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**ENHANCING THE INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL  
NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

**By**

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**BEd Hons (UFS)**

**Full dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's  
Degree in Education (MEd Psychology of Education)**

**In the**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STUDIES**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**At the**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

**BLOEMFONTEIN**

**SOUTH AFRICA**

**December 2017**

**Supervisor: Dr MM Nkoane**

## DECLARATION

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I, Malebohang Catherine Morena declare that the dissertation “ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS” handed in fulfilment of the master’s degree in education at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at this or any other university.

I also declare that no work of other scholars has been used without the means of proper citation and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I hereby cede copyright to the University of the Free State.

.....

MC Morena

December 2017

## DEDICATION

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This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband, Molefi John Morena. Your impact in my life is unforgettable. Your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed; your constant support and assurance that I can make it, kept me going. I achieved this because of your assistance and inspiration. I will forever love and respect you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all who assisted me throughout my study journey:

My pillar of strength, the Lord Almighty, for granting me the strength and wisdom to complete this study. I truly learnt to trust in the Lord with all my heart, not leaning on my own understanding – Proverbs 3:5.

My supervisor, Dr MM Nkoane, ntate, you are amazing. You believed in me while I did not believe in myself. Your humility and professional, tireless guidance, together with your words of encouragement and tolerance, brought me where I am today; thank you for that. Above all, I learnt a lot from you, ntate; you instilled in me the will to always trust in the Lord. May God bless you abundantly.

My co-supervisor, Dr M Malebese, thank you very much 'm'e for your logical and constructive way of assessing my work. You persistently urged me to push hard, and here I am now! Kea leboha Mohlakoana ea motle!

My caring mother, Ntsetse. I thank God for the mother He has granted me. Your words "thuto e tla u kenya moo ho sa kenoeng" kept echoing and have brought me thus far. Kea leboha 'm'e, Molimo a u boloke.

The beautiful fruits of my womb, Lebohang and Kamohelo, I did this for you, my children. I wanted to lead by example that education is the key to success. Lebo, mummy's friend, you experienced the tough way I travelled, but your priceless encouragement, motivation and prayers sustained me. Continue to be the caring person you are, my girl. Ke le rata haholo Bakuena, I am truly blessed to have wonderful children like you.

My sisters, Ntia Morena, Manthabeleng Morena and Pulane Mamoliehi Phaphathisa, I thank you for your immeasurable support throughout my study. I dearly love you all.

Thank you very much, SuLE family, your comments and constructive critiques kept me focused and on track. Keep up the good work, colleagues. Through you, we are going far.

I thank all my colleagues and friends for the support they have given me.

I also thank all the officials who gave me permission to conduct this study, and all the people who participated in this research.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AC</b>	<b>Action Research</b>
<b>CDA</b>	<b>Critical Discourse Analysis</b>
<b>CP</b>	<b>Critical Pedagogy</b>
<b>LSEN</b>	<b>Learners with Special Educational Needs</b>
<b>MoET</b>	<b>Ministry of Education and Training (Lesotho)</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>PAR</b>	<b>Participatory Action Research</b>
<b>SASA</b>	<b>South African Schools Act</b>
<b>SGB</b>	<b>School Governing Body</b>
<b>SMT</b>	<b>School Management Team</b>

## ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to enhance inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Inclusion is understood to mean changing the educational system in order to accommodate all learners regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. Learners with special educational needs are defined as those who have difficulties that make it harder for them to learn or access education, meaning that they may need additional assistance different from that given to other learners. Mainstream classrooms are referred to as general classrooms.

As a major strategy to respond to Education For All (EFA) Lesotho implemented Free Primary Education (FPE) in the year 2000. As a result of free education, many children were enrolled in schools including those with special educational needs. This has brought challenge to teachers on how the inclusion of learners with special educational needs can be enhanced. Critical pedagogy (CP) which is a conceptual framework was used as a lens of conducting this study. The choice of critical pedagogy was based on the fact that its major goal is to emancipate and educate all learners regardless of their differences. Furthermore, its principles of empowerment, social justice and transformation were regarded important to view critical pedagogy as the best lens.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used as a methodological approach. PAR involves an inclusive perspective that, to understand a community's realities, it is necessary for the researcher to interact with research participants. In PAR co-researchers are actively contributing in all phases of the research process. In conducting this study, involved were fourteen co-researchers including the head teacher, seven teachers, three learners and three parents who participated throughout the study.

To analyse data, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used. Fairclough's framework was chosen to ensure that the focus of the analysis was on the linguistic features of the text; also to focus on circumstances related to the production of text by co-researchers and finally on the broader social practice to which the text produced belonged.

The findings of the study revealed that initial teacher tuition does not prepare teachers affectively for inclusive education; the curriculum is restrictive leaving little space for adaptations; teachers still use teacher-centred approaches; inadequate parental involvement; as well as the teaching and learning environment that is not conducive for inclusion. The study recommends that initial teacher tuition institutions prepare all

teachers for inclusive education. In-service programmes and workshops are also recommended for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge of inclusive education. For curriculum, the study recommends decentralized curriculum. Learner-centred approaches are recommended and it is also recommended that parents should be seen as active participants in education. The study further recommends the barrier free environment for successful inclusion.

*Key words: Inclusion, Learners with special educational needs, mainstream classrooms*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIENTATION TO ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was carried out to find how inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms can be enhanced. This chapter presents the background to the study, followed by a statement of the problem, which compounds the research question, research aim and the objectives of the study. A description of critical pedagogy (CP), as a conceptual framework, is followed by operational concepts.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodological approach and the accompanying design and the instrumentation used during data generation are explained. To analyse data, the study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), unfolding on the three levels which most of the proponents of CDA identify themselves. A preview of inclusion is made in terms of its challenges, solutions to such challenges, its components, conducive conditions to its functionality, threats towards it and its successes. The chapter concludes with the value of the research, ethical considerations and the layout of chapters.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

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

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

By implementing compulsory education, even learners with special educational needs were seen in high numbers in schools. This has brought a challenge to teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners in one classroom.

Inclusion is defined by Eleweke and Rodda (2002:114) as the full-time placement of children with special needs in regular schools and aiming to provide equivalent educational opportunities and experiences for all learners. Engelbrecht and Green (2007:42) add that inclusion involves transforming and changing the education system to accommodate all children, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. Learners with special educational needs (LSEN) are defined by Klein, Cook and Richardson-Gibbs (2001:xii) to refer to learners who have difficulties that make it harder for them to learn or access education, which means they may need different help from that given to other children. Regular classrooms are referred to as “mainstream classrooms”(Cummins, 2005:573).

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The introduction of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho has led to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, with the result that teachers are faced with the challenge of meeting the particular educational needs of those learners.

#### **1.3.1 Research question**

How can the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms be enhanced?

#### **1.3.2 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in a mainstream classroom in one primary school in Lesotho.

### **1.3.3 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- demonstrating challenges towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms
- identifying possible solutions to problems with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms
- highlighting the components of inclusion
- creating a conducive environment for the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms
- highlighting the threats that may hinder the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms;
- sharing the success indicators for enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

### **1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The study is located within Critical pedagogy (CP), which is a conceptual framework that originated from critical theory, espoused by the Frankfurt School. The main figures or grand narrators who contributed significantly to this conceptual framework are Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (McKernan, 2013:425).

CP as a conceptual framework is viewed relevant and suitable for this study, as it recognises lived experiences and social realities in which learners live. This means that I considered the experiences and social realities of the situation in which the study was conducted.

Aliakbari and Faraji (2011:80) state that CP is concerned with transforming relations of oppressive power that cause people to be oppressed; therefore, it is suitable for this study, as I believe that people should feel free so that they can actively participate in this study.

Freire's concept of praxis (Giroux, 1997:101) and the liberating nature of CP assisted the co-researchers to develop strategies that promote active participation of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Participatory action research (PAR) was used as an approach to undertake the study. PAR involves an inclusive perspective that states, to understand a community's realities, it is necessary for the researcher to interact with research participants (MacDonald, 2012:38). In this study, I believe that people's experiences are ever-changing, regardless of their ability; therefore I wanted to involve them in the study to hear and learn about their experiences and problems, as Nkoane (2010:326) rightfully states, human beings should be studied via human methodologies that respect them and enhance that they are subjective.

This approach appreciates people's power to make a difference; it promotes democracy, empowerment and equality, and encourages marginalised people to take control of their learning. All these principles are also envisaged by CP, which is the lens that was used in conducting this study. CP, like PAR, embraces the following principles: empowerment, emancipation, social justice and hope (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:77).

The epistemological and ontological assumptions of PAR that knowledge creation is an active process and is subjective (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135), are another indication that it was the best method in this study, as the co-researchers were contributing throughout the research process and not treated like subjects of the research. As the researcher, I recognise and value the social being of people, and so does PAR (Reason & Bradbury, 2002:xxii). In PAR, co-researchers are actively contributing in all phases of the research process (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135); in this study too, they contributed throughout the entire research process.

I believe that different opinions and suggestions from different people can best respond to how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream

classrooms, as Laws and Kelly (2005:70) stipulates that individuals become creative actors of their own world. I worked harmoniously with the co-researchers in a democratic environment in which every member was treated with respect. Tshelane (2013:420) states that PAR engages participants in a democratic process as equals, so that their voices can be heard and respected. Different opinions from co-researchers were accepted, as people had different opinions due to their different experiences and contexts (Francis, 2012:149).

## **1.6 DATA GENERATION PROCEDURES**

Data were generated at scheduled meetings with co-researchers, using discussions on the issues or phenomena under investigation. Teams' planning, implementation and reflection around issues were tabled and assessed in the meetings. Meetings with co-researchers assisted in the generation of data, as together we tried to respond to the objectives and research question. Co-researchers also generated data through reflections of information about their experiences, beliefs, collective views and the meanings behind those views (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008:291; Wilkinson, 1998:181).

During the meetings with co-researchers, discussions were initiated by posing or probing questions to the co-researchers to initiate the discussions. Together we tried to create and maintain an environment that encouraged full participation and we used probing to direct the discussions or to clarify aspects. The discussions were audio-taped and transcribed later (Wilkinson, 1998:182).

## **1.7 SELECTION OF CO-RESEARCHERS**

Purposive selection of co-researchers was applied, whereby I selected co-researchers on the basis of information needed (Polkinghorne, 2005:612). Co-researchers were selected on the basis of their involvement with learners with special educational needs. The co-researchers comprised three learners, seven teachers, the school principal and three parents. The teachers in this research process are regarded as important because

they are the ones interacting with and experiencing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Both learners and teachers in this study assisted in generating data relevant to the study and further helped to come up with solutions to such challenges. Kincheloe (2005:253) states that by actively engaging learners with special educational needs in their learning, they can be empowered and saved from being mere objects of learning. Parents were included in this study as resource people who live with their children; this aspect is seen as an important criterion for their inclusion. Will (1986:414) holds a strong belief that parental involvement and participation in the planning and evaluation of children's education may help learners to not see schools as foreign places; this has a positive impact on them. As a result, they stand a better chance to contribute on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms.

The rationale behind the inclusion of head teacher or principal is that he or she is seen as the overseer of the school and was included to be up to date with the changes that were suggested by co-researchers as the study unfolded. Datta (2015:237) emphasises that it is important for the school principal to be a proponent and leader of inclusion for the successful implementation of strategies of inclusion.

## **1.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used to analyse data in this study. CDA explains why and under which circumstances the text producers use their specific linguistic choices. CDA investigates the discourses informed by analysing the social dimensions of language used. The study followed Fairclough's analysis, which constitutes text, discourse and social practice (Rogers, 2011:19).

The audio recordings of the discussions during the meetings with co-researchers were transcribed into written text. Fairclough's framework was chosen to ensure that the focus of the analysis is on the linguistic features of the text; also to focus on

circumstances related to the production of text by co-researchers and, finally, on the broader social practice to which the text produced belongs (Jørgensen& Phillips, 2002:68).

## **1.9 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH**

The study aims to assist teachers in the chosen school to improve the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The strategies that emanate from the study will assist learners, teachers and other stakeholders alike to improve the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms and to help them in their own learning. It is hoped that this study will further contribute to shaping and informing the policy imperatives of the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. Moreover, the strategies suggested, can be adapted and applied in other schools across the country and across the world.

## **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I requested clearance and permission from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State. Permission to conduct the research was also requested from the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho in order to obtain access to the selected school. In addition, permission was sought from the principal of the selected school to obtain access to the teachers, the learners and the parents.

I obtained informed assent and consent from the co-researchers to participate in the study. The co-researchers were informed of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the procedures to be used. The co-researchers were informed that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were assured that they would remain anonymous in all reports and they would be protected against any possible harm. Co-researchers were also assured that the data generated during the study would be treated in the strictest confidentiality.

## 1.11 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

**Chapter 1** presents the background to and orientation of the study.

**Chapter 2** reviews the literature relating to enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. This study is located under the conceptual framework; therefore this chapter firstly presents critical pedagogy as the conceptual framework underpinning the study. Subsequently, related literature which centres on the objectives of the study is presented.

**Chapter 3** discusses participatory action research (PAR) as a methodology. In this chapter, the research design, methods of data generation and data analysis are all discussed.

**Chapter 4** presents discusses and analyses the data, providing the interpretations for each of the objectives of the study.

**Chapter 5** finally presents the findings, recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW TOWARDS ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to improve the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In this chapter, the conceptual framework adopted in this study is discussed and justification for the choice of this conceptual framework is provided. As a transformative approach, critical pedagogy (CP) is seen as a relevant framework and lens to be used. The definitions and historical background of CP are presented. Its objectives, which make it relevant in conducting this study, are also discussed. The discussed objectives include equality, humanity, dynamics of power relations, care and respect. In the same manner, its principles, which are also regarded as an important factor in choosing CP as the best conceptual framework in this study, are discussed. These principles include democracy, critical consciousness, social justice and active participation. The role of the researcher using CP and the relationship of the researcher and the co-researchers are discussed as well.

Furthermore, the following are presented: a review of related literature focusing on challenges toward inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, possible solutions to such challenges, a conducive environment toward such challenges and threats towards circumventing such challenges. The components of and best practices towards inclusive education in different countries are then discussed. Teacher training, curriculum, pedagogical practices, parental involvement and learning environment are seen as challenges with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

## **2.2 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Critical pedagogy (CP), according to Moreeng and Twala (2014:495), is viewed as a process which incorporates viewing in depth that which lies underneath; and that involves thinking, analysing and critiquing what one comes across. When defining pedagogy, Wink (2005:1) points out that it should not be viewed only as implying how to teach, but should also be seen to be about the visible and hidden interactions between the teacher and the learners both inside and outside the classroom. In different definitions of CP, most authors stress the notion of oppression transformation. McKernan (2013:425) defines CP as a movement that involves relationships of learning and teaching whereby learners gain critical consciousness and social awareness; as a result, they take suitable measures against oppression. Boud and Lee (2005:509) add that it is the practice that encourages critical thinking and activities which have the potential to transform oppression or social relations.

According to Kincheloe (2005:157), CP is an approach that is concerned with transforming relations of power that are oppressive. Wink (2005:33) adds that pedagogy is critical if it seeks to change and free people from circumstances that enslave them. As the study aimed at enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs who have been excluded and oppressed for a long time, CP helped to direct us.

### **2.2.1 Historical background of critical pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy (CP) originates in the tradition of critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the work of Paulo Freire, the most celebrated critical educator, who is generally considered to be “the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy” (McLaren, 2000:1). CP was first described by Paulo Freire and developed by Henry Giroux and others as a praxis-oriented educational movement, guided by passion and principle to help learners develop consciousness of freedom, recognise authoritarian tendencies and connect knowledge of power and the ability to take constructive action (McLaren, 2015:120). The prominent members of CP are Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse (Kincheloe, 2005:110).

According to McKernan (2013:424), the critical theoretical tradition, which is the source of CP, developed by the Frankfurt School, was greatly influenced by the work of Karl Max, particularly his views on labour and that the essential societal problem was socio-economic inequality. Karl Max further believed that all people needed to work towards a socialised economy in which each individual receives according to his or her ability, arguing that social justice is dependent upon economic conditions (Brewer, 2011:437). According to McLaren (2001:5), the major concern of critical theory is that education should go beyond the transfer of knowledge to helping develop critical consciousness which leads to transformation of the individual, the learning environment and the entire society.

After the Second World War, Jurgen Habermas and Paulo Freire followed the traditions of the Frankfurt School with the focus on education (Abraham, 2014:93). However, CP did not inherit the Frankfurt School as it is. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2007:12), CP combined liberation ethics of theology and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School with the progressive impulses in education. Freire scholars, such as Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Donald Macedo, Peter McLaren and Ira Shor, also contributed to enrich it (Abraham, 2014:96).

Although Freire's initial focus targeted adult literacy projects in Brazil, his work has consequently dealt with social and educational issues and became popularly adopted. The heart of Freire's pedagogy revolved around an anti-authoritarian, dialogical and interactive approach, which aimed to examine issues of relational power for learners and workers (McLaren, 2000:201). I believe in a democratic learning situation; hence CP best fits this study.

In addition, the fundamental goal was to place social and political critiques of everyday life at the centre of the curriculum. According to Freire (1970:67), there was no place for mere critical thinking. Rather, Freire's praxis – critical reflection and action – required the implementation of a variety of educational practices with the goal of creating not only a better learning environment, but also a better world. Using CP as the lens in this

study, I believe that the suggested strategies for inclusion should be implemented and reflected upon in order to choose the ones that enhance inclusion.

On the other hand, Wink (2005:165) states that the development of critical theory began with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates stressed the importance of dialogue, questioning and taking action. CP challenges long-held assumptions and leads to asking new questions, and the questions asked to determine the answers to get (Wink, 2005:165). In conducting this research, communication was regarded as important. Co-researchers engaged in dialogue throughout the research process, questioning other practices, and highlighting and implementing effective suggested strategies.

### **2.2.2 Relevance of critical pedagogy in this study**

CP as a conceptual framework is viewed relevant and suitable for this study as it recognises lived experiences and social realities in which learners live. This means that the researcher considers the experiences and social realities of the situation in which the study is conducted.

According to Aliakbari and Faraji (2011:80), CP is concerned with changing relations of oppressive power that cause people to be oppressed. I hold the view that people working together should be treated equally, with no one regarded as superior to another. In conducting this study, all research participants were regarded equally and hence were referred to as “co-researchers”. Equality was emphasised in order to move away from oppressive practices towards all participants participating in the study.

Important as well, I hold the view that all people should be free. It is clear, therefore, that CP is suitable for this study. I believe that people should feel free to communicate so that they can actively participate in the study. When co-researchers feel free and are treated with respect, they become highly committed to give their views towards the research question and the research objectives.

Freire's concept of praxis (Giroux, 1997:101) and the liberating nature of CP assisted me in promoting active participation, as I believe that if every person who is affected by learners with special educational needs actively participate in this study, the objectives can be achieved.

### **2.2.3 Objectives of critical pedagogy**

This section presents the objectives of CP. The discussed objectives are social justice and equality, which helped me treat co-researchers equally, as well as humanity, which helped me treat co-researchers in a humane way, where love, trust and respect reigned and were emphasised throughout the research process. In addition, CP aims at transforming the relations of power which are oppressive. This objective assisted me to move away from oppressive power relations and towards sharing of power among the co-researchers. The last objective addressed is that CP aims at caring for and respecting people.

#### **2.2.3.1 Social justice and equality**

According to Scherlen and Robinson (2008:57), social justice is regarded as promoting a just society by challenging and valuing diversity. To Rawls and Parijs (2003:17) social justice is about assuring the protection of equal access, rights and opportunities, as well as taking care of the least advantaged members of the society. Social justice exists when "all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights and a fair allocation of community resources" (Scherlen & Robinson, 2008:57). In conditions of equality, people are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliation, age, race, belief, disability or any other characteristic of background or group membership (Lavery, 2009:10).

It was, therefore, important to use CP in this study, as I hold the view that all persons should be treated with respect and equality. This objective assisted co-researchers to view one another as equals. The stakeholders of the school were not discriminated

against and they were treated with respect and as equals throughout the research process

All members' views were embraced, regardless of whether they were those of a teacher, principal, parent or a learner. Research team members were treated equally, regardless of age, sex or disability.

### **2.2.3.2 Humanity**

CP takes a humanistic approach to education as it focuses on positive identity, purpose, hope, critical society, equity and freedom (Kincheloe, 2005:253). Co-researchers become motivated to participate in the research process when they are treated in a humane way; for this reason, I respected and treated every member of the research team with humanity. Clearly, therefore, CP serves as a source of empowerment for learners who have been segregated and oppressed, like learners with special educational needs, who have been treated with charity for a long time. As a result, because CP calls for humanisation, it was the best choice in this study.

Using the social justice lenses, people are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliation, age, race, belief, disability or any other characteristic of background or group membership (Lavery, 2009:10). It was, therefore, important to use CP in this study as learners with special educational needs were not discriminated against, and were treated equally to other co-researchers.

### **2.2.3.3 Dynamics of power relations**

CP is concerned with changing the relations of power which are oppressive (Tracey & Morrow, 2017:48). According to Mitchell, Bennie and Johns (2012:12), power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship is in a position to carry out his or her own will, despite resistance. For example, in a classroom context, if the teacher is the one who has all the power to control the class, such a classroom is regarded as teacher-centred. However, power should be shared among the members of the class. In

essence, when conducting this study, power was exercised by all co-researchers (Wong, Newton & Newton, 2014:135).

The use of CP assisted the shift of power from the researcher to all the co-researchers because CP calls for the transformation of power relations. I was a facilitator and contributor like the other members of the team. Thus, the values of emancipation are particularly important where social injustice and unfairness of power exist in relation to opportunity, authority and control (Morrow *et al.*, 2012:758). Against such a background, CP was the best lens to guide us.

#### **2.2.3.4 Care and respect**

CP calls for a learning environment where care, love and respect reign (Nkoane, 2013:397). I, too, hold the opinion that all people should be treated with care, love and respect, hence these qualities were emphasised throughout the research process. Members of the community felt cared for and respected when they were included in the research process. The community plays an integral role in the learning process, as it is the people most central in our lives who influence the way we perceive the world and, therefore, how and what we learn; they were, therefore, respected and loved when this study was conducted. They could come up with practical ideas of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms because they were treated with respect. They brought forth strategies they apply at home to include children with special needs. From a critical pedagogy viewpoint, education should occur in meaningful contexts, and every effort should be made to connect learners' school experiences with their out-of-school experiences (Degener, 2001:48).

#### **2.2.4 Principles of critical pedagogy**

In this section, the principles of CP are discussed. These principles include democracy, developing critical consciousness, social justice and active participation. The principle of democracy in this study helped me to always remember that power is vested in all the research team members, and not in myself alone. The principle of social justice helped

me to treat all co-researchers equally, while the principle of active participation helped all co-researchers to actively participate freely throughout the research process. Developing critical consciousness as a principle, as discussed in this study, helped the research team to question and take action against oppressive elements during the research process.

#### **2.2.4.1 Democracy**

Democracy respects and embraces different people (Makoelle, 2016:16). Learners with special educational needs have been segregated and marginalised through school practices that do not meet their needs. CP calls for an environment that is democratic (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:78); it questions instructional methods that produce the notion of hegemony. In this study, the concept of hegemony is understood as pedagogical dominations in the process of teaching and learning (Davis & Harrison, 2013:84). Moreover, CP helps learners question and challenge beliefs or practices that dominate them and distort the power imbalances present in the learning environment. The notions of domination and the concept of hegemony will help the researcher to move away from any form of domination over the co-researchers.

Using CP as the lens that guided this study, I helped people that were affected by special educational needs to feel that they were also recognised by including them as equal members. It was through the help of this principle that the co-researchers were able to question the practices that they felt to be oppressive for learners with special educational needs.

Importantly too, CP entails Freire's influential philosophy of praxis, which describes critical reflection and action, which entail the application of educational activities that create a better education experience. As the result of the notion of praxis, the social realities in which learners with special educational needs live were considered when this study was conducted. The suggested strategies to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms were put into practice, and then reflected upon whether they helped eliminate oppressive practices. Moreeng and

Twala (2014:495) state that, in CP, praxis is seen as a tool for eliminating oppressive relationships and strives for emancipating, liberating and revolutionary conditions.

#### **2.2.4.2 Critical consciousness**

It is of great importance for all stakeholders to develop critical consciousness about learners with special educational needs so that they can improve the conditions of their lives. Critical consciousness includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding (McDonough, 2015:21). The social process of questioning the assumptions about reality (Taylor, 2008:10) and active participation in critiquing how knowledge is produced were needed in conducting this study in order to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Brekke and Von Tetzchner (2003:178) emphasise that children with special educational needs should know about their disability and their developing peers should also know about the disability and the implications thereof. This is the reason why learners were also included as co-researchers in conducting this study. Inclusive education, on the other hand, creates a stage for CP that is needed to nurture liberatory consciousness (Nkoane, 2011:100).

When people have developed critical consciousness, they make connections between their problems and the social context which the problems are embedded in. They also interpret the problems and analyse reality (Abraham, 2005:97). To gain this kind of consciousness all stakeholders rejected passivity and rather practised dialogue regarding their challenges to come up with solutions. Consciousness is the result of collective struggle, and not the effort of an individual. All co-researchers were acting in a way that enabled them to transform their society to better include learners with special educational needs in all spectrums of life (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:78).

#### **2.2.4.3 Social justice**

CP is the approach whose main principle is social justice, which is generally equated with the notion of equality or equal opportunities. One of the goals of CP is the transformation of the unequal world of education (Liasidou (2012:69). It is also concerned with challenging the ways in which educational systems perpetuate and reproduce social inequalities with regard to excluded and marginalised groups of learners across a range of abilities (Sapon-Shevin, 2007:54). This principle helped the co-researchers identify the educational practices that continue the exclusion of learners with special educational needs and move away from them. Apart from that, it is this principle that also guided me to include all the stakeholders, even those who have been excluded in the education system.

In conditions of social justice, people are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliation, age, race, belief, disability or other characteristics of background or group membership (Lavery, 2009:10). It was, therefore, important to use CP in conducting this study, as I hold the view that every person should be treated with respect and equality. The stakeholders of the school who have been discriminated against, were treated with respect and equality throughout the research process.

In CP, marginalisation has no place; the aim is to return the lost voices and identities of the marginalised groups (Scherlen & Robinson, 2008:73). CP is therefore regarded important in this study, as the stakeholders of the school will be free to table their views and become agents of change (Nkoane, 2011:100). Against this background, it is clear that CP encourages all stakeholders of the school to be agents who are actively engaged in promoting social change within the education system.

#### **2.2.4.4 Active participation**

According to Menon (2008:4), active participation is based on the principles of democracy, equality and acknowledgement of individuals. These principles are exactly the ones embraced by CP. Additionally, CP calls for willingness for the teacher to learn as he or she teaches (Rexhe pi & Torres, 2011:680). Against this background, I was willing to learn more from the active stakeholders in the research process.

Creating an active learning environment, co-researchers played active roles facilitated by the researcher. Because they were actively involved in the search of how best to include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom, we freely interacted with one another. We were all free to think, to observe, to question and to search for answers to solve the problem at hand. Likewise, Giroux (2013:23) has put forward that CP draws attention to questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge, values and skills, and it illuminates how knowledge, identities and authority are constructed within particular sets of social relations.

#### **2.2.5 Epistemology and ontology of critical pedagogy**

According to McNulty (2013:525), epistemology is the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge with regard to its methods, scope and the justification of belief and opinion. It is referred to as “the theory of knowledge”. In simple terms, it is the study of knowledge and what it means to know something.

Ontology, on the other hand, is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2011:711) as the study of what there is in the world. Ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed. I believe that both knowledge and truth are contextual, therefore can be gained best from people in a specific context. The fact that I believe that knowledge is contextual, compelled me to include the stakeholders of the school where the research was conducted.

Knowledge is subjective as far as CP is concerned, hence the inclusion of different people in the study to get different opinions. CP recognises personal experiences of individuals. Individual opinions, feelings and emotions are recognised and there is no universal truth, as people have different experiences and interpretations. In conducting this study, the co-researchers' emotions, feelings and opinions were recognised and acknowledged.

