explore an understanding of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho;
- To investigate the importance of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho;
- To explore the resources that can be used to enhance an enabling environment for learners with specific educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.
- To determine the challenges faced by teachers when dealing with learners with specific educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.
- To determine how to overcome the challenges confronting teachers when teaching learners with special educational needs.

4.2 Biographical Results of the Participants

Table 4.1: Biographical Results of the Participants (Teachers)

SCHOOLS		Gender	Age	Grade level	Highest qualifications	Teaching experience
SCHOOL A	Participant 1	Female	35 years	Grade 2	DEP	3 years
	Participant 2	Male	42 years	Grade 4 & 6	DEP	6 years
	Participant 3	Female	30 years	Grade 7	ADSE	5 years
	Participant 4	Male	37 years	Grade 4	DEP	3 years
	Participant 5	Female	51 years	Grade 5	B.Ed.	18 years
	Participant 6	Female	48 years	Grade 3	B.Ed.	15 years
	Participant 7	Female	54 years	principal	B.Ed.	29 years
SCHOOL B	Participant 1	Female	38 years	Grade 5	B.Ed.	6 years
	Participant 2	Male	28 years	Grade 4	DEP	3 years
	Participant 3	Male	52 years	Grade 6	B.Ed.	17 years
	Participant 4	Female	36 years	Grade 3	B.Ed.	5 years
	Participant 5	Female	37 years	Grade 7	DEP	4 years
	Participant 6	Female	62 years	Principal	DEP	30 years

4.2.1 School A

The proprietor of School A is the Roman Catholic Church under the Lesotho Government Fund. This school is in a rural area located in Maseru District. Data were collected using focus group

discussions. The FGD was made up of five (5) female teachers and two (2) male teachers teaching Grade 1 to Grade 6.

Participant A1

Participant A1 is a female teacher and a holder of a Diploma in Education. She has three years' teaching experience and aged between 30 and 39 years. She teaches learners with special educational needs along with those without special educational needs in an inclusive class. She started teaching a group of learners without disabilities but has experience in teaching an inclusive class. She was teaching Grade 2 learners. The school outsourced an expert specialised in the teaching of learners with special educational needs to staff-develop teachers teaching LSENs and educate them on how to help and approach LSENs.

Participant A2

Participant A2 is a male teacher who attended workshops on LSENs and a holder of a Diploma in Primary Education. He had six years' teaching experience and aged between 40 and 49 years. He teaches English reading from Grade 4 to Grade 6. He was teaching reading only because the principal gave him this specific task when he realised that there was a gap amongst LSEN who could not read and write. So this teacher was recruited because the problem could not go on unabated. "I am there to remedy the situation," he said.

Participant A3

Participant A3 was a female teacher who had five years' experience and a holder of an Advanced Diploma in Special Education. She is aged between 30 and 39 years. The teacher liked to help and teach LSENs. She said her friend specialised in special education, and as a result, she also developed an interest in this programme. She became interested in helping the poor and children living with HIV/AIDS at her home, having realised that vulnerable children lack self-esteem. Eventually, she became interested in helping children with disabilities.

Participant A4

Participant A4 was a male teacher who had three years' experience and a holder of a Diploma in Primary Education. He was in the 30-39-years age range and was teaching Grade 4 learners. The teacher is a soccer trainer who interacts with different learners on the soccer field, where he realised that some of the LSENs had excellent skills in sports, but they need support to enhance their talents.

Participant A5

Participant A5 is a female teacher and a holder of a Bachelor's Degree in Education and aged between 50 and 59 years. She has eighteen years' teaching experience and has been teaching LSENs for five years. The teacher teaches Grade 5 learners, including an autistic child. She said she wanted to learn about LSENs because since the inception of the new curriculum in 2000, every teacher should know about inclusive education and how to approach LSENs according to their different needs.

Participant A6

Participant A6 is a female teacher holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education. She had fifteen years' experience in teaching and had been teaching LSENs since the introduction of the new curriculum in 2000. She reported experiencing enormous challenges because she became a teacher before the Lesotho Teacher Training College introduced Special Education Programme, which was implemented for a few years before it was closed down.

Participant A7

Participant A7 was the principal of the School A. She was a female teacher aged between 50 and 59 years. The principal had a Bachelor of Education Degree. She had been teaching for twenty-nine years, and nine out of those years were spent in the position of principal. The principal revealed her natural fondness for children, which is what lured her into the teaching profession.

From time to time, she helped children in need with money to buy school necessities such as school uniforms, stationery that is not supplied by the government, and other items. She also assisted needy learners with food. She even mentioned that her grandson is autistic, so she needs to learn as much as possible about working with LSENs so that she can help her grandson in the process. She teaches Grade 1 learners, and there are three learners with special educational needs in this group. These learners are girls who could not read and write, so she needs help to overcome this challenge.

4.2.2 School B

The proprietor of School B is a Roman Catholic Church under the Lesotho Government Fund. In this school, the focus group discussion comprised six (6) teachers, including the principal of the school. Teachers taught from Grade 2 to Grade 6. These teachers had LSENs in their respective classes; the whole school had sixteen (16) learners with special educational needs. Teachers in this school migrated from one class to another because they were under-staffed. Almost all teachers did not have permanent classes except those who were teaching Grade 1 and Grade 7 learners. All the teachers in School B concurred that they worked as a team and moved around to help each other in their respective classrooms. They solved each classroom's challenges together.

Participant B1

Participant B1 had a Diploma in Special Education and went for further training and obtained a Bachelor of Education Degree in Primary Education. She also had six (6) years of experience in teaching and was in the 30-39-years age range. She was teaching Grade 5 learners, and in this class, there were two learners with special educational needs whom she assigned remedial work after school three times a week, from Tuesday to Thursday. She attended workshops organised by the Ministry of Education and Training and thus had some experience in inclusive education and some competence in working with LSENs.

Participant B2

Participant B2 is a male teacher in possession of a Diploma in Primary Education and had attended workshops on how to deal appropriately with LSENs. He had three (3) years' experience in teaching and is aged between 20 and 29 years.

Participant B3

Participant B3 is a male teacher who was the Deputy Principal. He acted as the principal in the absence of the principal, and they work together on administration issues. The Deputy Principal was a Grade 6 class teacher. He was in the 50-59 years' age range and had seventeen (17) years of teaching experience. He held a Bachelor of Education Degree.

Participant B4

Participant B4 is a female teacher who holds a Bachelor of Education Degree and had five (5) years' experience in teaching an inclusive class. She had attended workshops which cultivated her skills in the teaching of LSENs. She is aged between 30 and 39 years.

Participant B5

Participant B5 is a female teacher who holds a Diploma in Education and has four (4) years of teaching experience. She is between the ages of 30-39. The teacher is also responsible for sporting activities. She said she would like to see each learner participating in sports.

Participant B6

Participant B6 is the Principal of School B. She is a female teacher holding a Diploma in Primary Education with thirty (30) years' teaching experience, of which 13 was spent as principal. She is aged between 60 and 65 years. The principal ensures that marginalised learners go home with enough food after school so that they can share it with the ones left at home.

4.2.3 Special Education Unit Officials: Ministry of Education and Training

Table 4.2: Biographical information of participants (officers)

Ministry of Education and Training	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Working experiences
Officer 1	Female	40-50	B.Ed	14 years
Officer 2	Female	40-50	PGDE	16 years

Participant O1

Participant O1 was a female officer holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education. She first trained at the Lesotho Teacher Training College and completed in 1995. She taught from 1996 to 1999 before furthering her studies. After completing university education, she taught for four years and then went to serve the government at the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in the Special Education Unit as an official from 2006 to date. The official held a managerial post.

Participant O2

Participant O2 is a female teacher who trained at the Lesotho Teacher Training College. She taught for three years before furthering her studies at university and obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Education. She further obtained a Post-Graduate Diploma in Psychology of Education. She went back to work because she had been on study leave. After teaching for five years, she went to serve the Ministry of Education and Training in the Special Education Unit as the Assistant Inspector from 2004 to date.

4.3 Thematic results

The four broad themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of data are used as headings in connection with sub-themes, as illustrated in Table 4.3 below, to present data in this chapter. These themes are discussed in depth in the following sections.

Table 4.3: Overview of the themes and sub-themes of the study

Themes	Sub-themes
Understanding an enabling environment for LSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe, comfortable and inclusive education - Equal and quality EFA
Importance of an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility of the curriculum - Training for Special Education teachers - Coordination between learners, teachers, parents - Improvement of teachers' salaries
Resources to be used to enhance an enabling environment for LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of resources in rural primary schools - Availability of adequate and quality infrastructure - Provision of teaching and learning materials - Availability and flexibility of the human resource
Challenges faced by teachers when dealing with LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of teaching and learning materials - Inaccessibility of rural schools - Lack of adequate infrastructure - Teaching overcrowded and multi-grade classrooms - Inaccessible physical environment - Lack of parental support and involvement - Negative attitudes of learners, parents and teachers towards LSEs - Human resource and special education teachers - Poor remuneration for teachers
Overcoming the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSEs in rural primary schools in Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to understand LSEs - Improvement of methods and approaches used by the teachers - Collaboration between teachers, learners without disabilities and LSEs - Specialised training facilities/educational resources

4.3.1 Understanding an enabling environment for LSEs

Under this theme, the views of the participants who participated in interviews and focus group discussions suggested that they clearly understood an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. All the participants agreed that an

enabling environment for learners with special educational needs meant a safe, comfortable, healthy, and inclusive environment where equal and quality education is provided to all learners, regardless of their differences as discussed in the next section.

4.3.1.1 Safe, comfortable, healthy and inclusive environment

The transcripts from participants engaged in focus group discussions (FGA P1, P2, P4; FGB P1, P2, P3, P4, and O1, O2) revealed that safety, comfort, health and inclusivity within the learning environment are the necessary elements which help enhance an enabling learning and teaching environment for all learners including those with special educational needs.

Participants recognised that a safe and comfortable space contributes to the holistic development of all learners as well as ensuring the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and psychological well-being of learners with disabilities. This statement aligns with the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018). They declared that an enabling environment should be a place that allows for the implementation of an established set of rules related to playtime activities for learners with special educational needs. The participants illustrated this point by saying:

“An enabling environment is a safe, comfortable and a barrier-free space for everyone in the learning place. Therefore, teachers need to establish discipline and rules that govern conduct during lessons in the classroom situation and during playtime” (FGA, Participant 6).

“An enabling environment is a place which develops learners in terms of their intellectual, spiritual, emotional and psychological well-being” (FGB, Participant B2).

“Each learner should be catered for holistically; for instance, the teaching that all learners receive should develop them psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and physically. The learning environment should be friendly to all learners” (FGA, Participant 4).

“An enabling environment motivates all learners. Praises and feedback motivate and boost learners’ self-esteem and increase their confidence to contribute in class” (FGA, Participant A4).

From the responses cited above, the participants clearly understood what constitutes an enabling environment, as they described it as a place where learners with special educational needs feel at home, at peace and where they are treated equally, enjoying the same privileges as their non-disabled counterparts. Chidindi (2012) points out that creating an enabling learning environment is the foundation of the process of educational transformation because individuals are inspired and encouraged. Participants in the following utterances reveal this:

“An enabling environment is a place free of all learning obstacles. It is a learning situation in which everybody involved is free” (FGA, Participant 3).

Participant 3 further pointed out that:

“All parties involved – teachers, parents and authorities should work towards uprooting intolerance to create a humane environment.”

4.3.1.2 Equal and quality education to all learners

Participants also refer to equal and quality EFA learners as another factor that determines an understanding of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools. Three of the participants stated the following:

“The teacher-learner ratio should be appropriate to allow the teacher to help individual learners appropriately. There should be enough space for the teacher to move freely in order to adequately attend to every learner, including learners with special educational needs” (FG B, Participant 3).

Participant 5 (FGB) asserted that:

“Learners should be treated equally. There should be no discrimination. When learners with disabilities have done wrong, they should be treated in the same way as other learners without disabilities. The same measures should be applied to the learner without recognising their disabilities. For instance, when extra-mural activities take place, every learner should participate irrespective of their disability.”

Participant O2 added that:

“An inclusive environment is friendly and barrier-free, a place where every learner studies without any disturbance hindering his/her learning progress.”

