

Challenges of Inclusive Education: Lesotho Case Study

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ABSTRACT Effective implementation of inclusive education continues to be a thorn in the flesh for school managers and authorities in Lesotho. This paper's aim is two-fold: First, it investigates the underlying causes and recommends possible strategies to address the challenge faced by teachers when dealing with impaired learners. Second, it attempts to tackle impediments to effective implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 368 randomly selected teachers from Maseru, Lithabane, Berea and St. Bernadette. The findings revealed that inadequate infrastructure design, almost non-existent resources, and ill-prepared and disempowered teachers are the fundamental causes of this situation. This study provides a comprehensive status report and makes a substantive contribution to what policymakers and teacher training institutions are called upon to pay attention to.

I. INTRODUCTION

Extending access to education is part of a worldwide agenda (Rouse 2008). Inclusive schooling is considered the means of developing a classroom that caters for all children. The principle of inclusion seeks to achieve education for all by restructuring schools as institutions that include everybody, support learning and respond to individual needs. Inclusion may require full-time placement of children with special needs in the regular school with the aim of providing equivalent educational opportunities and experiences for the students (Eleweke and Rodda 2000). Teachers are the key force in determining the quality of inclusive education. They can play a crucial role in transforming schools or bringing about no change at all (Swart et al. 2002). Misunderstandings and misperceptions of the concept of inclusion appear to frustrate its implementation (Mohd Ali et al. 2006). The right to education is a basic need for every child. Unfortunately, uncountable thousands of children are not given this right. According to Nkoane (2006), physically impaired learners face

challenges such as oppression, exclusion and marginalisation, and they are seen only as objects of pity with their voices not being heard. There are not enough support services for learners with physical impairments (NEPI report 1992). Hay (2003) states that education support service professionals are battling to come up with the relevant transformation and they have also not made the transition to support learners with impairment. In order to respond to the diverse needs of all learners, the existing education system must be transformed from a system of separate education to a single integrated system (Heiman 2004). The creation of inclusive schools requires more than merely the implementation of new policies (Swart et al. 2002).

Confusion arises when inclusive education is taken to be a fixed state instead of a dynamic process, as was pointed out in UNESCO's Review of the Present Situation of Special Education (Hegarty 1998). For the purpose of this paper, the definition of inclusive education derives from the 1994 Salamanca Statement, "that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties of differences they may have" (UNESCO 1999: 8). Research suggests that inclusive education programs should look for improvements in terms of *contextual factors*: individual, family, community, organization and government. Specific indicators include presence, participation, choice, respect, knowledge and skills (Peters 2004). Lesotho is one of the developing countries that experiences problems regarding implementation of inclu-

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sive education. The face of schools in our evolving society is changing, and teachers must acquire skills in working with learners who are academically and socially disadvantaged. The intention of this paper is two-fold, firstly, to explore some of the difficulties experienced by educators in dealing with impaired learners within the mainstream primary schools, secondly, to illuminate some impediments to effective implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho primary schools.

Inclusive Education - The Contextual Framework

Inclusion is more than a model for special education service delivery. It is a new paradigm for thinking and acting in ways that include all persons in a society where diversity is becoming the norm rather than the exception (Stainback and Stainback 1996). Many psychological theories of understanding learning breakdown believe that problems are located within learners. For example, very little is said about system deficiencies, social systems and their problems, exposure to intellectual work and poverty (DoE 2005). It is for this reason that we strongly view the realisation of thorough comprehension and effective implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho schools as a consequence attributable to both system deficiencies in terms of infrastructure, inadequate training or empowerment of teachers, and lack of support from parents and educational authorities. Elimination of these barriers could guarantee not only optimally functioning systems, but also the accomplishment of national education imperatives.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), paradigms are the encompassing systems of interdependent practices and thinking patterns, which define the nature of the investigation according to three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. This basis sets the persuasion (the paradigm), and thus provides the direction of the action that is undertaken during the study. In order to understand this study, it is necessary to first refer to the meaning of each of these 'interdependent systems'. Ontology specifies the nature of the reality that is being investigated, epistemology defines the nature of the relationship between the researchers and the knowledge which is being 'discovered', and method-

ology refers to the manner in which the researcher goes to work in order to 'discover' the knowledge (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Though most studies in psychology tend to be anchored within the interpretive paradigm, there is a firm belief that each individual forms their own understanding of the world in which they live (Coetzee 2011).