I also hold the notion that knowledge is subjective and one cannot know everything by oneself. According to Katz (2014:1), in this pedagogy, learners' personal experiences are integrated into classroom lessons. In conducting this study, my own beliefs on inclusion were governed by co-researchers' background knowledge and experiences, situation and environment (Waghid, 2007:193).

#### **2.2.6 Role of the researcher and their relationship with co-researchers in using critical pedagogy**

The researcher and co-researchers were seen as partners and equals in conducting the research; there were trust and recognition that they were equal members of the team, as suggested by Watson, Watson and Reigeluth (2008:691). Furthermore, open discussions that were taking place confirmed what Watson *et al.* (2008:69) highlight – that through open communication, research can be conducted harmoniously. I acknowledged ideas of different co-researchers, as Nkoane (2011:100) highlights that proponents of CP challenge the exclusion and silencing of learners' voices, and encourage dialogue whereby trust and acceptance are emphasised.

The learning environment is vital in the research process, as it impacts on the way research takes place. As a result, I created an environment that dictates trust. Each member in the research knew his or her role and it did not end at the members knowing their role, but each member was seen actively contributing in the research process (Shor, 2012:17). I also created a safe environment, characterised by cooperation, acceptance and mutuality, where co-researchers felt free to express their views and ideas.

According to Rose, Ramalu, Uli and Kumar (2010:76), learners with special educational needs compromise friendship and personal relationships because of the exclusion that they experience due to their disability. As a result, I made the co-researchers aware of disability and its implications. Learners with special educational needs were also helped to understand the social skills of other co-researchers. Von Tetzchner, Brekke and Sjothun and Grindheim (2005:9) point out that if other members are not made aware of the disability, they might exaggerate the helplessness of learners with special educational needs or feel sorry for them. However, if they are equipped to deal with disability, this changes considerably (Borman & Dowling, 2006:46).

There should also be mutual researcher-co-researcher power relations. Thus, the researcher should avoid using personal power to improve herself at the expense of co-researchers, or to hold back the lived experiences of co-researchers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:19).

I was never authoritarian or a dictator; rather, I was willing to learn from the co-researchers, respecting their ideas and expectations (Freire, 1998:94). The teacher and the learners became co-agents (Guthrie & Davis, 2003:17), as “no one teaches another, nor anyone is self-taught, men teach each other mediated by the teacher” (Freire, 1970:58). There was a fluid relationship between the co-researchers, whereby the research team members were deemed valuable.

However, the researcher should not be permissive. Dialogue between co-researchers should not be a “feel good” sort of thing, but be productive. According to Macedo

(1994:1858), a person whose voice is listened to through dialogue within the social context, develops an internal understanding and awareness of his or her own reality that makes personal transformation possible. In this study, the researcher was seen as a problem-poser, as Kincheloe and McLaren (1994:140) suggest that the teacher should empower the learners by raising their awareness of producing an inequitable status quo in school and other societal institutions.

In CP, the researcher should incorporate the co-researchers' experiences and move away from traditional methods of education. According to Leanna (2014:1), in CP, learners' personal experiences are integrated into the classroom lessons. The banking methods of teaching should be avoided, and the environment where learners and teachers are both learners and teachers should be embraced. In conducting this study, no co-researcher was regarded more knowledgeable than another. Co-researchers played roles of both teacher and learner.

Giroux (2003:3) emphasises the importance of learners being active participants in their own learning. They, together with their teacher, correct the curricular, share their ideas and learn to challenge assumptions. In this study, co-researchers, especially learners, were included as active participants in this study, as Degener (2001:716) emphasises that learners should contribute to decisions about their learning. Learners were actively involved in the whole process of the research because critical learners accept, reject or suspend judgment about a concept, and they even offer good reasons for their ideas and can correct their own or others' procedures (Francis & Hemson, 2007:100).

I allowed the co-researchers to engage in social criticism in order to create a public sphere in which citizens can exercise power over their own learning and lives. Allowing co-researchers to reflect on their common knowledge, they learnt how to transform their lives. This is a thinking shift from naïve to critical consciousness (Degener, 2001:43).

The inclusion of learners and letting them be active members of this study, promoted moving away from the traditional research methods of making participants objects of the study (McLaren, 2015:121). In traditional research methods, instead of communicating

with the co-researchers, the researcher gives rules that the participants have to patiently follow, whereas in CP, co-researchers are encouraged to engage in collective action, founded on the principles of social justice, equality and empowerment (McLaren, 2015:120).

## **2.3 DEFINITIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

This section presents definitions of operational concepts. Concepts that are defined are inclusion, learners with special educational needs and mainstream classrooms.

### **2.3.1 Inclusion**

According to Bryant, Smith and Bryant (2008:119) inclusion is the philosophy and practice of educating learners with disabilities in general education settings. Loreman (2010:10) sees inclusion as the practice of meeting the physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs of learners with special educational needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools, together with other children of their age without disabilities, with appropriate support.

I understand inclusion as having so-called “normal” learners and learners with special educational needs in a regular classroom, bringing support that allows all learners to work towards achieving the same educational goals. In this study, “inclusion” will be used interchangeably with “inclusive education” as they are referred to mean the same thing.

### **2.3.2 Learners with special educational needs**

Describing learners with special educational needs, Loreman (2010:11) states that they are those in need of special education programmes, because of their physical, intellectual, learning, communication or behavioural characteristics; learners requiring specialised health services or who are gifted or talented. Cooke, Tessier and Klein(1996:139) add that learners with special educational needs have learning

difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to access education or learn. I understand learners with special educational needs as those learners who need special attention, compared to ordinary learners.

### **2.3.3 Mainstream classrooms**

According to Cummins (2005:573), mainstream classrooms are regular classrooms, enrolling different ethnic groups, manifesting diverse cultures, languages and cognitive styles. Similarly, Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002:8) establish that a mainstream classroom is a classroom setting whereby all learners are considered as equal learners and equal citizens. In this study, the concept of a mainstream classroom is understood as the learning setting which provides opportunities for learners with special educational needs to interact and learn together with others without special educational needs.

## **2.4 CHALLENGES TOWARD INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

This section presents the challenges toward enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. The discussed challenges include teacher training, curriculum, pedagogical practices, parental involvement and the learning environment.

### **2.4.1 Teacher tuition**

For inclusion, teachers should be prepared to accept and ensure the participation and success of learners with special educational needs. For this to happen, teachers should be prepared accordingly, as Rachakonda and Sharma (2011:121) establish that inclusion without changes in teaching techniques and learning strategies promotes exclusion. However, as most of the teachers in mainstream schools are not prepared to respond to the needs of learners with special educational needs, classroom teachers

report feeling not prepared for inclusive education (Florian, 2012:276). Emphasising this point, Mittler (2012:113) stresses that inadequate knowledge and teacher preparation are major obstacles to inclusive classrooms. According to Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff and Swart (2007:360), teacher preparation programmes have been dominated by the medical model, which views disability as inability.

In the same manner, Carroll, Forlin and Jobling (2003:66) postulate that the teacher preparation programmes offered in many institutions, still use separate training models, which separates regular and special education teacher preparation. This type of teacher preparation is segregating, which is against the lens that guides this study. Teachers learnt that some learners have special needs and their needs can only be met at segregated special schools by special teachers with special materials (Florian, 2012:277). Teacher tuition is thus segregated, with each discipline being seen as special and different. This separation of programmes becomes a big challenge when teachers have to include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Highlighting teacher tuition, Florian and Rouse (2009:595) emphasise that, in the United States of America, graduates learnt that there are two types of human beings, and if one decides to work with a certain type, one renders oneself incompetent to work with the other. This condition leads to a belief that teachers can be prepared to work with a particular group of learners. Similarly, in a study of teachers in rural British Columbia, Carrollet *al.* (2003:65) revealed that both pre-service and in-service teacher education had not prepared teachers for the realities of inclusion.

Teachers disclosed their inability to provide best educational programmes to learners with special educational needs, because of inadequate teacher preparation (Carroll *et al.*, 2003:66). Furthermore, according to Riggs and Mueller (2001:57), in two New England states, teachers highlighted that their districts provided little orientation towards including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. One teacher was quoted: “There is no training, there is no do this and no this is how you do it.”

In the same manner, Oswald and Swart (2011:391) added that in South Africa, before 1994, teacher education constituted a “dual system” – mainstream and special education. To teach in a special school, a teacher had to obtain an additional qualification on special education (Oswald & Swart, 2011:391). Similarly, Slade and Prinsloo (2013:1512) highlight that in South Africa, teacher preparation does not equip teachers with the necessary skills to manage and handle classes containing learners with special educational needs. In addition, Nimante and Tubele (2010:171) also argue that teachers lack the experience and knowledge of psychology as well as social and special pedagogy that are needed in order to understand some of the learners’ special needs in learning.

Lesotho is not exceptional in this regard, as Johnstone (2014:8) establishes that the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training has not provided a model for changing the medical model paradigm. In addition to that, Seotsanyana and Matheolane (2010:40) reveal that teachers who are not qualified are still employed in Lesotho with the aim of reducing high teacher-pupil ratios. However, that practice was noted to have undermined the quality of education. Similarly, Mosia (2014:292) asserts that inclusion is compromised in Lesotho, as 60% of primary teachers are qualified, while 40% are unqualified. Surprisingly, the Lesotho College of Education, which is the sole producer of primary school teachers, does not show in its mission how it aims to help Lesotho teachers become inclusive (Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson, 2005:130).

#### **2.4.2 Curriculum**

Each learner, regardless of differences, needs access to the meaningful curriculum that allows a learner to use his or her strengths. However, curriculum seems to be one of the barriers to learners with special educational needs. According to Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:19) curriculum is one of the significant barriers to learning for learners with special educational needs.

Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:20) further highlights that, in many contexts, curriculum is centrally designed and rigid; it leaves very little flexibility for alterations for

learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs are, therefore, faced with poor performance due to the curriculum that does not meet their needs. Clough (1998:27) highlights that the curriculum can be biased, appealing to learners who are regarded as able, but degrading to learners with special educational needs.

According to Lukes (2005:488), in a study conducted in Queensland, Australia, the findings revealed that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment were out of alignment and inconsistencies between policies and practice were experienced. These were seen because professional development was limited, as school leaders were compelled to focus on managerial development, rather than pedagogical practices.

Furthermore, the syllabus requirements of different curricula and assessment procedures created problems for teachers and administrators. Assessment was also not embedded in teachers' practices (Bricker, Yovanoff, Capt & Allen, 2003:28). Similarly, in India, many parents reported that their reason for not sending their children with special needs to school was the irrelevant curriculum that is not geared towards real life (Peters, 2004:18). Lesotho also still offers a performance-based curriculum, the goals of which do not include learners who do not meet pre-formulated norms and standards (Mosia, 2014:306).

This is where the notion of resistance comes in. According to Dheram (2003:798), CP, which is the lens used in this study, incorporates a theory of resistance to explain reasons why many learners from minor groups constantly fail within the education system. Sharma, Simi and Forlin (2015:321) strongly emphasises that learners should have access to the same standard of education and be given the opportunity to progress in the same general curriculum taught to all learners, for their inclusion to be meaningful. Offering the same standard of education is still a challenge as far as the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms is concerned (Lewis & Norwich, 2005:1). CP challenges the practice of different standards of education in that learners should all be educated, regardless of gender, class, race or disability (Lewis & Norwich, 2005:1).

### **2.4.3 Pedagogical approaches**

Another challenge with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms is pedagogical approaches that do not meet the needs and interests of learners. According to research conducted by Moloji, Morobe and Urwick (2008:615) in Lesotho, pedagogy that is restrictive towards learning and particularly unaccommodating for learners with special educational needs, was identified.

In Lesotho, a low-income country which, before the 1990s, had very little educational provision for learners with special educational needs, there are just four special schools and no inclusive provision for learners with special educational needs (Urwick & Eliot, 2010:142). A typical lesson consists of a class teacher teaching the learners, learners independently completing or copying class work from the board and then go in line to the teacher to be marked; learners with special educational needs are taught individually in any spare time at the discretion of the teacher (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009:140).

These methods are teacher-centred and promote rote learning, whereby learners become passive and the teacher is the only source of knowledge. Freire (1970:477) refers to this practice as “banking methods”, which he highly opposes as methods of teaching. Teacher-centred methods treat the learner as hopeless, and denies learners interaction with other learners, which leads to learners who are demotivated and do not enjoy learning (Bonner, 2010:178). In a teacher-centred classroom, materials often used, are books, and assessment implies paper-pen assessments.

The teaching and learning materials and the assessment methods that are used do not cater for learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. To the contrary, CP embraces an environment where teachers and learners are teachers and learners (Katz, 2014:1) – teachers learn from learners and learners from the teachers.

Furthermore, this practice is oppressive and dominating to learners, a factor which CP opposes. CP has the goal of emancipating marginalised and oppressed people by challenging any form of domination, oppression and subordination (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:80). CP challenges these oppressive practices and holds the notion that learners should be all educated, regardless of their gender, class, race or disability (Lewis & Norwich, 2005:1). Similarly, Howell (2006:168) holds the opinion that to overcome barriers arising from the pedagogical practices, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the process of teaching and learning is flexible enough to include different learning styles and needs.

Teachers who still regard themselves as the only knowledge holders in the education system are, therefore, a big challenge towards the enhancement of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. As long as teachers do not consider the knowledge of other stakeholders, they are prone to oppress others. Furthermore, Moloi *et al.* (2008:614) identified pedagogy in Lesotho that is restrictive towards learning and particularly unhelpful for “slow learners”.

#### **2.4.4 Parental involvement**

An important factor for successful inclusion is valuable parental involvement in the education of learners with special educational needs. Parental involvement is defined by Jeynes (2005:245) as the participation of parents in their children’s learning. Parents are the first educators of their children. They are the key authorities on their children’s needs and have distinctive knowledge on strategies for successful inclusion (Hill & Tyson, 2009:740). Clearly therefore, parents should be seen as equal partners in the education sector. Despite Bandura’s (1997:754) emphasis that self-efficacious parents regard education as shared responsibility, parents of learners with special educational needs are seen as not actively involved in the learning of their children.

In the same manner, Swart and Phasha (2005:92) hold the view that a mutual relationship between parents and teachers is more beneficial to the learners’ behaviour than either party trying to deal with it alone. However, many parents of learners with

special educational needs are not involved in their children's education (Margalit & Raskind, 2009). According to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001:91), although parents attend meetings, they are not involved in the objectives development, interventions and assessment methods. In a study conducted by Allan (2003:178) in Australia and Scotland, it was established that, in some places, parents are ignored and patronised by professionals in education.

Parents complain that teachers concentrate on their children's restrictions and do not listen to them enough or keep parents updated on how their children's needs are met (Lindsay & Dockrell,2004:983). In addition, there is a misunderstanding between parents and teachers on how much to be involved. Teachers complain that parents like to control the running of the school, while parents complain that teachers are concentrating on their children's limitations (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004:984).

In addition, teachers tend to see themselves as experts in all areas of learners' schooling. They seem not to give parents enough chance to be actively involved in their children's learning. This behaviour leads to the disparity of power relations between parents and teachers, which results in parents becoming self-protective or feeling intimidated by the school (DoE, 2005:22). CP is against these power imbalances and advocates for mutual power relations, emphasising that no one knows better than the other and that teachers should avoid imposing personal power at the expense of the parents (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:19).

#### **2.4.5 Learning environment**

Learners with special educational needs can only be effectively included in a barrier-free environment. According to Eloff, Engelbrecht, Swart and Oswald (2002:12), the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms needs appropriate infrastructure, facilities and assistive devices, which are currently lacking in most schools. By facilities and assistive devices, Eloff *et al.* (2002:12) refer to more accessible buildings, equipment and appropriate instructional materials.

An inaccessible environment, which is a serious challenge, leads to learners with special educational needs who are supposed to be attending school, being unable to attend; this way, learners are marginalised and excluded from school. According to Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger (2010:76), the physical environment of many schools is not accessible to learners with special educational needs and such an environment can affect the learning of such learners directly. Similarly, Eleweke and Rodda (2002:116) point out that the essential facilities for educating learners with special educational needs in many schools are lacking or inadequate, if available.

In addition, McNary, Glasgrow and Hicks (2005:16) highlight that in some areas in developing countries, the idea of inclusion is undermined due to some barriers, including the absence of support services, large class sizes, inadequate facilities and poor infrastructure. It is reported that the quality of primary school education in Lesotho has declined under the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy due to insufficient teaching and learning materials, high teacher-learner ratios and congestion in classrooms (Jopo, Maema & Ramokoena, 2011:5). Furthermore, Chitereka (2010:83) adds that Lesotho is one of the world's least developed countries; as a result, schools also suffer.

Equally important is that the ideology of the school should change in order to better include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Kim and Nuñez (2013:81) stipulate that schools need the school culture to change from that of competition to a culture of cooperation, thereby creating a "school culture of living together". Sharma and Sokal (2015:281) also holds the view that culture, practices and policies of schools should be restructured in such a way that segregation and sorting of learners according to abilities be avoided. Mosia (2014:295) strongly emphasises that inclusive education cannot exist in an environment that still compares learners against performance or predetermined standards.

Furthermore, it is difficult to include learners with special educational needs effectively and efficiently, without sufficient support, such as financial support, devices for those who need them, the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the diversity of learners,

and specialists who support the teachers and schools that need assistance (Frankel, Gold & Ajodhia-Andrews, 2010:11).

Most Lesotho schools are reported to be in a situation where they cannot control instructional practice due to the lack of resources (Moloi *et al.*, 2008:620). Many schools suffer from insufficient general teaching facilities, space, textbooks, furniture and qualified teachers (Moloi *et al.*, 2008:620).

## **2.5 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

This section presents possible solutions to the challenges, as discussed in the previous section. The possible solutions are towards teacher training, curriculum, pedagogical practices, parental involvement and the learning environment.

### **2.5.1 Possible solutions towards teacher tuition**

For preparing teachers to accept and ensure participation of learners with special educational needs, Carrollet *al.* (2003:65) highlight that in Australia, revisions to teacher education programmes were advocated. Meanwhile, Browder, Wakeman, Spooner, Ahlegrim-Delzell and Algozzine (2006:394) state that in the United States, staff development seminars and workshops towards social models of disabilities were provided to school staff members in order to provide the necessary skills to practising teachers.

According to Burlo (2010:207), in the United States, teachers undertake a two-year evening part-time course in inclusive education and attend training sessions discussing issues on inclusive education, setting instructional objectives, collaborative teaching, individual educational programmes and the implementation of peer preparation programmes. Also, a major commitment of school authorities and universities was to redesign teacher preparation programmes, with emphasis on psychology (Browder *et al.*, 2006:394). It is reported that in New South Wales, the need for their teacher training

curriculum to include at least one compulsory course on special education has already been endorsed (Forlin, 2006).

In the South African context, the South African Ministry of Basic Education emphasises that pre-service tuition in inclusive education should be prioritised (Motshekga, 2010b) and tuition should shift the focus from individual deficits to the environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers within society and institutions. Moreover, Selesho (2012:540) states that all the provinces conducted campaigns of awareness to educate communities about inclusive education.

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

According to Walton and Nel (2012:24) The South African Department of Education suggested that teachers should be re-orientated to new pedagogies through comprehensive tuition programmes. There is also notable evidence of teacher enrolment in workshops and short courses offered by various non-governmental organisations, and university-level courses offered for in-service teacher apprentices (Walton & Nel, 2012:24).

However, Donohue and Bornman (2014:43) report that the tuition programmes that educated teachers on how to accommodate and teach learners with special educational needs were usually only a week or two long and, of course, that was too short. Furthermore, Stofile (2008:109) announces that the programmes also focus on developing certain skills, whereas teachers often need far more comprehensive training programmes.

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

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

### **2.5.2 Possible solutions towards curriculum**

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

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

The framework aims to cater even for learners with special educational needs, as it highlights relevance and addresses emerging issues pertaining to new demands.

According to Raselimo and Mahao (2015:2), in Lesotho, different curriculum reforms have been put into place with minimal success. The aim was to achieve the goals of education for the development of the nation. The latest education reform that is currently used in Lesotho, is the integrated curriculum, which aims at moving away from the subject- and examination-oriented curriculum to a new dispensation where the curriculum is organised into learning areas that reflect real-life challenges (MoET,2009:vii).

The integrated curriculum aims at equipping each learner with the necessary competencies to address life challenges. The overall goal is “to ensure access, quality, equity and relevance in the sector of education” (Mariga & Phachaka,1993:1).

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

### **2.5.3 Possible solutions towards pedagogical approaches**

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

According to Allan (2003:175), in Australia, teachers are allowed to prepare and share, to develop appropriate methods and materials for lessons, and to network and exchange information. Similarly, it was recommended in Scotland that the system of

assessing learners with special educational needs be reviewed and probably discontinued because of its inefficiency, iniquity and failure to meet the needs of the learners. Sharing the same sentiments, the South African Ministry of Basic Education put more emphasis on pre-service tuition in inclusive education; it needs to be prioritised and training should address the pedagogies that have been shaped by conservative philosophies and past practices of segregated special education (Naicker, 2005).

It is also highlighted by Walton (2011:241) that, in South Africa, the Education White Paper 6 envisaged the retention of special schools that would serve the needs of learners with moderate to severe support needs and also serve as resource centres for neighbourhood schools. In that way, the White Paper could foresee that about 500 ordinary primary schools would, over a period of 20 years, be converted into “full service schools”, which would be equipped, through staff training, building adaptations, and collaboration, with a variety of support services to meet the diverse educational needs of learners in a community (DoE, 2001:22).

Furthermore, courses were redesigned to incorporate more learner-centred methods, including cooperative teaching and learning (Frederickson, Warren & Turner, 2005:198). In addition, Nind (2006:118) postulates that courses incorporated a number of innovative practices to help novice teachers improve their teaching techniques and attitudes towards disabilities. According to Majumdar, McAlister, Eurich, Padwal and Marrie (2006:999), pedagogical practices that are more learner-centred help learners develop social skills and circumvent the issue of rote learning, teacher-learner ratio and negative attitudes of learners about the inclusion of learners with special educational needs.

CP as the lens used in this study also encourages active learning, whereby teachers and learners are actively involved in their learning and engaged in promoting social change within the education system (Bonner, 2010:178). According to Makoelle (2012:3) in South Africa, pedagogy that is used in schools has improved in ways that respond positively to learner diversity. Furthermore, many technology devices were

made available to be used by different people with different disabilities and are providing many learners with special educational needs with opportunities to be educated together with their peers without disabilities (Hasselbring & Glaser, 2000:105).

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

In addition, in 2009 the ministry published the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework, which calls for a radical approach to teaching aimed at a pedagogy shift towards more methods that develop creativity, independence and survival skills of learners. Also, learners should assume greater responsibility for their own learning (MoET, 2009:viii).

#### **2.5.4 Possible solutions towards parental involvement**

According to Hornby and Witte (2010:774), the role of parents in improving educational outcomes for all learners, including those with special educational needs, has been recently recognised by the New Zealand government through publication of the Schooling Strategy (Peters, Johnstone & Ferguson, 2005:149), in which improving parental involvement is one of the priority areas. On the other hand, in South African

schools, parents play a significant role in the management of the school, particularly the administration of school fees, by electing and serving on governing bodies.

Despite the implementation of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho, the Free Compulsory Primary Education Policy is silent about the role of parents in the school, except permitting them to participate in the feeding scheme (Morojele, 2012:38).

In 2010, the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) developed and published the Education Act, 2010, which allows parents to be involved in the education of their children (Education Act, 2010:section 4(a)). The act emphasises that a parent should be involved in the development of the disciplinary policies of the school, should cause the learner to receive full-time education that is appropriate for his or her ability, aptitude and age, and is expected to provide the learner with the full opportunity and guidance to complete primary education (Education Act of 2010 Section 4(3) (a) to (d)).

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

### **2.5.5 Possible solutions towards the learning environment**

Various practices were implemented across the world in order to improve the learning environment for successful inclusion. According to Datta (2015:237), in Australia,

learners with special educational needs participate in all areas of school life. Australian government education departments established internal support systems, which enable them to help teachers and learners, rather than expecting assistance to be provided in the form of additional staff, resources or services (Westwood & Graham, 2003:4).

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

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

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

## **2.6 COMPONENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

This section presents important components of inclusive education in this study. The first component is the right to education of all learners, including those with special educational needs. The second component discussed, is the conducive inclusive learning environment, where inclusion emphasises enabling the system to meet the learning needs of all learners. Thirdly, the component of diversity is discussed, as inclusion celebrates differences. The fourth component discussed, is involving parents and communities in the education sector. Lastly, the component of active participation, whereby learners are motivated and empowered to take responsibility for their learning, is discussed.

### **2.6.1 Equality**

Inclusive education is a tool to evade attitudes towards differences by educating all learners together. The inclusion of all learners teaches the learner and his or her peers that all people are equally valued and that it is important to try, by all means, to include them (Stainback, Stainback & Stefanich, 1996:19). In conducting this study, this component of inclusion was vital, as it was instilled to all co-researchers that we were equal in the team, regardless of our credentials.

Inclusion also helps to abolish the differences created due to the stigma attached to learners with special educational needs. The concept of all learners learning together with their peers, regardless of their differences, ensures that learners with special educational needs are not marginalised, discriminated against or excluded. According to Mapuranga, Dumba and Musodza (2015:216), the involvement of peers in the learning process of learners with special educational needs helps learners to learn together and remove discrimination. The reason for involving all stakeholders, including parents and learners with special educational needs, in this study was to ensure that no party would feel marginalised or excluded.

### **2.6.2 Diversity**

Inclusion values diversity or different abilities of all learners (Education White Paper 6, 2001:16). This means that learners with special educational needs can learn together with other learners as long as their variety is taken into consideration. In an inclusive school, all learners are seen as unique beings, who have something important to contribute (Voltz, Brazil & Ford, 2001:25). Elaborating further, Voltz *et al.* (2001:25) postulate that for learners, including those with special educational needs, to feel safe in the school environment, they should feel accepted by their peers and teachers. Inclusive schools should celebrate the diversity of learners, while maintaining a range of educational options to meet the needs of individual learners (Schrag & Burnette, 1994:1). This shows the need to model and develop respect for individual differences.

### **2.6.3 Learning environment**

Inclusion is about enabling education systems, structures and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners (Schrag & Burnette, 1994:2). Based on individuals' needs, inclusion acknowledges that learners should get appropriate support (Mittler, 2000:40). According to Memisevic and Hodzic (2011:700), all learners should be educated in schools nearby their homes, within an environment that does not restrict them. In such environments, learners with special educational needs have the opportunity to engage in social interaction with their peers, and thereby their social and communication skills improve (Soponaru, Paduraru & Dumbrava, 2016:19).

Inclusive education calls for restructuring the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all learners have access to the range of educational opportunities offered by the school. The restructuring includes the curriculum, pedagogical practices, assessment and recreational opportunities (Mittler, 2000:11). The aim of restructuring the school is to ensure access and participation of all learners, avoiding isolation and segregation.

Furthermore, it accepts and respects the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs, which are equally valued. Most profoundly, Mapuranga *et al.* (2015:218) establish that in an inclusive school, the learning environment should protect learners from any form of abuse or exploitation. Mandipa (2013:73) states that usually learners with special educational needs face abuse or bullying in schools.

#### **2.6.4 Parental involvement**

Inclusion acknowledges that learning also occurs in the home and community structures. According to Mapuranga *et al.* (2015), parents are valuable contributing partners in the education system and their involvement enhances the effectiveness of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Parents have to be involved in the education of their children and schools have the responsibility to encourage parental involvement. Following this principle, not only teachers are included in this study, but all the stakeholders who are affected by the learning of learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, Smith (2004:36) holds the notion that there should be a shared responsibility between the inclusive school and the parents in order to avoid stress that families may face with their children, which may lead to abuse of learners with special educational needs.