From the above responses, it is clearly highlighted that an enabling environment should be understood as providing equal and quality EFA. This is in line with the assertion by Landsberg, Kruger, & Swart (2011) that an enabling environment promotes quality EFA by enforcing established rules, regulations, procedures and existing conditions in order to provide and facilitate the smooth and continuous inclusion of all citizens and civil society organisations in the process of policy formulation and the development of all learners irrespective of their disabilities.

Participant O2 responded that an enabling environment is a user-friendly, barrier-free, and inclusive environment that enables learning in all aspects of education, including the surroundings of the learners with special educational needs.

Other participants commented by saying:

“There is a need to have a user-friendly, safe and inclusive environment that enables learning in all aspects of education, including the surroundings of the learners with special educational needs. The environment is free of learning obstacles, and every learner can move at their own pace. In the end, that particular learner can acquire the knowledge according to the goals of both the learner and the teacher. This is where all the needs of different learners in an inclusive class are catered for and met” (Participant O1).

“An enabling environment is tailor-made to suit every learner in the teaching and learning environment. It is inclusive, welcoming and safe” (FGB, Participants 1, 2, 3).

The findings demonstrate that an enabling environment allows productive learning, where all learners learn happily in a free, conducive and healthy environment. It ensures quality education and equal involvement of all learners. One participant declared, thus:

“An enabling environment supports and extends children’s development and learning. Learners with disabilities learn and develop best in a caring and supportive environment which is responsive to their individual needs, and it takes into cognisance their areas of strengths and weaknesses in assessing their present level of performances. It is characterised by caring and support which ensure spiritual and social development. An enabling environment ensures access to quality education; promotes equal involvement and the participation of learners with disabilities within the learning environment in the society and promotes the relaxation and cooperation within the school and the community” (Participant O2).

Participant A6 also agrees with these sentiments, adding that in an enabling environment:

“Learners with special educational needs should be educated with their counterparts without disabilities since they are like other children, and they equally have the capacity to learn. They also deserve quality education to achieve their dreams. They should not be discriminated against by their peers without disabilities, who should have a humane approach to LSENs. The values of *Ubuntu* should be inculcated in them by teachers and parents” (Participant O1).

“An enabling environment is a conducive one and it helps in developing and supporting education. It is a learning place where all learners learn successfully to suit their different needs. The teaching and learning activities allow every learner to enjoy the school environment. It should be enabling for every learner without any obstacles. The environment should be free, happy, useful, inclusive, bully-free and disciplined. People around should treat everyone with respect and dignity” (Participant O1).

The participants expressed their understanding of their view of an enabling environment. These participants perceived an enabling environment as a place where learners learn successfully, freely, and happily. These findings are in sync with Chidindi's (2012) assertion that an enabling learning environment is a place free from both physical intimidation and emotional anger. The results related to the importance of an enabling environment are presented in detail in the next section.

4.3.2 The importance of an enabling environment for LSEs

The findings show that the flexibility of the curriculum, training for special education teachers, coordination between learners and teachers, parents' involvement, and the improvement of teachers' salaries are essential for the creation of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

4.3.2.1 Flexibility of the curriculum

The responses of participants (FGA; P3, FGB; P4 & P5) from both focus group discussions revealed that the flexibility of the curriculum was fundamental to the creation of an enabling learning environment for learners with special educational needs. They believed that the structure of the curriculum plays a pivotal role in enhancing an enabling environment if it suits the learners' needs and capacities in inclusive schools. The participants had this to say:

“A suitable curriculum should be flexible enough to suit every learner's needs. Each learner should be allowed to learn at their own pace and this can only be realised if the assessment is structured to cater to each learner's capacity” (FGA, Participant 3).

“The curriculum should be flexible enough and should suit each learner's needs” (FGA, Participant 3).

Moreover, Participant 3 and Participant 7 from FGA highlighted that the current curriculum is highly inaccessible for the learners, arguing that it is too difficult to understand, and most teachers experience challenges in conveying it to learners as they are still grappling with its

implications. The participants' responses revealed that teachers had reservations about it and believed that the training and the time allotted to its implementation were insufficient. Participants P3, P7 and PO1 and PO2 from FGA emphasised that the curriculum for learners with special educational needs should be relevant to their needs to make learning appropriate to learners' lives, capacities, and needs. Besides, they declared that it should be flexible and inclusive enough to meet the needs of all learners. There should be adequate provision of materials or equipment that allow for the creation of an enabling learning environment. The participants said:

“The curriculum is higher than the level of this rural primary school. The syllabus needs learners who are versed in technology. Unfortunately, teachers were trained only for a short time and by the time the new curriculum was implemented in the schools, they had not yet grasped it properly. Most teachers find it challenging to convey the curriculum to learners when they are still grappling with understanding it” (FGA, Participant 3).

“The current curriculum is difficult to implement. Most teachers complain that it is apparently too high for the learners and that the teachers were given a short time for training and it was immediately implemented in the schools after that short training” (FGA, Participant 7).

“The curriculum for learners with special educational needs should be relevant to their needs to make learning appropriate to learners' lives, capacities and needs, and there should be adequate materials to meet all learners' needs” (PO1 & PO2).

On the contrary, Participant A7 and Participant B6 from FGA said:

“The curriculum is relevant, but it does not cater for teachers' skills, competencies, and training. If teachers are sufficiently equipped with proper skills, they should be able to interpret the curriculum smoothly. Apparently, capacity-building for teachers is needed urgently.”

4.3.2.2 Training for special education teachers

Many factors play a part in creating an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs. Among these, the training of teachers assumes paramountcy. The participants indicated that an enabling environment is essential for learners with special educational needs in Lesotho's rural schools, and they believed that teacher training is also crucial towards realising this environment. The participants said:

“I think the government should restore the one-year special education training programme at LCE, which should be done after completion of the teachers' diploma. This programme should be compulsory to every student teacher. The curriculum implemented in primary schools is inclusive, so this will equip primary school teachers with some skills and approaches needed to assist learners with disabilities. Workshops and in-service training should also be offered when teachers are on long breaks” (FGA, Participant 4).

“An enabling environment demands that teachers be trained in special education. Teachers ought to be work-shopped and equipped with the skills necessary for teaching learners with special educational needs. The curriculum offered at teacher training colleges should be inclusive so that when teachers complete their studies, they would be able to teach every learner irrespective of whether they have a disability or not” (FGA, Participant 6).

“Learners should be supported, praised, motivated and be given feedback. Only fully trained teachers can appreciate how these aspects impact on learners with special educational needs as they have skills to teach them. The government should hold regular training workshops for teachers; more so because learners with disabilities give teachers more work than other learners without disabilities. The training should not only focus on curricular issues but should also instil the right attitudes on the part of teachers. Such attitudes include empathy, respect, and non-discrimination to help protect such learners from all kinds of abuse and disrespect. The government should bring back the one-year

special education programme that was offered by the LCE, and it should be a compulsory programme” (FGA, Participant 4).

The same participant further pointed out that:

“Learners with special educational needs are in every class, even in those classes taught by untrained teachers. So, it is difficult for such teachers to assist such learners appropriately, particularly because most teachers do not like to teach such learners, particularly in rural areas. With proper and relevant training, teachers will find it easy to identify learners with disabilities. They will feel empowered and their self-esteem will improve and in turn, they will be able to impart knowledge to all learners. The government still has a lot to do to train teachers on imparting knowledge and skills to learners with disabilities as well as on how to use the resources needed in executing this task” (FGA, Participant 4).

“At the inception of the current inclusive syllabus, teachers were summarily trained and this was not enough because we still face hurdles in our interpretation of this new syllabus which we have not understood to date” (FG A, Participants 3 & 7).”

“Training is imperative for teachers to identify where and how to improve in order to be able to upgrade their skills needed in helping learners with special educational needs” (FGA, Participant 1).

“The special education curriculum is very relevant; it is only that it needs enough time for the preparation of its implementation. As primary school teachers, we should be involved in the planning stages of any new curriculum. Teachers need long-term training for them to adapt to the curriculum successfully. The government, through inspectors in the Ministry of Education and Training, should make proper follow-up and school visits to ensure that teachers are coping successfully. Some teachers are still facing challenges in dealing with learners with special educational needs” (FG A, Participant 7).

“We have been advocating the building of a healthy and a user-friendly environment that suits every learner in the education sphere; a place which needs teachers who are trained to deal with learners with special educational needs and who attended workshops on dealing with such learners” (FG A, Participant 6).

4.3.2.3 Coordination between learners, teachers and parents

The transcripts of the participants (FGB P4, P6, and FGA P4) show that the coordination between learners, teachers, and parents plays a critical role in the creation of an enabling environment for learners with disabilities. The participants mentioned that the creation of such an environment is critical to a healthy and effective education system which should metaphorically function like a three-legged pot if it has to be successful. It should comprise teachers, learners, and parents. Should any of these three components fail to commit itself to its part as it is supposed to, there is no way the teaching-learning activity can produce the desired product. Without coordination between the parent and the teacher, the learner’s needs would always be compromised. This is especially true in a setting where the learner may not even have any form of disability; so, the implications for learners with disabilities are dire. Mahlomaholo (2013) highlights the view that the environment is inhabited by other people who play a major role in arranging and restructuring the environment for the benefit of the learner. These people present with them the team remembrance of their communities in the form of culture, which enriches the experience of learning ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. Therefore, in this study, the underlying principle of Ubuntu emphasises a community which exhibits an opportunity for inclusion, that is, where everyone is included in deliberation.

The responses from the participants illustrate teachers’ understanding of this tripartite system that may impact negatively on the learner if not carefully coordinated. This is what the participants had to say about the issue:

“Regular counselling should be developed for the parents of learners with special educational needs. Public gatherings should also be held to educate the general public and some parents that it is not shameful to have a child with a disability as some parents keep their children at home, oblivious of the fact that they would be violating their right to education, despite their disabilities” (FGA; Participant 2).

“While most parents are over-protective about their children even though they still bring them to school, other parents are so over-protective that they keep their children at home because of the nature of disabilities their children have. If teachers could be vigilant and take care of such learners, parents would be prosecuted because Lesotho’s education policy encourages free and compulsory primary education for all children. The Education Act (2010) demands that every child aged between six (6) and thirteen (13) years should be attending school” (FGA, Participant 4).

“Teachers and school administrators have a mammoth task of mounting awareness campaigns in all communities around schools. Even at the school assembly, everybody should be educated on the importance of treating learners with disabilities respectfully even at home by their parents. Parents should be encouraged to attend parents’ meetings so that teachers can communicate the milestones and challenges that their children face. Unfortunately, very few parents attend these interface meetings. These meetings are generally attended by parents whose children perform well, academically” (FGA, Participant 7).

“Most of the learners’ parents are not formally employed and their children are sometimes forced to drop out of school owing to financial challenges as their parents have to migrate to neighbouring South Africa in search of domestic work. This challenge makes it difficult for parents to engage with teachers for the benefit of their children” (FGA, Participant 1).

“The community, through the guidance of the village chief, should mount awareness campaigns based on learners with special educational needs. Everybody should take responsibility – not just the government. The business community should also be encouraged to assist. If communities include learners with disabilities in activities such as athletics, choirs, soccer, and other forms of sport, they will develop a sense of belonging. Such learners should be protected from all kinds of abuse and ridicule; so, parents should allow their children to take part in these social activities” (FGA, Participant 1).

Participant FGA P2 supported this notion and continued:

“Parents should not hide their children at home. All children should be allowed to go to school. Parents should discourage girl children from engaging in early marriages. Equally, they should bar their boy children from going to initiation schools when they are still too young. They should not be herd-boys misused for financial gain. However, these things still happen because of poverty and disease. Many children become heads of their households at a tender age. Village chiefs should initiate the idea of openly and willingly discussing these issues because teachers often fail to convince them. Some parents and guardians turn down the advice. Learners with disabilities should be respected by their families and the entire community, just like children without disabilities” (FGA, Participant 2).

Participant O2 added, thus:

“Parents ought to be actively involved in programme planning and evaluation. Parents may also provide important information because they intimately know their children living with disabilities, particularly their interests, skills and knowledge. This information may assist teachers in the teaching and learning of such learners” (PO1).

An enabling environment is important since it helps learners to know their strengths, which helps them build their self-esteem.