In order to understand the dynamics and comprehensiveness of inclusive education, a framework is necessary. The adopted and appropriate framework is the one developed by Peters (2004), it is proposed as a conceptual guide to thinking about the network of relationships and factors inherent to inclusive education development. It is used in this paper as a conceptual map for educational planning and evaluation.

The proposed framework includes four domains of inputs, processes, outcomes and contextual factors in an open system. An open system not only accounts for external factors influencing inclusive education (for example, policy, legislation, cultural and socio-economic conditions), but also considers these external factors as integral components of inclusive education development as a whole. The framework is used here as an organizing construct to review the literature on inclusive education for this paper. The first sub-section of the framework focuses on priority areas that have been identified as critical challenges to effective inclusive education across the four domains of input, process, outcomes and context. At the bottom of Peters' (2004) framework, illuminated contextual factors provide critical support for inclusive education in an open system. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these factors. However, they provide the structural, policy and economic environment within which inclusive education operates. All the domains of Peters' (2004) interact as a dynamic process of inclusive education.

Inclusion and Inclusive Education Unpacked Implications for Teachers

Generally, learners served by special education fall into 13 disability categories. In order of prevalence, they are learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, other health impairments (including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), multiple disabilities, autism, orthopaedic

impairments, hearing impairments, developmental delay, visual impairments, traumatic brain injury, and deaf-blindness. Usually, students with learning disabilities are by far the largest category of special education (Sleeter 2007). In order to respond to the diverse needs of all learners, the existing education system must be transformed from a system of separate education (isolating special education from regular education) to a single integrated system (Swart et al. 2002). Ladbrook (2009) laments that South African teachers have been subjected to a trajectory of forces or developments in society and in education, and they now find themselves in a new and inclusive education system. This has inevitably brought with it, stress and adjustment issues for many educationalists. Educators though diverse in background, competency and plurality, hold closely similar desires and expectations for their learners, and for their own imagining of themselves as professionals. Differences in the mediation of the curriculum are dependent upon the learner, the educator and the availability of resources in the school.

Genuine inclusion does not mean dumping students with disabilities into general education classes without support for teachers or students (Stainback and Stainback 1999). Inclusive education is a seemingly uncomplicated term that is often assumed to be the same in all contexts. Dyson (2001) argues that there is in fact no commonly accepted notion of inclusion, but rather a range of varieties of inclusion. He identifies inclusion as placement, inclusion as education for all, inclusion as participation and social inclusion. Practicing teachers are the key to the successful implementation of an inclusive system, and they will need time, ongoing support and in-service training. Therefore, real change requires a long-term commitment to professional development (Swart et al. 2002). Lunt and Evans's (2002) evidence indicates that inadequate facilities, absence of support services, large class sizes and poor infrastructure are some of the obstacles to achieving meaningful inclusion in developing countries. Training programmes for support personnel such as educational audiologists, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and communication support workers such as interpreters, are not available in many of the developing countries.

Inclusive Education in Lesotho

According to Mariga and Phachaka (1996), before the 1980s, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), churches and individuals were responsible for the special provision of education for learners with impairments in Lesotho. It was in this period between 1983 and 1992 where parents, impaired learners and their organisations began to seek national education provision for impaired learners. Concepts such as individual dignity were spreading, and gaining support and influence worldwide, with Lesotho also being influenced by this trend. It became an area of focus that vulnerable and marginalised learners needed to participate in a new educational dispensation, as well as needing to be emancipated to promote their own development (Mateusi 2012). From 1989 to 1990, Lesotho established a special education unit to implement inclusive education. The establishment of the Special Education Unit (SEU) was intended to support the attainment of education for all (Ministry of Education and Training 1990). To fully support all learners, the SEU was developed with the purpose of promoting the integration or inclusion of all learners in the regular school system to enable them to acquire appropriate skills and education (Mariga and Phachaka 1996). In order to support special education learners in the mainstream, the Special Education Unit, together with other NGOs, sensitised the public to the educability of learners with special education needs.