#### **2.6.5 Active participation**

The active, meaningful participation of learners with special educational needs is a critical element of inclusion. According to Voltz *et al.* (2001:26), this concept goes beyond mere physical placement of learners with special educational needs or with disabilities in mainstream classrooms – the quality and quantity of interactions with the learners and the teachers should be considered. This component was very crucial in conducting this study because co-researchers were not involved merely for the sake of involving them; they actively participated throughout the research process.

Active participation implies that learners are engaged in meaningful ways in the daily running of the classroom. According to Chitereka (2010:85), the social model of disability has presented a compelling framework for bringing learners with special educational needs together in a common struggle for equality and rights. By doing so the model promoted the idea that learners with special educational needs should be active participants of their own learning, rather than being passive recipients.

The importance of increased participation and communication among all the people involved in the provision of the inclusive learning situation cannot be overemphasised. This collaboration involves dedication by the teachers working together, the school administrators, the school system and the community.

## **2.7 CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Some conditions are necessary for effective inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. This section presents the conditions necessary for enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. The way teacher training, the curriculum, pedagogical practices, parental involvement and the learning environment become conducive for inclusion, is presented. Environment is conducive where there are trained teachers to support inclusion and where special and general teachers work cooperatively to best accommodate learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. The environment is also conducive when teachers work hand in hand with parents, and parents are actively involved in the learning of their children. Furthermore, the environment is conducive to the extent that the curriculum is adjusted to suit individual needs, pedagogical practices used best suit the learners, and learners are accepted as they are.

### **2.7.1 Competent teachers**

The environment is conducive if there are competent teachers who can meet the different needs and interests of each learner. Nkabinde (1993:108) states that if every child can be approached in the basis of his or her capabilities, and not their inabilities,

then such learners can develop their own potential. Sharing the same sentiments, Mapuranga et al (2015:216) confirms that the needs of learners with special educational needs can be addressed if teachers are prepared to handle inclusive classes. Therefore, Ajuwon (2008:12) supports the working environment where teachers are allowed for further preparations in order to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs.

Inclusion forces regular and special education teachers to work collaboratively for the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs. Teachers working cooperatively to share knowledge and skills, predict a conducive environment. Supporting the idea of teachers working together, Ajuwon (2008:12) establishes that both general and special education teachers should work hand in hand in order to help each other meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of each learner. The Basotho nation has a belief in cooperative efforts (*matsema*) to solve their social problems (Curriculum & Assessment Policy Framework, 2009:6). This implies that, cooperatively, teachers can solve their challenge of being not properly trained towards inclusion.

Important also, continuous support from relevant authorities, including the principals and specialist resource teachers, whereby teachers receive assistance in order to master the skills required, make teachers become more effective and committed (Hall & Hord, 2006:82).

### **2.7.2 Adaptable curriculum**

Adaptable curriculum, whereby the presentation, materials and evaluation are adjusted to suit the learners' individual needs, reveal the conducive environment for inclusive education. According to Mzizi and Rambuda (2014:78) curriculum adaptation refers to amending what is taught and how learners are provided access to what they need for successful learning. Pratter and Devereaux (2002:23) add that adapting what is taught, may refer to a different curriculum or alternative curricular goals.

Creating a classroom environment where teachers are able to change the curriculum and pedagogy to best suit the learners, reveal a conducive environment. According to Peters (2004:12), in a study conducted in North America, Europe and the Pacific, the major finding was that there is no reason to maintain segregating learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms because changes in the curriculum and pedagogy were found to benefit all students. Content adaptation, on the other hand, may include difficulty level and the amount of work given (Conderman, 2011:26).

Following this further, text materials can be adapted by reading the text aloud or use audio files, allowing a peer to read to a learner, changing modality of text input or use voice-recorded materials (Department of Education, 2005:34). Using language that learners are familiar with, poses a conducive environment, as CP also encourages discussions conducted within the language and knowledge of the learners (McLaren, 2015:93).

According to Degener (2001:34), in CP, there is no set curriculum or programme because all decisions related to the curriculum and material studied, are based on the needs and interests of the learners. Curriculum and instructional materials should be framed through the use of learners' experiences and realities, as envisaged by CP (Degener, 2001:35).

### **2.7.3 Teaching and learning environment**

The learning environment where learners are accepted as they are, reveal a conducive environment where everyone is treated according to his or her needs. According to Georgiadi, Kalyva, Kourkoutas and Tsakiris (2012:532), acceptance is an important determinant of successful inclusion because rejection can contribute to many emotional and behavioural problems. Sharing the same sentiments, Gillies (2007:7) and Tileston (2004:40) maintain that learners with special educational needs should be mixed with learners without special educational needs. According to Georgiadi *et al.* (2012:532), the practice of mixing learners with and without special educational needs improves the attitudes of both types of learners towards inclusion.

Creating a classroom culture where there is a teacher-learner mutual relationship leads to education that is more learner-centred (Gillies, 2007:7) and leads to using pedagogical practices that best suit each learner in an inclusive setting. When learning is learner-centred, even learners with special educational needs enjoy school because their needs are met. Education White Paper 6 (2001:17) maintains that to achieve the objectives of inclusion, instructional practices should be learner-centred. Furthermore, teachers who are flexible and not only hold onto the way they were taught to teach, and who are professionally stretched on managing different situations, are prone to use pedagogical practices that meet the needs and interests of the learners (Walton, 2010:12).

Furthermore, teaching and learning methods that allow social inclusion creates a conducive environment in a learning situation. According to Mahlomaholo (2013:320), a socially inclusive way of teaching creates a platform where learners and teachers, as well as members of the community, talk to one another about real-life situations and solutions. Important too, is that a school setting where peer tutoring is seen as an effective strategy, enhances the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (Ford, 2002:88) and ensures mutual empowerment (Yates, 2014:28).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002:72) the physical environment whereby the buildings cater for the needs of learners with special educational needs reveal a conducive environment. An example is buildings with ramps to ease mobility. Important too, is an environment where all learners have access to information. For example, information should be presented in Braille form for learners with visual impairments (Chitereka, 2010:87).

Moreover, recognition of teachers dealing with learners with special educational needs also enhances inclusion. Johnstone and Chapman (2009:130) establish that the incentives of teachers should be increased so that they can believe that their efforts are rewarded. Similarly, support from relevant authorities, including the principal, as well as the provision of adequate and appropriate materials, learning support assistants and

special teachers contribute to the enhancement of inclusion. Continuous support from specialist resource teachers, whereby teachers receive assistance in order to master the skills required, will also make teachers become more effective and committed (Hall & Hord, 2006:82).

#### **2.7.4 Parental and community involvement**

Appropriately managed relations between teachers, diverse learners and the wider community reveal a conducive environment. On this issue, Tizard, Schofield and Hewison (1982:14) state that active parental help leads to measurable improvement in learners' academic performance. Tizard *et al.* (1982:14) further clarify that the community plays an integral part, as it is the people most central to our lives who influence the way we perceive the world and therefore how and what to learn. A community that is allowed to freely participate in school matters denotes a conducive environment. Important also, schools that are interconnected and interdependent with the society, enable parents and the community to be actively involved the education of their children. According to Giroux (1998:95), CP calls for an educational environment connected to everyday life.

According to Will (1986:414), when there is a relationship between parents and the school, and when the community is involved in the planning and evaluation of their children's education, learners do not see schools as foreign places and their academic work improve. Similarly, CP, which is the lens used to conduct this study, argues that it is naïve to see the classroom as a separate place from the rest of the society (Parkay, Forrest, Beverly & Thomas, 2010:434).

Schools where there are school-parent programmes have been found having outstanding record of success in promoting achievement (Newman & Wehlage, 1995:415). In addition to that, Yssel *et al.* (2007:149) point out that establishing partnerships with colleagues, parents, community members, education officers and non-governmental organisations can enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms(Sharma, 2015:321).

From a CP point of view, it is humanising and empowering to include the community in the education system; therefore, an effort should be made to connect school experiences with real-life experiences (Degener, 2001:38). Against this background, it can be argued that cooperation between the school and the home leads to a conducive environment for inclusive education.

Schools with clear policies indicating the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, including parents, enhance inclusion (Zhao & Kuh, 2004:120). On this point, Morojele (2012:44) emphasises that there should be more clarity with regard to the roles and responsibilities of diverse stakeholders, including the government, teachers and parents. Likewise, Loreman (2010:20) emphasises that school administrators who are supportive to inclusion, enhances inclusive education.

## **2.8 THREATS TOWARDS THE INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

### **2.8.1 Teachers' understanding and expertise**

Teachers who feel that their teacher training has not prepared them for inclusion, and therefore feel unable to help learners with special educational needs are a threat towards the inclusion of such learners in mainstream classrooms. According to Forlin, Keen and Barret (2008:254), teacher knowledge and skills are reported to influence the successful implementation of inclusion. Agbenyega (2007:56) adds that a lack of teacher-preparedness and the feeling that inclusion is “an imposition from outside” poses a threat to inclusion.

Teachers who have not developed an understanding towards special educational needs, and are not yet ready to accept learners with special educational needs pose a threat for inclusion to effectively take place. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000:278) emphasise that learners with special educational needs are seen as the least favourable group, compared to other learners, because they are regarded as the most

difficult category. Unchanged teachers, who still view disability as an individual disease, lead to poor teacher-learner relations (Engelbrecht, 2003:309).

Unchanged teachers, who tend to avoid or ignore to learn from experienced or special teachers with regard to inclusion and who often pass over the responsibility to such teachers (Kim, 2013:81), pose a threat to inclusion. On the other hand, teachers who feel that they are degraded when they are assisted by other teachers with relevant skills and knowledge, are also a threat towards inclusion. Both general teachers and special education teachers should communicate and cooperate because these are the skills needed for successful inclusion (Kim, 2013:81).

### **2.8.2 Educational viewpoints**

Some educational viewpoints pose threats to inclusive education. Using pedagogical approaches used with learners who do not have special needs for learners who do have special educational needs, is unfair (MacMillan, Gresham & Forness, 1996:148). According to Nind and Wearmouth (2006:118), clarity for teachers on what constitute practice that is effective in teaching approaches for classes including learners with a range of special educational needs, is lacking. Moreover, according to Frederickson and Joiner (2002:174), there is a shortage of evidence about teaching approaches that effectively include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms; that absence of evidence stands as a threat to including learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms.

Inclusion is threatened in Lesotho because it is stated that specialists in the area of disabilities are lacking to guide teachers on which approaches are effective (Mosia, 2014:292). Teachers are the ones determining what is and what is not working, and this practice was found to be biased and unsystematic (Desgranges, Desgranges & Karsky, 1995:16). An example is the case whereby learners learn Braille, yet they could cope with enlarged print or eye glasses (Mittler & Platt, 1996:159).

Similarly, teacher-learner ratio is a serious challenge that leads to teachers using teacher-centred approaches, which do not take into consideration the needs of the learners (Nind & Wearmouth 2006:120). The implementation of free primary education (FPE) has brought many learners to school, but the number of teachers is still low –to such an extent that one teacher is faced with over 60 learners in a class (McConkey & Mariga, 2011:18). This way, it is very difficult to meet the needs of each learner.

The learning community that does not understand that learning cannot occur without collaboration and cooperation also serves as a threat to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (Frederickson & Joiner, 2002). In this situation, teachers who do not regard other stakeholders to have a say in the learning environment cannot effectively implement inclusion.

### **2.8.3 Inadequate policy guidelines**

Inadequate policy guidelines on inclusive education are a serious threat towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. According to Memisevic and Hodzic (2011:701), in Europe, like in many other countries, educational legislation declares to support the concept of inclusion, but unfortunately the laws do not specify how inclusion should be implemented; it is therefore left open for different interpretations. In the same manner, Donohue and Bornman (2014:2) stipulate that, even though it is over a decade after the introduction of Education White Paper 6, there is still no agreement about what should and should not be classified as a disability in South Africa. Similarly, Mosia (2014:292) also establishes that in Lesotho, the policy is silent about non-teaching professionals, like psychologists and occupational therapists, helping with assessment and placement.

A lack of written school policies on parental involvement poses a threat to the inclusion of learners with special educational in mainstream classrooms. There should be school policies indicating what parental involvement mean, as it may be interpreted differently by different people (Carrington & Robinson, 2006:327). According to Fan (2001:29), definitions of parental involvement are not clear and consistent. It is not clear whether it

depicts ambitions of parents for their children's academic success, communication between parents and their children about school matters, participation of parents in school activities, parents' communication with teachers about their children, or parental supervision at home (Fan, 2001:29).

#### **2.8.4 Partial support and resources**

It is difficult to include learners with special educational needs effectively and efficiently without sufficient support, such as financial support, devices for those who need them, the necessary infrastructure to accommodate diversity of learners, and specialists to support teachers and schools that need assistance (Frankel *et al.*, 2010:11). Most Lesotho schools are reported to be in a situation where they cannot control instructional practice due to lack of resources (Moloi *et al.*, 2008:620). Many schools suffer from insufficient general teaching facilities, space, textbooks, furniture and qualified teachers (Moloi *et al.*, 2008:620) due to a lack of funds in schools. Limited involvement of parents in decisions regarding the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms is a serious threat. In addition, minimal parent education organised by schools poses a threat to inclusion. Memisevic and Hodzic (2011:701) highlight that parents should be educated on how much they should be involved in the education sector. In the absence of such education, parental involvement is compromised.

Limited teacher preparation on working with parents and the scarce focus on involving parents of learners with special educational needs pose a threat to including learners with special educational needs (De Boer & Munde, 2015:182). According to Shobana and Saravanan (2014:16), teachers who are not properly prepared on how to work cooperatively with parents, tend to overlook the efforts of parents or complain that they are too much involved in the education system.

On the other hand, parents, either of learners with special needs or learners without special needs, who still have negative attitudes towards inclusion are threats to inclusion (De Boer & Munde, 2015:180). Important also, socio-economic disadvantages

of some parents of learners with special educational needs are considered one of the main threats in an inclusive school (Engelbrecht, Oswald & Swart, 2003:305). Parents who are not able to meet the needs of the school, including supervising their children's academic work, tend to refrain from participating in school matters, and therefore are a threat to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs.

## **2.9 BEST PRACTICES TOWARDS ENHANCING THE INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Different best practices are implemented around the world in order to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In this section, reference will be made to countries such as Australia, Europe and South Africa.

### **2.9.1 Best practices in Australia**

Carroll *et al.* (2003:67) established that, in Australia, pre-service tuition for general teachers include compulsory units on teaching learners with special needs. In some states, such as New South Wales, the need for the teacher tuition curriculum to include at least one compulsory course on inclusive education have already been approved and the course incorporates a number of modern practices to help novice teachers improve their teaching techniques and attitudes towards learners with special educational needs. Initial teacher tuition is increasingly adapted to prepare graduates for a more inclusive school environment (Chambers & Forlin, 2010:76).

An Australian national competency framework potentially impacts upon the requirements of all universities in Australia to ensure proper units on inclusive education are included within their courses. Importantly, there has been increasing dialogues about the skills and competencies needed for teachers to be inclusive teachers (Forlin, 2010:180). Teacher tuition courses that focus on change of attitude towards inclusive education, as well as the skills and knowledge required, result in new graduates who are more supportive to learners (Lancaster & Bain, 2010:119).

In addition, Richards and Clough (2004:80) postulate that there is increased contact with people with special needs during preparation, through course experiences and site-based programmes. These practices have shown good results towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. Some tertiary education providers are choosing to implement an infusion approach, rather than offering standalone units of study on special needs. The infusion approach describes “modification of curriculum for learners with special educational needs, embedded within and across all curricular areas” (Sharma *et al.*, 2012:15).

Similarly, Miller (2010:58) adds that different innovative models are developed to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education. These models include field experiences in inclusive classrooms, coursework, interviews, infusion of information about diversity throughout the curriculum, direct contact with people with disabilities (Chambers & Forlin, 2010:78) and incursion activities, whereby learners with special educational needs visit the university. All in all, Winter (2006:87) concludes that interaction with learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms is one way of ensuring that pre-service teachers experience inclusion.

Important also, Datta (2015:237) postulates that Australian government education departments established internal support systems that enable them to help teachers and learners, rather than expecting assistance to be provided in the form of additional staff, resources or services. Apart from that, each school has become more self-sufficient in terms of support provided for both teachers and learners (Westwood & Graham, 2009:4).

School-based special education teachers, support teachers and state-wide visiting teacher services for learners with vision and hearing special educational needs are employed. Peer tutoring, school service officers and paraprofessionals who perform the role of classroom aides, working under the supervision of the teacher, are some of the internal support systems developed by individual schools (Westwood & Graham, 2003:11).

In addition, Allan (2003:175) establishes that the Australian government identified pedagogies which address issues of equity, social justice and inclusion. Furthermore, there are increased relationships between parents, the school and the community through school community programmes (SCP). Stakeholders of the school are involved in the planning and evaluation of learners' education.

### **2.9.2 Best practices in Scotland**

Notably, most European countries do not have separate teacher tuition programmes (Florian & Rouse, 2009:297). Inclusive education is made available for experienced teachers through continuing professional development (CPD). In Scotland, the new Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme was introduced in the year 2007-2008. The rationale for the new programme was based on an acknowledgement that teacher trainees should become teachers by working in schools. Nevertheless, the universities support the learning that occurs in schools with a curriculum incorporating theoretical and professional knowledge.

Teacher trainees spend 18 weeks on university-based learning supported by the other 18 weeks in school experience placements. This practice is done due to the fact that theoretical knowledge can be inconsistent with practice in school. Furthermore, the curriculum is designed to support teacher trainees to engage in critical and reflective practice (Florian & Rouse, 2009:298).

On the other hand, Peters (2004:12) highlights that transforming special schools into resource centres is a common practice. These centres provide courses and training for teachers and other professionals; disseminate and develop methods and materials; support mainstream schools and parents; provide part-time and short-term help for individual learners; and support learners in entering the labour market.

Furthermore, teachers are trained towards more flexible approaches for the 21st century. Training teachers towards using modern methods helps learners move away from teacher-centred approaches to education and make teachers enjoy teaching.

Furthermore, the Scotland government recommended many changes which aim to establish an inclusive education system for all learners. Some formal systems, such as recording and assessing children with special educational needs, were abandoned (Warnock& Clayton, 2003:725).

### **2.9.3 Best practices in South Africa**

Successful inclusive schools in South Africa became inclusive by being inclusive. This means that they became inclusive at their work places because learners with special educational needs were admitted. Some schools assert that they are not ready for inclusion and deny learners with special educational needs admission on the grounds that they cannot cater for them (Walton& Ketchum, 2006:240). It is usually because of a lack of the physical facilities, support personnel, technical resources or experienced teachers. The problem with this kind of thinking is that without learners who demand the modification of physical services or the addition of technical or human resources, there is no reason for schools to make changes.

This does not suggest careless inclusion, dumping potentially defenceless learners into unfriendly schools. It says that schools in South Africa are developing good and sustainable inclusive practices and cultures that are welcoming diverse learners and are learning “how to include as they include”. An example is a school that is wheelchair-inaccessible – the school would have remained wheelchair-inaccessible if learners who use wheelchairs for mobility had not been enrolled. Now ramps have been built and teachers had to come up with flexible and creative solutions to curriculum and assessment challenges to accommodate such learners.

Similarly, teachers in other schools learnt sign language because of the inclusion of learners who were deaf, but not before the admission of these learners. The resourcefulness, creativity and responsiveness that drive schools in South Africa to be inclusive, against the odds, seem also to motivate these schools beyond the classroom walls. The capacities of these schools were not enhanced before learners with special

educational needs were admitted, but rather by the admission of such learners (Walton& Ketchum, 2006:240). .

Furthermore, according to Walton (2011:242), there is no longer a separate curriculum for learners with disabilities. All learners follow the same curriculum, with adaptations or accommodations where necessary. Inclusive education addresses exclusion and barriers to learning caused by factors such as language differences, poverty, an inflexible curriculum, inadequate support service, inaccessible environments, and a lack of parent involvement, in addition to disabilities (Walton, 2011:242).

Adding on some of the best practices in South African schools, Masondo (2014:8) states that many inclusive schools in South Africa do not only regard themselves as community resources, willing to assist with basic needs like food, but they also mentor newly appointed principals in their provinces and areas, and provide support to neighbouring schools. Some schools welcome in-service teacher trainees to observe inclusive teaching in action. Walton (2011:243) adds that some inclusive schools facilitate parent support groups and others share their resources, facilities and expertise as a reasonable extension of the culture and values that make them inclusive.

According to Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004:301), parents assist in all school areas. The burden of managing the school alone is no longer expected of the principal. The school governing bodies (SGBs) determine the school policies, while school management teams (SMTs) are formed and assume responsibility for the implementation of such policies and the day-to-day running of the school (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996: section 16).

## **2.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented critical pedagogy (CP) as a conceptual framework and the related literature. The first part of the chapter presented the historical background of CP, its relevance in conducting this study, the objectives of the study, including social justice and equality, humanity, dynamics of power relations, as well as care and respect. The

principles of CP, including democracy, critical consciousness, social justice and active participation, were discussed. Also, epistemology and ontology of CP were discussed, as well as the role of the researcher and their relationship with co-researchers. Definitions of the operational concepts of inclusion, learners with special educational needs and mainstream classrooms were also presented. In the last part of this section, a review of related literature was presented. Reviewed literature centred on the objectives of this study: challenges towards inclusive education; possible solutions to identified challenges; components of inclusion; conditions necessary for inclusion; and threats towards inclusion.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN FOR ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed at enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms in one primary school in Lesotho. In order to achieve this aim, this chapter discusses the research methodology and the accompanying study design, as well as the instrumentation used during the generation of data. The study adopted participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological approach, which was a means of operationalising the critical pedagogy (CP). The study used critical discourse analysis (CDA) in analysing the data. The definitions and the historical origins of PAR are presented. The principles, steps and ontological and epistemological assumptions of PAR that serve as the basis of choosing it as the best method of conducting this study, are presented as well.

#### **3.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Participatory action research (PAR) can be referred to as an alternative to scientific and traditional social research, as it moves an investigation from a linear cause and effect perspective to a more participatory framework that considers the context of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:480). PAR allows the participants to be actively involved in solving their problem. Co-researchers become actively involved in the quest for ideas and information to guide their future actions, rather than being passive (Whyte, 1991:21).

According to Telford, Koch and Kralik (2006:459), collectively, the researcher and the co-researchers engage in social investigation and take action with the purpose of improving a problem or situation. PAR recognises the need for people being studied to

participate in the design and conduct of all phases of any research that affects them (Vollman, Anderson & McFarlane, 2004:129).

Thus, PAR is a process of investigating a problem, using social methods whereby the affected people are involved in posing and solving their problem. In PAR, co-researchers, together with the researcher, actively participate throughout the research process. The definition of Kearney, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013:115) that PAR involves the participants as equal partners in all phases of the research – designing, implementing, acting and evaluation – will be used in this study.

### **3.2.1 Historical background of participatory action research**

The term “participatory research”, according to Brydon-Miller (1997:658), was first used by Maja Lissa Swantz in the 1970s to describe work. It was then conducted in Tanzania to draw on the knowledge, skills and expertise of community members to create development projects that were locally controlled. According to Hall (1997:262), Orlando Fals-Borda used the term “participatory action research” in Colombia to describe work, emphasising the component of social change. Brydon-Miller (1997:659) adds that, at around the same time, in India, Rajesh Tandon was developing the same approach to conduct community-based research. It was an appropriate approach in this study because the expertise of the community members was used to come up with the solutions to the challenges encountered by that society. The solutions are aimed at bringing about social change in that community.

However, MacDonald (2012:35) establishes that PAR originates from action research (AC), founded by Kurt Lewin. Lewin’s philosophy was that people can be more motivated about their work if they are involved in the decision-making about how the work place is run (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:36). According to MacDonald (2012:37), Lewin’s AC addressed challenges of segregation, discussion and assimilation, also helping people resolve issues initiating change, while studying the impact of such changes. This study also involved the stakeholders so that they are the ones deciding

how best the inclusion of learners with special educational needs can be enhanced in mainstream classrooms to avoid segregation.

On the other hand, McIntyre (2007:388) establishes that many participatory action researchers were influenced by Freire (1974:48), who introduced the notion of “conscientisation” and critical reflection. Freire is a critical pedagogue who challenged social relationships based on dominance and power in traditional education (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006:855). He emphasised the importance of critical consciousness and dialogue as key to social change (Freire, 1974:48). In this study, through dialogue, the marginalised group was involved in critically analysing their situation and organising actions to improve it (Burnes & Cooke, 2013:411). For a long time, learners with special educational needs have been marginalised in the education system. By including people who are affected by special educational needs in this study, it aims to raise awareness that such people exist and should be treated as equal to people without special educational needs.

Furthermore, according to MacDonald (2012:37), PAR also emerged from international development movements that occurred within the fields of adult education and the social science communities. The movements shared a vision of a society that is free from domination (Maguire, 1987:30). PAR was linked to the trends of radical and reformist approaches to international economic development assistance, and as an empowering alternative to traditional approaches to education in adult education and the ongoing debate in the social sciences over the dominant social science paradigm (Crossley, 2009:397). In this study, power was shared among all the co-researchers; no team member was to feel oppressed at any stage.

### **3.2.2 Justification for the choice of participatory action research**

I adopted PAR as a methodological approach because I wanted to enable the stakeholders to take ownership of the process of transforming their own social reality (Cargo & Mercer, 2008:327) and share their experiences with regard to inclusion. In PAR, the researcher is free to include people who face and are affected by the problem

at hand. The researcher acknowledges that the alliance of individuals with varied knowledge, skills and expertise advances the sharing of knowledge development. Stakeholders in education help advance a more compelling and a clearer agenda for social research by incorporating ethical concerns and projects for social transformation into educational research and practice (Kompridis, 2006:390).

PAR is suited for research with side-lined individuals (MacDonald, 2012:40). However, in this study, the focus is on learners with special educational needs who are regarded as a side-lined group. PAR acknowledges people with special needs; hence it is regarded a suitable methodological approach to conduct this study of enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. PAR, as a methodological approach, was followed because it recognises the voices of oppressed and marginalised people (Mahlomaholo, 2009:225). It commits the researcher to work with members of communities that have been oppressed and exploited in an effort to bring about social change (Nkoane, 2012:100).

According to Wood and Hendricks (2017:105), when a group of people with a common interest come together to explore a problem or an issue, they are in a better position to come up with effective solutions. Within PAR, co-researchers come together and discuss their workplace challenges and come to a shared understanding. I fixed my eyes hopefully on multiple voices and narratives of other co-researchers, so I value the view that in our interactions with others as co-researchers, we need to respect each others' expertise and value the contribution each team member makes.

In addition, to bring about social change, Kompridis(2006:364) postulates that PAR rejects the principle of objectivity whereby the researcher is seen as a "distant observer"; rather, in PAR, the researcher is seen working collaboratively with other co-researchers in trying to solve the problem at hand. In PAR, stakeholders in education help advance a more compelling and a clearer agenda for social research by incorporating ethical concerns and projects for social transformation into educational research and practice (Kompridis, 2006:384).

The researcher believes that the stakeholders are in a better position to answer the research question. PAR allows dialogue and permits co-researchers the freedom to speak (Reason & Bradbury, 2008:463). I find PAR relevant and appropriate because I am aware that, in order to reply to the five objectives of this study, the co-researchers' lived experiences are of utmost importance. When co-researchers are free to speak, they are in a position to better solve the problem at hand. Ideally, it is the stakeholders, in collaboration with the researcher, who determines what the challenges with regard to inclusion are, and how they want to eliminate such challenges (MacDonald, 2012:40).

### **3.2.3 Objectives of participatory action research**

#### **3.2.3.1 Equality and teamwork**

PAR is grounded in the values of democracy and equal opportunities (Koch & Kralik, 2006:35) it is therefore regarded the suitable methodology in conducting this study of enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In this study, principles such as freedom of speech, equity, non-sexism, transparency and social justice are taken into account (Nkoane, 2012:100). Collaborative relationships were built between the co-researchers and me in search of how best learners with special educational needs could be included in mainstream classrooms. According to Kindon, Painand Kesby(2008:93), PAR seeks to foster opportunities to democratise knowledge production by those involved. Similarly, Prosser and Loxley (2007:57) emphasise that PAR aims at enabling participation of all people, unlike viewing them as uninformed or insufficiently articulate enough to contribute.