4.3.2.4 Improvement of teachers’ salaries

In this study, the participants raised concerns regarding the remuneration of teachers who shoulder the extra responsibility of dealing with learners with special educational needs. One of them pointed out that:

“Teachers’ salary structure should be reviewed progressively. When teachers are hungry and stressed by their financial issues, it is not only going to affect the individual teacher, but this also compromises learners’ performance. Teachers’ dissatisfaction can result in poor school performance” (FGA, Participant 3).

“Teachers’ salaries should be improved. Teachers’ went on strike owing to several grievances, including poor salaries, which was their main concern. The strike began in August and ended in October. They went back to work after their representative associations had negotiated and agreed with the government which promised that it would attend to teachers’ grievances. Teachers’ salaries should be given priority, as they hardly meet our basic needs” (FGA, P7 and P4).

Participant P4 also pointed out that:

“Some teachers say that the government has increased their workload by including learners with special educational needs in the mainstream system, yet their salaries are disappointingly meagre”.

Clearly, this is a grievance attributable to the negative attitudes exhibited by some teachers.

4.3.3 Resources used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs

The findings demonstrate that infrastructure, human resources, and teaching and learning materials ranked among the most important resources that can help enhance an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in Lesotho’s rural primary schools.

4.3.3.1 Importance of teaching and learning materials

The responses of the participants from both focus group discussions (FGA; Participants 1, 2 and FGB; Participants 6, 3, and 4) reveal that teaching and learning materials are indispensable elements in the enhancement of an enabling learning environment at rural primary schools in Lesotho. When the teaching and learning materials are prepared well in advance, teaching and learning will become an enabling factor for both the teacher and learners, particularly learners with special educational needs. The participants observed the following insofar as the resources are concerned in rural primary schools:

“Resources should suit every learner’s needs in an inclusive school. Learners with visual and physical impairments should have proper infrastructure and adequate equipment suitable for their needs” (FGA, Participant 2).

“A safe and welcoming environment for every learner, with all the resources to support their learning, guarantees success. The environment should allow every learner to move and learn freely. Sporting activities should be inclusive too and sports resources should be available as sports is part of learning. Teaching and learning resources contribute towards easier, effective and enjoyable teaching and learning” (FGA, Participant 7).

Other responses further emphasised what had been pointed out in the above-cited utterances.

“Learners with disabilities lack resources that help improve their well-being. These include wheelchairs for the physically impaired learners; Braille for the visually impaired and hearing aids for the hearing-impaired. We are also running short of books. Rural schools are almost inaccessible due to poor roads and transport systems. Teachers had been waiting in vain for books for Grade 7 learners” (FGA, Participant 4).

“Teachers need resources to avoid lecturing so that learners in primary schools can have access to real-life learning. Teachers have to rely on concrete materials to make learning fun and easy. Schools should be provided with long-lasting resources such as chart papers, non-breakable teaching aids, wheelchairs, hearing aids, Braille, movable boards, white sticks, and other specialised resources that cater for learners with disabilities and are valuable to the teaching and learning process. Such resources help learners to learn independently and acquire exceptional knowledge that can be applied at a later stage (FGA, Participant 3).

“As teachers, we appreciate the value of resources. Without proper resources, performance can be deficient. With resources, teaching and learning become enjoyable and successful. Resources foster learners’ independence; learners are much more likely to come up with their solutions to everyday problems” (FGA, Participant 4).

“The government does not seem to prioritise education; hence, school administrators do not have recourse when challenges arise within their schools. For instance, when each government comes to power, it wants to sway people to its party rather than improving education. People at the helm of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) do not seem to take education seriously. The slogan; ‘education is the backbone of the country’, just remains a slogan” (FGA, Participant 3).

“Resources encourage parents of learners with disabilities to send their children to school, as it is Government Policy for each learner to acquire basic education. Clearly, though, when the resources are not available, most parents will not be attracted to the idea of sending their children to school”, (FG A, Participant 3).

“School administrators should avoid using dilapidated chalkboards for learners with low vision, the lines of their exercise books should be bold-faced with markers, there should be enough light in the classrooms, the edges of the steps, sharp-corners of tables and desks should be clearly marked with contrasting colours. It is also advisable that teachers be aware of seemingly insignificant resources such as adapted chairs, magnifying glass, adjusted pens, Braille, chart papers and legible handwriting when working with learners with special educational needs for all these enhance an enabling environment” (Participant O2)

“The government should provide adequate resources, equipment, and teaching and learning materials for learners with diverse learning needs. When there are no resources, learners drop out of school. Further, in rural communities, there is a lack of employment; schools and learners around run short of resources. For example, when learners are given homework on research, they will not do it because their parents do not have cell phones. Again, some parents keep their children because they do not have the resources to facilitate their movement from place to place. For example, there is a need for crutches or wheelchairs for the physically-impaired learners; hearing aids for the hearing-impaired learners and Braille for the visually-impaired learners. These are not available to enhance the free movement and free learning of learners with special educational needs. If there is

a lack of resources, teaching will not be effective. Thus, most township schools perform better than rural schools because it is easy for them to get resources” (FGB, Participants 1, 2 and 6).

“Resources enhance the learning environment. Children like to play, and they learn through play; so a lesson done with the help of resources becomes flexible, and parents who keep their parents at home will be motivated when they realise that there is an improvement at school for learners with disabilities. Teachers will also improvise when there are no readily-made resources to make teaching and learning successful” (FGB, Participant 1).

Participant O1 is of the view that:

“Resources promote the application of more interactive teaching methods that increase interdependence. Every child becomes independent through hands-on learning. When the resources are available, education becomes a joint venture, with all stakeholders playing their roles”.

“Resources should be available for learning to be easy, irrespective of the learners’ diverse disabilities. Braille should be used by the visually impaired learners. Relevant teachers should also be assigned to help those learners. For the hearing-impaired learners, interpreters should be availed so that these learners learn successfully. If the relevant resources can be availed for every learner, inclusive education will be easy to implement” (FGB, Participant 3).

“The money allotted to schools does not cater for all our needs; so, teachers should improvise and make their teaching aids that could help make learning and teaching easily understood through bringing teaching to real-life situations” (FGB, Participant 4).

4.3.3.2 Importance of infrastructural resources

The participants indicated that infrastructure should be prepared in such a way that it accommodates all learners regardless of disabilities. The importance of infrastructure in an

educational setting cannot be underestimated, as demonstrated by participants' observations. According to Mosia (2017), some buildings are not accessible by learners with special educational needs, particularly those who use wheelchairs, mostly in the institutions with stairs. The participants had this to say:

“The infrastructure should be improved as most buildings are old. Renovations should have been done before the government introduced the integrated curriculum which recognises inclusion; for example, classrooms do not have ramps, making it difficult for learners on wheelchairs to move around the school” (FGB, Participant 1).

“Resources such as libraries and computer laboratories, would also help in creating and enhancing an enabling learning environment for all learners, including those with disabilities. Nowadays, learners learn a lot through discovery, and it would be great for learners with special educational needs to be availed with a rich learning environment in the form of a library and technological material. However, in this school, learners do not know a computer; they have never seen it, making it even more difficult for teachers to relay the information because it is not easy for them to understand it. The government should provide resources such as furniture, Braille material, hearing aids, and wheelchairs for learners with disabilities and these resources should suit an array of disabilities” (FGA, Participants 2, 3 & 7).

Most participants agreed that the government should have availed resources before implementing the current curriculum. These participants quickly observed that some challenges were intertwined and enmeshed in political disputes, rendering it very difficult to be vocal about their unavailability.

4.3.3.3 Importance of flexible workforce (human resources)

The responses of the participants from Focus Group Discussion A (Participant 4) and the education officials (P O1 and P O2) showed that the flexibility of human resources is vital in enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural schools. The participants fully advocated the flexibility of the entire learning environment as well as teachers. Odanga, Raburu, and Aloka (2018) assert that teachers' self-confidence can be

enhanced by improving their working conditions, which include, among others, provision of the relevant teaching and learning equipment and undertaking plans to enhance their well-being.

“Teachers need to be flexible for them to cater to the diversity of learners through appropriate teaching programmes, organisations and other adaptations that are necessary for individual learners. Teachers must consider variables such as the capabilities, previous knowledge, skills, and interests of learners” (P O2).

The responses from the participants in Focus Group Discussion B and the officials from the Ministry of Education and Training (FG B; Participants 3 & 5 and Participant O1) show that an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs is not just a pipedream as it can be achieved through serious commitment on the part of all educational stakeholders. The participants responded, thus:

“Teachers should be well-trained at the Lesotho College of Education and they should be made to attend inclusive workshops for the benefit of quality and inclusive education” (PO1).

Participant B3 from Focus Group Discussion B agrees with the other two participants and commented that:

“Teachers should be flexible enough to provide remedial classes after school for learners with special educational needs. Individual educational plans should be formulated by teachers so that each approach suit learners according to their different needs.”

The findings show that teamwork is a powerful tool for the success of teaching and learning. This statement is emphasised by one of the participants, as demonstrated by the statements below:

“There should be trust and teamwork in order to bring change to learners with disabilities, particularly in rural primary schools. If there is trust, educational processes will be successful. The teachers should work together regarding the teaching of learners with disabilities. The parents of such children should be made aware of the futility of

comparing their children with their neighbours' children without disability and should also bear in mind that learners do not learn at the same pace. Parents should appreciate teachers' efforts, and they should come to school and discuss their children's academic work, asking teachers questions where they may have doubts" (FGB, Participant 5).

4.3.4 Challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSEs

The findings reveal a myriad of challenges confronting teachers who are dealing with learners with special educational needs. These challenges include lack of teaching and learning materials, the inaccessibility of rural schools, inadequate and/or inappropriate or even a lack of appropriate infrastructure, crowded classrooms, learners' and teachers' negative attitudes which place learners with special educational needs at risk, inflexible curriculum, lack of parental support and involvement, lack of human resources and teachers trained in special needs, poor remuneration for teachers, and a lack of visible coordination between teachers and parents.

4.3.4.1 Lack of teaching and learning materials and other resources

Amongst the challenges the participants raised, lack of resources topped the list. The participants indicated that:

"Learners drop out of school due to lack of resources that allow them to continue with their studies. Due to the lack of resources, teaching is rendered ineffective. That explains why most town-based schools perform better than rural-based schools. In most town-based schools, many parents belong to the working-class such that if the school does not have resources, parents can buy the resources for their children. This contrasts sharply with the situation obtainable in rural schools where most parents are unemployed. On the contrary,, teachers are the ones who buy the resources to help the learners who are in need" (FGB, Participants 1 and 6).

Participant 2 agreed with Participant 1 and Participant 6. The participant said:

"Parents keep their children at home because they do not have the resources to help their children move from place to place. For instance, there are no crutches and wheelchairs

for the physically-impaired learners; hearing aids for the hearing-impaired learners and Braille for the visually-impaired learners” (FGB, Participant 2).

Participant 6 further narrated a very compassionate story which profoundly highlights the indispensability of resources:

“We used to have a physically impaired learner in our school. She did not have a wheelchair; she used to come to school crawling. Our main gate is not properly levelled and there are rough stones along the way. So, she often had to use an alternative gate which is a little bit far though it is smoother. Unfortunately, the girl did not complete Grade 7 because we lacked the resources to support her.”

Participant 6 reiterated the existence of the challenge of the inaccessibility of rural schools owing to long distances. She said:

“In rural areas, children traverse long distances to get to school. By the time they get to school, they would be hungry and tired, so they do not learn effectively. During bad weather conditions such as rainy, windy, and cold days, their school attendance is affected, and they spend some days absent from school. When they come to school after some days, they find their counterparts far ahead of them, a scenario which negatively affects their performance. They also get discouraged by travelling long distances on a hungry stomach. Once the learners feel that they are tired, they decide to drop out of school” (FGB, Participant 6).

Participant 6 added:

“Rural schools lack adequate resources. Teachers normally improvise for their teaching to be effective, and many teachers do not like to work in rural areas. We have a shortage of staff. After finishing their primary school, rural school learners find it difficult to get enrolled into high schools of their choice in township schools as the principals of these schools prefer recruiting children who attended school in English Medium; hence, their

applications are rejected with the belief that they lack sufficient content, which will see them struggling and therefore downgrade the school standard.”