The following general policy statement constitutes Lesotho's basis for the provision of educational opportunities for people with special educational needs: "Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) will promote the integration of children with special needs into a regular school system at all levels." Educational policies and financing arrangements should encourage and facilitate the development of inclusive schools. Barriers that impede movement from special to regular schools should be removed and a common administrative structure organised (Maqelepo 2008; Ntaote 2003). In order for Lesotho to achieve inclusive education, MOET has to embark on a project of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). Inclusive education is implemented through the combined effort of all people, their families, their organisations and the rele-

vant government ministries, such as health, education, and social security (Maqelepo 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

As we wanted to understand the existence, nature and way of expression of the phenomenon being studied (Henning et al. 2008), a combination of normative and ethnographic/interpretive paradigms were employed, although prominence leaning more towards a quantitative research approach, which is descriptive and exploratory in nature. Quantitative research is a numerical method describing observations of materials or characteristics (Maree and Pieterse 2007).

Population and Sampling Technique

Probability sampling technique namely simple random sampling was used because it is valuable in a study where the pool from which the population is drawn is too big and elements which have a chance of being included have a probability that exceeds zero. The researchers relied on both his experience and vast previous research studies to identify and obtain units of analysis deliberately in such a manner that the sample obtained might be regarded as being representative of the relevant population (Welman et al. 2011). The unit of analysis or population consists of nine hundred (900) primary school teachers from Lithabaneng, St. Bernadette and Berea, in the Maseru district of Lesotho. The primary school teachers were targeted because most of the impaired learners seem not to progress further than primary school level.

Data Collection and Measuring Instrument

A survey in the form of a semi-structured questionnaires with multiple Likert rating scales was used to collect data from 900 primary schools teachers in Lesotho, and only 467 (52%) were returned fully completed. The developed semi-structured questionnaire items were based in the main on the ecosystem theory to learner support, development and assessment. This theory includes the way community and culture influences the development and learning of a learner (Cook et al. 1992). In this theory, the relation-

ship between the school, society and the education system is highlighted as an important interconnectedness. Part of the researchers' contention is that psychological tests used to evaluate learners must be informed by the ecosystem theory. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A, related to demographic information of the participants While Section B measured the feelings and perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges they face in dealing with inclusive classroom situations. When using a research instrument such as a questionnaire, it is important to ensure validity and reliability (Sarantakos 2005). Face validity and content validity were ensured in this paper as the contents of the questionnaires covered issues teachers are familiar with. The pilot study reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7106.

Data Analysis

Each participant was analysed using the ecosystem theory inventory. The information was combined and used in the descriptive as well as inferential statistics. For the data analysis the SPSS statistical software, version 14.0 was used. Descriptive statistics was used to provide a biographical analysis of primary school teachers. Inferential statistics were applied in the form of chi-square tests to determine the frequency count variables.

The mean and median of the ranking variables were computed and reported using the SPSS statistical software, version 14.0. Chi-square analysis was used to determine the frequency count variables.

Ethical Issues

Permission was first sought and granted by the relevant education authorities in Lesotho before the questionnaire was administered. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and were free to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable in a way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of Respondents

The respondents' demographic data included gender, age group, educational level and teaching experience.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

<i>Demographic variables</i>	<i>N = 467</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	131	28.05
Female	336	71.95
<i>Age</i>		
Between 18 – 25 years	-	-
26 – 30 years	81	17.34
31 – 35 years	170	36.40
36 – 40 years	90	19.27
41 – 50 years	83	17.77
More than 51 years	42	8.99
<i>Educational Level</i>		
Grade 12 / Form 10	13	2.78
Post school teaching qualifications	405	86.72
Other qualifications	49	10.49
<i>Teaching Experience</i>		
Between 1 – 5 years	144	30.84
Between 6 – 10 years	170	36.40
Between 11 – 20 years	88	18.84
Over 21 years	65	13.92

Table 1 shows that more females (71.95%) than males (28.05%) took part in this study. This finding is similar to Morolong’s (2007) and Garnefski et al.’s (2004), where it was indicated that generally there are more female teachers than males at primary schools. The respondents (36.40%) were between the ages of 31–35, followed by 36–40 (19.27%). An overwhelming number (86.72%) were qualified teachers with the appropriate teaching qualifications. More experienced teachers (those with over 10 years’ experience) formed a small portion (32.76%) of the population, compared to 67.24% who had between 1–10 years’ experience.