For a long time, to be a child and to have a disability brought about a double disadvantage, as such children would have been systematically excluded from discussion about their education. In this study, I believe that people's experiences are ever-changing, regardless of their ability; I therefore wanted to involve them in the study to hear and learn from their experiences and problems, hence the use of PAR as a methodological approach. According to Nkoane (2010:326), human beings should be studied, using human methodologies that respect and enhance that they are subjective.

Similarly, McIntyre and Phaneuf (2008:217) hold the view that PAR allows opportunities for working with people, rather than for people. Hence I worked with the co-researchers in trying to solve their problem, rather than trying to solve the problem myself.

I believe that cooperatively the stakeholders, together with the researcher, can come up with the answers to the question of what is the best way to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (Greenwood & Levin, 1998:122). Furthermore, the researcher and co-researchers both benefit from exposure to PAR, as they together create and share a space for working collaboratively in developing new knowledge.

Sharing the same sentiments, Zeller-Berkman (2014:520) emphasises that those who are affected by the topic under investigation become crucial partners in the research process. This clearly shows that, alone, the researcher may not yield rich information. Rather, in this study, all the co-researchers are to engage in ongoing and sometimes overlapping cycles of fact-finding, planning, action and reflection (Lewin, 1946:38). Research teams participate in all phases, trying not only to understand the data, but also to use data to change the underlying causes of the problem at hand (Zeller-Berkman, Muñoz-Proto & Torre, 2015:26).

### **3.2.3.2 Inclusion**

Including all the stakeholders in the research is envisaged by PAR. Research is conducted with them, not on them (Zeller-Berkman *et al.*, 2015:27). In PAR, inclusion is centred on those most affected by a problem. According to Morales (2016:160), they are engaged in planning, carrying out and applying the results of the research. This is exactly what will be happening in conducting this study; each co-researcher included, will be engaged throughout the research process. The act builds on these co-researchers' strengths, expertise and ability to create knowledge about the issues affecting their lives. Learners with special educational needs and the stakeholders are viewed as experts of their own experiences.

Through this view, they are completely capable of exploring inclusive education issues—in fact, they are necessary research team members. PAR and inclusive education share the same principles and, therefore, is the best methodology in conducting this study. The study itself is about inclusive education; therefore, using PAR as a methodology, makes it more inclusive, as it includes all stakeholders. The principles that they share, include the fact that both are community-based, meaning that they reflect the community as a whole; they are not selective, rejecting or exclusive. This study too is not exclusive, but inclusive, as it includes the stakeholders of the school. In conducting this study, collaboration and equity, whereby all members will have rights and responsibilities with the same opportunities, will be promoted.

### **3.2.3.3 Transformative and empowering**

Empowerment is a crucial element of PAR, wherein the primary focus is to reduce inequalities and power differences (Baum *et al.*,2006:855).The transformative and empowering nature of PAR – whereby the researcher and participants co-create knowledge, while developing a sense of the community and educating one another by negotiating meanings and raising consciousness (MacDonald, 2012:34) –is another reason why it is regarded suitable for this study that aims to enhance inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Carr and Kemmis (1986:211) highlight that PAR offers teachers, parents, learners and administrators a means to take collaborative responsibility to develop and reform education. It is also regarded as an emancipator to the marginalised –the voices of learners with special educational needs will be heard ;they are allowed to speak and give their views on how they can be easily included in mainstream classrooms. This means PAR challenges oppression, marginalisation and exclusion (Nkoane, 2010:338), which are also challenged by inclusive education.

### **3.2.3.4 Problem-based**

According to Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008:425),PAR is context-bound, relational and situated. As it is contextual and focuses on the real existing problem, seeking for solutions as a group of people working together, it is the best method because the co-

researchers are the ones who know the problems they encounter in their context. Working together with them, assisted in coming up with solutions. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2007:334) state that strategies used in PAR include planning change with the participants, acting on and observing the process, reflecting on the process and consequences and further the cycles of planning and reflecting. For participatory action researchers, solutions to problems are negotiated among the interests of stakeholders with different power bases and resources (Herr & Anderson, 2005:28). Thus, participatory action researchers believe that knowledge is contextual, uncertain and evolving (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006:47).

### **3.2.4 Principles of participatory action research**

#### **3.2.4.1 Defuse power relations**

Participatory action research (PAR) enables researchers to put critical pedagogy (CP) in practice and it addresses the differences between power structures, allowing every stakeholder to have a voice in decision-making. In conducting this study, the researcher and co-researchers will be working harmoniously, sharing ideas through communication, using familiar language. Participatory action researchers believe that knowledge is jointly owned with co-researchers and therefore should be shared with the community in culturally suitable modes. Knowledge is disseminated using popular forms of communication (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013:124). This way, the viewpoints of every member will be recognised and valued, and members will be treated equally and with respect.

Participating in communicative action occurs with a communicative space, a place in which co-researchers are free to be open and honest, and respect one another's views and ideas. From a PAR point of view, this needs to be a space where conversations are conducted with respect. Where respect reigns, there is a sincere effort among co-researchers to reach voluntary consensus, and difference is valued (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013:36). In this regard, the co-researchers feel free to contribute in whatever way. Bergold and Thomas (2012:4) state that co-researchers become

willing to disclose their views, opinions and experiences in an everyday life that is open and with trusted people.

According to Balogun-Mwangi, Matsumoto, Ballou, Faver and Tadorova (2016:6), in PAR, the researcher does not control, as in traditional research. Rather, the co-researchers are the experts, while the role of the researcher is to participate productively and meaningfully in the generation of data. Clearly therefore, in conducting this study, power was shared among the co-researchers, as PAR is considered democratic, equitable, liberating and life-enhancing (Koch & Kralik, 2009:35). Establishing equal power relations leads to fairness, freedom and hope in the relationship of the researcher and co-researchers.

#### **3.2.4.2 Transformative**

One of the challenges facing inclusion of learners with special educational needs is how the community at large perceives them. Including different people in this study made a considerable contribution for social change. Greenwood and Levin (1998:122) highlight that PAR is concerned with social change that embodies the belief of defining a problem in order to solve it. Most of the time members of the society do not know that they can also contribute to the improvement of the school, so using PAR helps to raise awareness in the community that they can contribute and make a change. By using PAR, the voices of the voiceless are heard (Nkoane, 2010:317). It is empowering also to include the community in the research process, as PAR envisages empowering oppressed individuals (Mason, 2006:22). Including learners with special educational needs in the research process also empowers them to define and find solutions to their problems.

#### **3.2.4.3 Active participation**

I recognise and value the social being of people, and so does PAR (Reason & Bradbury, 2002:xxii). In PAR, knowledge creation is an active process and is subjective (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135). In this study, the co-researchers were contributing

throughout the research process and were not treated like objects of the research. Again, in PAR, co-researchers are essential to the process of identifying the problem, developing treatment and disseminating the results (Dold & Chapman, 2012:515). Important also, is that in PAR, co-researchers are actively contributing in all phases of the research process (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135). In this study, all the co-researchers are expected to participate from the beginning to the end of the study. Different opinions and suggestions from different people can best respond to how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms, as Kelly (2005:70) stipulates that individuals become creative actors of their own world.

#### **3.2.4.4 Mutual corroboration**

I believe that people should not be decided upon; they are the ones who know the kind of lives they live. That is why I chose PAR as the research methodology in conducting this study, so that the stakeholders could be the ones deciding what and what not to do in order to best include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The philosophical underpinnings of PAR, symbolising the concept that people have the right to determine their own development and the need for the community to participate meaningfully in the research process to analyse their own solutions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:59), contribute to the reasons why PAR serves as the appropriate method in this study. In the same manner, Cook (2012:140) emphasises that unless co-researchers are involved in decision-making, the practice is not PAR. Safety is created within communicative spaces where participants produce a sense of cohesion with shared decision-making (Berckmans, Velasco & Loots, 2016:1020).

#### **3.2.5 Ontology of participatory action research**

Ontology is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2011:711) as the study of what there is in the world. Ontological assumptions are concerned with what is believed. In participatory action research, reality is complex and subjective, just like in critical pedagogy, where the nature of reality is socially produced through social interactions. It avoids fixed and objective views of the researcher at the expense of the marginalised groups (Kincheloe,

2009:110). According to McTaggart (1997:10), “human beings may not always see the same light on the hill nor seek out to wonder the same utopia”. Thus, the use of PAR in this study goes hand in hand with the ontological standpoint of CP, which emphasises subjective reality. Against this background, I wished to get various viewpoints from different people regarding how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms.

I hold the opinion that the best people to respond to the objectives of this study are those that are involved with learners with special educational needs on a day-to-day basis, therefore PAR, as a methodological approach, was regarded appropriate in conducting the study. I believe that different opinions and suggestions from different people can best respond to how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. Reality was discovered through interaction. It was therefore highly important to use PAR because it allows the co-researchers to be the owners of the study, giving it direction, therefore yielding positive results. Kelly (2005:70) emphasises that individuals become creative actors of their own world. Thus, using PAR, researchers believe that knowledge is evolving, uncertain, contextual and value-laden (McNiff & Whitehead 2006:112).

### **3.2.6 Epistemology of participatory action research**

According to McNulty (2013:525), epistemology is the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge. PAR suggests both interpretive and critical approaches to knowledge generation in the research process. The epistemological stance of PAR allows the voices of the marginalised to be heard and their experiences are made legitimate through the research process (Kincheloe, 2009:108). Furthermore, PAR assumes that knowledge creation is an active process and is subjective (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135), which is another indication that it is the best method for this study, as the co-researchers were contributing throughout the research process and not treated like objects of the research. In PAR, participants are actively contributing in all phases of the research process (Chandler & Torbet, 2003:135) and they will contribute throughout this research process.

Furthermore, I recognise and value the social being of people, and so does PAR (Reason & Bradbury, 2008:xxii). This was seen in the way the research was conducted, where co-researchers were interacting in a friendly, informal way. Co-researchers were free to express themselves. According to Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008:425), participatory action researchers assume that knowledge is jointly owned with collaborators and must be shared with the community in culturally appropriate modes. In conducting this study, the language that was used, was mother-tongue throughout the process (Tello, 2006:170). English was also allowed to be used when any member felt that he or she could better be understood when expressing him- or herself in English.

### **3.2.7 Relationship between the researcher and co-researchers**

In conducting research using PAR, co-researchers are collaborators in the research project (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008:425). I worked collaboratively with the co-researchers in each phase of the research process. Like the participatory action researchers, I assume that people who are committed and participate in the process will generate more and will be more devoted in the successful implementation of the findings (Reason & Marshall, 2001:319).

I worked harmoniously with the co-researchers in a democratic environment, in which every member was treated with trust and respect. Tshelane (2013:420) states that PAR engages participants in a democratic process as equals, so that their voices can be heard and respected. Different opinions from co-researchers were accepted, as people have different opinions due to their different experiences and contexts (Francis, 2012:949). At the same time, I shared power with the co-researchers, as Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008:426) highlight that participatory action researchers challenge the traditional division of power in the research relationship.

### **3.3 SELECTION OF CO-RESEARCHERS**

I invited the school principal, seven teachers, three parents, two learners with special educational needs and one learner without special educational needs, all from one

school in which the study was conducted. The reason for choosing all co-researchers from one school is to contextualise inclusion problems and identify the best ways of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. I believe that by working with these stakeholders, we can make a difference, as making a difference is the major driving force for conducting this study of enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

According to Hlalele (2013:565), concerned people come together to co-create their vision of how they want to learn and live together in the present and in the future. I understand that teachers, parents and learners can be representative of stakeholders. This does not suggest that other groups, such as policymakers, are not important to contribute. The three groups chosen, were selected because they were the most closely involved and directly affected by special educational needs.

The teachers in this research process are regarded important because they are the ones interacting and experiencing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. They know which practices they follow in their classrooms and they know which ones work and which ones do not work. They are also the ones who know the challenges they face with regard to including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

The learners, on the other hand, are the people who know the challenges with regard to their education, as they are directly affected by inclusion. This is their everyday experience that is studied. The Revised Code of Practice in the United Kingdom recommends that learners with special educational needs have the right to be involved in exercising choice and making decisions (Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Monsten, 2003:40). As a participatory problem-solving method, it allows learners to have a say in decisions that affect them. They also help to come up with solutions to their challenges. In this study, three learners were included: one with a physical disability; another one was visually challenged; and the other one had no special needs. It was evident in this study that by actively engaging learners with special educational needs, they felt more supported, confident and relaxed. Learners were, therefore, empowered and saved

from being mere objects of learning. Working with these people, who had muted voices, allowed them to open their mouths and share their stories of living with special educational needs (Kincheloe, 2005:253).

Parents are regarded as the first educators of their children and are responsible for their children's education. Including them in the research is of utmost importance for effective learning. Jeynes (2007:101) has a strong belief that parents' involvement and participation in the planning and evaluation of their children's education can help learners not to see schools as foreign places. This has a positive impact on them and, as a result, they stand a better chance to contribute to how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms.

Parents can also make a considerable contribution in addressing the objectives of the study, as Mashau (2000:20) states that parents are primary caregivers of their children, and, as such, are the central resource in the education system. In conclusion, Bennett (1997:127) points out that because parents and their children are most affected by the outcomes of the inclusion process, it is important to include them in studies investigating the "benefits, of inclusion".

The school principal, as the overseer of the school was included, so that she could be updated with the changes that would be suggested. Zachos and Matziouri (2015:112) emphasise that it is important for the school principal to be a proponent and leader of inclusion for the successful implementation of inclusion. Furthermore, the presence and contribution of the principal serves as security to other co-researchers that the suggested ideas will be implemented. Apart from that, the principal was also teaching, therefore including her in this study was helpful as she had more to contribute with strategies on how to best include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, I understood that the principal might have some information that other co-researchers might lack with regard to learners with special educational needs in that particular school.

### **3.3.1 Credentials of co-researchers**

#### **3.3.1.1 The coordinator of the study**

In this study, the core-researcher is referred to as the “coordinator of the study” and is currently pursuing a study towards a master’s degree.

#### **3.3.1.2 The principal**

Mrs Moyo has been the principal of this school since 1986. She holds a master’s degree in Education (MEd) and has attended different short courses with regard to inclusive education.

#### **3.3.1.3 Special education teachers**

Mr Pule is a Bachelor of Education (BEd) holder with special education and English as his measures. He obtained his bachelor’s degree from the National University of Lesotho. He started working at this school in 2015, after obtaining his degree. He is trained as a high school teacher, but was employed at this school because of his skill in special education. He teaches Grade seven.

Ms Tsebo holds a Primary Teachers’ Certificate, plus a Diploma in Special Education obtained from the Lesotho College of Education. She has been teaching at this school since 1990. She has also attended short courses on special education in different countries, including France and Botswana. Ms Tsebo is a Grade four tutor and a remedial teacher in this school.

Mr Andreas also holds a Diploma in Special Education, obtained from the Lesotho College of Education. He is physically challenged and uses a wheelchair. He is a Grade six tutor and has a passion to help learners with special educational needs succeed academically.

#### **3.3.1.4 General teachers**

Mr Lebo, a Diploma in Primary Education holder, has 25 years teaching experience. He has been teaching at different schools, including special schools. He joined this school in 1997 and is a Grade five tutor.

Mrs Tau also is a Diploma in Primary Education holder and has been teaching at this school since 1986, when the school was founded. Mrs Tau is holding the position of the deputy principal in the school and teaches Grade one. She too has attended different courses in special education.

Ms Nthabeleng and Ms Rapeisi are new teachers, who joined the school this year. The latter teaches Grade two and the former Grade three. They both obtained their Diploma in Primary Education from the Lesotho College of Education in 2015.

#### **3.3.1.5 Parents**

Mrs Lebusa is the chairperson of an organisation of people with autism in that area. Her daughter with autism is now in Grade seven, and she started attending this school in Grade one.

Mrs Ntsonyana, who also uses a wheelchair, is a parent at this school, even though her child has no special educational needs. She is also a member of the school board.

Mr Kokolia has been a parent at this school and is now employed as a caretaker at the school. He has been at the school since 1990 and ever since then, he has been interacting with learners, parents and the teachers of this school.

#### **3.3.1.6 Learners**

Lineo is a twelve-year-old girl in Grade three. She is physically challenged and uses a wheelchair. Tumelo is a Grade six boy with no special educational needs and Tsepo is

a Grade five boy with visual problems. Tsepo does not see well, but does not wear spectacles or walk with a stick.

### **3.3.2 SWOT analysis**

The team performed the SWOT analysis as a guide to the activities of the co-researchers. The analysis was important for the awareness that there might be challenges or problems that may hinder the study that might need to be addressed or recognised. The analysis might also inform us about some options to neutralise or nullify our shortcomings.

#### **3.3.2.1 Strengths**

A number of strengths were identified, which included cooperation among the members, who were dedicated to work cooperatively. The team comprised the school principal, teachers, parents and learners. Amongst the teachers was a physically challenged teacher, while another one had exposure to some inclusive education courses in different countries, and two other teachers were special educators. The learners in the team comprised both learners with special educational needs and learners without special educational needs. All the team members had day-to-day interaction with learners with special educational needs, therefore their experiences enabled them to make valuable contributions with regard to enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

The participation of the principal and providing us with the access to the school premises throughout the research process, from planning to the implementation, helped this study to be a success. Allowing us to implement the proposed strategies, not complaining that we are wasting time for the completion of the syllabus was remarkable. Furthermore, the active participation of co-researchers throughout the research process was a good sign that they truly wanted change.

The participation of learners with and without special educational needs was of great importance because they shared their experiences, challenges and their proposed solutions to the challenges they encounter. The learners were also very excited to participate in the study, as the meetings were enjoyable and in a relaxed environment, different from everyday classroom settings.

The experiences of both the teachers and the learners enabled them to make valuable and informed contributions on activities to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

The school where the study was undertaken is an independent school that has been pronounced to be an inclusive school; therefore the environment was conducive. The buildings and the entire environment enabled free movement for all members including those using wheelchairs. Also, almost all the needed resources, such as writing materials and data-capturing instruments such as a voice recorder and a video recorder, were readily available. In addition, there was free Wi-Fi in the school and members were connected.

As equality and respect are norms in that school, it was very easy for the team members to treat all members as equals and treat one another with respect, as PAR stresses.

Apart from that, parents also had access to the internet and public libraries at their respective workplaces, which made it easier for them to search for information on how inclusive education is practiced in other countries. Furthermore, participation of all the class teachers was seen as a strong point because the higher the number of participants, the more information was gathered from the members. Apart from that, all the teachers were able to implement the suggested strategies, rather than when it would be implemented in one class. This means, if the strategy was working, then the whole school benefited.

In addition, the principal of the school was very active in this study; therefore that was regarded as a strong point in conducting the study. The principal was always there, very active and willing to help in any way, as she indicated that it was not only the researcher benefiting from the study, but the school as well.

### **3.3.2.2 Weaknesses**

Time available for the study was very limited and therefore was regarded as a weakness. Teachers felt that they still had their everyday work, apart from the research. It was difficult to have all members present at all meetings, as the parents also had other commitments.

Some of the members of the team also lacked exposure to PAR as a method, as most of them were familiar with other research methods whereby they would be issued questionnaires that could be completed in less than two minutes. That was seen as a weakness because the co-researchers were used to research projects where the main researcher is in a dominating role, and not where they are regarded as all equals; as a result, most of the time they were looking up to the researcher.

Another weakness was that the research project was not funded; therefore, the members had to cover their travelling expenses as they came from different places. The cost of calls and emails were also covered by the members themselves and that was regarded as a weakness. I felt ashamed to be helped by people without giving them any incentives, especially the learners, because they were provided extra transport and lunch boxes, apart from their normal school day provisions.

### **3.3.2.3 Opportunities**

The teachers and the principal felt empowered, as they had previously felt powerless to include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms, because

they believed they needed special skills to implement inclusion successfully. The principle of empowerment was achieved, as Kindon and Elwood (2009:20) emphasise that PAR creates conditions that foster space for empowerment. Even the teachers, who did not see inclusion as effective, had the opportunity to change that mentality through participating in this research project. Inclusion of a teacher who was physically challenged, was another opportunity, because we gathered information from the right type of person, who experienced inclusion from his early age up until now as a teacher. Furthermore, teachers realised that even the teaching methods that they had been taking for granted could be useful for better inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Parents, on the other hand, felt that the research opened their eyes, especially those who had held a belief that learners with special educational needs needed some cure of some sort so that they could better be included in mainstream classrooms. They felt motivated to see that they could bring about change in the education of their children. They also redressed the idea they initially had that teachers were the only ones who knew what to do in educating learners with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Again, they changed their mindset to one where they believe that by including learners with special educational needs in the mainstream, the nature of disability some learners have, can change. Also, there was a change on the belief that such learners cannot learn, or that they distract the class.

Members of the team realised that, through cooperation of parents, teachers and learners, the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms can be a success. I also realised that PAR is doable, while earlier I had doubts whether PAR was really doable. In addition, I was based full-time in the school during the research project, so I was able to observe and experience some of the ideas discussed at the meetings.

By including all the stakeholders, they were empowered to have a say on the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. They were

committed to use every opportunity to inspire such learners, therefore, they informed the direction of the study (Foster, 2005:8).

Another opportunity was that the internet was accessible and because the study was undertaken in the capital town, we were free to invite any expert on inclusive education.

#### **3.3.2.4 Threats**

The Basotho, as a nation, have their own norms and culture, whereby adults are regarded as superiors, whose words are final, and children as minors, who should abide by what parents say. This is regarded as respect, as far as the Basotho culture is concerned. This posed a threat because learners had a tendency of listening to what parents and teachers said and to agree on that. They were not able to argue with the parents or teachers; however, one could notice by their look that they had something different to say, but could not bring themselves to say it. That weakens the study using PAR as a methodology and CP as a lens, as they call for equality.

As much as the co-researchers were assured anonymity and confidentiality, I could notice that the co-researchers did not feel free to use the voice recorder. That was because teachers indicated that although most of the researchers who came before me also assured confidentiality, pictures of learners with special educational needs were seen published in public for profit-making.

### **3.4 SPIRAL SET-UP OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

The spirals of PAR were used when data were generated. All the spirals are vital as they overlap and flow well into one another, signifying that certain processes are in progress when the next spiral evolves. Details on how data were collected, took spirals as follows.

#### **3.4.1 Initial planning**

In the first phase, I went to a school where the researcher anticipated undertaking the research. I met the principal and asked for permission to conduct a study at her school, as Christensen (2012:238) highlights that it is important for researchers to obtain permission from school administrators and the participants themselves, because educational research studies are conducted within the confines of a school system. I explained my research topic and why I was conducting that research. I further explained the type of research method that I intended to use, namely PAR.

The principal was happy to hear about my research topic and the fact that I had chosen their school for the research, as she regarded the school as non-existing in the eyes of the government and other institutions. However, she was troubled by the research method, as she made it clear that she was not familiar with such a research method. I explained that with PAR, the researcher does not just come and collect data; rather, the researcher works together with the community to identify problems and try to solve them. Whyte (1991:20) states that individuals in a community actively participate jointly with the professional researcher throughout the entire research process.

Although the principal was at first hesitant that this kind of research was going to waste their time, she asked for two days to read about how research using PAR is conducted and then she would get back to me. After two days, she called me to the school and informed me that she was excited by that kind of research. She also asked me to include four more teachers, apart from the initial three teachers that I had intended to

include. This was not a problem, as Pain, Whitman and Milledge (2011:5) state that some priorities might change and some plans may not be possible.

She also told me she would find suitable parents to be included in the study and she would ask teachers to choose learners to participate. On the same day, the seven teachers were called in for the briefing. With the help of the principal, I explained that the intention of the study was to work collaboratively in order to find the best ways to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Most of the teachers, including those with special education qualifications, indicated that it was very challenging to teach learners with special educational needs together with the “normal” learners, because they waste a lot of time trying to assist learners with special educational needs as they are unpredictable – meaning that generalisation does not work with them. That indicated that teachers were aware that there was no one-size-fits-all solution in teaching learners with special educational needs. They raised the issue of not covering the content they are supposed to cover in the syllabus; they complained about the lack of materials to use; the issue of lack of funding was raised as a challenge in the school; and they also complained about parents who are in denial about the state of their children and end up not committed to their children’s education.

When they complained about the parents, on that point, one teacher suggested that we should also include parents and learners. Other teachers laughed and said, “this must be a joke, how can we work with parents and learners under the same roof, they will never respect us”. But after further explanation on how research using the PAR method is conducted, they agreed that maybe PAR would make a difference because so many researchers have conducted studies, asking them questions, but that made no difference.

They further emphasised that they had hope that maybe that time around, the research would assist them on how to deal with learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The three learners with special educational needs from

different classes were chosen by the teachers and were given consent forms to be signed by the parents. The principal volunteered to find parents who could be available for the research meetings. Among the parents who agreed to participate in the study was a parent who was a member and a chairperson for an association of people with autism in that area. There was also a parent in a wheelchair; her participation acted as a role model to the learners with special educational needs and experiences of her school days were shared.

### **3.4.2 Putting the team together**

The consent forms for the teachers, learners and parents that indicated that the participation would be voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, were issued. Three parents, seven teachers, three learners and the principal returned the signed consent forms with their names and phone numbers. After collecting the consent forms, I called all those people who indicated they were willing to participate over the phone. I arranged a meeting with them on a day that would be convenient to them. We all agreed to have our first meeting on the Friday afternoon of that week. The Friday afternoon was convenient to them, because in that school, Friday is regarded as a half-day, as classes end at half past twelve, while other days school ends at three o'clock. This meant that the teachers and the learners would be free on the Friday afternoon, and the parents agreed that they would create time for the meeting.

The team was given a classroom to use for the meetings that would be held during the process. The first meeting started at two o'clock in the afternoon, comprising myself, the principal, seven teachers, three parents and three learners. At the beginning of that meeting, the co-researchers introduced themselves and restated the purpose of the research—to find out how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. Co-researchers were enlightened that their views were considered valuable and could help influence any future plans for inclusion in Lesotho.

The principal, as the chairperson for that day, further explained to the team the research method that was going to be used and that it was that of collaborative team-working, called “participatory action research”. She asked me to elaborate more on PAR and I explained how it works, talking about its objectives, principles, epistemological and ontological assumptions, power relations and the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers. It was then that the learners started feeling a little more relaxed, as they were somewhat nervous to attend the meeting with the teachers and parents.

At that meeting, the members of the team were made aware that we were all equal, and therefore regarded as co-researchers. The co-researchers were assured that their concerns were to be heard in order to inform future practice. They were also assured anonymity for individuals and the school, and therefore encouraged to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings about their experience of inclusion freely. They were encouraged to speak freely, without holding back anything they thought important. An agreement was drawn that we would hold our meetings on Sundays at two o’clock. An agenda was drawn that at the next meeting, we would formulate the team rules that would guide us. The reason for choosing Sundays was that on Sunday afternoons the co-researchers would be free and would create time for the meetings.

### **3.4.3 Development of team rules**

On the first Sunday that we agreed to meet, we all attended the meeting. We agreed that we would all play different roles in different meetings, meaning that no one member would be assigned as the chairperson or secretary; such roles would be played by different members. I am very much aware of the unequal power relations (teacher/learner/parent) that could compromise the democratic, collaborative process. From the very beginning, I emphasised to the co-researchers that the project was theirs and that my role was to guide them through the process. According to Dick (2004:429), there are different levels of participation within an action research process, but the important point is that co-researchers are involved in negotiating their roles.

The rules were that there would be respect towards each member; members would be treated as equals and everybody's contribution would be valued. Freedom of expression was emphasised as well. The agreement was that the attendance register should be marked for each sitting of a meeting. In case any member would be absent from a meeting, such member was supposed to send an apology through the WhatsApp group that was created by one of the learners for our convenience. The WhatsApp group was named "PAL Meetings" and that learner was an administrator of that group. In that group, when one member sent a message, all the members had access to that message. In addition to the rules, information was to be kept confidential and for the purpose of the research – not for profit-making. Furthermore, co-researchers should remain anonymous in that names which would be used would not be the real names of the participants.