“Teachers experience great challenges in helping learners with disabilities, particularly the visually impaired that do not have relevant materials like Braille to help them meet their needs. They use books that are used by other learners without disabilities. They are unable to use the books; instead, they depend on the assistance rendered by their classmates” (Participant O2).

The participants’ responses are consistent with other scholars’ assertion that, when learners’ educational plans are changed into the more resourceful, reactive and human methodology, they feel included, safe, and the chance of quality education in their local schooling is elevated (Vennville & Oliver, 2015).

4.3.4.2 Inaccessibility of rural schools

The study has revealed many challenges bedevilling rural schools. The participants from Focus Group Discussion A (Participants 3 and 6) said the following:

“Rural schools are located within the communities which are far from towns and people from these places travel through long and unsafe places. They go through dongas and forests because there are no good roads. Rural schools also face a lack of basic public services such as safe drinking water, electricity, welfare facilities, clinics, police stations, and a shortage of priests and qualified teachers.”

Other participants concurred, adding that:

“Most qualified teachers do not like to work in rural schools, not even those who are born in rural villages. Once these teachers get qualified, they migrate to town and work at urban schools” (FGA, Participant 1).

“Rural schools are deprived of important amenities such as electricity, water, toilets, public transport, a user-friendly environment, and adequate teachers; there is much multi-

grade teaching, and there are no doctors to attend to emergencies. Nobody wants to work in such places” (FGA, Participant 4).

“In rural areas, most people are not formally employed. They live in abject poverty; some children drop out of schools in order to take care of their siblings; others are orphans, and there are yet others whose parents have gone to towns or even the neighbouring South Africa to look for jobs. These children raise their siblings in child-headed households. The entire situation is so depressing” (FGA, Participant 1).

In Focus Group Discussion B, some participants said:

“Some learners come to school hungry as they come from impoverished families where there are no parents. Teachers’ bring their money to buy basic needs such as soap so they can bath and wash their clothes. Sometimes, teachers contribute money to buy school uniforms, particularly school shoes, for needy learners. Learners who take care of their siblings are given food at school so that they can have supper with their siblings. Teachers who teach such learners are emotionally affected” (FGB, Participants 1 and 6).

However, the study findings have exposed disparities between School A and School B. School A has funding, which has helped it to set up a feeding scheme for learners who come from disadvantaged families. The learners are provided with a meal before attending classes. Again, there is a small clinic in School A, where learners can be helped when there is a health problem.

Participants 3 and 4 from Focus Group Discussion A describe a rural school as:

“This school is situated in a place where learners go to the farm fields, take care of their siblings; where girls go into early marriages and boys attend initiation schools and therefore drop out of school.”

Participants 4 and 6 from Focus Group Discussion B pointed out:

“Rural schools situated in impoverished communities where people are jobless. There is a high rate of absenteeism, as most children are taken care of by relatives. Relatives want

these children to find work at an early age. For example, boys become herd boys, and their school attendance is poor because they alternate days between herding and attending school.”

Participant 6 further said:

“At our school, children, particularly girls, demonstrate an abysmal school attendance because they take care of their younger siblings. Most of them got orphaned because of the HIV/AIDS scourge. There was one little girl whose school attendance was erratic. When we made a follow-up as a school, we discovered that she was taking care of her sick grandmother because there was nobody to shoulder the responsibility. The school offered to help the girl by providing food for her and her sick grandmother, sometimes helping with caregiving” (FGB, Participant 6).

4.3.4.3 Lack of adequate infrastructure

Infrastructure was one other very important factor that was identified as crucial in this study. The participants in School A, School B, and Government offices commented on issues of infrastructure. Participant O2 stated that ramps should be built and existing facilities rehabilitated. There should be user-friendly classrooms and toilets; the ground should be levelled to enhance free movement. She also suggested that authorities should label the equipment that learners use; for example, boys’ and girls’ restrooms. For learners with low vision, step edges should be marked with contrasting colours to make the environment enabling. This is perhaps what Khoaeane (2012) calls an inclusive educational environment.



Figure 4.1 Classroom roof blown away by the wind in School A, showing inadequate infrastructure



Figure 4.2 Classrooms without ramps; their roof was blown away by the wind in School A, displaying a non-enabling environment



Figure 4.3 Leaking classroom roof and broken windows in School B, showing a non-conducive learning environment

“The infrastructure in most rural schools is poorly constructed and dilapidated. The classroom roofs are leaking, the windows are broken, and teachers’ furniture is dilapidated and needs replacement. Most school blocks do not have ramps for wheelchairs to move around. Again, learners with disabilities depend on their counterparts without disabilities who often help them move from place to place within the school” (FGA, A7).

Participants 3, 6 and 7 all agreed that the environment is disheartening for them as teachers. They also feel discouraged to work with learners with disabilities in such a situation.

The findings further indicate that in both schools, the environment is generally not user-friendly. The school structures are old, and their surroundings are untidy. In School A, the situation was relatively bad during the researcher’s first visit. Unfortunately, by the second visit, a storm had blown off the roof housing Grade 4 Block, and the Principal’s office.

4.3.4.4 Teaching overcrowded and multi-graded classes

Teaching overcrowded and multi-graded classes was another challenge that teachers in rural schools faced. They reported not having been thoroughly trained to handle such classes. In rural schools, most of the teachers are overloaded. Not only are they expected to teach multi-graded classes, but the same classes they teach are also overcrowded. They stated:

“Due to a shortage of teachers and overloading, we have less time to attend to learners with disabilities. There are so many qualified teachers in this country. We are understaffed, but the government does not hire teachers” (FGA, Participant 3).

“The number of teachers does not commensurate with the school roll in most rural schools, and teachers teach many learners in one classroom. The classrooms become overcrowded, and teachers have to multi-skill” (FGB, Participant 5).

The officials from the Ministry of Education and Training agreed with the participants in the Focus Group Discussion in this regard. They said:

“Since the introduction of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho, learners have increased in classrooms. The same classrooms which looked spacious enough to accommodate the learners that the schools originally absorbed have now become too small to accommodate FPE learners. Thus, the teacher-learner ratio has become a challenge, making it is challenging for effective and quality teaching and learning to take place. Many rural schools are seriously understaffed. Although teaching multi-graded classrooms seems an immediate remedy, it also poses serious challenges” (Participants O1 and O2).

4.3.4.5 Inaccessible physical environment

The physical environment was one of the significant inhibitions identified by the officials in the Ministry of Education and Training, especially when it comes to learners with special educational needs. There are some barriers to the inclusion of such learners in ordinary schools, like physical barriers such as classrooms without ramps that create inaccessibility to students with physical disabilities, sloppy school surroundings that hinder smooth movement for learners using a wheelchair, socio-economic factors, lack of funding for infrastructure, and education policies of the country in practice (UNESCO, 2011). Although there are numerous policies in place within the disability sector in Lesotho, there are still gaps, including a lack of national policy on disability protection and prevention. For example, the Disability Equity Bill has not been changed into policy requirements for disability mainstreaming. It is not linked to

performance management, and there is a lack of internal policies on disability. Further, monitoring tools are generally lacking.

“The geography of our country is not user-friendly to learners with disabilities. Some learners are restricted by their distant villages, as they are supposed to cross dongas, rivers, and walk along vast fields. Some learners attend school at an advanced age, and others do not attend school at all because of their disability. Those who are on wheelchairs are not able to travel from their homes to school. Such learners end up dropping out of school” (Participant O1).

“Learners who travel long distances to school usually come late. We brief them on what has been learned, but we do not re-teach the topic and they miss lots of important information taught before their arrival. Their rate of absenteeism is high, and the weather conditions sometimes bar them from attending school. This often occurs during the rainy season” (FGA, Participant 4).

Other participants intimated, thus:

“Learners with special educational needs are sexually abused by some community members when they travel long distances to and from school. Even some relatives abuse them taking advantage of their disabilities” (FGB, Participants 4 and 6).

4.3.4.6 Negative attitudes of learners, parents and teachers towards LSENs

Social stereotypes regarding learners with special educational needs were also identified as undermining the education system in Lesotho. These stereotypical attitudes are even more pronounced in rural schools. Some members of society treat learners with disabilities as though they are not human and without any right to education.

Participant 3, from Focus Group Discussion B made the following observation:

“Parents keep children with disabilities at home. They feel there is no need to send them to school if they do not see any progress. They say that their children are not safe from home to school, and because of the nature of their disability, they are also insecure.

Teachers and parents are sometimes not patient with such learners because they lag behind. Some parents are even reluctant to help these children with their homework, complaining that they do not make any progress. Some parents may still be willing to assist their disabled child, but their illiteracy plunges the whole effort into disarray. So, it is not easy to help the child. Some teachers complain that the government has put a huge load on them by ‘forcing’ schools to accept learners with special educational needs rather than placing them in special schools. They believe the parents of these learners do not want to take responsibility for these children, so they bring them to school to evade their responsibility. Some teachers also exhibit indifferent attitudes towards learners with disabilities because of the paltry salaries they earn. They ‘forget’ that the curriculum is inclusive, and learners with disabilities also have the right to be in the same class with their peers” (FGB Participant 3).

“Most parents of learners with disabilities do not attend meetings convened at school. These meetings are important because they allow stakeholders to deliberate on learners’ challenges and milestones at school. Parents who attend the meetings are mostly those whose children perform well, academically. This severely strains teachers because curricular issues need more discussion and cooperation between teachers and parents so that learners can progress, particularly those with impairments” (FGB, Participant 4, Participant 7).

“Some parents also have a negative attitude towards the idea of learners with disabilities being taught in the mainstream system. They argue that teachers neglect their children without disabilities as they tend to focus more on learners with special educational needs. On the other hand, the parents of learners with disabilities become overprotective of their children, assuming that their children will not be humanely treated. Others, however, think taking their disabled to school is a waste of time. They say the children are hopeless, so there is no need sending them to school” (FGA, Participant A4).

“Some learners label, ridicule and bully learners with disabilities. Incidentally, the latter develop either low self-esteem or negative defence mechanisms to protect themselves.

Once learners with disabilities are bullied, they become too timid to come to school” (Participant O2).

Participant O1 also advances her view, which is as follows:

“Learners with special educational needs develop some negative, defensive mechanisms when their schoolmates bully them. Some teachers have a negative attitude towards learners with disabilities as evidenced by deliberate failure to help them, saying that they do not have skills to teach such group of learners and recommend that they should be taught in special schools where teachers have been trained for them. In a nutshell, they think it is not fair for learners with disabilities to be included in the mainstream classes” (Participant O1).

Although the general opinion is that teachers are not trained to deal with learners with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Training, through the Special Education Unit had this to say:

“The SEU holds workshops to empower teachers with relevant methodologies and techniques to address the needs of learners with disabilities. The SEU personnel do visit rural primary schools to offer school-based training. They do not, however, conduct vigorous training because they are battling challenges such as staff and financial shortages. They normally pay school visits to attend to special cases addressed by schools.”

Participant O1 reiterated the same view, thus:

“The SEU trains teachers to equip them with relevant skills to approach learners with disabilities. These workshops are done at least twice yearly. It might not seem much, but they are still effective since teachers who have been trained manage to demonstrate a change of attitude towards these learners, providing remedial classes to ensure that their needs are met. They are also trained on how to use individual educational plans to address the individual needs of all learners.”

Participant O2 then made the following suggestion about the parents' attitude:

“Parents ought to be involved actively in activities such as programme planning and evaluation. They may provide important information about learners and that may assist teachers in the teaching and learning process. Unfortunately, the parents of learners with special educational needs are not very cooperative in this regard.”

Participant O2 agreed:

“Parents should adopt a positive attitude. They should stop keeping children with disabilities at home. They should trust that teachers who have been designated to take care of their children despite their needs will indeed do their job. They should feel free to talk about their children's conditions because they are the ones who know their children better” (FGB, Participants 4 and 5).

Other participants from Focus Group Discussion A see the challenge in the same light, thus:

“It is important for parents to discuss the background history of children with their teachers. This helps teachers to locate the problem that each learner has and that makes it easy for the teachers to address the needs of each learner (FDGA, Participant 3).

“Teachers and learners should refrain from labelling learners with disabilities. Not only is it insensitive, but it is also inhuman and unprofessional. Learners with disabilities should be accommodated irrespective of their different learning styles” (FGA; Participant 3).