Table 2 shows that 45.38% (18.07% strongly disagree and 27.31% disagree) of the respondents do not understand what inclusive education involves, while 17.67% are not sure. A total of 36.95% (24.90% agree and 12.05% strongly agree) claim to know and understand inclusive education. Teachers are the chief implementers of any educational policy. However, with such a number of respondents who do not understand inclusive education, there is still a long way to go if national imperatives regarding inclusive education are to be achieved in Lesotho. What compounds the problem is the inadequate or non-existence of teacher development programmes (36.96%), lack of resources to support the school curriculum (32%), unsuitable infrastructure for impaired learners (33.74%), and unsupportive school board (37.20%) and parents (64.03%). Bringing home to inclusive classrooms requires establishing strong, collaborative partnership with families. Ideally, these experiences occur at school and at home through the coordinated efforts of teachers and parents (Winter 2007). It is also evident from Table 2 that 61.40% of the teachers feel inadequate to deal with inclusive classrooms, and this is as a consequence of a lack of training workshops on the subject (55.02%). Clearly, many teachers in Lesotho are not professionally trained to deal with learners with special needs, and some of them are unable to function effectively in an inclusive classroom.

It is evident from Table 2 that male teachers’ views lack of or insufficient knowledge about

Table 2: Summary of teacher feelings and perception regarding Inclusive Education (IE) challenges

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Respondents’ rating/score = %</i>				
	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>
I have enough knowledge about inclusive education.	12.05	24.9	17.67	27.31	18.07
We have an appropriate school programme for teacher development.	14.86	13.65	22.09	36.96	12.45
Our school has resources to support the curriculum.	30.28	11.95	32.27	15.94	9.56
Our school infrastructure is accommodative and suitable for learners with impairments.	10.34	12.10	6.62	33.74	27.12
I feel there is timely distribution and allocation of learning materials to schools.	38.19	40.94	10.63	5.91	4.33
I believe we have a supportive and effective school board.	4.0	8.8	12.8	37.2	37.2
I feel there is a working relationship between parents and teachers.	5.0	18.2	14.00	30.00	34.03
There are remedial classes at our school for impaired learners.	16.0	28.0	11.5	24.7	18.2
I feel teachers have adequate training and skills concerning inclusive education.	9.9	16.4	12.5	32.3	29.1
I feel there is regular teacher training workshops on inclusive education.	8.84	13.25	22.89	30.12	24.9

Strongly agree (SA) = 5; Agree (A) = 4; Neutral (N) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly disagree (SD) = 1

inclusive education and handling impaired learners, as well as lack of support from parents and authorities are the key concerns of primary school teachers in Lesotho. Interestingly, the findings from Table 3 also show that female respondents were significantly concerned by these core issues.

Qualitative Data Analysis

It is evident from Table 4 that the challenge faced by these teachers is likely to dampen their spirits and demoralise them. A total of 49.61% attest to this fact, supported by 64.41% indicating that they always experience problems when working with impaired learners.

“Their pace of learning is very slow and they need a lot of motivation. They may understand the concept today; tomorrow they have forgotten it. Since they have a short attention span, they rarely sit still in class, and as a result, they make learning and teaching difficult. They always cause disorder in the class. They interrupt others when teaching and learning is going on. They are restless; they move around the class shouting and disturbing the class,” beams one teacher.

“They beat others in class and sometimes refuse to write. They also want to be noticed, yet this makes them uncomfortable at the same time. Sometimes they are difficult to discipline. They turn out to be rebellious in class sometimes,” adds another teacher.

“I spent most of my time focusing on them without attending to the other learners and this delays progress. They also need too much of my time which is very tough for me to dedicate myself exclusively to them in an over-crowded class,” retorts another teacher.

At times, mentally impaired learners may display unexpected and erratic behaviour, and teachers have to know how to handle them because of their fragility due to their special needs. Accordingly, Evans (2007: 560) asserts that due to the emotional and social needs of these learners, teachers should be flexible and creative in their teaching and also establish a support network for the learners. Similarly, teachers should be able to empathize with the impaired learners. This would put teachers in a better position to understand the difficulties that impaired learners are subjected to. They need to bear in mind that these learners may display disruptive and disturbing behaviour. Such behaviour could be a culmination of the frustrations the learners experience and would therefore need additional support (Frederickson and Cline 2009: 411).