The co-researchers preferred to use their mother tongue for discussions. As a result, the discussions were transcribed in Sesotho and then translated into English. Variations of questions were used for clarity, especially for learners and parents.

#### **3.4.4 Co-researchers' activities**

All the research team members were present a tour next meeting, which was devoted to understanding the nature of the problem. It was during that meeting that the co-researchers exchanged ideas on the research topic. We then agreed to brainstorm the challenges facing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. That was done after Mr Kokolia (alias) suggested as follows:

*Ke nahana re boleleng lintho tsohle tseo re nahanang hore libaka ts'itiso hore inclusive education e etsahale hantle* (I suggest that we brainstorm the challenges that make inclusion ineffective).

That was done from the belief that it was through understanding the challenges that we would be enabled to find ways that would best enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The team then brainstormed the challenges with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in

mainstream classrooms and Mr Kamo wrote down the suggestions. That was in line with what Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (2009:137) highlighted: when using PAR as a methodology, the planning should help in defining the objectives and give opportunity to follow up and evaluate the activities. The guiding questions were phrased slightly differently due to the different co-researchers to ensure comprehension and relevance.

### **3.4.5 Strategic planning**

A strategic plan is drawn up to operationalise the activities of each of the priorities that is set. The co-researchers drew up a plan of action that would act in response to the five objectives of the study. The first objective of the study is to justify the needs and to demonstrate challenges that make enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms necessary. Thus, the plan of action that was drawn up, comprised activities that aimed at enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

### **3.4.6 Identifying mechanisms relevant to improving the situation**

During the meetings co-researchers engaged in discussions about how they experienced learners with special educational needs. The co-researchers agreed that in the meetings, most of the times, things that have been found lacking, should have strategies designed and, thereafter, the skills necessary to implement them should be developed. Where necessary, the way these strategies and skills would help learners in class, was to be demonstrated.

The plans on how to improve the situation were then formulated. In one of the cases, the teachers emphasised that they still use the traditional methods of teaching, whereby the teacher teaches and the learners follow what the teacher instructs them to do. On the other hand, the learners indicated that the teachers were too strict on them and did not allow them to discuss any class work with their class mates.

In order to overcome these deficiencies, the research team agreed upon using pedagogical practices that allowed learners to work together. Examples of strategies that allowed learners to work together were peer tutoring and group work. It was also suggested that teachers should plan their work together when possible, thereby practicing collaborative teaching. Again, the co-researchers agreed on giving learners academic work according to their abilities and capabilities.

Moreover, the sitting arrangement in classes was suggested to be in a circular form. Parents were to be seen as active in the education of their children. They were to be used as resource persons and they were supposed to sign each piece of work their children were given. Evaluation of agreed strategies would be continuous, so that a strategy that did not work, could be cut short.

### **3.4.7 Setting priorities**

Prioritisation should be applied successfully at all levels of strategic planning and implementation (Kerzner, 2013:105). The co-researchers' intention was to find the best ways to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. First of all, it was highly important for the co-researchers to understand what is meant by "learners with special educational needs". All research team members exchanged ideas on their ideas about learners with special educational needs. The next priority was to identify the challenges with regard to including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. This part happened to be a very burning issue, as everyone was complaining that it was difficult to include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. The following priority was to brainstorm how the prior mentioned challenges could be solved. The fourth priority was to implement the suggested strategies and members divided themselves accordingly to observe when strategies were implemented. The fifth priority was to reflect on the implemented strategies.

From their observation and experiences, co-researchers highlighted that the activities and environment which allowed socialisation, enhanced the inclusion of learners with

special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, pedagogical practices that would promote socialisation should be incorporated. Collaborative team teaching was also regarded important for inclusion. Similarly, it was noted that parental involvement in the learning process was vital.

#### **3.4.8 Implementation of acknowledged strategies**

All the identified strategies were implemented one at a time, in order to determine whether the desired results could be obtained. The implementation of strategies was observed by selected co-researchers and the positive results were noted. The team of participants engaged in these strategies, which called to action teachers, parents as well as learners. Teachers were necessary when strategies needed their convergence with regard to what they thought would maximise their overall achievement in teaching and learning. Learners were necessary in respect of testing certain ways of teaching in order to solidify learning. Learners were taught in new ways, which co-researchers agreed to follow to achieve the desired effect. According to Brydon-Miller (1997:660), a joint agreement of all the parties involved leads to the implementation of suggested activities by the responsible co-researchers.

All the activities emanated from the research team through discussions and activities forming the main activity of data generation. From the discussions, participants came up with constructs relevant to enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. This enabled the co-researchers to plan what should be done, and bring back a report to the meeting for post-mortem, as well as to see how many meetings would be needed.

#### **3.4.9 Reflection stage**

At this stage, shared reflection and consolidation of the activities that had been implemented, were done by the co-researchers. The review was further made on the suggested activities. According to Gaffney (2008:27), once the activities designed to address the problem have been implemented, the co-researchers should evaluate the

impact of the suggested practices. The focal point of the co-researchers at this stage was to shed light on whether the implemented activities enhanced the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms or not.

Responses from the reflection stage led to new questions; hence the continuous process that is referred to as “spirals of ongoing action and reflection” (Gaffney, 2008:27). This process is not an easy, straightforward spiral of planning, implementing and observing, but rather, as Kemmis and McTaggart (2005:277) dispute, a process which overlaps and where initial plans may change due to the experiences encountered during implementation.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

During the meetings, the co-researchers were all informed about the ethical considerations. This study was planned and implemented in such a way that it would not threaten or harm the co-researchers. I requested clearance and permission from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State. Permission to conduct research was also requested from the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho in order to obtain access to the selected school. In addition, permission was sought from the principal of the selected school to obtain access to the teachers, parents and the learners.

I also obtained informed assent and consent from the co-researchers to participate in the study. The co-researchers were informed of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the procedures that would be used. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The co-researchers were assured that they would remain anonymous in all reports and they would be protected against any possible harm. They were also assured that the data gathered during the study would be treated in the strictest confidentiality. Most importantly, they were informed that they owned the results of the research and could determine how that information could be used in addressing the problem at hand (Brydon-Miller, 1997:660).

### 3.6 DATA GENERATION PROCEDURES

I acknowledged that the phenomenon of learners with special educational needs could pose some emotional challenges in discursive settings. A variety of research tools was regarded necessary, therefore, even though the main tool in this study was focus group discussions, one-on-one meetings were used where I felt information was sensitive.

The views of the stakeholders involved in the research project were obtained, using focus group discussions. Focus group discussions are planned sessions where individuals discuss ideas and perceptions focused around a topic of interest (Freeman, 2006:495). According to Freeman (2006:496), the major assumption of focus group discussions is that with a free and permissive atmosphere that fosters a variety of opinions, a more complete and informative understanding of the issues can be obtained. This approach appeared well-suited to address the objectives of this study.

Furthermore, Greeff, Vansteenwegen, and Gillard (2012:101) states that the major role of focus group discussions is for the research team to simultaneously generate data on a specific issue. In these meetings, team members interacted harmoniously with one another to accomplish a common goal – enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs.

Data were generated at scheduled meetings with co-researchers, using discussions on the issues or phenomena under investigation. During each co-researcher meeting, two members were assigned to note important points on the flipchart paper and at the end we discussed identified themes. The discussed points and themes were used as part of the textual data that helped us to analyse in a session conducted for this purpose. The teams' planning, implementation and reflection around issues were tabled and assessed in those meetings. Meetings with co-researchers assisted in the generation of data, as together we tried to respond to the research objectives and the research question. Co-researchers also generated data through reflections of information on their experiences, beliefs, collective views, and the meanings behind those views (Gillet *al.*, 2008:291).

During the meetings with co-researchers, discussions were initiated by posing or probing questions to the co-researchers to initiate the discussions. Together we were trying to create and maintain an environment that encouraged full participation and we used probing to direct the discussions or to clarify aspects.

### **3.7 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS**

Adhering to the ethical guidelines, I asked for permission to video and audio tape our discussions. In PAR, co-researchers determine which instruments can be used and then adapt the suggested research instruments (Brydon-Miller, 1997:662). However, only audio-taping was used; the video-taping I anticipated, did not work out because some of the co-researchers indicated that they were not comfortable with the use of video recordings or any picture-taking due to the experiences they had of prior researchers, who used pictures of learners with special educational needs from their school as a profit-making mechanism, despite their assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

This was in line with what Paltridge and Starfield (2007:122) emphasise, namely that recording, whether by taking notes, observation, taking photographs, audio-recording, or video-recording, can be threatening in a research context. I therefore ensured that all the co-researchers were as safe and comfortable as possible. The discussions were audio-taped and later transcribed word for word (Wilkinson, 1998:182).

Using a scientific, user-friendly interview technique, the free attitude interview (FAI) of Meulenberg-Buskens (2011:1), I initiated conversation and, with respect, directed co-researchers to the topic at hand (Mahlomaholo, 2009:228). This method was highly effective in focus group discussions, as co-researchers shared their knowledge and experiences interactively. According to Tsoetsi (2013:162), in free attitude interviews, co-researchers are free to interact with one another. During discussions, co-researchers were attentively listened to, and non-verbal communication was observed in order to enhance the understanding of audio-taped data.

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

To analyse data, this study used Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2012:453). According to Fairclough (2012:453), discourse refers to samples of spoken and written language, while text is referred to as one dimension of discourse. As a branch of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, CDA examines discursive practices, showing how discourse endorses power relations and ideologies and how it impacts "on social identities, social relations and systems knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1992:193).

CDA was used to access the meaning of data (Van Dijk, 2009:68) in order to deepen our understanding of how the five objectives influence the effective ways of enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. CDA was used in corroboration with PAR, which emphasises that co-researchers should take part in analysing the study results. The meaning of the text is revealed at the level of discursive practice, which might have been informed by cultural practices and/or habits of the mind (Gee, 2015:197; Van Dijk, 2009:68). Furthermore, the social structural level uncovers interpretations, which were informed by the way society is organised.

According to Fairclough (2003:170), different discourses are linked with different positions. Specifically, text is a record of an occasion in which something was communicated. It involves the presentation of information and beliefs or ideologies of participants, as discussed in the communication.

Discursive practices refer to norms, rules and mental models of acceptable behaviour in a particular society, in particular roles used to speak, hear and interpret the message. They are spoken and unspoken conventions or rules that govern how people learn to think, speak and act at any point in their life. On the other hand, social context refers to distinct settings in which discourse occurs – each with a set of rules that determine rights and responsibilities and what is expected and allowed. This refers to how terminology is used in a particular context.

Critical discourse analysis also justifies the conceptual framework used (critical pedagogy) to respond to questions about the relationship between language and society. CP is used at the analysis levels to assess how power, social justice and emancipation relate to the problems identified. To conclude, I used empirical data to verify whether data refute or confirm what the literature says.

### **3.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological approach. Presented also, is how the research was designed. The historical background of PAR and the justification for why it was regarded relevant in this study were discussed. The objectives, principles, ontology, epistemology and the relationship of the researcher with the co-researchers were discussed. Presented also, is how the co-researchers were selected, their credentials, the SWOT analysis guiding the activities of the co-researchers, the spiral set-up of PAR and how data are analysed.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA TOWARDS ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In this chapter, data are presented, analysed and interpreted in accordance with the objectives of the study. The objectives relate to the challenges of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, the solutions to such challenges, understanding the conducive conditions under which inclusion can be enhanced, and anticipating plausible threats towards enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in order to circumvent them. The final objective involves formulating success indicators with regard to enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Critical discourse analysis is used to access the meaning of data (Van Dijk, 2009:68) in order to deepen our understanding of how the objectives influence the effective ways of enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The meaning of the data is revealed at the textual level – the level of discursive practice, which might have been informed by cultural practices and/or habits of the mind (Van Dijk, 2009:68). Furthermore, the social structural level uncovers interpretations that were informed by the way society is organised.

To conclude, I used empirical data to verify whether data refute or confirm what the literature says.

## **4.2 CHALLENGES TOWARDS ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

Inclusion denotes the practice of meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools, together with other children of their age without special educational needs, with appropriate support (Memisevic & Hodzic, 2011:700). In this study, the focus was on teacher tuition, the curriculum, pedagogical practices, parental involvement and the learning environment.

### **4.2.1 Initial teacher tuition**

Initial teacher tuition refers to the preparation of teachers with knowledge, behaviours, skills and attitudes so that they can perform well in classrooms, schools and the community at large (Harris & Sass, 2011:798). Teacher tuition with regard to including learners with special educational needs seem to be a challenge because teacher preparatory institutions still use separate training models, separating between regular and special education, and putting more emphasis on ways of facilitating learning to improve learner attainment and achieving high pass rates. There is less emphasis on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms (see Section 2.4.1).

The best practice for initial teacher tuition is to prepare graduates for a more inclusive school environment, drawing from the context of a particular country. Pre-service teacher preparation includes compulsory units on teaching learners with special educational needs, increased contact with people with special needs during tuition, and the implementation of different models, including field experiences in inclusive classrooms and incursion activities (see Section 2.9.1). Incursion is the practice of bringing learners with special educational needs to the university so that novice teachers can interact with them.

In one of our meetings, as we discussed the challenges of including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, the teachers indicated that the

teacher preparatory institutions that they had attended, did not prepare them enough for inclusion. Even those that are referred to as “special education teachers” confirmed that they had not been effectively equipped with regard to inclusive education.

**Ms Nthabeleng** indicated: *Our teacher preparatory institutions did not prepare us effectively to work with learners with special educational needs because we were trained to teach in general schools, while few were trained as special education teachers.*

**Mr Andreas** put forward: *I always struggle because even our mentors during teacher tuition did not actually demonstrate to us how to implement the strategies of inclusion when teaching.*

**Ms Tsebo** added: *I was trained as a special educator and the focus was on learners with special educational needs only, hence it is challenging in an inclusive setting.*

**Mr Pule**, a special education teacher, confirmed on the issue of teacher tuition: *Even though I was trained as a special education teacher during teaching practice, it was us student-teachers who chose the schools we wanted to practice in, and it did not matter whether the chosen school practiced inclusive education or not.*

These excerpts show that the institutions these teachers had attended, still divided teacher trainees into general and special educators. The statement “*our teacher preparatory institutions did not prepare us effectively to teach learners with special educational needs because we were trained to teach in general schools*” is understood to mean that Ms Nthabeleng had been prepared as a general teacher and she acknowledges that general tuition did not prepare them for inclusive education. This statement also stresses that general teacher tuition does not prepare teachers with regard to including learners with special educational needs.

In this context, the assertion “*we were not fully trained about learners with special educational needs*” is understood to mean that teachers feel they are not equipped enough to include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In the phrase “*while few were trained as special education teachers*”, Ms Nthabeleng is understood to acknowledge that a small number of teachers were trained as special

educators. This citation shows that Ms Nthabeleng believes that special education teachers are better prepared with regard to inclusive education.

The reference of Ms Tsebo, one of the special educators, confirms that teacher tuition is thus a challenge due to separate teacher tuition into special and general education. The phrase "*I was trained as a special educator*" is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo was prepared with regard to special education. When someone is a special educator, in this context, he or she is understood to possess the skills to teach learners with special educational needs.

The expression "*the focus was on learners with special educational needs only*" is understood to mean that during tuition, special education trainees were focusing only on learners with special educational needs, ignoring learners without special needs. The phrase "*hence it is challenging in an inclusive setting*" is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo is facing challenges in classrooms where learners with special educational needs are educated alongside learners without special educational needs. It can also be depicted that special education is different from inclusive education.

Mr Andreas' excerpt "*I always struggle*" is understood to mean he always faces a challenge. The phrase "*our mentors during teacher tuition did not actually demonstrate to us how to implement the strategies of inclusion when teaching*" is understood to mean that the tutors did not show the initial teachers how to apply inclusion strategies. It is clear from this response that Mr Andreas did not feel competent enough for inclusion.

From these contributions, it is clear that teacher tuition is thus a serious challenge with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. In this school, teachers felt they were not well equipped with teaching learners with special educational needs. Including learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, where teachers feel they are inadequately trained, confirms the cold relationship between teachers and learners with special educational needs in mainstream settings. It creates a school community which is discriminating –a

community in which it is known that other learners are taught in a special class and others in a general classroom, and the one group is “better” than the other.

It was not surprising to hear reports that things were not going well between teachers and learners with special educational needs, and that made teachers feel like learners with special educational needs were a burden to them:

**Mr Andreas** denoted: *...we are left with no other alternative than ignoring learners with special educational needs.*

It is also clear that it was instilled in teachers that there are two types of tuition – general or special – and if one decides to enrol with one type, he or she believes him- or herself incompetent to enrol with the other. This is the reason why in this school, learners with special educational needs are referred to a special teacher in a separate room where they are taught separately. This practice is exclusive, as learners with special educational needs are separated from their peers. Also, it leads to labelling of learners with special educational needs, which critical pedagogy (CP) opposes (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011:80).

In CP’s point of view, separation between special education and general education deprives teachers of equality and social justice. In a just society, diverse people have the right to equal treatment. In the same manner, where equality is valued, people are not discriminated against in any form (see Section 2.2.3.1).

#### **4.2.2 Curriculum**

According to Marsh (1992:47), the curriculum points out the aims; what should be taught; how it should be taught and how knowledge is to be assessed. Centrally designed and rigid curricula, which leave little flexibility for adaptation, is one of the considerable barriers to learning for learners with special educational needs (see Section 2.4.2). However, a blended approach, which is the act of modifying the curriculum for learners with special educational needs, is regarded as the best practice. This approach emphasises that the curriculum should be adapted in order to cater for

diversity (see Section 2.5.2). During our discussions with the co-researchers, the centrally designed and rigid nature of the curriculum seemed to be a serious challenge:

**Mrs Moyo** highlighted the following: *curriculum is a problem because we are not even consulted or involved when it is developed, yet it is expected that every learner be taught in the same manner, at the same time and be tested at the same way.*

**Ms Lebo** added: *The curriculum treats these learners as if they are the same, that's why we progress with those who show progress and ignore those with special needs.*

**Mrs Tau** also added sadly: *Another point is that it is expected that we finish the syllabus at a certain time, otherwise we are regarded incompetent.*

The assertion by Mrs Moyo that “*curriculum is a problem because we are not consulted or involved when it is developed*” is understood in this context to mean that teachers are not involved or consulted in the development and planning of the curriculum. Mrs Moyo might be aware that when teachers are not consulted or involved in curriculum development, they face challenges when they have to implement such a curriculum at class level. She might also be aware that if teachers were involved in curriculum planning, the curriculum planners would understand that a uniform curriculum is not effective.

This reference “*it is expected that every learner be taught in the same manner, at the same time and be tested at the same way*” is understood to mean that the curriculum that is used, does not cater for all learners, especially learners with special educational needs. The fact that a uniform curriculum is not effective, is seen in Ms Lebo emphasis that “*the curriculum treats learners as if they are the same*”. This statement, in this context, is understood to mean that learners are not the same, but the curriculum does not cater for learners with special educational needs.

It is clear that the teacher is aware that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ in learning because learners are different. The teacher is also aware of and blames the curriculum for

discriminating against learners by emphasising that they progress with those who progress and ignore those with special needs is discriminating and exclusive. The phrase *“that’s why we progress with those who show progress and ignore those with special needs”* is understood as a confession that Ms. Lebo is making that they ignore learners with special educational needs and progress with other learners without special educational needs. To progress with learners who progress and to ignore learners with special needs is discriminating and exclusive. However, it is normal in this context to work in favour of people without special needs, rather than those with special needs.

It is obvious that in this school, social justice does not exist. According to Robinson (2008:37), social justice exists when everyone shares common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights and a fair allocation of community resources. Furthermore, it is clear that learners are not treated with respect in this classroom, which contradicts CP, as highlighted in Section 2.2.5.3. From this response, it can also be depicted that power is teacher-centred. In this classroom, it is clear that Ms. Lebo is the one who controls the class. She determines what, where, how and when to learn. The teacher is using personal power to improve herself at the expense of learners with special educational needs.

When learners with special educational needs are ignored in order to cover more curriculum content, they are excluded and become objects in the learning process. This is contrary to the fluid relationship that Freire (1998:94) calls for. Additionally, friendship and personal relationships of learners with special educational needs are compromised because of the exclusion they experience due to their disability.

According to the conceptual framework used as a lens of conducting this study, CP, it is not humane to segregate or oppress other people. CP calls for people who are treated in a humane way (see Section 2.2.3.2). The biased curriculum that caters for one group of learners at the expense of the other is discriminatory and inhumane.

### 4.2.3 Pedagogical approaches

Pedagogical approaches in this context can be understood as methods of teaching and learning. Restrictive pedagogical approaches that do not meet the needs of the learners were identified to be a serious challenge in an inclusive setting. These are teacher-centred methods that deny interaction among the learners. In teacher-centred classrooms, books are the sole materials that are used in the teaching and learning process. Methods of assessment used in teacher-centred settings are usually paper-pen methods, which treat learners as hopeless (see Section 2.4.3). Nevertheless, more learner-centred methods, including cooperative teaching and learning that promote active learning, are regarded as best practices. Similarly, assessment should be in different modes in order to respond to the needs, abilities and interests of learners (see Section 2.5.3).

Discussions about curriculum in our meetings led to discussions on how pedagogical approaches can be a challenge towards inclusion.

**Mrs Ntsonyana** raised a concern: *The way teaching is done, cannot help all the children. I once arrived in one classroom and found a teacher sitting down holding a book reading for the children, all children looking at her, holding a stick in the other hand and I asked myself whether they were learning or fighting!*

**Mr Andreas** emphasised: *Remember we said teacher tuition with regard to teaching these learners was a problem. We use teacher-centred methods because of overcrowded classrooms and lack of teaching materials.*

**Ms Tsebo** also contributed: *Teaching has always been teacher-centred and I am comfortable teaching like that.*

The scenario that Mrs Ntsonyana gives, where the teacher was the only one holding a book and the learners were looking at her, reveals the classroom environment whereby the teacher used the traditional methods of teaching. The teacher was transmitting knowledge to the learners and the learners were passively involved. According to Degener (2001:716), learners should be actively involved in their learning.

The teacher holding a stick in her hand demonstrated that there was no freedom in that class. The issue of power residing in the teacher can also be depicted from this scenario. An adult holding a stick is a sign that he or she is dominant and holds authority. Furthermore, the Basotho cultural practice of the parent-child relationship between learners and teachers can be depicted as well. According to the Basotho cultural practices, parents are knowledgeable, superior and intelligent, and children should submit to parents and learn from them. Hence the learners were listening attentively to their teacher.

The reference Mrs Ntsonyana made of “*a teacher sitting down, holding a book, reading for children and all learners looking at her*” is understood to mean that the teacher was reading for the learners. The fact that the teacher was the only one holding a book and the learners were looking at her demonstrated that learning was teacher-centred. Teacher-centred methods are against the call of CP that the banking methods of teaching should be avoided, and an environment where learners and teachers are both playing the role of learning and teaching should be embraced (see Section 2.2.5.4).

This scenario also gives a picture that it was normal in this school for a teacher to use teacher-centred methods. The response of Mr Andreas ascertains the use of teacher-centred methods: “*We use teacher-centred methods*” is understood to mean that Mr Andreas agrees and affirms that teachers in this school use teacher-centred methods of teaching. The phrase “*because of overcrowded classrooms and lack of teaching materials*”, in this context, is understood to mean that teacher-learner ratio and insufficient learning materials are the bases of the pedagogical practices that are used in this school.

Mr Andreas stressed overcrowded classrooms and insufficient materials as the major reasons why teachers were inclined to practice traditional teacher-centred methods. This response shows that he acknowledges that they might know of other teaching methods, but they use the teacher-centred methods because of the lack of teaching-learning materials and the overcrowded classrooms. The statement “*remember we said teacher tuition was a problem with regard to teaching these learners*” is understood to

mean that they still use teacher-centred methods because they had not been equipped with other methods of teaching learners with special educational needs.

However, the reference of Ms Tsebo that “*teaching has always been teacher-centred*” is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo has known teaching as being teacher-centred. The phrase “*and I am comfortable teaching like that*” is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo uses teacher-centred methods and enjoys using them. From this response, it is clear that Ms Tsebo might not be aware of other methods that are not teacher-centred and that she is comfortable with the teacher-centred ones. However, CP is concerned with power transformation. A classroom environment where all the power is centred on the teacher are teacher-centred and CP calls for power that is shared by all class members (see Section 2.2.3.3).

#### **4.2.4 Parental involvement**

Parental involvement entails the continuous support and encouragement of parents to take part in the education of their children. According to Singh and Mbokodi (2004:301), parents should be meaningful partners with the school, working collaboratively to ensure quality education. The best practice is when parents are involved in all areas of the school, including determining school policies, implementing such policies and the day-to-day running of the school (see Section 2.9.3).

Parental involvement is regarded as one of the serious challenges with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. Many parents of learners with special educational needs are not involved in their children’s education, while teachers complain that some parents are too much involved and want to control the school. They emphasise that parents are in denial about the state of their children and are not cooperative.

On the other hand, parents defend themselves, saying that their behaviour is due to the fact that teachers do not involve them enough in school matters. They complain that teachers do not listen to them; they concentrate more on their children’s disabilities than

their abilities (see Section 2.4.4). This was also seen as a challenge during our discussions, with the discussion on parental involvement being the longest one. The co-researchers responded to the issue of parental involvement being a challenge as follows:

**Mrs Moyo** as the principal of the school stated: *Parents give us problems because most of them never come to meetings, but are quick to judge the teachers.*

**Ms Rapeisi** mentioned: *They are in denial of accepting that their children have special needs. They expect that when they bring their children with special needs to school, they should be healed.*

**Ms Lebo** postulated: *Parents do not work cooperatively with the teachers.*

**Ms Nthabeleng** added: *There is really a misunderstanding between the teachers and parents, though I never encountered such parents myself.*

**Mr Andreasheld** the view: *Some parents believe that we waste their children's time by saying they have special educational needs, yet they do not. You will sometimes see that they are so bitter that they can fight teachers.*

Additionally, **Ms Tsebo** emphasised: *The worst part is when parents send children to school with neither a book nor pencil.*

However, **Mrs Lebusa** established: *Teachers do not want to listen to us, yet we would help them on how to help our children with special needs because we have more experience.*

Furthermore, **Mrs Lebusa** established: *We are only called when the school wants to report something. Some of us wish to be involved, but it seems our ideas do not matter.*

In corroboration of Mrs Lebusa's idea, **Mr Kokolia** stipulated: *Most of us are not as educated as the teachers, but when we are confused about what to do, they are not willing to guide us.*

The excerpts of Ms Rapeisi and Mr Andreas "by saying they have special educational needs, yet they do not" and "they are in denial of accepting that their children have

*special needs*” reveal that parents are in denial that their children have special educational needs: “*They are in denial of accepting that their children have special educational needs*” is understood to mean that some parents have not accepted that their children have special educational needs. “*They expect that when they bring their children with special educational needs to school, they should be healed*” is understood to mean that parents of learners with special educational needs understand hold the view that their children are sick and that they will be healed when they are at school.

The excerpts of Ms Lebo, Ms Nthabeleng, Mr Andreas and Ms Tsebo confirm that parents do not cooperate with teachers: “*Parents do not work cooperatively with teachers*” is understood to mean that parents do not work jointly with teachers. “*There is really misunderstanding between teachers and parents*” is understood to mean that there is a clash or squabble between parents and teachers. Also, “*parents send children to school with neither a book nor pencil*” is understood to mean that parents send learners to school without writing materials, as they are uninvolved with their children’s education.

To emphasise that parents are not cooperative, the principal, Mrs Moyo’s response that “*most of them never come to meetings, but are quick to judge the teachers*” is understood to mean that in this school, parents who never attend meetings are the ones who are likely to judge the teachers. This response shows that Mrs Moyo, as the overseer of the school, has seen that this behaviour of parents of not attending meetings is giving them problems, hence the phrase “*[p]arents give us problems*”. This phrase is understood to mean that parents are making it difficult for the school.