“Another challenge affecting learners is poverty. Parents and relatives initiate or sometimes agree to the early marriages of young girls. On the other hand, boys are hired as herdboys. Although Education For All advocates that ‘all children should go to school, that no child should be kept at home, that early marriages to young girls should not be condoned, that young boys should not be sent to initiation schools,’ the opposite is rampant in most rural villages in Lesotho. Children are hired as herd boys, and such

learners drop out of school without their parents discussing the problems with teachers because the economic situation of their families is dire” (FGA, Participant 2).

In most cases, parents are not involved in helping their children with disabilities cope with their school work not because they do not want to, but they are forced by their economic circumstances not to get fully involved while struggling to make ends meet. Most parents in rural areas live in distressing poverty. This situation leaves learners with disabilities more vulnerable than their counterparts. Regarding the lack of parental support, Maluleke (2014) highlights the deterioration of their responsibilities to assist their children, as parents sometimes feel their contributions would not be valued.

“People residing in this rural community do not have formal jobs because they are not educated. They rely on subsistence farming and those who do not have their fields where they can grow their food migrate to neighbouring countries to look for jobs. Unfortunately, most of them get domestic jobs. This means they must leave their children alone. Some of the children are left with relatives who sexually abuse them. In most cases, learners attending school in rural areas fail to complete primary education” (FGB Participant 4).

4.3.4.7 Human resources and special education teachers

One other major challenge confronting rural schools is hardship. The difficult life that characterises rural communities makes rural schools unable to attract qualified teachers. The problem is aggravated by the fact that teachers are already poorly remunerated and the few available teachers in rural schools have to teach multi-graded classes. So the situation degenerates into a vicious cycle. du Plessis (2014) asserts that rural schools are often plagued with educational problems such as isolation from specialised services, limited accessibility to quality staff, and shortage of teachers. Commenting on this aspect, one participant said:

“Another challenge faced by the rural schools centres around lack of skills on the part of teachers who deal with learners with disabilities. Teachers should have the appropriate

skills and expertise to teach these learners. The government should hold training workshops for these teachers” (FGA, Participant 4).

“There are inadequate teachers in rural schools. Rural schools are inaccessible, owing to poor road networks. The infrastructure at schools is generally poor – windows are broken, roofs are leaking, floors have potholes, there are inadequate classrooms, the teachers’ furniture is rundown, and there is a lack of crucial teaching-learning resources. As a result, fewer teachers are attracted to rural schools. The situation is very depressing” (FGA, Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

Other participants highlighted the following challenges:

“Rural schools face the challenge of inadequate teachers who teach learners with special educational needs. Most teachers do not like to specialise in inclusive education because they say that the government loads them with extra work when they are not properly resourced to deal with learners with disabilities. They suggest that such learners be sent to specialised schools where there are proper resources to deal with their various conditions. Teachers generally use the words: ‘these children do not belong here’. Our school faces an acute shortage of special education teachers, and mainstream teachers have to teach learners with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms though they are not confident about the methods and approaches used to teach them and meet the different needs of learners with disabilities” (Participant O 2; O1, and 6).

4.3.4.8 Poor remuneration for teachers

Poor remuneration for teachers in Lesotho has been ongoing for years. For instance, the years 2018 and 2019 were punctuated by ongoing teachers’ strikes in Lesotho. Currently, the situation has not yet been brought to finality. Almost all the participants agreed that teachers’ salaries were inadequate. They said:

“Teachers detest teaching in rural schools because there is nothing attractive or enticing there. The so-called mountain allowance for public schools is minimal if not completely embarrassing” (FGB, Participant 3).

“Teaching is a tough job. What is appalling is that it is one of the lowest remunerated professions in this country. Teachers are not happy with their salaries; so, instead of focusing on learners, they focus on other means of supplementing their salaries which do not even afford basic needs at the end of the month” (FGA, Participant 4).

“Teachers’ salaries should be prioritised and teacher-learner ratio should be reviewed downwards” (FGB, Participant 4).

“Our salaries do not afford our basic needs. The government does not bother to increase teachers’ salaries, yet they have added more responsibilities by including learners with disabilities in the education system. It is not fair. If teachers can be given in-service training and be paid good salaries, I believe teachers can change their attitude towards the teaching of learners with disabilities” (FGA, Participant 3).

Participant 3 further commented on teachers’ dissatisfaction with their salaries as alluded to by their different teachers’ unions. Participant 3 said:

“The Lesotho Association of Teachers (LAT), the Lesotho Teachers’ Trade Union (LTTU) and the Lesotho Principal’s Association (LEPAS) represented teachers to negotiate with the government about teachers’ problems which were tabled as follows; career and salary structure, performance contract, acting principals’ incentives, arrears, utilities, pension fund, payslips, and retirement age. The government took its time to respond to these grievances. So teachers went on strike in August through September 2019, hoping to fast-track the proceedings, but the strikes did not resolve the problems” (All participants in FGA and FGB).

4.3.5 Overcoming the challenges teachers face in dealing with LSENs

The findings under the previous themes suggest that the participants in this study identified the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with learners with special educational needs. The philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* is associated with the being of a person, which is determined by his or her association with other persons in the inter-subjective community (van Niekerk, 2013).

An analysis of the focus group discussions suggests that more improvements need to be made to overcome the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with learners with special educational needs. The findings were then categorised into the following sub-themes: need to understand LSENs, improvement of methods and approaches used by the teachers, collaboration between teachers, learners without disabilities and LSENs, collaboration between parents of learners with special educational needs and teachers, and specialised training facilities or educational resources.

4.3.5.1 Need to understand LSENs

Mounting awareness campaigns aimed at sensitising society about different disabilities among other people was seen as a tool to promote an understanding of the needs of learners with disabilities. The participants revealed that making people aware of the disabilities was tantamount to ‘developing new knowledge’ and ‘sharing ideas and information’ regarded as helpful in addressing the needs of learners with special educational needs in their host rural school environment as shown in the following responses:

Participants 6 (FGD A) said:

“The most important thing is for an individual to deal with something he or she has knowledge of; people who are around learners with disabilities such as community members, learners without disabilities and parents, needed to be made to understand learners with disabilities. They should also know how to address their special educational needs.”

The responses of both government officials (PO1 & PO2) show that the unique needs of learners with disabilities need qualified teachers to impart new knowledge among learners with special educational needs and community members.

During the interviews, Participant 1 had this to say:

“The responsibilities of teachers include accommodating and taking care of all learners’ needs in the school. There has to be the placement of qualified teachers, especially those

who have experience in teaching learners with disabilities. At least 3 or 4 teachers have to be deployed to each school.”

The other officer (PO2) added:

“Schools need to hold meetings with parents where teachers can disseminate information to parents teaching them about disabilities so that all people get to understand and accept learners with disabilities as human beings like everyone else.”

4.3.5.2 Improvement of methods and approaches used by the teachers

Drawing from the participants’ responses, it is apparent that the lack of trained teachers prevailing in Lesotho’s rural schools is one of the major challenges. Evidently, the participants’ responses under this sub-theme pointed to the need for improving the methods used by teachers in addressing the special needs of learners with disabilities. The utterance cited below clearly substantiates this view.

Participant 2 said:

“Teamwork and planning together how to develop strategies that effectively help learners with disabilities can remedy the situation” (FGB).

Both schools and government officials reiterated the importance of offering remedial classes to lagging learners as learners differ in their academic problems:

“Teachers need to apply the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for them to address each learner’s different needs, so as to help them to upgrade their academic performance” (P O1).

Participant 4 (FGA) added, thus:

“Most teachers have a negative attitude, which needs to be changed for them to be able to help learners with special educational needs in our school.”

The above responses point to a free, inclusive and compulsory education supported by the UN, the UNESCO, and the Salamanca Statement of 1994, emphasising that inclusive education should be cognisant of the wider diversity of children's needs.

4.3.5.3 Collaboration between teachers, learners without disabilities and LSENs

Under this sub-theme, the participants' responses reveal that enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs should be everybody's responsibility. The findings attest to the need to improve collaboration among teachers, learners without disabilities, and learners with disabilities. Learners with disabilities are everybody's concern, and they need care and support, which is usually provided by their nuclear and extended families, schools, religious and community organisations, and also by governmental and non-governmental organisations (Khanare & de Lange, 2017). So there should be a display of kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, respect and concern for others as encapsulated in the concept of *Ubuntu/Botho*.

Participants 3 (FGD B) added:

“Engaging all learners regardless of disability has to be our motto; this instils acceptance and love among our students.”

“Learners need to be treated equally, and teachers and learners have to be trained about the different forms of disability” (Participant 5, FGD A).

These findings are in line with the tenets of the theory of *Ubuntu* underpinning this study. The concept of *Ubuntu* embraces unity and, in particular, a sense of communality, thereby promoting the spirit of oneness, sharing and empathy towards one another, which all enhance human value, trust, and dignity (Letseka, 2011; Khoza, 2005; Metz, 2011). The government needs to embrace this philosophy to enhance an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs to cater to all, irrespective of their disabilities.

The discussion on this subject matter pointed to the participants' realistic view of collaboration. There was a commonality between the two schools on the notion that the parents of learners with disabilities should collaborate with teachers in the teaching of learners with disabilities. The

responses of some teachers in both School A and School B pointed to a common challenge, that is, the lack of parental support to learners with disabilities. The participants' advocacy for collaboration seeks to overcome such challenges. During the focus group discussions, participants expressed their views advocating collaboration:

“Parents keep their children with disabilities at home. There is a great need for teachers to support parents for them to feel free to bring their children to schools” (FGB, Participant 3).

Similarly, Participant 2 in focus group B added:

“I think working collaboratively with parents of children with disabilities enables school facilitation and management team to work with teachers and this enables the voices of such parents to be heard on behalf of their children.”

The participants indicated the need for their rural schools to strengthen their relationships with learners' parents. They highlighted that when relationships with every community member are strengthened, the learning of individual learners with disabilities will be improved. This is seen in the utterances of Participant 4 in Focus Group Discussions A:

“There has to be a constructive plan enhancing cooperation between teachers and parents in offering support to the learning of learners with disabilities.”

The findings strongly advocate the need for collaboration between the parents of learners with special educational needs and teachers. This trajectory gravitates towards enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs within the context of their rural school. Chidindi's (2012) study findings are in sync with the findings of this study, particularly the fact that learners with special educational needs were able to adjust to their academic life due to the collaborative support they received within their schools. The participants in this study advocated the need for learners with disabilities to be assisted collaboratively for them to overcome their

challenges. In their study, Gabdrakhmanova and Guseva (2016) found that adjustment and adaptation were easy for learners with disabilities due to the collaborative support they got within their learning environment.

4.3.3.5 Specialised training facilities/educational resources

Under this sub-theme, most participants revealed that educational resources need improvement. The findings reveal the absence of appropriate teaching and learning resources within rural schools, making the enhancement of an enabling environment for learners with disabilities difficult. Some of the participants' explanations show that resources contribute to enhancing an enabling learning environment.

“Books should have reached schools by the time schools start at the beginning of each year; classrooms should be cleaned and renovated; all the school surroundings should be paved for free movement of learners with disabilities; chalkboards should be repainted and ceilings and classroom carpets should be done” (Participant O1).

“The availability of the resources determines the success of the teaching and learning activity” (FG: B2).

“Resources constitute a good classroom atmosphere. The government should provide us with the resources before the year begins so that teaching and learning will start earnestly and progress consistently and will always be productive. The availability of resources encourages the parents of learners with disabilities to be hopeful that their children will improve when they have appropriate resources to help them cope with classroom work. The parents who keep their children at home will be motivated to send their children to school when they realise that there is a holistic improvement” (FGB, Participants 3, 4, and 6).