Question: Use of Additional Supplementary Didactical Approaches

The findings show that 29.82% of the respondents use additional methodologies (extra teaching methods) when dealing with impaired learners in their classrooms, while 70.18% reported not using any supplementary didactical approaches to accommodate these learners. Some

Table 3: Significant differences between the genders

Underlying dimensions	Mean males	Mean females	p-value
Insufficient or non-existent knowledge of inclusive education.	4.23	4.62	0.050
Lack of knowledge and skills in dealing with impaired learners.	4.01	4.62	0.050
Inadequate resources to support the curriculum.	3.67	4.19	0.261
Lack of teacher support from parents and authorities.	3.49	4.12	0.050
Inadequate teacher development workshops/training on inclusive education.	3.26	3.87	0.005
Infrastructure challenge – inside and outside the classrooms.	3.03	3.53	0.170

Table 4: The extent of the challenge posed by impaired learners

Items	Always	Sometimes	Not at all
The frequency/extent of the challenges faced by teachers in inclusive education.	49.61	44.19	6.2
Problems of working with impaired learners.	64.41	33.90	1.69

of the methods that can be used are cooperative learning and peer tutoring, which are almost similar in their approach. Cooperative learning, on the one hand, specifies the importance of positive interdependence and is designed to promote task-related contact whereby learners help one another, with the ideal situation being one whereby able-bodied learners help the disabled learners. On the other hand, peer tutoring is a method where the key factor is trust among the learners. These methods foster a warm relationship among the learners, and it is known that learners are less weary of their peers and more sceptical of their teachers (Ayers 2006: 40-41).

Question: Training Received to Deal with Impaired Learners

A total of 65.52% of the respondents claimed to have received training regarding challenges of an inclusive classroom. Conversely, 98.26% reported not having received any training with regard to impaired learners, for example:

“Mentally impaired learners need a great deal of attention which is difficult in mainstream schools. I do not know how to work with them since I am not trained in how to handle them” remarked one teacher.

“It is important to train teachers on how to deal with learners with special needs because most of the teachers in the mainstream do not know anything about the inclusivity of these learners,” adds another.

“Special education should be compulsory for all teachers so that they will be in a position to deal with physically and/or mentally impaired learners; both mainstream and special needs teachers should be provided with special education...,” one teacher said.

Another teacher further advised that:

“The Lesotho College of Education (LCE) should train all teachers with regard to special needs learners and in-service training should be provided for teachers who are already teaching”.

Question: Assistance or Support from Education Authorities

The findings indicate that 35.75% of the respondents concur that they receive assistance from the authorities. Conversely, 65.25% denied that authorities provide any support or assis-

tance to teachers in how to deal with impaired learners.

“Our government must ensure that schools are provided with special facilities for special needs learners, especially those who are severely affected, should be put in one place so that their needs can be adequately provided for,” argued one teacher.

Learners with a deformity of either one or both hands would benefit if the relevant technology could be made available to them so that can do their work and facilitate their participation in the classroom. Such facilities would alleviate any additional frustrations experienced by the learners because they would be able to be more active in class (Mitchell 2008: 206). Additionally, specialized teachers such as teaching assistants and mentors can be employed to help use these special facilities at schools and be of assistance to special needs learners (Ainscon et al. 2007: 73). Notwithstanding the argument advanced by Wearmouth (2009: 8) that the onus is on teachers to find ways to support all their learners and integrate the newly acquired information with what they already know, South Africa’s White Paper 6 (2001: 47) states that staff in the education support services should be trained for their roles as part of the district support teams for the purpose of supporting the teachers.

DISCUSSION

This purpose of this paper is to analyse the current challenges facing inclusive education in Lesotho and explores some possible remedies. The concept of inclusive education has come to mean many things (Florian 2008): from the very specific – for example, the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools – to a very broad notion of social inclusion as used by governments and the international community as a way of responding to diversity among learners (Ainscow 2007). Teachers being at the centre, are expected to play a pivotal role in providing education that is inclusive for all. Regrettably, the expectations for teachers are high but their value is low (Vaillant 2010). So, the responsibility of having to deal with the demands of Inclusive Education (IE), compounds the problem. Hasten to say, Inclusive education has remained a major and pending challenge. In general, students have been placed in regular schools without introducing significant institu-

tional and curricular changes in either school culture or teaching practices (Operti et al. 2009).