However, the citation of Mrs Lebusa that “*teachers do not listen to us*” is understood to mean exactly that teachers do not listen to parents. “*We would help them on how to help our children with special educational needs*” is understood to mean that parents promise that they would help teachers on how to deal with their children”. The phrase “*we have more experience*” is understood to mean that Mrs Lebusa regards parents as having better experience with learners with special educational needs than teachers.

Similarly, the response that “*we are only called when the school wants to report something*” is understood to mean that in this school, parents are never called, except when something is to be reported to them. The statement “*some of us wish to be involved*” is understood to mean that some parents, including Mrs Lebusa, are willing to be involved in the school. The phrase “*but it seems our ideas do not matter*” is understood to mean that ideas of parents are taken for granted.

Besides, the reference of Mr Kokolia that “*most of us are not as educated as teachers*” is understood to mean that many parents are not educated, and “*when we are confused about what to do*” is understood to mean that sometimes parents are confused by what they should do. The phrase “*they are not willing to guide us*” is understood to mean that teachers are not keen to guide parents.

From these responses, it is evident that both teachers and parents were blaming each other for the lack of parental involvement in education. However, truth of the matter in this school was that there was limited collaboration between the school and parents. On the other hand, active participation is one of the principles celebrated by CP. According to CP, the learning of the teacher from other stakeholders as he or she teaches, is vital (see Section 2.2.5.4).

#### **4.2.5 Learning environment**

According to Prater (2007:238), the learning environment includes the physical layout of the classroom, the number of learners and the physical environment of the school. The learning environment is indicated as one of the barriers to inclusion. The idea of inclusion is undermined due to some environmental barriers, including poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, the absence of support services and large class sizes (see Section 2.4.5). Thriving inclusion needs appropriate infrastructure, appropriate facilities, support and assistive devices. The aim is to avoid isolation and segregation, thereby ensuring access and participation (see Section 2.6.2).

In one of our meetings, the learning environment was also highlighted as a challenge towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms:

**Ms Rapeisi** postulated: *The buildings and the entire physical environment of the school is a problem, especially for learners on wheelchairs and those with visual challenges.*

**Mr Andreas** added: *We are facing a serious challenge with regard to teaching materials because our school is independent, therefore the government does not fund us at all. It is very expensive to have appropriate materials because learners with special educational needs need special equipment.*

**Mrs Moyo** raised another point: *We have the problem of scarce materials, therefore it is difficult to meet the needs of each learner. We end up giving them the same work due to lack of materials like photocopying machines.*

On the other hand, **Lineo** raised a concern: *I wish I was able to get into those classes upstairs. I envy those who are attending those classes; unfortunately we are not able to get there with our wheelchairs.*

Emphasising the issue of physical environment, **Mrs Ntsonyana** established: *During our time, it was not easy to attend school when one had special needs due to the environment that was not conducive for them. It is surprising that even now learners with special educational needs still experience the same problem.*

The excerpts of Ms Rapeisi, Lineo and Mrs Ntsonyana confirm that infrastructure is a challenge in this school. *“The buildings and the entire physical environment of the school is a problem”* is understood to mean that the buildings of the school and the environment at large are a predicament in this school. *“[E]specially for learners on wheelchairs and those with visual challenges”* is understood to mean that learners on wheelchairs and visual challenges are affected more than other learners by the barrier of infrastructure.

The citation of Lineo *“I wish I was able to get into those classes upstairs”* is understood to mean that this student is not able to access the classes upstairs and wishes to get

there. *“Unfortunately, we are not able to get there with our wheelchairs”* is understood to mean that learners on wheelchairs in this school are not able to reach classes that are upstairs. This response gives a picture that the building of the school has some parts that are not accessible for learners with special educational needs. This is highlighted in Lineo’s assertion *“I envy those who are attending in those classes”*. This statement is understood to mean that she desires to be attending the classes upstairs.

On the other hand, the excerpts of Mr Andreas and Mrs Moyo confirm that teaching and learning materials are a challenge with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs. The response of Mr Andreas *“we are facing a serious challenge with regard to teaching materials because our school is independent and the government does not fund us”* is understood to mean that the school does not get any funding from the government because it is independent. According to this response, it is clear that independent schools do not get funds from the government. Furthermore, the emphasis that *“it is very expensive to have appropriate materials because learners with special educational needs need special equipment”* is understood to mean that appropriate materials and equipment for learners with special educational needs are expensive.

However, the reference of Mrs Moyo *“we have the problem of scarce materials”* is understood to mean that the materials are available, but are limited. Mrs Moyo further states that, due to the problem of scarce materials, *“it is difficult to meet the needs of each learner”*. This statement is understood to mean that the needs of some learners are not met, while other learners’ needs are met. The statement *“we end up giving them the same work due to lack of materials like photocopying machines”* is understood to mean that teachers give different learners the same kind of class work due to lack of materials such as photocopying machines.

The lens used in this study, CP, calls for stakeholders developing critical consciousness towards learners with special educational needs (see Section 2.2.5.2). When stakeholders are conscious about special educational needs, they work hard at creating an environment that is conducive for learners with special educational needs. When the environment caters for learners with special educational needs, they feel respected and

cared for (see Section 2.2.3.4) and they participate in their learning (see Section 2.2.5.4)

### **4.3 SOLUTIONS TOWARDS ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

#### **4.3.1 Collaborative teaching as a solution towards teacher tuition**

Collaborative teaching, which is commonly called “team teaching” or “cooperative teaching” includes two or more teachers working as a team and educating learners in a classroom (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2008:5). In collaborative teaching, teachers share responsibility in planning, teaching and evaluation. It is not one teacher teaching, followed by another one teaching a different subject, or one teacher teaching while the other is marking (Villa *et al.*, 2008:6). According to Friend and Cook (1992:14), collaborative teaching in inclusive classrooms includes interaction with colleagues, paraprofessional, parents and others, where all members are equal.

Collaborative teaching and implementation of peer education programmes were found to be solutions towards the challenge of teacher tuition and pedagogical practices (see Section 2.5.1). The best practice was seen to be placing special education teachers in regular classrooms to work collaboratively with general teachers in order to strengthen inclusion (see Section 2.5.5).

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

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

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

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

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

The excerpts of Mr Kokolia and Ms Tsebo suggest that teachers work together. The idea raised by Ms Tsebo that “*teachers can sit and do their lesson plans together after school*” is understood to mean that all teachers should stay after school and do their lesson plans together, rather than doing them individually. It can be portrayed from this response that Ms Tsebo might be aware that teachers do not plan their work together.

Mr Kokolia’s term “*special educators*” is understood to mean teachers trained in special education and “*general teachers*” is understood to mean teachers who are not trained as special teachers. In this school, it is normal to refer to some teachers as special teachers and others as general teachers. The phrase “*teachers work together*”, in this context, is understood to mean collaborative teaching. The phrase “*so that they can exchange ideas on how to help learners with special educational needs in an inclusive setting*” is understood to mean that both special and general teachers can help each other on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms.

Similarly, Mrs Lebusa’s reference calls for collaborative teaching. He aspires for all stakeholders to be included in the teaching of learners. The phrase “*not only teachers should be involved in the learning process*” is understood to mean that people other than teachers should be involved in the process of learning. The statement “*I suggest that even the community members or parents should be used as resource persons*” is understood to mean that parents and the community members should also be used in the teaching and learning process as resource persons.

It is normal in this school that teachers work individually. Each teacher plans, implements and assesses the learners alone; hence members of the research team

suggested collaborative teaching. They might be aware that the individualised working of teachers does not help in an inclusive setting and that no man is an island.

#### **4.3.2 Curriculum adaptations as a solution towards curriculum as a challenge**

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

Using the same curriculum for all learners, with adaptations where necessary for learners with special educational needs, was indicated as the solution towards curriculum as a challenge, as highlighted in Section 2.7.2, 2.9.1 and 2.9.3. In the same manner, during our discussions, members held the opinion that the same curriculum should be adapted in order to best suit each learner:

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

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

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

The references of Mr Pule and Mrs Ntsonyana emphasise the needs of the learners. In this context, “*learners’ needs*” are understood to mean the strengths and weaknesses of

learners, while Mr Andreas talks about the abilities of the learners, where “*abilities of each learner*” is understood to mean what learners are capable of doing. The phrase “*curriculum can be adapted*” is understood to mean that curriculum can be modified to suit all the learners.

Mr Pule’s assertion that teachers should adapt the curriculum to meet each learner’s needs, shows that he might be aware that, in this school, teachers do not make adaptations to the curriculum; as a result, the needs of other learners are not met. It is normal in this context that the curriculum is presented as it is, without any alterations made to it. Similarly, the phrase “*teachers should design the class work according to the abilities of each learner*” demonstrates that Mr Andreas might also be aware that class work is not designed according to the abilities of the learners. Therefore, when class work is not designed with reference to the abilities of each learner, some of the learners might be oppressed or excluded.

In the same manner, the assertion of Mrs Ntsonyana that if teachers can be patient and design the work according to the needs of learners, then even learners with special education can enjoy learning, denotes that she might be aware that teachers are not patient. This declaration may also indicate that Mrs Ntsonyana might be aware that learners with special educational needs do not enjoy learning. The fact that learners might not enjoy learning is depicted from the phrase “*even learners with special educational needs can enjoy learning*”.

When teachers have developed critical consciousness about learners with special educational needs, they are inclined to treat them equally to other learners without special educational needs. They are able to alter the curriculum in such a way that it meets the needs of different learners (see Section 2.2.5.2& 2.2.3.1). Above all, CP calls for people who are treated with care and respect (see Section 2.2.3.4); when teachers are involved in the development of curriculum, they can feel respected.

### 4.3.3 Learner-centred approaches as solution towards pedagogical practices

Learner-centred approaches to teaching encompass methods that focus on learners, rather than on teachers (Cornelius-White, 2007:120). In order to overcome the challenge of pedagogic approaches in inclusive schools, more learner-centred methods are stressed in Section 2.5.3. In the same way, during our meetings, pedagogical approaches that are more learner-centred, including cooperative teaching-learning and peer tutoring, were suggested as solutions towards pedagogical approaches:

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

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

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

Mr Pule's excerpt "*[t]ime has changed, teaching is no more teacher-centred*" is understood to mean that he is aware of methods other than teacher-centred methods that may be used to teach. "*[T]eachers should stop acting as if they are the only ones who know*" is understood to mean that Mr Pule is aware that teachers are using teacher-centred methods, whereby they are the only active members in the learning process. The phrase "*should stop*" sounds authoritative, as Mr Pule is one of the special teachers in the school. It sounds as if this teacher is dictating to other teachers what to do. It is normal in this school that the special educators are the ones who know best about inclusion.

The example that Mr Pule gave, "*I told my learners that I did not come to teach them, but we are going to teach each other*", depicts that this teacher might be aware of

learner-centred methods that were not used in the school. Teacher-centred methods treat learners as passive participants in the learning process.

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

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

When learners with special educational needs are treated in a humane way, as CP calls for (see Section 2.2.3.2), they are allowed to actively participate in learning (see Section 2.2.5.4).

#### **4.3.4 Parents as active members of the school community**

In many countries, the challenge of parental involvement was solved by allowing parents to be actively involved in schools. However, in Section 2.5.4, it is stated that the significant role parents play in most South African schools, is in the management of the school, where they serve on governing bodies. The team members thought it was of

utmost importance for parents to take a more active role than just serve in the management of the school:

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

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

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

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

**Mrs Moyo** put forward: *Parents should sign every home work given to their children as a proof that the child was guided to do the homework.*

The suggestion of Ms Tsebo that the school should educate parents on how to cooperate with teachers is understood to mean that the school should train parents to collaborate with teachers in the education of their children. This is further strengthened by Mrs Ntsonyana's suggestion that "*teachers and parents can work collaboratively for the benefit of their children*". Ms Tsebo might have made her assertion because she might be aware that parents do not cooperate well with the teachers. The phrase "*for the benefit of the learners*" reveals that Ms Tsebo might be aware that learners are affected by parents who do not cooperate with teachers. The act of parents who do not work collaboratively with teachers negatively affects the academic performance of their children.

In corroboration with Ms Tsebo's assertion, Mrs Ntsonyana's excerpt that there should be a teacher-parent association so that teachers and parents can work collaboratively for the benefit of the learners is understood to mean that learners benefit when teachers and parents work collaboratively. Mrs Ntsonyana might have seen that learners in

schools where there are teacher-parent associations benefit from the collaboration of parents and teachers.

In addition to these references, Ms Lebo's citation that "*there should be a school policy that clearly states how parents should be involved in the education of their children*" is understood to mean that there should be a blue print of what and what not is expected of parents in this school. This statement indicates that there might be no document in this school with regard to how parents should be involved.

#### **4.4 CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

##### **4.4.1 Competent teachers**

Teachers who can meet the diverse needs of learners create a conducive environment for inclusive education. These are teachers who strive to ensure a good match between their teaching styles and the learners' learning styles. They are teachers who use a variety of teaching styles to appeal to learners' diverse learning styles. When each learner is approached in the basis of his or her capabilities, then such learners can develop their own potential (Mapuranga, Dumba & Musodza 2015:216). In Section 2.7.1, literature reveals that teachers who are able to meet the needs of all the learners prove to be a conducive environment for inclusion. Similarly, during our discussions, teachers were indicated as one of the conditions necessary for inclusion:

**Mrs Ntsonyana** pleaded: *Teachers should change their tendency of ignoring our children when they don't cope with their studies.*

**Mr Kokolia:** *Teachers should know the needs of the learners so that they can best meet them.*

**Mrs Lebusa** established: *We need teachers who are able to communicate with us and guide us how we can also help.*

**Mr Pule,** on the other hand, suggested: *If we can work collaboratively as colleagues, then we can exchange ideas on how the needs of learners can be met.*

**Mrs Tau** added: *Using learner-centred methods helps teachers to learn the interests and needs of each learner.*

**Lineo** also suggested: *We should be allowed to work with other learners without special needs in the classrooms.*

**Tumelo** raised a concern: *School can be nice if teachers can stop beating us.*

The plea that Mrs Ntsonyana made that *“teachers should change their tendency of ignoring our children”* is understood to mean that the tendency of teachers disregarding learners with special educational needs should be changed. Mrs Ntsonyana as the caretaker of the school might be aware that teachers have the tendency of disregarding learners with special educational needs. *“When they are not coping with their studies”* is understood to mean that she might be aware that learners with special educational needs sometimes do not cope with their studies. Mrs Ntsonyana might also be aware that if teachers can stop ignoring learners with special educational needs when they do not cope with their studies that may enhance inclusion.

In the similar manner, the view of Mr Kokolia that *“[t]eachers should know the needs of the learners”* is understood to mean that teachers should know the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. And *“so that they can best meet them”* is understood to mean that teachers can best cater for the needs of the learners.

On the other hand, Mrs Lebusa’s citation *“[w]e need teachers who are able to communicate with us”* is understood to mean that parents want and need teachers who communicate with them. Mrs Lebusa, as a parent, might be aware that communication in this school is a problem. The phrase *“and guide us how we can also help”* is understood to mean that teachers should guide parents on how they can take part in the school. Mrs Lebusa might wish to help, but teachers do not communicate with parents on how they can take part in the school.

The assertion of one of the special education teachers, Mr Pule, calls for collaboration among the colleagues. *“If we can work collaboratively as colleagues”* is understood to

mean that members of the staff should work as a team. The phrase “*then we can exchange ideas*” is understood to mean that they can help one another, and “*on how the needs of learners can be met*” is understood to mean how learners can be catered for.

Stressing the same issue of collaboration, Mrs Tau and Lineo proposed teachers who use learner-centred methods. The response of Mrs Tau “*using learner-centred methods helps teachers*” is understood to mean that teaching and learning methods that are learner-driven help teachers. And “*to learn the interests and needs of each learner*” is understood to mean that to learn what the capabilities of each learner are. Lineo’s response “*[w]e should be allowed work with other learners without special needs in the classrooms*” is understood to mean that learners with special educational needs should be grouped with learners without special educational needs during group work in the classrooms. “*We*”, in this context, is understood to mean learners with special educational needs. Lineo, a physically challenged learner, might be aware that during collaborative group work in the classrooms, learners with special educational needs are not grouped with learners without these needs. This response, in this context, is understood to mean that if the two groups can be merged, inclusion can be enhanced.

Additionally, Tumelo’s citation “*[s]chool can be nice if teachers can stop beating us*” is understood to mean that learners can be happy to attend school if corporal punishment can be abolished. “*School can be nice*” is understood to mean that school can be a happy place to be. The phrase “*if teachers can stop beating us*” is understood as a plea to teachers to stop corporal punishment. This response shows that Tumelo might be aware that corporal punishment is one of the threats to inclusion.

Competent teachers are aware that knowledge is subjective and contextual (see Section 2.2.6); hence they allow learners to become active participants in the learning process. Obviously, competent teachers treat learners equally, trying to meet the needs of each learner in the classroom (see Section 2.2.3.1).

#### 4.4.2 Inclusive curriculum

According to Nind and Wearmouth (2006:120) an inclusive curriculum is understood to mean the content, methods, language and materials of teaching and learning that caters for diversity in the classroom. Creating a classroom culture where there is a common teacher-learner relationship leads to a curriculum that is adapted to meet the needs of the learners; as such, the curriculum would be inclusive (see Section 2.7.2). The co-researchers also indicated that when teachers relate well with learners, they get to know the learners' needs and may strive to adapt the curriculum so that it meets the needs of learners with special educational needs:

**Ms Nthabeleng** indicated: *I have seen that when I interact with learners, I gain even more information I did not know about the learners.*

**Tsepo** also highlighted: *Because my teacher likes to chat with me, I told her that I enjoy singing; that's why I am always chosen to give a song item during assemblies.*

**Mrs Tau** made us aware: *I always try by all means to meet the needs of learners in my class by giving them exercises according to their capabilities, yet the content is the same.*

The above assertions confirm that mutual interaction between the teacher and the learners leads to an inclusive curriculum. The term “exercises” in this context is understood to mean class work. “*I always try by all means to meet the needs of learners in my class*” is understood to mean that Mrs Tau always considers the needs of the learners when planning her lessons, hence the reference “*giving them exercises according to their capabilities, yet the content is the same*” is understood to mean that under the same content, learners are given different class work due to their differences. Mrs Tau might be aware that the curriculum should be altered somehow to meet the needs of the learners. She might be aware also that when the curriculum is adapted, it makes even learners with special educational needs happy to learn.

Ms Nthabeleng's quotation “*I have seen that when I interact with learners I gain even more information I did not know about the learners*” is understood to mean that Ms

Nthabeleng might have interacted with learners and through those interactions she learnt many things about the learners that she did not know before. Ms Nthabeleng might not have been interacting with the learners before and might have learnt lately that when she interacts with the learners, she gains more information about the learners' needs and interests. She might have also learnt that the interaction helped her adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the learners.

In the same manner, Tsepo's citation that *"because my teacher likes to chat with me, I told her that I enjoy singing"* is understood to mean that due to the fact that the teacher interacts with the learners, Tsepo was able to disclose to the teacher that he enjoys singing. As a result of interacting with learners, the teacher has noticed the interests of the learners and works towards meeting them, hence the quote *"that's why I am always chosen to give a song item during assemblies"*. This extract is understood to mean that the reason why Tsepo is chosen to give a song item during assemblies is because he told the teacher that he enjoys singing.

From these assertions, it is clear that when social justice reigns in classrooms, learners become happy to learn. Specifically, when teachers respect and care for the learners with special educational needs, they work hard to meet their needs, interests and talents. As a result, learners feel they are treated in a humane way and become actively involved in their learning (see Section 2.2.3.2& 2.2.5.4).

#### **4.4.3 Accommodating environment**

An accommodating environment denotes an enabling environment for the diverse school community. Such an environment includes the physical setting, cultures and contexts in which learning takes place. A physical environment with buildings that cater for the needs of learners with special educational needs reveals a conducive environment. An example of an inclusive building is one with ramps to ease mobility. An environment where all learners have access to information also reveals a conducive environment.

Continuous support from specialist resource teachers, whereby teachers receive assistance in order to master the skills required, makes teachers become more effective and committed. Furthermore, teaching and learning methods that allow social inclusion create a conducive environment in a learning situation (see Section 2.7.3). The co-researchers also held the view that the environment should be accommodating for effective inclusion:

**Mrs Lebusa** proposed: *These buildings should be made to accommodate all learners, irrespective of their abilities.*

**Lineo** established: *The play grounds and the toilets are very difficult to use.*

**Tsepo** said: *Other learners like to laugh at me that I am blind and they do not like to play with me!*

**Mr Pule:** *I suggest that the sitting arrangement be changed from this one that learners are facing one direction.*

On the other hand, **Mr Kokolia** held the view: *I think this school rule that learners should communicate in English only should be changed. Learners should be allowed to communicate in any language that they feel comfortable using.*

The contentions of Mrs Lebusa and Lineo highlight that the physical environment is an important condition for inclusion. “*These buildings*”, in this context, is understood to mean the school buildings and “*should be made to accommodate all learners*” is understood to mean that they should be renovated to cater for all learners. The phrase “*irrespective of their abilities*” is understood to mean whether with or without special educational needs.

In the same manner, Lineo’s citation “*[t]he play grounds and the toilets are very difficult to use*” is understood to mean that the play grounds and the toilets that are currently used in the school, are not user-friendly for learners with special educational needs. Lineo’s excerpt clarifies that as a physically challenged learner, she might have

experienced trouble in using the toilets and the playgrounds of the school. She might be aware that if they could be made accessible, inclusion could be enhanced.

According to the quotation of Mr Kokolia, the culture of the school is an important factor for inclusion. The extract *“I think this school culture”* is understood to mean the culture of the school. The phrase *“learners should communicate in English only”* is understood to mean that, in this school, English is used as the only medium of expression and *“should be changed”* is understood to be a strong feeling that it has to change. On that note, the statement that learners *“should be allowed to communicate in any language that they feel comfortable using”* is understood to mean that other languages should be used freely by the learners. Mr Kokolia might be aware that sticking to one language can be exclusive.

On the other hand, the excerpts of Pule and Tsepo hint at the idea of social inclusion as an important factor for inclusive education. As a learner, Pule might be aware that the seating arrangement that is used in the classes does not promote inclusion, hence his suggestion, *“I suggest that the sitting arrangement in the classrooms be changed from this one of learners facing one direction”*. *“The seating arrangement”* is understood, in this context, to mean the way desks are arranged in classrooms. The phrase *“be changed from this one of learners facing one direction”* is understood to mean that the seating arrangement is always the same, whereby learners are seated in rows facing the teacher.

Tsepo’s assertion is understood to mean that the current situation in schools is not appealing to learners with special educational needs. The term *“other learners”*, in this context, is understood to mean learners without special educational needs. The phrase *“like to laugh at me”* is understood to mean that this learner is mocked and *“that I am blind”* is understood to mean that Tsepo has a challenge with regard to sight. The phrase *“they do not like to play with me”* is understood, in this context, to mean that other learners exclude him when playing. Tsepo might be aware that a situation where learners with special educational needs are laughed at by other learners because they have special needs, is not conducive for inclusion. However, the lens that is used in

conducting this study calls for an environment where all people are treated equally, and not discriminated against due to disability (Lavery, 2009:10).

#### **4.4.4 Cooperation with parents and community members**

Community involvement includes involving the community in all sectors of the school. The community plays an integral part, as they are the people most central to the lives of the learners; they influence the way the learners perceive the world and they also influence how and what the learners learn (see Section 2.7.4). As a result, a community where it is allowed to freely participate in school matters denotes a conducive environment. When schools are interdependent and interconnected with the community around the school, that community is enabled to be actively involved the education of their children (see Section 2.7.4).

The best practice is when there are good relationships between the parents and the school. Programmes such as school community programmes are seen to motivate the community to actively participate in school activities. The community is then involved in the planning and evaluation of their children's education (see Section 2.9.1).

**Mr Kokolia** asked: *Why is it that there are no school-parent associations in this school? I am sure if we can have such an association, everybody can be motivated to take part in school activities.*

**Mrs Moyo** raised a concern: *We do not even know how to teach learners with special educational needs some extra-curricular activities, and there are many skilled people out there who can assist.*

Mr Kokolia's question "[w]hy is it that there are no school-parent associations in this school" is understood to mean that Mr Kokolia is surprised that there are no such associations in the school in which the research was conducted. He might be aware that many schools have teacher-parent associations. He might also be aware that in schools where there are teacher-parent associations, members of the community are motivated and actively participate in school activities, hence the assertion "*I am sure if we can have such an association, everybody can be motivated to take part in school activities*".

In the same manner, Mrs Moyo's assertion "*we do not even know how to teach learners with special educational needs some extra-curricular activities*" is understood to mean that learners do not participate in extra-curricular activities because teachers do not know how to teach such activities. However, Mrs Moyo acknowledges that "*there are many skilled people out there who can assist*". This citation is understood to mean that there are other people besides the teachers that can help to teach learners with special educational needs extra-curricular activities.

In a CP point of view, teachers should be willing to learn as they teach; therefore, allowing parents to be active in the education setting, can help them learn more about learners with special education from people central to their lives.

## **4.5 THREATS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **4.5.1 Teachers' understanding and expertise**

Teachers are the leading force for the success of inclusion. However, teachers can also be threats towards inclusion. Teachers who have not developed understanding towards special educational needs, who still regard disability as inability, and are not yet ready to accept learners with special educational needs, pose a threat for inclusion to take place effectively. Teachers who still use initial teacher tuition as an excuse that they are not prepared for inclusion, are a threat towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (see Section 2.8.1). The co-researchers also held the view that teachers' understanding and expertise can be a threat towards inclusion:

**Mrs Moyo**, as the overseer of the school, established: *There are teachers who do not like to work collaboratively with other teachers.*

**Mrs Tau** pleaded: *It's high time that we do not complain about materials; we should just use the ones we have.*

**Lineo**, a physically challenged Grade three learner, on the other hand highlighted: *My teacher likes to give me very simple class work, telling me that I cannot do the same class work with others. I feel bored in the class.*

**Mr Pule** emphasised: *Teachers who are not ready to change the traditional methods of teaching are a serious threat to inclusion.*

Mrs Moyo's assertion that there are teachers who do not like to work collaboratively with other teachers, is understood to mean that there are some teachers in this school who like to work independently. "*There are teachers*" is understood, in this context, to mean some teachers. The phrase "*do not like to work collaboratively with other teachers*" is understood to mean that they do not like teamwork; rather, they prefer working individually. This response of Mrs Moyo, the principal of the school, can mean that she might be aware that there are teachers in the school who do not like to work with other teachers. As a result, she might be aware that teachers who do not like collaborative teamwork might hinder inclusive education.

From the assertion of Mrs Tau, it can be concluded that teachers like to complain about teaching and learning materials as their excuse for inclusion. "*It's high time*" is understood to mean that now is the time. The phrase "*that we do not complain about materials*" is understood to mean that teachers should stop complaining about teaching and learning materials. And "*we should just use the ones we have*" is understood to mean that teachers ought to use the available materials. From this response, it is clear that there are some teaching and learning materials in the school that can be used; therefore, teachers should stop complaining about materials.

On the other hand, the assertion of Mr Pule that teachers who are not ready to change the traditional methods of teaching are a serious threat, is understood to mean that those teachers who still use teacher-centred methods of teaching pose a threat to inclusive education. "*Teachers who are not ready to change*" is understood to mean teachers who still continue in the same manner and "*traditional methods of teaching*" is understood to mean teacher-centred methods. The phrase "*are a serious threat*", in this context, is understood to mean that they pose a threat to inclusive education.

The assertion of Lineo shows that her class teacher still regards disability as inability. The fact that the teacher gives her very simple class work, with the impression that she cannot do the same class work as others, clearly shows that the teacher has not developed a good understanding of special needs. “*My teacher likes to give me very simple class work*”, in this context, is understood to mean that the teacher gives Lineo class work that is below her ability. The phrase “*telling me that I cannot do the same class work with others*” is understood to mean that the teacher informed the learner that she is not able to do the same work as other learners without special educational needs. It is clear from Lineo’s response that this teacher does not know the needs, abilities and interests of the learners, hence the statement, “*I feel bored in the class*”. This statement, in this context, is understood to mean that Lineo does not feel challenged or interested.

#### **4.5.2 Educational viewpoints**

Pedagogical approaches that pose a threat to inclusion, include the use of teaching and learning methods for learners who are free of disabilities, for learners with special educational needs. Other pedagogical approaches that pose a threat to inclusion are teacher-learner ratio, a lack of materials, a lack of clarity for teachers on what constitute effective practice in teaching approaches for inclusive classrooms, and a shortage of evidence about teaching approaches that effectively include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms (see Section 2.8.2). Methods of teaching were found to be a serious challenge to inclusion:

**Ms Lebo** stated: *We use teacher-centred methods because they have always been appropriate.*

**Mr Pule** highlighted: *The serious challenge in this school is resources because with the money we charge for the fees it is difficult to meet the needs of all learners.*

**Tsepo** postulated: *Even the books that we use, have small letters; most of the time I don’t see what is written.*

Ms Lebo's reference that they use teacher-centred methods because they have always been appropriate is understood to mean that teachers in this school still use traditional teacher-centred methods because such methods are regarded as proper in this school. "*We use teacher-centred methods*" is understood as an acknowledgement that teachers in this school use teacher-centred methods and the phrase "*they have always been appropriate*" is understood to mean that teacher-centred methods are regarded as correct. It can be depicted that teachers in this school still believe in one-size-fits-all methods of teaching.

Mr Pule's assertion that "*[t]he serious challenge is resources*" can be interpreted to mean that they still use the pedagogical practices they use because of a lack of resources. The word "*resources*" in this context, is understood to mean teaching and learning materials. The phrase "*with the money we charge for the fees*" is understood to mean that the school still charge low fees, and "*it is difficult to meet the needs of all learners*" is understood to mean that it is not easy to cater for individual learners. This response gives a picture that with the fees charged, the school is able to provide for some resources, but it is not possible to acquire all necessary materials with the school's income from the school fees.

Tsepo's excerpt adds to Mr Pule's assertion that the materials available lead to the pedagogical practices used in this school. "*Even the books that we use*", in this context, is understood to mean that books are the sole learning materials used in the school. The phrase "*the books that we use, have small letters*" is understood to mean that the text of the books are not large enough for learners who are visually challenged. This response adds to the fact that a mentality of one-size-fits-all reigns in this school. Again, it is clear that the needs of some learners, like Tsepo, are not met in this school.

### 4.5.3 Inadequate policy guidelines

The slow implementation of policies on inclusive education is a serious threat towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The lack of written school policies on parental involvement also poses a threat to the inclusion of learners with special educational in mainstream classrooms (see Section 2.8.3). Implementation of policies was indeed emphasised as a serious threat towards inclusion.

**Ms Nthabeleng** stated: *Very good policies about inclusive education are there, but there is no follow-up whether they are implemented or not.*

Sharing the same sentiments, **Mr Andreas** said: *I suggest that apart from the policy developers in the ministry of education, there should be officials whose main responsibility is to ensure the effective implementation of policies with regard to inclusion.*

**Mrs Ntsonyana** added: *Look at this Building Control Act as an example; it is a very good policy emphasising that school buildings should be suitable to people with special needs, but new inaccessible school buildings are still built.*

All the excerpts stress that there are good policies, but their implementation is a problem. The response of Nthabeleng that “*very good policies about inclusive education are there*” is understood to mean that inclusive education policies are available. The phrase “*but there is no follow-up whether they are implemented or not*” is understood to mean that follow-up whether the developed policies are implemented or not, is not done. An example of a good policy, mentioned by Mrs Ntsonyana, is the “*Building Control Act*”, which is understood to be a policy indicating buildings that support inclusive education. A “*policy emphasising that school buildings should be suitable to people with special needs*”, in this context, is understood to mean a policy that lays emphasis on buildings that are appropriate for stakeholders with special needs.

Supporting good policies with regard to inclusive education, the assertion of Mr Andreas that “*there should be officials whose main responsibility is to ensure the effective*

*implementation of policies with regard to inclusion*” is understood to mean that officials are needed to ensure the successful running of inclusion. Mr Andreas might be aware that the policymakers are there, but officials to oversee that policies are implemented, are absent. This is derived from the phrase, “*apart from the policy developers in the ministry of education*”. This citation shows that Mr Andreas has a feeling that in the absence of such officials, inclusive education might be at stake.

#### **4.5.4 Partial support and resources**

Support can be understood, in this context, to mean assistance from those in power. The needed support includes financial support, specialists to support the school and teachers when the need arises, and the infrastructure needed to accommodate diversity and assistive devices where necessary (see Section 2.8.4). During our meetings, the lack of support from relevant authorities was seen as a threat to inclusion:

**Ms Nthabeleng** stated: *The ministry of education is not ready to help this school because it is regarded independent.*

**Mr Andreas** added: *Even the ministry of social development, that we were told is responsible for the welfare of people with special needs, never asks how we are coping.*

**Ms Tsebo** added: *I think that office called “special education unit” should be closed because it does not assist us at all.*

The citations of Ms Nthabeleng, Mr Andreas and Ms Tsebo clearly show that the lack of support from relevant authorities is a threat to inclusion. “*The ministry of education is not ready to help this school*” is understood to mean that the ministry of education does not support this school. “*The ministry of education*” can be understood to mean the department responsible for education in the government. The phrase “*it is regarded independent*”, in this context, is understood to mean that the school is not a public school. Ms Nthabeleng might be aware that the ministry of education does not support independent schools.

The “*office called ‘special education unit’*” is understood to mean that there is an office in the ministry of education that is responsible for special educational needs. That it “*should be closed*” is understood to mean that it should stop operating. And the phrase “*it does not assist us at all*” is understood to mean that the special educational needs unit does not help them. Ms Tsebo might be aware that the special education unit does not help teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, hence she suggests that that office should be closed.

A lack of support from relevant authorities is seen a serious threat for inclusion. Mr Andreas’s response that “*even the ministry of social development that we were told is responsible for the welfare of people with special needs, never asks how we are coping*” is understood to mean that the ministry of social development also does not support them. “*The ministry of social development, which we were told is responsible for the welfare of people with special needs*” is understood to mean that the ministry of social development is the government office responsible for the wellbeing of people with special educational needs. The phrase “*never asks how we are coping*” is understood to mean that the officials of the ministry of social development never check on them to see how they are managing.

## **4.6 COMPONENTS OF INCLUSION**

This section presents the components that were chosen as vital for inclusion. Equality, diversity, the learning environment, parental involvement and active participation are the components of inclusion that were regarded important to best include learners with special educational needs.

### **4.6.1 Equality**

The concept of inclusion ensures that learners with special educational needs are not marginalised, discriminated against or excluded. The inclusion of all learners teaches the learners that all people are equally valued. Learners have a sense of belonging

through inclusive education (see Section 2.6.1). The following remarks show that equality is an important component for inclusion:

**Mrs Tau** said: *I experienced that presenting a lesson using different modes enable all learners to have equal opportunity of the same content.*

**Lineo** said: *When we are also chosen to participate in competitions, others notice that we are also able.*

On the other hand, **Mrs Moyo** emphasised: *We should also be aware that we do not concentrate on learners with special educational needs only; even other learners without special needs need our attention.*

The comments of these members indicate that when learners with and without special educational needs are treated equally, inclusion is enhanced. The response “*I experienced that presenting a lesson using different modes enable all learners to have equal opportunity of the same content*” is understood to mean that Mrs Tau had used different modes when presenting a lesson and she noticed, when doing so, all learners are catered for. When different modes of presenting a lesson are used, different needs and interests of learners are met.

The citation of Mrs Moyo “*[w]e should also be aware that we do not concentrate on learners with special educational needs only; even other learners without special needs need our attention*” is understood to mean that teachers are advised not to pay attention only to learners with special educational needs, but to all learners. The principal, Mrs Moyo might have noticed that teachers give more attention to learners with special educational needs than to other learners. When attention is given to one group of learners, the other one is excluded.

In the same manner, Lineo’s extract “*when we are also chosen to participate in competitions, others notice that we are also able*” is understood to mean that when learners with special educational needs are allowed to participate in school competitions, other members of the school community will come to understand that disability is not inability. Lineo might be aware that in their school, learners with special

educational needs are not allowed to participate in competitions, maybe because disability is equated with inability.

#### **4.6.2 Diversity**

Diversity, in this context, can be considered as different abilities of all learners. This means that learners with special educational needs learn alongside their peers and their diversity is taken into consideration (see Education White Paper 6, 2001:16 in Section 2.6.2). Diversity was also regarded as one of the significant components for inclusive education during our discussions:

**Mrs Tau** stated: *When we plan the lessons, we should take into account different abilities and interests of the learners.*

**Mr Pule** established: *I noticed that when I interact more often with the learners so that we can learn their differences, interests, needs and abilities.*

**Lineo** highlighted: *There is no sport in this school that we play because only learners without special needs are allowed to participate.*

The quotation of Mrs Tau “*when we plan the lessons, we should take into account different abilities and interests of the learners*” is understood to mean that teachers should consider the interests and abilities of learners in order to plan lessons accordingly. Mrs Tau might be aware that when lessons are planned in accordance with the learners’ needs and interests, inclusion is enhanced. Mr Pule’s reference shows that when teachers interact with learners, teachers have the opportunity of learning about the learners’ differences. When teachers know the differences of the learners, they are in the position to value and respect such differences.

On the other hand, Lineo’s statement “*there is no sport in this school that we play because only learners without special needs are allowed to participate*” is understood to mean that learners with special educational needs are not allowed to participate in sporting activities, as learners without special educational needs are the only ones

allowed to take part. Lineo might be aware that diversity is not valued during sporting activities in this school. She might also be aware that when diversity is not valued, inclusion is at risk.

#### **4.6.3 Learning environment**

Inclusion is about enabling education systems, structures and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners. Depending on individuals' needs, inclusion acknowledges that learners should be educated in restriction-free environments, where they are accepted as they are and their needs are met (see Section 2.6.3). The co-researchers agreed that the learning environment is central to inclusion:

**Mr Kokolia:** *I suggest that we organise fun walk to raise funds in order to make ramps for free movement.*

**Mr Andreas:** *Using more learner-centred methods like group work help learners with special educational needs feel at home.*

**Ms Rapeisi** added: *When learners with special educational needs are always mixed with learners without special need, learners with special educational needs feel that they are loved and accepted for who they are.*

The extract of Mr Kokolia “*we organise fun walk*” is understood in this context to mean that the co-researchers should organise a fun walk. The phrase “*to raise funds*” is understood to mean to make money and “*in order to make ramps for free movement*” is understood to mean that ramps will ease movement. Mr Kokolia might be aware that movement is restricted due to the unavailability of ramps in the school. He might also be aware that inclusion is at stake where movement is restricted.

Ms Rapeisi might be aware that when learners with and without special educational needs are mixed, learners feel they are loved, hence the response, “*learners with special educational needs feel that they are loved and accepted for who they are*”. This statement is understood to mean that learners feel a sense of love and acceptance. Ms

Rapeisi might have experienced that mixing learners make them feel appreciated, while isolating them according to their abilities make them feel devalued.

On the same note, Mr Andreas believes that learner-centred methods of teaching make learners with special educational needs feel at home: “*group work help learners with special educational needs feel at home*”, in this context, is understood to mean that learner-centred methods, including group work, help learners with special educational needs to feel valued.

#### 4.6.4 Parental involvement

Inclusion acknowledges that parents should be involved in the education of their children. At the same time, inclusion admits that schools are responsible to encourage parental involvement (see Section 2.6.4). Parental involvement was regarded as one of the components necessary for inclusive education during our discussions:

**Tumelo** postulated: *I like it when we are given homework and my mother helps me.*

**Lineo** added: *My dad taught me a mathematical formula that I taught my teacher.*

**Ms Lebo** emphasised: *Actually, parents know better about their children so when they take active roles, they assist us on how best we can accommodate their children.*

**Mrs Lebusa** added: *We, parents are very ready to participate when doors are open for us.*

The excerpts of Tumelo and Lineo serve as evidence that parental involvement is a vital component in inclusive education. The citation “[m]y dad taught me a mathematical formula that I taught my teacher” is understood to mean that Lineo’s father taught her one formula of mathematics that she taught her teacher. “*I like it when we are given homework and my mother helps me*” is understood to mean that Tumelo enjoys being given homework so that his mother can help him. Tumelo might be aware that the fact

that his mother helps him with his schoolwork when he is given homework helps him improve. These responses show that children enjoy it when parents are involved in their education.

Parents also agree that they like to actively participate at the school. The extract of Mrs Lebusa “[w]e, parents are very ready to participate” is understood to mean that parents are ready to participate. Mrs Lebusa might be aware that parents are willing to take part in the education of their children. She might be aware that as much as parents are willing to participate in the education of their children, the school does not allow them, hence she indicated “when doors are open for us”. When doors are open is an expression meaning when permission is granted.

Similarly, Ms Lebo, as a teacher, regards parental involvement as crucial for inclusion. Her assertion “parents know better about their children so when they take active roles, they assist us on how best we can accommodate their children” is understood to mean that when parents are involved in the education of their children, they can help teachers to better include learners with special educational needs in the classes, as they are more knowledgeable about their children. Ms Lebo might be aware that when parents are actively involved in their children’s education, they give some tips to teachers on how best learners with special educational needs can be included.

#### **4.6.5 Active participation**

Another important component of inclusion is active participation. The notion of active participation, in this context, means that all learners are actively engaged, rather than being passive in the daily running of the classroom. Active learners are free to interact with other learners and teachers (see Section 2.6.5). The co-researchers emphasised active participation as an important factor for inclusive education:

**Mr Pule** pointed out: *I have seen that when learners are given group work, they become so excited that even those that I thought were withdrawn become outgoing.*

**Tsepo** highlighted: *I enjoy pal reading so much.*

**Lineo** added: *I also like when we work in pairs in the class because my friend makes me understand better.*

The excerpts of Mr Pule, Tsepo and Lineo symbolise that through collaborative teamwork, like group work and peer tutoring, learners become actively involved in their learning. *“I have seen that when learners are given group work, they become so excited that even those that I thought were withdrawn become outgoing”* is understood to mean that Mr Pule has noticed that through the group work method, learners are free to participate. The phrase *“even those that I thought were withdrawn become outgoing”* is understood to mean that even the reserved students are able to socialise. Mr Pule might have experienced that when learners are put in groups to do their work, they become happy and free, and therefore participate meaningfully.

The term *“pal reading”* is understood to mean a reading activity where friends are paired to read to each other. The statement *“I enjoy pal reading so much”* is understood to mean that Tsepo benefits from pal reading. Tsepo might be aware that through pal reading, all learners become actively involved in their learning. Similarly, the response of Lineo *“I also like when we work in pairs in the class”* is understood to mean that she enjoys it when they are assigned work where they work in pairs. Lineo states that she understands the work better when she is paired with her friend, hence her statement *“my friend makes me understand better”*. Lineo might have noticed that when they work in pairs, she understands better than when other methods are used.

## **4.7 EVIDENCE OF THE FUNCTIONALITY ON HOW INCLUSION CAN BE ENHANCED**

### **4.7.1 Teacher tuition**

Initial teacher education prepares graduates for an inclusive school environment. Tuition integrates modern practices to help novice teachers improve their teaching techniques and attitudes towards learners with special educational needs. Teacher tuition focuses

on the knowledge and skills required, therefore results in graduates who are more supportive to learners. Again, the increased contact with learners with special educational needs during teacher preparation was seen as the best practice, as it has shown good results in an inclusive setting (see Section 2.9.1).

**Ms Rapeisi** postulated: *Institutions of higher education should prepare all teachers towards inclusion.*

**Mr Andreas** emphasised: *There should be in-service programmes that help us accommodate learners with special educational needs.*

Ms Rapeisi's assertion that "[i]nstitutions of higher education should prepare all teachers towards inclusion" is understood to mean that teacher tuition institutions should move away from separating programmes into special education and general education. Rather, teachers should all be prepared towards inclusive education. Ms Rapeisi might be aware that separated programmes do not help in an inclusive setting.

Similarly, the citation of Mr Andreas "[t]here should be in-service programmes that help us accommodate learners with special educational needs" is understood to mean that teacher institutions should offer inclusive courses for practicing teachers, so that they can improve their ways of including learners with special educational needs. Mr Andreas might have noticed that the practicing teachers' ways of including learners with special educational needs has to be improved.

#### **4.7.2 Curriculum**

Literature reveals that the best practice with regard to the curriculum in an inclusive classroom is that there should be no separate curriculum for learners with special educational needs. Positive results are cultivated through the implementation of the infusion approach. According to Chambers and Forlin (2010:78), the infusion approach is the practice whereby the curriculum is presented with adaptations when necessary (see Section 2.9.3). The co-researchers also held the notion that the same curriculum should be given to all learners, with some adaptations where necessary:

**Mrs Tau** established: *I have seen that all learners can learn the same content when it is adapted to meet the needs of the learners.*

**Tumelo** brought forward: *Sometimes our teacher gives us ten items to do, yet Limpho is given only three items.*

The references of Mrs Tau and Tumelo confirm the importance of the same curriculum, with some adaptations where necessary for learners with special educational needs. “*I have seen that all learners can learn the same content when it is adapted to meet the needs of the learners*” is understood to mean that Mrs Tau is aware that all learners can learn the same content when adaptations are made in order to meet the needs of the learners. Mrs Tau might have adapted the curriculum somehow, and noticed that even learners with special educational needs can learn the same content as learners without special educational needs.

Emphasising the need for adapting the curriculum to meet the learners’ needs, Tumelo’s citation, “[s]ometimes our teacher gives us ten items to do, yet Limpho is given only three items” is understood to mean that their teachers sometimes give other learners many items of work, while Limpho, who is understood to not be able to do many items, is given less items. Tumelo might be aware that learners are given work with reference to their aptitudes.

#### **4.7.3 Pedagogical approaches**

Teachers’ education towards inclusive pedagogical approaches is introduced in institutions of higher education. Pedagogies addressing issues of equality, equity, inclusion and social justice are emphasised. Teachers are also educated on approaches for the 21st century. Stressed also, are methods like collaborative group work and peer education (see Section 2.9.2). The co-researchers also held the view that learning should be learner-centred:

**Ms Lebo** stated: *I was excited to notice that I can even record myself and let children listen to the recorder.*

**Lineo** added: *My best lesson is when my teacher takes us to the library to watch the stories she always tells us in the class.*

The excerpts of Lineo and Ms Lebo emphasise the importance of using differentiated methods of learning. Ms Lebo's citation, "*I was excited to notice that I can even record myself and let children listen to the recorder*" is understood to mean that Ms Lebo was happy to realise that she can record herself to deliver the lesson. Ms Lebo might have changed the mode of presenting the lesson and noticed that the learners enjoyed that approach.

The excerpt of Lineo emphasises that learners like it when lessons are presented in different modes. "*My best lesson is when my teacher takes us to the library to watch the stories she always tells us in the class*" is understood to mean that Lineo's favourite style of learning is when they watch the story on television, rather than listening to the teacher. Lineo might have been exposed to listening to the teacher and watching the same story on television. When comparing the two methods, Lineo preferred watching the story on television.

#### **4.7.4 Parental involvement**

Increased relationships between the school, parents and the community are seen as the best practice in different countries, including Australia, Scotland and South Africa. The stakeholders are involved in all sectors of the school, from planning to the evaluation of the learners' education (see Section 2.9.2). Parental involvement was also seen as important during co-researchers' meetings:

**Mr Pule** indicated: *Even though I had always thought parents are not cooperative, I noticed that when they are given chance to participate, they do whole heartedly.*

**Mrs Moyo:** *I suggest that at the beginning of every year parents should be oriented about how they can be involved in the learning of their children.*

Mr Pule's assertion, "[e]ven though I had always thought parents are not cooperative", is understood to mean that Mr Pule had all along thought that parents do not work collaboratively with teachers. Mr Pule might have experienced parents who do not work hand-in-hand with teachers. It is understood that Mr Pule had lately noticed that teachers can become cooperative if given the chance, hence the declaration, "*I noticed that when they are given chance to participate, they do whole heartedly*".

In corroboration with Mr Pule's assertion, Mrs Moyo's suggestion, "*I suggest that at the beginning of every year parents should be oriented*" is understood to mean that orientation for parents at the beginning of each year is necessary. Mrs Moyo might be aware that parents are not involved in the education of their children because they are not oriented, hence the suggestion.

#### **4.7.5 Learning environment**

One of the best practices with regard to the learning environment in different countries is getting support from special schools that are transformed into resource centres. The resource centres provide short courses for teachers and parents, and disseminate materials and methods of teaching. Furthermore, schools are developing sustainable inclusive cultures and practices that welcome diverse learners (see Section 2.9.2 & 2.9.3). Similarly, the co-researchers held the notion that learners with special educational needs should be included and physical services would be dealt with later:

**Mrs Ntsonyana** suggested: *Renovations are needed for free movement in this school.*

**Mr Kokolia** added: *We do not even need new buildings, on these existing buildings, modifications can be made to accommodate everybody.*

**Ms Tsebo**: *We can appreciate any support from anybody who wishes to support us so that we successfully accommodate learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms.*

According to Mrs Ntsonyana and Mr Kokolia's excerpts, the physical environment needs some modifications in order to accommodate learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. "*Renovations are needed for free movement in this school*" is understood to mean that the buildings should be transformed to allow free movement in the school. Mrs Ntsonyana, as a physically impaired person, might be aware that transformed buildings allow free movement for everybody. The citation of Mr Kokolia, "*[w]e do not even need new buildings, on these existing buildings, modifications can be made to accommodate everybody*", is understood to mean that to accommodate learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms, new buildings are not needed; rather, the existing buildings can be adapted. Mr Kokolia might have seen that to accommodate people with different abilities, the existing environment can be modified.

On the other hand, the citation of Ms Tsebo, "*[w]e can appreciate any support from anybody who wishes to support us so that we successfully accommodate learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms*", is understood to mean that the school will be grateful for any support given to them in order to effectively include learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. Ms Tsebo might be aware that when the school is supported by different stakeholders, inclusion becomes a success.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

Chapter 4 focused on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data generated and from the literature study conducted on enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms and from the focus group meetings of the co-researchers conducted through free attitude interviews (FAI). The discussions were centred on the objectives of this study. Analysis was therefore key for ensuring a clear understanding of how inclusion can be enhanced. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), pioneered by scholars such as Fairclough, Van Dijk and Wodak, was used to analyse and interpret data.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION TOWARDS ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings from the analysed data, as well as the recommendations, discussions and conclusion towards enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The chapter starts with the background of the study, which encapsulates the statement of the problem, the research question, the aim and the objectives of the study to remind the reader about what the study intended to investigate. Thereafter, the chapter presents the findings, followed by the recommendations. The findings, discussions and recommendations are aligned with the objectives of this study.

#### **5.2 BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As a major strategy towards the achievement of Basic Education for All, Lesotho introduced the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy, whereby many children were sent to school. The mountain kingdom of Lesotho implemented the Free Compulsory Primary Education Policy in the year 2000 (Mariga & Phachaka, 2011:78). The policy's main objectives are:

to make basic education accessible to all learners; to make education equitable in order to eliminate inequalities; to guarantee that every Mosotho child completes the primary education and ensure that education is affordable to Basotho. (Chitereka, 2010:91)

By implementing compulsory education, even learners with special educational needs were seen in numbers in schools. This has brought a challenge to teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners in one classroom.

Inclusion is defined by Rodda and Eleweke (2002:114) as the full-time placement of children with special educational needs in regular schools and aiming to provide equivalent educational opportunities and experiences for all learners. Engelbrecht and Green (2007:42) add that inclusion involves transforming and changing the education system to accommodate all children, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. Learners with special educational needs are defined by Klein *et al.* (2001:xii) to refer to learners who have difficulties that make it harder for them to learn or to access education, which means they may need different help from that given to other children. Regular classrooms are referred to as mainstream classrooms (Cummins, 2005:573).

### **5.2.1 Research question**

How can the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms be enhanced?

### **5.2.2 Aim and objectives of the study**

The aim of this study was to enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. The objectives are thus as follows: demonstrating challenges towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms; identifying possible solutions to such challenges; creating a conducive environment for inclusion; highlighting the threats that might hinder inclusion; demonstrating the components of inclusion; and sharing the success indicators for enhancing the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

## **5.3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.3.1 Findings about teacher tuition**

Some institutions offer teacher tuition programmes that separate between regular and special education teacher apprenticeship. Teacher tuition is thus isolated, with each

discipline seen as different and special. Novice teachers learn that some learners have special educational needs and their needs can only be met by special teachers with special resources. The reason that teachers give about their incompetence with regard to inclusion, is that they feel the knowledge and skills learnt during teacher preparation did not prepare them enough for inclusive education (see paragraph 2 of Section 2.4.1).

General teachers complain that they were prepared to teach learners without special educational needs. On the other hand, special educators find fault with their tuition because emphasis during their preparation was on learners with special educational needs only, not including learners without special educational needs. Furthermore, this study found that emphasis was on theory rather than on practice during teacher preparation. The separation of programmes was seen as a big challenge when teachers have to include learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (see paragraph 3 of Section 4.2.1).

### **5.3.2 Recommended components of teacher tuition**

Based on the findings of this study, the recommendation with regard to teacher tuition is that the initial teacher tuition institutions should prepare all teachers for inclusive education. The case of separate teacher programmes, where some teachers are prepared for special education and others are prepared for general education only, should be revisited. Important also is the recommendation that student teachers should be allowed to interact with special educational needs during their tuition.

They should be exposed not only to theory, but also to practical ways of putting inclusion into practice. For teacher apprentices who are doing their work-integrated learning (WIL), it is therefore recommended that teachers in the general and special streams should work collaboratively with them. This could be realised through an exchange of ideas on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in mainstream classrooms. In-service programmes and workshops are also recommended for teachers in order to improve their skills and knowledge on inclusive

education. Similarly, the study recommends that teachers should work with other teachers from different places to build collaborative networking.

### **5.3.3 Risks of teacher tuition**

According to this study, teachers' understanding can pose a threat to inclusion. When teachers are not prepared for inclusive education, they tend to oppress learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs may feel marginalised in classes where teachers are not ready for inclusion. According to Makoelle (2014:131), when teachers do not know how to accommodate learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, it may lead to teachers having the notion that such children should not be included.

Furthermore, teachers who do not share power with other members of the class, tend to be authoritarians. Their teaching may favour learners without special educational needs at the expense of learners with special educational needs (see paragraph 2 of Section 2.8.1). Teachers who are positivistic-oriented, which means teachers who regard themselves as more knowledgeable than others, pose a threat to inclusion. They deny learners collaboration with others, resist collaborative teamwork and treat them as objects in the learning process (see Section 4.5.1).

### **5.3.4 Findings on the curriculum**

Findings about the curriculum revealed that it is centrally designed and this was seen as a challenge to inclusive education (see paragraph 2 of Section 2.4.2). It was also found that though teachers are the implementers of the curriculum, they are not allowed to participate in developing such a curriculum. The co-researchers highlighted that the curriculum is rigid and leaves little flexibility for alteration. It was indicated that teachers are not included or consulted when curricula are developed. The curriculum comes as a finished product that does not regard the challenges in schools (see Section 4.2.2).

The study indicates that even if teachers aspire to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with special educational needs, it is difficult due to large classes and teachers having received inadequate tuition (see Section 4.2.2). Furthermore, the curriculum is seen to be biased, favouring learners without special educational needs, which leads to parents being reluctant to send their children with special educational needs to schools (see paragraph 3 of Section 2.4.2). When the curriculum is biased, a certain group (learners with special educational needs) is excluded. Such a curriculum leads to the use of materials and methods that do not meet the needs of learners with special educational needs.