The findings further reveal that the participants had an understanding of the importance of educational resources in the effective teaching and learning of learners with special educational needs. These findings resonate with those of Seotsanyane and Matheolane (2010) and Mosia (2014), who reported that the lack of resources exacerbates the vulnerabilities of learners with disabilities, especially those learning in rural schools. The above-cited quotation dovetails with

some aspects of the reviewed literature, which show that engaging in an inclusive agenda ensures quality learning through improving the learning of learners with special educational needs (Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart, & Lyner-Cleophas, 2012).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews. The researcher has solicited for the participants' views through their original utterances. This chapter has shown that the challenges facing teachers in enhancing an enabling environment in rural primary schools in Lesotho are quite universal; hence, the common responses were obtained from both the focus group discussions and the one-on-one, in-depth interviews. All the respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of what constitutes an enabling environment, the importance of an enabling environment, and they agreed on strategies of enhancing it. It can be concluded that lack of infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, lack of resources, poor remuneration, and lack of coordination between all educational stakeholders are among the key challenges that hinder the enhancement of an enabling environment in Lesotho's rural primary schools. The participants have also proffered recommendations on how the same challenges can be addressed to enhance an enabling learning environment for learners with special educational needs in rural schools in Lesotho. The next chapter discusses the findings and proffers recommendations on the roles that different stakeholders should play to enhance an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented, analysed, and interpreted data elicited from the participants. This chapter discusses the main findings of the study. After that, it highlights the conclusions deriving from the findings. It discusses the limitations of the study. The chapter proffers the general recommendations and suggests possible areas for further research.

5.2 The key research findings

This section provides a summary of the findings that responded to the five key research questions used in guiding this study:

1. How can an enabling environment for LSENs be understood as an essential need in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
2. What is the importance of an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
3. What are the resources needed to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
4. What are the challenges teachers face in dealing with LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho?
5. What are the ways to overcome the challenges faced by teachers when teaching LSENs be determined?

The responses to the above questions were presented as themes that had emerged out of this study.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Understanding an enabling environment for LSEs

5.2.1.1 Safe, comfortable, healthy and inclusive environment

The findings reveal that the participants clearly understood what entails an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. All the participants concurred that an enabling environment for learners with disabilities meant a safe, comfortable, healthy, and inclusive atmosphere where equal and quality education is provided to all.

The findings reveal that safety, comfort, health, and inclusivity within the learning atmosphere enhance an enabling learning and teaching environment for all learners, including those with disabilities. Venville and Oliver (2015) indicate that when educational structures are transformed into a more creative, receptive and human system, learners with disabilities feel included, safe and able to exploit opportunities in terms of acquiring quality education in their local schools. Participants recognised that a safe and comfortable space contributes to the holistic development of all learners as well as ensuring the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of learners with disabilities. They indicated that an enabling environment should be a place for the implementation of a set of established rules related to the playtime activities for learners with special educational needs, particularly in rural primary schools. The findings attest to productive learning, where all learners are free to learn happily in a healthy, free and conducive environment. Hornby (2015) ensures quality and equal involvement of all learners (LIEP, 2018). The notion that all children should be educated in the general education classroom replaces retrogressive values regarding the rights of the individual (Gabbrakhmanova & Guseva, 2016).

5.2.1.2 Equal and quality education to all learners

The findings indicate that equal access to quality education by all learners should be considered as a factor that constitutes an understanding of an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs. Some participants emphasised that an enabling environment should be a non-discriminatory space (LIEP, 2018), where teachers' workloads are sustainable. The findings

further revealed that an enabling learning environment should be understood as that which promotes equal and quality EFA by enforcing established rules, regulations, procedures and existing conditions that should provide and facilitate the smooth and continuous inclusion of all citizens and civil society organisations in the process of policy creation and development for all learners irrespective of their disabilities. The findings further demonstrate that an enabling environment allows for productive learning, where all learners are free to learn happily in a healthy, free and conducive environment. It ensures quality and equal involvement of all learners. Mateusi *et al.* (2014) argue that inclusive schooling involves the development of a classroom that caters for all children. Precisely, inclusive education is when disadvantaged learners with learning barriers are equally considered in education, along with other learners.

5.2.2 Theme 2: The importance of an enabling environment for LSENs

5.2.2.1 Flexibility of the curriculum

Designing an enabling learning environment is the basis on which to develop and advance a process of educational transformation, which promotes the EFA regardless of individual learning characteristics. Assuredly, inclusion can only be fully achieved by putting in place enabling mechanisms, availing an appropriate environment and ensuring the development of relevant teaching techniques in the inclusive classroom. The findings show that the flexibility of the curriculum, training for special education teachers, and coordination between learners, parents and teachers involvement help in creating an enabling environment for learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The participants' responses revealed that the flexibility of the curriculum is vital to an enabling environment for LSENs. They stated that curriculum structure plays a pivotal role in enhancing an enabling environment if it suits the learners' capacities and needs in inclusive schools. The participants stated that the curriculum is difficult to interpret, and most teachers experience challenges encoding it to learners when they are still grappling with understanding it. The participants' responses revealed that teachers had reservations about it and believed the training and the time allocated to its implementation were insufficient.

The findings further reveal that the curriculum for LSENs should be relevant to their needs to make learning appropriate to learners' lives, capacities, and needs. Also, there should be the provision of adequate materials needed in the enhancement of an enabling learning environment.

5.2.2.2 Training for special education teachers

Many factors coalesce in creating an enabling environment for LSENs, particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The findings reveal that an enabling learning environment is important for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho and that teacher training is equally central to the creation of this environment. Teachers, particularly in Physical Education, require specialised training in the inclusive teaching of pupils with autism, intellectual disabilities, and behavioural disorders in Physical Education. Teachers are incompetent in the management of the behaviour of these learners (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Both pre-service and in-service teachers need teaching practice in ordinary classrooms that are inclusive of learners with diverse disabilities in Physical Education. Qualified and experienced teachers in Physical Education should mentor untrained teachers in such teaching practice to equip them with the relevant theory and practice. Hlalele (2012) asserts that insufficiently trained and unskilled teachers apply teaching strategies that inappropriately attempt to address the needs of learners with disabilities. Hove (2014) identified a lack of skills among teachers as preventing them from functioning effectively in the mainstream education system.

The findings reveal that primary schools, mostly in rural areas, run short of special education teachers, so it is not easy for teachers to meet the different needs of every learner because they are not trained to deal with learners with special educational needs, and some teachers had some understanding that such learners should not be included in the regular classroom. The findings reveal that some teachers perceived the inclusion of LSENs in the mainstream as progressive, but highlighted that the government should prioritise the training of teachers before the inclusion takes place. Mateusi *et al.* (2014) concur, asserting that in Lesotho, however, more learners with disabilities are being integrated into mainstream classrooms without capacitating teachers to manage this educational inclusion. The shortage of qualified teachers, coupled with

overcrowding in classrooms, contributed to the low quality and inefficiency of primary education in Lesotho (Seotsanyane & Matheolane, 2010).

5.2.2.3 Coordination between learners, teachers, and parents

The findings attest to the fact that the coordination between learners, teachers, and parents could be a critical factor in establishing an enabling environment for LSENs. The participants mentioned that the creation of such an environment is critical to a healthy and effective education system, which should function like ‘a three-legged pot’ for it to be successful. It should consist of the teacher, the learner and the parent. Should any of these three components fail to play their part the way they are supposed to, there would be no coordination between the parent and the teacher, and the learner’s performance would always be compromised. This is true in a situation where the learner may not even have any form of disability; so, it could be worse with learners with disabilities. The findings show that some parents are migrating to neighbouring countries to seek jobs. So, it is not easy for parental involvement to occur in those circumstances; it is not easy for them to get involved in children’s work. Maluleke (2014) highlights that in this regard, the lack of parental support and negligence of parental responsibilities are attributed to the fact that parents feel their input would not be appreciated or taken into consideration. According to du Plessis (2014), functionally illiterate and innumerate parents are mainly found in rural areas; in addition, many rural communities lack professional help. Many of these problems are linked to socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment, and these also directly influence the quality of education provided to children (South African Schools Act, 1996).

5.2.2.4 Improvement of teachers’ salaries

The participants raised concern regarding the remuneration of teachers, who have to deal with the challenges posed by dealing with LSENs. They had more workload which did not match their meagre salaries which hardly afford their basic needs. Mateusi *et al.* (2014) identify teachers as fundamental in determining the quality of inclusive education. They can play a crucial role in transforming schools, but they may not bring about any meaningful change at the same time.

Sabella (2015) agrees that teachers become inspired when they are given sufficient support, without which they are unlikely to bring about any change at all. So, if teachers lack support from educational stakeholders, particularly regarding teaching and learning, mostly in terms of improving their salaries, that may reduce their commitment to work and this may lead to underachievement, resulting in LSENs dropping out of school. Coleman (2017) views well-paid teachers as very effective in their work. The findings reveal that teachers' grievances should be addressed so as to enhance an enabling environment for teachers and learners. The findings further reveal that teachers went on strike for two months, owing to dissatisfaction with their salaries. Studies indicate that good salaries act as a positive reinforcement in supporting teachers (Odanga *et al.*, 2018). Teachers were represented by their organisations; LAT, LTTU, and LEPSA to negotiate with the government through the Ministry of Education and Training. Teachers' salaries have further plunged during the COVID-19 lockdown, as some of the teachers working in private schools did not get their full salaries.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Resources used to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs

5.2.3.1 Importance of teaching and learning materials

The findings revealed that teaching and learning materials are essential elements in enhancing an enabling learning environment in rural primary schools in Lesotho. When the teaching and learning materials are prepared well in advance, teaching and learning can be an enabling experience for both the teacher and learners, particularly LSENs in rural primary schools. Schools in rural areas fail to adequately respond to the needs of children with learning barriers (Khanare, 2012). Lesotho is not an exception, and according to Khoaeane (2012), inclusive education in Lesotho might not achieve its predetermined goals and objectives if conditions in primary schools continue to deteriorate. Resources have a vital role to play in supporting the development of inclusive practices. This involves the utilisation of the expertise and specialised resources to effectively meet the needs of pupils with a range of needs within mainstream settings (Ekins, 2012).

5.2.3.2 The importance of infrastructural resources

The findings reveal that infrastructure should be specifically prepared to accommodate each learner. The importance of infrastructure in an educational setting cannot be underestimated. The findings indicate that the government should have availed resources before implementing the current curriculum. The participants observed that some challenges are intertwined in political squabbles, making their unavailability trivial. The findings reveal that in rural schools, the infrastructure is so poor and old that it does not suit inclusive education where LSENs are integrated into regular schooling. du Plessis (2014) observed that many rural communities and their schools are poor and disadvantaged, lacking basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, roads, transport, electricity, and information technology. The socio-economic realities of rural areas disadvantage learners in rural schools. Williams and Nierengarter (2010) further explain that to maintain and address rural realities, the rural community should draw from various sources such as efforts to provide cooperative and collaborative staff development for teachers in rural areas.

5.2.3.3 The importance of a flexible workforce

The findings reveal that the flexibility of human resources is important in enhancing an enabling environment for LSENs in rural schools. The participants fully advocated the flexibility of teachers and the entire learning environment. The participants reported that an enabling environment for LSENs is not just a pipedream as it can be achieved through serious commitment on the part of all educational stakeholders. Hornby (2015) advises that schools must ensure that ineffective strategies, such as class ability grouping, are avoided. All teachers should identify children with disabilities and ensure that the teaching strategies and techniques being employed are based on evidence-based practices, for example, cooperative learning and peer tutoring. Odanga *et al.* (2018) highlight that teachers' self-beliefs can be enhanced by improving their working conditions which include providing adequate teaching and learning facilities and instituting welfare programme. Effective teachers decorate their walls with relevant information that may provide students with visual cues or learning strategies that help them cope with learning tasks (*Kauffman et al., 2016*).

5.2.4 Theme 4: Challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSENs

The study findings depict teachers as facing many challenges when dealing with learners with special educational needs. Such challenges include lack of teaching and learning materials, the inaccessibility of rural schools, inadequate and inappropriate or even lack of infrastructure, crowded classes, learners' and teachers' negative attitudes which put LSENs at risk, lack of parental support and involvement, lack of human resources and special needs teachers, poor remuneration for teachers and lack of effective coordination between teachers and parents.

5.2.4.1 Lack of teaching and learning materials

The findings revealed that the participants had identified the absence of appropriate teaching and learning resources within their rural schools, their responses revealed that teachers lack resources and other materials to be well-equipped in teaching and learning of LSENs for quality education particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho. They indicated that there is lack of effective teaching and learning in their school environment to offer quality education to LSENs. They further said the school environment is not user friendly to accommodate learners with LSENs in order for them to reach their full potential. Therefore, a lack of resources within rural schools topped the list. A closer examination of the findings in this theme revealed that there are more challenges due to lack of teaching and learning materials and if not considered or even improved are likely to hinder the teaching and learning of LSENs. As a result it could become barriers in their learning; thus, mostly LSENs even drop out of school due to lack of resources that prevent them from continuing with their studies.