This paper identified challenges teachers in Lesotho are currently faced with. Amongst the myriad of pertinent challenges identified, skills and know-how in dealing with impaired learners, inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate resources, featured prominently. This situation is not peculiar to Lesotho, Ladbrook (2009) presented the lack of knowledge and training for educators and an inadequate infrastructure of the country present as some of the challenges for educators in South Africa. Furthermore, Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) maintain that Education White Paper 6 fails to acknowledge that real resources are needed to implement inclusive education and modestly precludes the Department of Education from carefully delineating new costs associated with policy changes. Wildeman and Nomdo (2007) say that these schools are under pressure to deliver better infrastructure facilities for their learners. Infrastructure facilities include the buildings, the pedagogic resources as well as the ratio of educator to class size. It is critical therefore that additional funding should be channelled towards non-personnel expenditure. The national conditional grant meant to address this need, was a short term goal, but did not materialise (Wildeman and Nomdo 2007). Where socio-economic related factors contribute to high teacher-learner ratios, there are text book and other resource shortages with limited provision for school and district based educational psychologist support (Engelbrecht 2004).

These literature findings somehow sums up the situation prevalent in Lesotho prior to endeavours to entrench effective IE system according to Miles (2000) when he states that when the national policy on integrated education was formulated in 1987 the situation of disabled children in Lesotho was bleak (Miles 1989). Only a handful of children were accessing any kind of services - considerably less than in the other English-speaking countries of southern Africa, and there was a desperate lack of expertise in the area of special or inclusive education. Money, materials and information and knowledge were in short supply, but there was a policy and a very strong disabled people's movement.

According to Vaillant (2011) several authors have noted that in the early 20th century, teaching in Latin America was considered a privileged,

highly prestigious occupation (Braslavsky 2002). But this situation has changed; today teaching is frequently associated with negative experiences such as work overload, fatigue, uncertainty about its function, and new requirements often not covered in pre-service teacher education (Vaillant and Rossel 2006). It stands to reason that a major challenge today is to analyse the role that teacher education curricula should play in responding to the diversity of learners. Teacher education needs to move from its currently rigid disciplinary and decontextualized content towards a more flexible approach, providing possibilities for diverse rhythms and pathways of learning progression. Many education specialists associate today's outcome-oriented approaches to curricula with inclusive teaching and learning (Moreno 2006), and present them as important tools in the hands of teachers to develop autonomous, critical, and assertive citizens (Operti and Duncombe 2008). To achieve this goal, it will almost be self-defeating if not suicidal for Lesotho Education authorities not to take into cognisance teacher concern, fears and anxieties pertaining to Inclusive Education (IE).

CONCLUSION

The discourse around Inclusive Education (IE) has proven to be both quite a fluid and its meaning more often misunderstood. Yet, it is world-wide phenomenon that never ceases to hound every sector of the society, especially education authorities within the developing countries in this case. The literature study indicates clearly that the concept of Inclusive Education (IE) has come to mean many things for many scholars. For example, the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools – to a very broad notion of social inclusion. Interestingly, there is confusion in the literature about the meanings of inclusive education and many of these meanings are contested. The purpose of this paper was not to enter the fray, but confined itself to exploring the challenges Lesotho primary teachers are confronted with regarding Inclusive Education (IE) and possible remedial interventions to overcome these challenges. Among the myriad of pertinent challenges identified, skills and know-how in dealing with impaired learners, inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate resources, featured prominently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given this situation in Lesotho, we deemed it necessary to propose few intervention measures and approaches not only to empower teachers in manoeuvring their way through the IE challenges, but also for education authorities whose primary concern is effective implementation of IE within the mainstream schools as guided by policy formulation and implementation processes. The three legged relationship below captures the essence of our recommendation. The government of Lesotho, in particular, education authorities, in their endeavour to achieve national educational imperatives, need not only work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders, for example, educational institutions, educational psychologists, parental associations, teacher associations, but also ensures and avail this support to teachers. Teachers being the significant agents of any societal change deserve first class consideration, if their buy-in, conviction and embracing of every effort, is to guarantee success in the implementation of inclusive education. While Education Authorities regulates and make policies, curriculum implementers in educational institutions are tasked and entrusted with proper execution of the curriculum. The expectation is that teacher training, has a role play in closing knowledge gaps that teachers might have. Further support for teachers and learners, is inherently left in the capable hands of experts such as Educational Psychologists, Councillors, etc. to assist with behaviour modification, disciplinary procedures, etc. Without doubt, a temporary remedy would be to avail schools with special teachers and/or teaching assistants who can provide one-on-one support to learners with special needs so that they too may benefit from the curriculum until such a time that it is modified. Availing this support will not only empower teachers, but also ensure that there is effective roll-out and implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in Lesotho schools.

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