#### **5.3.4.1 Recommendations about curriculum**

It is recommended that teachers, as the implementers of the curriculum, should also be the developers of the curriculum. The curriculum should be decentralised so that it can respond to the real-life needs of the learners, as emphasised in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (MoET, 2009:9) that education programmes should include cultural activities and values compatible with learners' development. All learners should be presented with the same curriculum, with some adaptations for learners with special educational needs where necessary. To respond to different abilities in the classrooms, Okeke, Van Wyk and Phasha (2014:221) emphasised that the curriculum should be satisfactorily adaptable with regard to needs, interests and talents of learners.

It is also recommended that other modes of assessments should be used, apart from the paper-pen assessments that are usually used. The study recommendations are informed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy, Lesotho (MoET, 2009:vii), which discourages a one-size-fits-all assessment strategy.

#### **5.3.4.2 Recommended conditions for an inclusive curriculum**

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that learners should contribute to the decisions about curriculum. According to Kincheloe (2005:328), the learners' knowledge, experience and realities of the context where learning takes place,

should be considered when framing the curriculum. It is also recommended that real materials should be used in the learning process (Aliakbari & Faraji,2011:80). Following this, the study recommends that curriculum should be flexible, leaving space for adaptations based on the needs and interests of the learners.

#### **5.3.4.3Risks of exclusive curriculum**

When the curriculum is exclusive, learners with special educational needs tend to be oppressed (Couch, 2017:126) because their needs, interests and talents are not considered. Exclusive curriculum contributes to learners with special educational needs dropping out of the schools.

#### **5.3.5 Findings on pedagogical approaches**

The study found that pedagogical approaches used in this school are highly teacher-centred (see Section 4.2.3). Teacher-centred methods do not meet the needs, interests and talents of learners with special educational needs. They promote rote learning, whereby learners are passive and the teacher is the only source of knowledge. These methods deny interaction between the learners and the teacher, and among themselves. Moreover, the study found that restrictive pedagogical approaches are regarded as one of the barriers to inclusion in many countries. Teaching and learning methods, materials and assessment methods that are restrictive and unaccommodating to learners with special educational needs are still used. The reason given towards using such methods is lack of materials and overpopulated classrooms (see Section 4.2.3).

##### **5.3.5.1 Recommended pedagogical approaches**

It is recommended that the needs, interests and talents of learners be taken into consideration when preparing lessons. When the needs are considered, teachers are compelled to move away from teacher-centred methods towards learner-centred methods. According to Majumdar, McAlister, Eurich, Padwal and Marrie (2006:321),

learner-centred methods improve social skills of learners with special educational needs, who mostly experience exclusion. Most importantly, interaction is highly recommended between the teacher and the learners, and among the learners themselves. It is through interaction that teachers can learn about the needs, interests and talents of different learners. According to Okeke *et al.* (2014:220), inclusive classrooms are democratic and teachers allow learners to actively partake in decision-making.

Important also, this study recommends that both general and special education teachers work collaboratively in order to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of each learner. Emphasising the importance of collaborative teaching, Beyers and Hay (2011:104) establishes that is common to have more than one teacher in an inclusive classroom, whereby teachers co-teach, using strategies such as complementary teaching, parallel teaching, supportive teaching or team-teaching. The study further recommends that teachers should start networking in order to learn from other people from different contexts how they go about inclusive education. Teacher development is highly recommended by this study, so that teachers can improve their knowledge and skills about inclusion through in-service programmes of inclusive education.

To enhance the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, cooperative learning is highly recommended. According to Johnson and Johnson (2008:10), cooperative learning is referred to as methods of teaching and learning that permit learners to work together towards achieving the same goal. Cooperative learning develops social skills and removes unnecessary competition among the learners, as well as developing positive supportive attitudes towards learners with special educational needs.

#### **5.3.5.2 Recommended conditions for pedagogical approaches**

The recommendation of this study with regard to pedagogy is that pedagogy should allow interaction between the learners and teachers, as well as among the learners themselves (see Section 2.7.3). Accordingly, the learners' personal experiences should

be integrated in the lessons (Leana, 2014:1). Following this further, the study recommends, with the reference from CP, that learners should be actively involved in their learning – together with their teachers, they should share ideas and determine areas of study (Degener, 2001:50).

Besides that, it is appropriate to recommend teachers to acknowledge that all learners can learn, but differently. When teachers recognise different learners' needs, interests and talents, and avoid the banking methods, they use different ways of teaching. Teachers who believe that all learners can learn, are likely to adapt their practice towards inclusive pedagogy in order to cater for all learners. Clearly then, the study recommends an environment where teachers and learners are both teachers and learners (Katz, 2014:4).

#### **5.3.5.3 Risks of exclusive pedagogic approaches**

Exclusive pedagogies, which are teacher-centred, do not consider the needs and interests of learners (see Section 2.8.2). Exclusive pedagogic approaches, where learners are passive, are oppressive in nature (Brewing, 2005:115). These methods marginalise and silence the experiences and voices of learners. Besides that, exclusive pedagogical approaches promote teacher authority in the learning process.

#### **5.3.6 Findings on parental involvement**

The study found that parents of learners with special educational needs are not actively involved in the education of their children. It was found that although parents do attend the meetings in schools, they are not involved in the planning for, and implementing and assessment of the learners (see paragraph 2 of Section 2.4.4). The underlying basis for the lack of parental involvement in inclusive schools is that there is a misunderstanding between teachers and parents, with one party complaining about the other (see Section 2.4.4 & 4.2.4). Parents criticise teachers that they concentrate on their children's disabilities, rather than their abilities. They also complain that teachers do not listen to them, whereas they are the ones who know their children better. On the other hand,

teachers complain that parents do not know their limit in the school. However, the study found that parents are not given enough chance to be actively involved in the learning of their children.

#### **5.3.6.1 Recommendations about parental involvement**

It is recommended that parents should be seen as equal partners in the school, therefore should be actively involved in the education of their children. The study further recommends that parents should not be restricted on participating in the school. Additionally, the study suggests that each school should have its own school policy that clearly states how much parents should be involved in the school. It is also recommended that each school should have a teacher-parent association, whereby teachers and parents can interact more often to discuss the wellbeing of the learners. According to Okeke *et al.* (2014:221), collaboration of parents and teachers bring about positive results to learners with special educational needs.

#### **5.3.6.2 Recommended conditions for parental involvement**

Schools where parents and the entire community are allowed to fully participate in the education system are another condition necessary for inclusive education (see Section 2.7.4). It is recommended that schools should take the initiative of educating parents about inclusion, so that they are seen as inclusive parents. It is also recommended that the community be actively involved in the education of learners.

Communication among the stakeholders is very important. According to Degener (2001:55), creating a dialogic environment where all stakeholders have an equal right to speak and question, empowers them. An environment where parents and the community are tolerated, is recommended. In final consideration, it is crucial to recommend that the school form a stakeholders' committee, so that both the school and the society work interdependently and interconnectedly towards inclusive environment. The stakeholders' committee can also constantly follow up whether the school is leading

to full inclusion. In the same way, programmes like teacher-parent associations are recommended (Will, 1986:415).

### **5.3.6.3 Risks of excluding parents in education**

The risks of excluding parents include ignoring the fact that the school or classroom should not be seen as a separate place from the society (Freire & Macedo, 1998:9). Furthermore, as CP emphasises the importance of teachers learning about the learners, when they are excluded in education, teachers may not have access to information about the learners' experiences and personal lives.

### **5.3.7 Findings on the teaching and learning environment**

The study found that the infrastructural and physical environment is still a challenge towards inclusion in many schools. The challenges that learners with special educational needs face include inaccessible buildings, equipment and inappropriate instructional materials (see paragraph 2 of Section 2.4.5). Similarly, in the school where the research was conducted, the physical environment was not conducive for learners with special educational needs. There are no ramps, toilet facilities are not conducive for learners with special educational needs, especially those that are wheelchair-bound, and playgrounds do not cater for such learners. The classrooms are over-populated and managed by one teacher. Even the sitting arrangement in the classrooms does not allow interaction among the learners. There is also a lack of support from other stakeholders (see Section 4.2.5).

#### **5.3.7.1 Recommended teaching and learning environment**

Barrier-free environments are recommended by this study for successful inclusion. The study recommends that the entire environment should be conducive for learners. There should be some changes to the physical environment in order to cater for all the school community. Most importantly, the study recommends the emphasis of the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, because if it can be internalised, then all stakeholders can work

towards an inclusive environment (Stubbs,2008:74). When the environment is appealing, learners with special educational needs feel welcomed (Okeke *et al.*, 2014:218).

### **5.3.7.2 Recommended conditions for the teaching and learning environment**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the school environment should be one that makes learners with special educational needs feel accepted and loved, regardless of their disabilities. Certainly, the positive attitudes of teachers and other learners about learners with special educational needs and appealing infrastructures are recommended as necessary conditions for an inclusive teaching and learning environment (Mahlo & Condy, 2016:13).It is also recommended that the language of teaching and learning should be that the learners are familiar with. This is in line with what Makoelle (2016:13) states that inappropriate language of teaching and learning puts many learners at a disadvantage.

### **5.3.8 Findings on inclusive education praxis**

#### **a) Striving towards equality**

According to the findings of this study, equality is one of the important components of successful inclusion. Inclusion teaches people that all people are equal, despite their differences (see Section 2.6.2). The study found that when lessons are presented using different modes, all learners feel equally valued. Also, when all learners, regardless of their disability, are allowed to take part in school activities, learners feel they are equally treated. However, the study reports that teachers seemed to concentrate more on learners with special educational needs than learners without special educational needs (see Section 4.6.1). When they give more attention to learners with special educational needs, learners without such needs feel excluded.

#### **b) Valuing diversity**

According to Education White Paper 6 (2001:16) Inclusion values diversity. This study found that when the school recognises and embraces the differences among the school community, it will be able to meet the needs of different learners (see Section 2.6.4 & 4.6.2). So far, diversity is not catered for in the school where the research was conducted. The findings of this study revealed that as much as the school is trying to recognise different abilities in the school, a lack of funds is a barrier towards the successful implementation of inclusive education (see Section 4.6.2)

### **c) Promoting active participation**

Active participation seems to be a potential component of inclusion. Inclusive education promotes active participation of learners with special educational needs in their own learning, and is against the passive placement of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (see Section 2.6.5). When learning is centred around learners, they seem to take control of their learning and perform better; learners reported that they enjoyed learning under these conditions. Cooperative teamwork and peer tutoring seemed to be highly favoured by learners (see Section 4.6.5).

#### **5.3.8.1 Recommended components for inclusive education praxis**

The study recommends that to value diversity, to promote equality and active participation and to provide a learning environment that is inclusive, schools should practice inclusion. When inclusion is successfully implemented, learning opportunities for all learners are maximised (Nel, 2013:5). The environment, materials and teaching and learning methods should be designed to meet the needs of different individuals. This study further recommends collaboration among the learners. Peer tutoring appeared to be the best method for helping learners with special educational needs.

For parental involvement, the study recommends that parents should be involved in all areas of the school. Also, the ethos of the school should emphasise the importance of parental involvement in the school. It should be stated in the mission of the school that parents are seen as equal partners in the running of the school. Through Education

Paper 6 (2001:20) A guide to parents and communities, the Department of Education of South Africa propose that parents should launch a network to promote inclusion in schools. Furthermore, the study recommends that parents should be positive about their children with special educational needs and volunteer to help the teachers where need arises. Parents are also recommended to be “agents of positive change” by actively participating in initiatives that raise awareness about inclusive education .

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reported the findings of the study, which revealed that initial teacher tuition does not prepare teachers adequately towards inclusive education. Based on the findings of this study, some institutions offer programmes which separate between regular and special education. This was understood where teachers indicated that they do not know how to work with learners with special educational needs. Another finding of the study is that the curriculum is centrally developed, is rigid and leaves little space for adaptations.

Moreover, the study found that pedagogical approaches that are used, are teacher-centred. It is not clear to teachers what pedagogical approaches to use in order to successfully accommodate learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. As a result, the needs and interests of different learners are not met. Another finding was that inadequate parental involvement was noted as a challenge in inclusive schools. The study further found that the entire environment, including the physical environment, is not appealing for inclusive education. The findings of the study therefore justify the need to respond to the research question: How can the inclusion of learners with special educational needs best be enhanced in mainstream classrooms?

However, the study recommended that teacher tuition institutions should prepare all teacher apprentices for inclusive education. In-service programmes and workshops, as well as networking, are highly recommended by this study for the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms to be successful. The study also recommends that the curriculum should be decentralised, and teachers should be

included in the development of the curriculum. It is recommended that teachers adapt the curriculum in such a way that it meets the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, the context where the curriculum is going to be implemented, should be considered when developing the curriculum. It is also recommended that parents should be seen as active, equal partners in education. The study further recommended that the pedagogical approaches used in inclusive classrooms should meet the needs of the learners. Thus, when their needs are considered, the teaching methods are going to be learner-centred. To conclude, the study recommended that the entire teaching and learning environment should be accessible for all learners, including those with special educational needs.

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## **Legislation**

Curriculum & Assessment Policy Framework, 2009

Education Act 2010

The Education White Paper 6, 2001

South African School Act 84 of 1996

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: THE TEAM'S TRANSCRIPTS

#### Challenges towards inclusion of learners with special educational needs

##### Initial teacher tuition

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *Our teacher preparatory institutions did not prepare us effectively to work with learners with special educational needs because we were trained to teach in general schools while few were trained as special education teachers.*

**Mr Andreas:** *I always struggle because even our mentors during teacher tuition did not actually demonstrated to us how to implement the strategies of inclusion when teaching.*

**Ms Tsebo:** *I was trained as a special educator and the focus was on learners with special educational needs only hence it is challenging in an inclusive setting.*

**Mr Pule:** *Even though I was trained as a special education teacher during teaching practice, it was us student-teachers who chose the schools we wanted to practice in, and it did not matter whether the chosen school practiced inclusive education or not.*

##### Curriculum

**Mrs Moyo:** *curriculum is a problem because we are not even consulted or involved when it is developed, yet it is expected that every learners be taught in the same manner, at the same time and be tested at the same way.*

**Ms Lebo:** *The curriculum treats these learners as if they are the same, that's why we progress with those who show progress and ignore those with special needs.*

**Mrs Tau:** *Another point is that it is expected that we finish the syllabus at a certain time otherwise we are regarded incompetent.*

### **Pedagogical approaches**

**Mrs Ntsonyana:** *The way teaching is done cannot help all the children. I once arrived in one classroom and found a teacher sitting down holding a book reading for the children, all children looking at her, holding a stick on the other hand and I asked myself whether they were learning or fighting!*

**Mr Andreas:** *Remember we said teacher tuition with regard to teaching these learners was a problem. We use teacher-centred methods because of overcrowded classrooms and lack of teaching materials.*

**Ms Tsebo:** *Teaching has always been teacher-centered and I am comfortable teaching like that.*

### **Parental involvement**

**Mrs Moyo:** *Parents give us problems because most of them never come to meetings but are quick to judge the teachers.*

**Ms Rapeisi:** *They are in denial of accepting that their children have special needs. They expect that when they bring their children with special needs to school, they should be healed.*

**Ms Lebo:** *Parents do not work cooperatively with the teachers.*

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *There is really a misunderstanding between the teachers and parents though I never encountered such parents myself.*

**Mr Andreas:** *some parents believe that we waste their children's time by saying they have special educational needs yet they do not. You will sometimes see that they are so bitter that they can fight teachers.*

**Ms Tsebo:** *The worst part is when parents send children to school with neither a book nor pencil.*

**Mrs Lebusa:** *Teachers do not want to listen to us yet we would help them on how to help our children with special needs because we have more experience.*

**Mrs Lebusa:** *we are only called when the school wants to report something. Some of us wish to be involved but it seems our ideas do not matter.*

**Mr Kokolia:** *Most of us are not as educated as the teachers, but when we are confused about what to do; they are not willing to guide us. Parents/ guardians on one hand are expecting miracles or their children to perform better.*

**Mr Pule:** *They are not ready to accept their children.*

**Mrs Nthabeleng:** *Some parents are not co-operative and are not expecting their children to perform like children without disabilities. It is like the school is expected to take away the disability the children.*

**Mrs Moyo:** *Some parents are in denial about the situation of their children. They think that teachers are wasting their children's time.*

**Ms Lebo:** *Sometimes children come to school without books or other materials needed at school.*

## Learning environment

**Ms Rapeisi:** *The buildings and the entire physical environment of the school is a problem especially for learners on wheelchairs and those with visual challenges.*

**Mr Andreas:** *We are facing a serious challenge with regard to teaching materials because our school is independent therefore the government does not fund us at all. It is very expensive to have appropriate materials because LSEN need special equipment.*

**Mrs Moyo:** *We have the problem of scarce materials therefore it is difficult to meet the needs each learner. We end up giving them the same work due to lack of materials like photocopying machines.*

**Lineo:** *I wish I was able to get into those classes upstairs. I envy those who are attending in those classes, unfortunately we are not able to get there with our wheelchairs.*

**Mrs Ntsonyana:** *During our time it was not easy to attend school when one had special needs due to the environment that was not conducive for them. It is surprising that even now LSEN still experience the same problem.*

## Solutions towards enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs

### Collaborative teaching as a solution towards teacher tuition

**Mr Kokolia:** *I suggest that special educators and general teachers work together so that they can exchange ideas on how to help LSEN in an inclusive setting.*

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

**Ms Tsebo:** *teachers can sit and do their lesson plans together after school.*

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

### **Curriculum adaptations as a solution towards curriculum as a challenge**

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

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

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

### **Learner-centred approaches as a solution towards pedagogical practices**

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

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

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *This issue of pedagogical approaches takes us back to the fact that we should know the needs and abilities of the learners. When teachers know*

*the needs of all the learners, then he or she can use teaching and learning approaches that meet their needs.*

### **Parents as active members of the school community**

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

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

**Ms Lebo:** *During parents meetings or open days parents should always be reminded that learners differ therefore even their performance differs.*

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

**Mrs Moyo:** *Parents should sign every home-work given to their children as a proof that the child was guided to do the homework.*

## **CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **Competent Teachers**

**Mrs Ntsonyana:** *Teachers should change their tendency of ignoring our children when they don't cope with their studies.*

**Mr Kokolia:** *Teachers should know the needs of the learners so that they can best meet them.*

**Mrs Lebusa:** *We need teachers who are able to communicate with us and guide us how we can also help.*

**Mr Pule:** *If we can work collaboratively as colleagues then we can exchange ideas on how the needs of learners can be met.*

**Mrs Tau:** *Using learner centred methods helps teachers to learn the interests and needs of each learner.*

**Lineo:** *We should be allowed work with other learners without special needs in the classrooms.*

**Tumelo:** *School can be nice if teachers can stop beating us.*

### **Inclusive Curriculum**

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *I have seen that when I interact with learners I gain even more information I did not know about the learners.*

**Tsepo:** *because my teacher likes to chat with me, I told her that I enjoy singing that's why I am always chosen to give a song item during assemblies.*

**Mrs Tau:** *I always try by all means to meet the needs of learners in my class by giving them exercises according to their capabilities yet the content is the same.*

### **Accommodating environment**

**Mrs Lebusa:** *These buildings should be made to accommodate all learners irrespective of their abilities.*

**Lineo:** *The play grounds and the toilets are very difficult to use.*

**Tsepo:** *other learners like to laugh at me that I am blind and they do not like to play with me!*

**Mr Pule:** *I suggest that the sitting arrangement be changed from this one that learners are facing one direction.*

**Mr Kokolia** was with the view that: *I think this school rule that learners should communicate in English only should be changed. Learners should be allowed to communicate in any language that they feel comfortable using.*

### **Cooperation with parents and community members**

**Mr Kokolia:** *Why is it that there are no school-parent associations in this school? I am sure if we can have such an association everybody can be motivated to take part in school activities.*

**Mrs Moyo:** *we do not even know how to teach LSEN some extra-curricular activities, and there are many skilled people out there who can assist.*

## **THREATS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **Teachers' understanding and expertise**

**Mrs Moyo:** There are teachers who do not like to work collaboratively with other teachers.

**Mrs Tau:** It's high time that we do not complain about materials, we should just use the ones we have.

**Lineo:** My teacher likes to give me very simple class work telling me that I cannot do the same class work with others. I feel bored in the class.

**Mr Pule:** Teachers who are not ready to change the traditional methods of teaching are a serious threat to inclusion.

## **Educational viewpoints**

**Ms Lebo:** *we use teacher-centred methods because they have always been appropriate.*

**Mr Pule:** *the serious challenge in this school is resources because with the money we charge for the fees it is difficult to meet the needs of all learners.*

**Tsepo:** *even the books that we use have small letters, most of the time I don't see what is written.*

## **Inadequate Policy guidelines**

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *very good policies about inclusive education are there but there is no follow up whether they are implemented or not.*

**Mr Andreas:** *I suggest that apart from the policy developers in the ministry of education, there should be officials whose main responsibility is to ensure the effective implementation of policies with regard to inclusion.*

**Mrs Ntsonyana:** *Look at this Building Control Act as an example, it is a very good policy emphasising that school buildings should be suitable to people with special needs, but new inaccessible school buildings are still built.*

## **Partial Support and Resources**

**Ms Nthabeleng:** *The ministry of education is not ready to help this school because it is regarded independent.*

**Mr Andreas:** *even the ministry of social development that we were told is responsible for the welfare of people with special needs never ask how we are coping.*

**Ms Tsebo:** *I think that office called special education unit should be closed because it does not assist us at all.*

## COMPONENTS OF INCLUSION

### Equality

**Mrs Tau** was quoted saying: *I experienced that presenting a lesson using different modes enable all learners to have equal opportunity of the same content.*

**Lineo** was also with the view that: *when we are also chosen to participate in competitions others notice that we are also able.*

On the other hand, **Mrs Moyo** emphasised that: *We should also be aware that we do not concentrate on LSEN only; even other learners without special needs need our attention.*

### Diversity

**Mrs Tau:** *when we plan the lessons we should take into account different abilities and interests of the learners.*

**Mr Pule:** *I noticed that when I interact more often with the learners so that we can learn their differences, interests, needs and abilities.*

**Lineo:** *there is no sport in this school that we play because only learners without special needs are allowed to participate.*

## Learning environment

**Mr Kokolia:** *I suggest that we organise fun walk to raise funds in order to make ramps for free movement.*

**Mr Andreas:** *using more learner-centred methods like group work help LSEN feel at home.*

**Ms Rapeisi:** *when LSEN are always mixed with learners without special need, LSEN feel that they are loved and accepted for who they are.*

## Parental involvement

**Tumelo:** *I like it when we are given homework and my mother helps me.*

**Lineo:** *my dad taught me a mathematical formula that I taught my teacher.*

**Ms Lebo:** *Actually, parents know better about their children so when they take active roles, they assist us on how best we can accommodate their children.*

**Mrs Lebusa:** *We, parents are very ready to participate when doors are open for us.*

## Active participation

**Mr Pule:** *I have seen that when learners are given group work they become so excited that even those that I thought were withdrawn become outgoing.*

**Tsepo:** *I enjoy pal reading so much.*

**Lineo:** *I also like when we work in pairs in the class because my friend makes me understand better.*

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM THE UFS



February 09, 2017

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Permission to conduct the empirical research**

May I kindly indicate that **MALEBOHANG CATHERINE MORENA** (student #2002104467) is a bonafide Masters Degree student in the School of Education Studies, Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State. She is currently registered towards the Master's degree studying in a discipline area of Educational Psychology.

As part of the programme, student is required to conduct an empirical enquiry. To accomplish the requirement, we kindly request you to assist with whatever thing which may contribute towards the completion of this study project. This may involve interviews; meetings; group discussions; observations or administering of questionnaires and/or participatory action research with formation of co-researchers.

Assistance rendered to her while conducting her empirical research will be highly appreciated. We promise to keep the actual names and/or identities of participants, the names of schools and all related information confidential. We further promise to respect all ethical dictates in research. Furthermore, participants in this study will not be compelled and school programme will not be disrupted in any way.

If any further information is required please contact me:

Yours sincerely



*M M Nkoane*

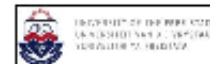
**Molebatsi Milton Nkoane (PhD) Supervisor**

**Director of Postgraduate Studies and Research: Faculty of Education**

Tel: +2751 401 7550/3777

Mobile: +2782 2004359

Email: [Nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:Nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za)



## **APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS TO ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH**

RESEARCHER: M. C. Morena  
SUPERVISOR: Dr MM NKOANE

University of Free State

Tel+ 27 (0)514012377

Email address

[nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za)

10<sup>th</sup> February 2017

### **INFORMED CONSENT:**

Dear Parent

I would like to ask your permission to allow your child to take part in the research project with the title:

### **(ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS)**

This study is about enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. I would like your child to participate in this research because he/she will be able to share his/her views on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in the mainstream classrooms.

The child will remain anonymous to protect his/her identity and will not be exposed to any kind of risk by participating in the study. I am sure your child will benefit from this study because during data generating process, joint meetings with other learners, parents and teachers will be held where ideas about how inclusion of learners with special educational needs can be enhanced will be discussed.

While I greatly appreciate your child's participation in this important study and value the contribution he/she can make, participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to release the child to take part in this study. If you do choose allow him/her to take part, and an issue arises which makes him/her uncomfortable, you may at any time

stop his/her participation with no further repercussions. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my supervisor (indicated above). Should any difficult personal issue arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted to assist your child.

Yours sincerely,

Malebohang Catherine Morena ([cmorena2008@yahoo.com](mailto:cmorena2008@yahoo.com))

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Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Research Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the parent

Name and Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

- I hereby give free and informed consent for my child to participate in the above mentioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why he/she is participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from his/her participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

RESEARCHER: M. C. Morena  
SUPERVISOR: Dr MM NKOANE  
University of Free State  
Tel+ 27 (0)514012377  
Email address  
[nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za)  
10<sup>th</sup> February 2017

### INFORMED CONSENT:

Dear teacher

I would like to invite you to take part in the research project with the title:

#### **(ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS)**

This study is about enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. I would like you to participate in this research because as a teacher, your experience of teaching in an inclusive setting, you will be able to share your knowledge and views on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in the mainstream classrooms.

You will remain anonymous to protect your identity and will not be exposed to any kind of risk by participating in the study. I am sure you will benefit from this study because during data generation process, joint meetings with other teachers, parents and learners will be held where ideas about how inclusion of learners with special educational needs can be enhanced will be discussed.

While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and value the contribution you can make, participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop participating with no further repercussions. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the

research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my supervisor (indicated above). Should any difficult personal issue arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted to assist you.

Yours sincerely,

Malebohang Catherine Morena ([cmorena2008@yahoo.com](mailto:cmorena2008@yahoo.com))

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Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Research Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the teacher

Name and Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the above mentioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

RESEARCHER: M. C. Morena  
SUPERVISOR: Dr MM NKOANE  
University of Free State  
Tel+ 27 (0)514012377  
Email address  
[nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za)  
10<sup>th</sup> February 2017

### INFORMED CONSENT:

Dear parent

I would like to invite you to take part in the research project with the title:

**(ENHANCING INCLUSION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS  
IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS)**

This study is about enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. I would like you to participate in this research because as a parent and a member of the community, your experience and interaction with people with special needs, you will be able to share your knowledge and views on how best learners with special educational needs can be included in the mainstream classrooms.

You will remain anonymous to protect your identity and will not be exposed to any kind of risk by participating in the study. I am sure you will benefit from this study because during data generation process, joint meetings with other teachers, parents and learners will be held where ideas about how inclusion of learners with special educational needs can be enhanced will be discussed.

While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and value the contribution you can make, participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop participating with no further repercussions. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the

research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my supervisor (indicated above). Should any difficult personal issue arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted to assist you.

Yours sincerely,

Malebohang Catherine Morena ([cmorena2008@yahoo.com](mailto:cmorena2008@yahoo.com))

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Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference

Research Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the parent

Name and Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the above mentioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UFS ETHICS COMMITTEE



Faculty of Education

08-May-2017

Dear Mrs Malebohang Morena

Ethics Clearance: **enhancing inclusion of learners with special educational needs**

Principal Investigator: **Mrs Malebohang Morena**

Department: **School of Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)**

### APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2017/0089**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. MM Nkoane  
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee  
Office of the Dean: Education  
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