5.2.4.2 Inaccessibility of rural schools

As shown by the participants in theme 3, the physical environment was one of the major inhibitions identified by the participants that their rural schools have classrooms to accommodate all learners, including LSENs. Although it appeared to be a privilege for them to have classrooms for all learners, the prevalent was the inaccessibility of such school classrooms that

such classrooms become barriers to the inclusion of LSENs, such as classrooms without ramps that create inaccessibility to students with physical disabilities and sloppy school surroundings that hinder smooth movement for learners using wheelchairs. The findings from the participants, therefore, indicated that LSENs felt a sense of belonging as they are fully accommodated in the classrooms, their enhanced learning condition enable academic performance through which they felt welcomed, grew, and developed holistically.

5.2.4.3 Lack of adequate infrastructure

The emerged findings relating to the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSENs is what the participants regarded as the need for their improvement. In this study, the findings refer to school infrastructure. Participants understood that infrastructure is one other important factor that needs to be identified as crucial in this study. Appropriate infrastructure for LSENs is one of the best resources which allow a free environment that contribute to effective learning and teaching and enhances enabling environment for LSENs. It calls for an inclusive education environment for all learners in the rural primary school setting.

5.2.4.4 Teaching overcrowded and multi-graded classrooms

The findings from the participants revealed that the learner-teacher ratio and teaching multi-grades in rural schools is a challenge. For the participants in this study, having enough numbers of learners that correspond with teachers' ratio give teachers allowance to reach each learner in the class to accommodate each learners' needs irrespective of their disabilities. It was found that an appropriate learner-teacher ratio should enable disability-friendly school environment to enhance teaching and learning for all learners, including LSENs. The participants' responses, therefore, show that overcrowded classes lead to poor manageable in the teaching and learning for LSENs and consequently fail in meeting a diversity of needs for every learner.

5.2.4.5 Negative attitudes of learners, parents and teachers towards LSENs

The prevailing negative attitudes from teachers and learners without any kind of impairment put the learners who experience barriers to learning at risk. In this vein, the findings from the participants' responses indicated that this is since teachers are not really trained to teach LSENs and there are few teachers to teach LSENs in all classes; as a result, they lack skills to offer to LSENs on how to work with LSENs within their rural primary schools.

5.2.4.6 Inaccessible physical environment

Teachers understood very well that the environment is one of the factors that contribute most to free movement and effective learning of LSENs, particularly in rural primary schools of Lesotho. The findings from two schools and MoET revealed that most of the schools do not have ramps to simplify the movement for physically impaired learners as it is discovered that the environment is sloppy, so it becomes a barrier for LSENs to move around. The MoET with SEU need to go around schools to check if the environment is user friendly to everybody at schools.

5.2.4.7 Lack of parental support and involvement

The research study findings reveal that lack of parental support is a challenge; therefore, teachers, learners and parents fail to work together in order to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The participants' responses suggest that having a healthy relationship among various stakeholders (including learners, teachers, and parents) was seen as an enabling factor to enhance teaching and learning for LSENs. The findings revealed that in order to help LSENs, teachers need to work as a team. Teachers believe that it is helpful because they learn from each other and boost their confidence towards their teaching approaches. This further points to the positive involvement of learners without disabilities and parents in helping LSENs in their different activities in and outside the classrooms. The findings of this study, therefore, revealed that lack of parental support hinders them from building relationships and enabling academic networking within their schools.

5.2.4.8 Lack of human resources and special needs' teachers

The findings revealed that rural primary schools face the challenges of attracting qualified teachers, particularly LSENs teachers. The problem faced by teachers is that they are poorly remunerated in Lesotho. Moreover, teachers are given an added load of LSENs who need more time to be attended to. The findings further indicated that the lack of special needs' teachers coincide with the assertion that rural communities and schools lack resources (Mosia, 2014). The findings indicated that teachers in rural schools had to teach every learner even in multi-graded classrooms because of a shortage of staff.

5.2.4.9 Poor remuneration for teachers

The findings show that the pay of teachers' is not satisfactory. The teachers' strikes reflected the poor salaries of teachers, yet the government had also added LSENs. The participants' responses indicated that the government's failure at upgrading teachers' salaries as a sign of appreciation for their extraordinary work to the future generation demotivate teachers from fully performing their work.

5.3.1 Theme: 5 Overcoming the challenges teachers' face in dealing with LSENs

The findings in the previous themes suggest that the participants in this study identified challenges faced by teachers in dealing with LSENs and these challenges showed some fragments in the teaching and learning environment of LSENs. The focus group discussions suggest that more improvements need to be done to overcome such challenges. The findings were then grouped into the following sub-themes: Need to understand LSENs, Improvement of methods and approaches used by the teachers, Collaboration between learners without disabilities and LSEN and Specialised training facilities/educational resources.

5.3.3.1 Need to understand LSENs

The findings from this study revealed that there should be awareness campaigns in sensitising the community by holding workshops, trainings, and public gathering in educating the community on understanding the needs of LSENs. The training would equip the community with some knowledge, and with the knowledge they would acquire, their negative attitude and discrimination towards LSENs and their families will decrease. The participants feel that everybody should be treated equally. Further, the findings show that LSENs need to be helped by professional people who are trained specifically for LSENs. Therefore, there is a need for everyone in the community to be educated about LSENs.

5.3.3.2 Improvement of methods and approaches used by teachers

Teachers understood that there is a need for improving the methods and approaches to addressing LSENs challenges. The participants emphasised that teamwork in planning academic work together on how to develop strategies that effectively help learners with disabilities can remedy the situation. All the participants realised the importance of different methods and approaches used by teachers to make teaching and learning a success. The MoET should consider holding frequent workshops and training for teachers; the training will help to equip teachers with different methods and approaches to help in an inclusive classroom.

5.3.3.3 Collaboration between learners without disabilities and LSENs

The findings highlight that there is a need for collaboration of LSENs and learners without disabilities. The participants said that learners without disabilities should show *Ubuntu* towards LSENs. The participants highlight that other learners without disabilities, their commitment to help, support and know how to address the needs of LSENs in this aspect of *Ubuntu* will be appreciated because *Ubuntu* embraces kindness, generosity, respect and concern to others. The findings of the study further displayed unity among learners without disabilities and LSENs. Participants realised that the relationship of learners without disabilities and LSENs showed the spirit of oneness which enhances human values, trust and dignity (Letseka, 2011). Participants further pointed out that there is a need for cooperation between the learners because they need each other and this support is well appreciated by their teachers.

5.3.3.4 Specialised training facilities/educational resources

The findings of the study reveal that resources constitute a good classroom atmosphere and participants have an understanding of the importance of educational resources in the effective teaching and learning of LSENs. Mosia (2014) reports that lack of resources exacerbates the vulnerability of LSENs, especially those in rural primary schools. Participants feel that resources in the teaching and learning system play a major role in promoting effective teaching and learning that brings quality and equal education to teachers and learners because resources enhance enabling learning to all learners.

5.4 Conclusion

The research study was carried to explore an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. According to the Lesotho Education Act (2010), free primary education was introduced in 2000. Every Mosotho child, irrespective of the child's disability should be offered equal and quality education. The introduction of an integrated curriculum brought challenges to teachers because most of the teachers teaching inclusive classrooms are not trained from teachers' college or the university to be well-equipped. They feel they are not relevant to teach LSENs. Moreover, lack of resources make them also not fit to teach such learners. Some teachers become negative to LSENs saying the government placed a load on them without any increment on their salaries.

In this study it is highlighted that there is a need to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools to provide support and help in increasing LSENs' confidence and belief in themselves that they can do their academic work independently.

This empirical study pointed out that an enabling environment allows for productive learning, where all learners are free to learn happily in a healthy, free and conducive environment that ensures quality and equal involvement of all learners (Mateusi *et al.*, 2014).

The findings in this study revealed that all education stakeholders should work as a team to achieve a common goal of enhancing an enabling environment for LSEN in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

5.5 Recommendations of the study

The study found out that teachers and education officials understood what is meant by enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

The focus group discussions and interviews with the participants enabled the researcher to synthesise the participants' standpoints on what can be done to enhance an enabling environment

for learners with special educational needs in rural primary schools. Therefore, the following recommendations were made according to the findings of the study:

- All stakeholders: teachers, parents, the entire community, school administrators, policymakers, the government, and its respective supportive ministries should acknowledge that inclusivity requires teamwork. Every stakeholder should fully support learners with special educational needs at schools. All should embrace the principles of *Ubuntu*.
- The government should scale up disability awareness campaigns in collaboration with village chiefs and community counsellors. This strategy educates parents, teachers, and other learners about the importance of supporting and accepting learners with disabilities.
- The Government of Lesotho, in collaboration with teacher training institutes – the Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho; as well as the Ministry of Education and Training through the Special Education Unit, should provide in-service training for teachers; organise workshops and provide short-term courses on special education.
- The government should fast-track the procurement of resources such as teaching and learning materials. These should reach schools timeously every year before schools re-open at the beginning of the year.
- Renovation of old school structures should be done regularly, and new structures should be erected. Planning should take cognisance of the need to ensure that these structures are inclusive, safe and user-friendly for all learners. Old structures should be improved, with ramps erected to accommodate the physically and visually impaired learners.
- The government, in consultation with the school administrators, should identify learners with special educational needs and review the feeding programme to accommodate them in different ways. They may be given food in the morning before classes commence and after school.

- For inclusive education to be more effective, the government should task a team of experts to help class teachers to enhance the teaching and learning environment for learners with special educational needs.
- The government should review and implement a flexible curriculum in order to meet the needs of all learners, particularly LSEs.
- Schools, through their principals, should invite experts to teach learners and teachers about learners with disabilities.
- The government, in conjunction with school administrators, should assign a team of experts (stationed in schools) to help LSEs and schools to implement life skills programmes and vocational education to help those learners who cannot proceed to institutions of higher learning. This way, LSEs are prepared for lifelong learning and are taught survival skills.
- School management should liaise with doctors, nurses, psychologists/social workers, counsellors, education officials, teachers, government and NGOs to develop strategies that can help LSEs to attain higher educational qualifications with the assistance of the government.
- School principals should identify LSEs and include follow-up home visits. If records of their lifestyles are kept, then measures can be put in place to address their various needs.
- The government should consider devolution of essential services departments such as social welfare, immigration, clinics, police stations, and road networks to villages to ensure accessibility of the rural areas. This makes it easier for services and service providers to reach LSE.
- Teachers' salaries should be reviewed to motivate and encourage teachers to perform more effectively.

5.6 Limitations of the study

According to Mhlongo (2017), the limitations of the study are the obstacles the researcher encounters and finds difficult to control. The officials in the Special Education Unit would persistently postpone scheduled meetings owing to their busy schedules. The researcher's schedule had to be altered. Visits to the schools were characterised by bottlenecks because teachers went on a countrywide strike meant to compel the government to attend to their grievances. So teachers' strikes continued for two months on end, from August through September 2019.

5.7 Concluding remarks

The research study sought to establish and assess different ways of enhancing an enabling environment for learners with disabilities in rural primary schools in Lesotho. Since the introduction of free and compulsory primary education in 2000, primary schools have seen an increase in the enrolment of LSENs (Education Act, 2010). As a legal framework that supports equal and quality EFA, the Education Act (2010) aligns itself with the World Conference on EFA held in Jomtien, Thailand by 150 countries from the 5th to the 9th of March 1990, to lobby for the accessibility of primary education to all children. Pursuant to this international convention, the study strongly emphasises the need for enhancing an enabling environment for LSEN. The thrust of this conference was to emphasise the empowerment of all children, including those with special educational needs, to access schools and complete quality primary education by 2015 (World Bank, 2000; UNESCO, 2000). However, developing countries like Lesotho are still grappling with massive challenges in transforming this into reality.

According to Mahlomaholo (2013), the learning environment is important in the creation of one's identity and the enhancement of educational performance. Mahlomaholo (2013) further states that parents, teachers, and peers play a significant role in organising and re-organising the environment for the benefit of all learners. These people bring together collective memories of their communities in the form of culture, which enriches the experiences of learning 'being' and 'becoming' (Mahlomaholo, 2013).

The findings from the study reveal that teamwork is one of the models that can contribute immensely towards a prosperous and enhanced teaching and learning environment.

As confirmed by this study, it is critical to enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The philosophy of *Ubuntu* formed the theoretical framework that appropriately fits in with the notion of including LSENs in the mainstream classes, which is the thrust of this study. According to Tshabalala (2014), several researchers concur that the concept of *Ubuntu* embraces unity and a sense of ‘community’, thereby promoting the spirit of oneness, sharing and empathy towards one another, which enhances human value, trust, and dignity (Mbigi & Maree, 1995; Venter, 2004; Khoza, 2005; Mabovula, 2011; Bell & Metz, 2012; Letseka, 2011). Therefore, the principles of *Ubuntu* are suitable to this study as they form the basis for enhancing an enabling environment for learners with special educational needs in Lesotho’s rural primary schools.

Letseka (2012) corroborated the significance of the theory by asserting that virtually every person residing in communities that embrace *Ubuntu* is usually inclined towards treating others with justice and fairness. Therefore, *Ubuntu* is appropriate for this study because it is an epithet of morality, acceptable norms, values, and a culture of caring such as compassion and kindness, generosity, benevolence, courtesy, respect, and concern for others. *Ubuntu*, as an emancipatory paradigm, is therefore relevant and can help enhance an enabling environment for LSENs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

The findings of this research work may be used to inform further research. It is recommended that any future study on a similar topic may include the parents of LSENs so that their voices and perceptions regarding the education of their children can be explored. Future researchers may want to:

- Investigate the slow allocation of resources, particularly teaching and learning materials which hardly reach schools in time.
- Investigate the high rate of dropouts among LSENs before they complete primary school education.
- Investigate poor communication between parents and teachers.
- Explore how the curriculum should be enhanced to meet the needs of different LSENs irrespective of their learning styles and diverse disabilities.

- Investigate the lived experiences of LSENs.
- Explore the perceptions and feelings of the parents of LSENs when their children learn together with children without disabilities.

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ADDENDUM A



18th September, 2019

The Principal

.....
.....

Dear Sir/madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am, **Mathabo Lebona** (Student Number: **2002099162**) a Masters student at the University of the Free State (UFS), faculty of education in psychology of education. I hereby request a permission to conduct my research at your school in the Maseru District. The reason for choosing your school is because there are qualified specialist teachers who have experience in teaching learners with special educational needs.

This research will focus on **enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho**. It will involve the collaboration of the Principal and teachers. The aim of this research will be to explore how an enabling environment can be enhanced for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

I am ready to observe all the stipulations of conducting research such as among others:

- It is voluntary to participate in the study.
- The information obtained will be handled with the confidentiality and will only be used solely for the purpose of my research.
- Prior arrangements will be made to obtain consent from co researchers.

Yours sincerely

Mathabo J.C. Lebona
Cell phone: (+266) 58435398
Email: lelecha.lebona@gmail.com

NB: For verification please feel free to contact my supervisors at the University of the Free State (UFS). Dr. Khanare: +27 730895151; Dr. Mukuna: +27 810451473.

ADDENDUM B: GATEKEEPERS' LETTER



Ministry of Education and Training

Mathabo Lebona (Student # 2002099162)

Maseru Lesotho

6th August 2019

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN MASERU DISTRICT
RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Dear Madam

The Ministry of education and Training grants you permission to conduct a research study within the Maseru rural primary schools as requested. It is the Ministry's hope that the outcome of that study will boost the ministry's efforts in the delivery of quality education to a Mosotho Child.

Yours faithful

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teboho Moneri'.

Teboho Moneri (Mr) CEO Primary (ai)

ADDENDUM C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



Dear Colleagues

I would like to invite you to take part in the research project titled “**Enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural Primary Schools in Lesotho**”. Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) face challenges that lead to under-achievement or sometimes eventual drop-out from school mostly in rural Primary Schools in Lesotho.

The aim of the study is to explore how an enabling environment can be enhanced for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) in rural primary Schools in Lesotho.

I believe your participation in this research will be useful, because your experiences will help me understand more about enhancing an enabling environment for LSEN in primary schools in Lesotho. I have clear confidence that the information obtained from this research will be beneficial in identifying strategies on how best to teach LSEN particularly in rural primary schools in Lesotho and contribute to the development of a new body of knowledge in the field of educational psychology.

I am ready to observe all the stipulations of conducting research which include, among others, that:

- Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary.
- The information obtained from you will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and will be solely used for the purpose of this research.
- If you choose to take part and any issue arises which will make you feel uncomfortable, you may, at any time, withdraw your participation with no further repercussions.

Yours faithfully

Mathabo J.C. Lebona
Cell phone: (266) 58435398
Email:lelcha.lebona@gmail.com

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: _____

Date: _____

NB: For verification please feel free to contact my supervisors at the University of the Free State (UFS). Dr. Khanare: +27 730895151; Dr. Mukuna: +27 810451473.

ADDENDUM D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PART 1: INFORMED CONSENT SHEET

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary Schools in Lesotho

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to explore how an enabling environment can be enhanced for Learners with Special educational Needs (LSEN) in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The focus of the study is that Implementation of Inclusive Education has placed several challenges including allocation of resources, overcrowded classrooms, infrastructure and lack of teacher training, all these challenges lead to underachievement and or ever drop-out of LSEN therefore the study intends to explore how the current status of Inclusive education can be improved in rural primary school in Lesotho as currently, it faces challenges that impede its success.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I, Mathabo JC Lebona, an educator at a primary school in Maseru district, I am employed by the Unity Primary School Maseru in Lesotho. I am studying towards a Med. degree in Psychology of Education at the University of Free State. I am conducting my study on enhancing an enabling environment for Learners with Special Educational Needs in rural primary schools in Lesotho.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter will be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *not applicable*

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

As teachers/officials from Special Education Unit (SEU), SEU is mandated to support schools with knowledge, skills and resources, the participants will provide information on how Special Education Unit Official collaborate efforts that can be used to enhance an enabling environment for LSEN in rural Primary Schools in Lesotho. Your knowledge as teachers/ SEUO with regard to enhance an enabling environment will contribute to the study by providing insight to explore an understanding of an enabling environment for LSEN in rural primary schools in Lesotho. The principal researcher will select two rural primary schools in Maseru district. The population will consist of seven teachers, one principal, from each school and two Special Education Unit Officials.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The method of data collection that will be used in this study is in the form of focus group discussion, semi- structured interviews and one-to-one interview. These data collection methods will allow the researcher to investigate and probe the responses of various interviewees to acquire valuable information regarding their thoughts, feelings, ideas, attitudes, values as well as concerns. The expected time for the interview is 45 minutes.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

While I highly appreciate your participation in this study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is absolutely voluntary and the information obtained from you will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and will be solely used for the purpose of this research study. If you do choose to take part and any issue arises which will make you feel uncomfortable, you may at any time stop or withdraw your participation with no further repercussions. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to withdraw once you have submitted the questionnaire.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study will serve to benefit Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) teachers and Special Education Unit Official as the Government of Lesotho. I am confident that the information obtained from this research will be beneficial in exploring how an enabling environment can be enhanced for LSEN mostly in rural Primary Schools in Lesotho. It will offer practical advice to enable teachers and Special Education Unit Official (SEUO) to how best the current status of Inclusive Education in Lesotho can be improved.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are currently no anticipated risks to the study. However, if such a risk may arise during the course of the study, the researcher will make the necessary referrals. While the researcher highly appreciate your participation in this study and the valuable contribution you can make, please feel free to contact me directly in +266 58435398 if you experience any discontent with the way research is being conducted and you are also free to consult my supervisor in (+27) 730895151, Co- supervisor (+27 810451473 if you experience any unhappiness and uncomfortable.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Of course yes! All necessary measures will be taken by the researcher to ensure that no participant is harmed in any way by the research. No participants' names or school names will be disclosed in any way. The researcher will allow participants to view the letters of informed consent. All information will be kept entirely confidential and will not be disclosed at any time. All participants will receive full anonymity. Participants will also be allowed to have access to the permission letters granted by the respective Departments of Education, allowing the researcher to conduct research. These letters will serve as proof that permission would not have been granted if any unethical practices were involved. The researcher will then explain to participants the significance of the forms from the Department of Education and the stipulations of what is allowed or not during the research process. Participants will also be briefed on the implications of the consent letter. Participants names will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give.

THE INFORMATION STORAGE

Hard copies of the participant's answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of at least five years in a locked cupboard at the researcher's place. For future researchers or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. This information may be used in the future for Research Ethics Review and or approval from the

committee. The interviews will be conducted at times convenient to the participants, probing through pre-set questions, but allowing them to share their perspectives freely. The interviews will be oral and will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

HOW INFORMATION WILL BE DESTROYED

After five years, hard copies of information will be destroyed using a paper shredder. No persons will have any access to the information that you will present in the interviews and when presented to my supervisor, pseudonyms will be used rather than actual names of participants.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Neither financial benefit nor any kind of award will be rewarded to any participant for participating in the study.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact ‘Mathabo JC Lebona via email at lelecha.lebona@gmail.com. Should the participant have any discontent about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my Supervisors Dr. Khanare on (+27) 730895151 and supervisor Dr. Mukuna (+27) 810451473

Yours sincerely

Signature of participant _____

Mathabo J.C. Lebona
Cell phone: (+266) 58435398
Email:lelecha.lebona@gmail.com

NB: For verification please feel free to contact my supervisors at the University of the Free State (UFS). Dr. Khanare: +27 730895151; Dr. Mukuna: +27 810451473.

ADDENDUM E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR EDUCATORS

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

Gender: Male OR Female

1. For how long have you been teaching?
2. What qualifications do you have?
3. How old are you?
A. 20-29 B.30-39 C.40-49 D. 50-59 E.60+
4. Do you have learners with special educational needs in classes?
5. What kind of disabilities do they have? Mention all forms of disabilities.
6. Are there LSEN who underachieve or drop out of the school?
7. How are LSEN given remedial classes?
8. Were awareness workshops held for teachers and learners of how to deal with LSEN?
9. How are the parents of “LSEN” involved in their academic work?
10. What strategies do you use to deal with underachieving and drop-out of LSEN?
11. How many learners are there per class with LSEN?
12. How many remedial teachers do you have?
13. Do you have resources to help LSEN?
14. Are LSEN involved in sports?
15. What challenges or factors contribute to underachieve and dropout of LSEN?
16. What can you say about inclusive education in your school?

Participant’s signature.....Date.....

Researcher’s signature: Date:

ADDENDUM F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR PRINCIPAL

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

Gender: Male OR Female

1. For how long have you been in this position (principal)?
2. What qualifications do you have?
3. How old are you?
A.20-29 B.30-39 C. 40-49 D. 50-59 E. 60+
4. Who governs your school (proprietor of the school)?
5. Do you have children with any kind of disability in your school? Mention all the forms of disabilities?
6. How many learners are in class with LSEN?
7. When did you start to admit learners with special educational needs?
8. Did ‘you’ make awareness workshops to teachers and learners on LSEN?
9. Do school facilities and environment accommodate LSEN?
10. What are the challenges or factors that contribute to underachieve or dropout of LSEN?
11. What strategies do teachers use to deal with the under-achievement and dropout of LSEN?
12. Where and how do teachers get resources to teach LSEN?
13. Are LSEN involved in sports activities?
14. What can you say about inclusive education in your school?

Participant’s signature.....Date.....

Researcher's signature: Date:

ADDENDUM G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION UNIT

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

Gender: Male OR Female

1. Which post do you hold?
2. How many years have you been in this post?
3. What level of education do you have?
4. How old are you?
A. 20-29 B. 30-39 C. 40-49 D. 50-59 E. 60+
5. Do the schools have learners with disabilities? Mention the type of disabilities.
6. How often do you pay school visit to support teachers?
7. Do school facilities accommodate LSEN?
8. Does the Government allocate resources, training and workshops to teachers?
9. How often do you make refresher courses and workshops to teachers?
10. Are there any strategies that SEU use together with schools to improve underachievement and dropout of LSEN?
11. How effective are the above mentioned strategies in improving underachievement and dropout of LSEN?
12. What kind of support do you give in supporting schools with LSEN?
13. Do you receive any support of funding other than government funding?
14. What do you say about the implementation of inclusive education mostly in rural primary schools?

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Researcher's signature: Date: