

**Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning  
in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

by

**MAREABOKA IRENE MAINE**

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**SUPERVISOR**

**DR SUMARI ERASMUS**

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## Declaration

Name: Mareaboka Irene Maine

Student number: 60035897

Degree: Master of Education (Inclusive Education)

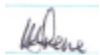
### **Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I also declare that this dissertation followed the APA 7<sup>th</sup> guidelines for references and citations.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher educational institution.



January 2022

SIGNATURE

DATE



## **Acknowledgements**

To Jesus Christ my Lord.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

### **Isaiah 41: 10**

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## **Abstract**

Limited research has been conducted in Lesotho about teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools. In the current research, the main aim was to explore teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The study adopted a qualitative approach and data was collected using semi-structured telephonic interviews and document analysis with 12 teachers in the school. The findings of this study revealed that teachers use formal and informal assessments and observations of learner's behaviour to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning as they do not have access to the 'assessment form' developed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) that help them identify the learners with diverse needs. Furthermore, the results showed that a few teachers differentiate the curriculum, but only a few of the teachers differentiated the learners' learning environments when responding to their diverse needs. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that teachers encounter many challenges when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning. The challenges included lack of training on inclusive education, lack of parental involvement, lack of appropriate learning materials, difficulty managing learners with diverse needs in the same classroom, time constraints, and lack of support from the MOET. Lastly, teachers reported that in order for them to be able to implement inclusive education successfully they require diverse learning materials, additional training on inclusive education from the school and/or the MOET, involvement of parents in their children's education, and teaching assistants in the classroom. In conclusion, teachers in the current study require more support from various stakeholders such as parents, school management, and the MOET to effectively include learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms. Future research should be conducted on the level of alignment between the national inclusive education policy in Lesotho and the curriculum followed by the public mainstream schools.

**Key terms: barriers to learning, challenges, curriculum differentiation, learners, mainstream, public, school, support needs**

## List of abbreviations

The following abbreviations were used in the thesis:

<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>EFA</b>	Education For All
<b>ESP</b>	Education Sector Plan
<b>ESS</b>	Education Support Service
<b>ESSP</b>	Education Strategic Sector Plan
<b>HICs</b>	High Income Countries
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Plan
<b>LCE</b>	Lesotho College of Education
<b>LIEP</b>	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
<b>LMICs</b>	Low - Middle Income Countries
<b>LSEN</b>	Learners with Special Education Needs
<b>MOET</b>	Ministry of Education and Training
<b>NUL</b>	National University of Lesotho
<b>SA</b>	South Africa
<b>SEU</b>	Special Education Unit
<b>SIAS</b>	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WPRPD</b>	White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter aimed to introduce the topic of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. This brief introduction outlined the available information on how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning; how they support learners experiencing barriers to learning; the challenges teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning, and teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Therefore, the chapter's focal point was the problem statement and rationale, with the underpinning research questions, theoretical framework, research design and methods, and related considerations.

### 1.2 Background

Children experiencing barriers to learning form a significant population within public mainstream schools (Kuschke et al., 2016). It is estimated that in high-income countries (HICs) such as the United States (US), 15% of children have a disability (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015). One of the key requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] in the US is to ensure that children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent possible (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015). However, in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs), such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa, many challenges have been encountered in the implementation of inclusive education (Adewumi et al., 2019). In South Africa (SA), statistics show that approximately 70% of children of school-going age are out of school while a large number of those who attend school are in special schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2015). Furthermore, although the inclusive education policies in SA stipulate that all learners have the right to receive appropriate education in the least restrictive

environment, regardless of the severity of the disability, the learners seem to be excluded from general education and placed in special schools throughout the country (Department of Education [DoE], 2001; DoE, 2014). As in SA, effective implementation of inclusive education continues to be a problem for mainstream schools and authorities in Lesotho (Mateusi et al., 2014). Although the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Lesotho has mandated quality education for all learners including those with diverse learning needs, the majority of learners with barriers to learning are not receiving a quality education in schools (MOET, 2019). In Lesotho, 40% of children with barriers to learning between the ages of five and ten do not attend primary school while 23% of children with barriers to learning between the ages 10 and 20 do not attend high school (Eriamiatoe, 2013). These figures are exceedingly high when compared to figures for learners without barriers to learning in the same age groups (Eriamiatoe, 2013). Therefore, although the constitution of Lesotho declares the right of children with barriers to learning to receive a quality education, the majority is not included in the educational system and is placed in segregated special schools mainly located in the capital city, Maseru and Leribe (Eriamiatoe, 2013; MOET, 2019).

All the MOET departments and relevant stakeholders recognize that all people including those who experience barriers to learning can learn and that they have the right to education in the same learning environment as their peers with and without barriers to learning. Furthermore, it is regarded as important for teachers to be empowered with teaching strategies and teaching methods so that they can respond to the diverse needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning (MOET, 2019). It is therefore important to determine teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a mainstream school in Lesotho. This will enable the MOET and school principals to establish whether teachers experience any challenges, need additional training on inclusive education, or need more support from relevant stakeholders.



### **1.2.1 Identifying learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream schools in Lesotho**

The MOET depends on teachers to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in Lesotho (Mosia, 2014). The MOET has a document titled 'Assessment Form' which is intended to provide teachers with guidelines on how to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning (Personal communication with the special education manager, 2021). The document consists of questions relating to birth, developmental history, and family history. It does not, however, assess the learner's current strengths, needs, and limitations. According to the MOET, this is the only form available to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning (see Appendix G) (personal communication with special education manager, 2021). In addition, Studies conducted in mainstream schools in Lesotho have also found that teachers often administer their own informal assessments when learners are enrolled in the school to identify whether the learner presents with a barrier to learning or not (Mateusi et al., 2014; Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2016). Furthermore, once teachers have identified learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms they often refer them to specialists for further assessment and diagnosis (Khumalo, 2018).

In conclusion, teachers in Lesotho have only the 'assessment form' as a formal instrument to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning and mostly rely on their own informal assessments to identify these learners.

### **1.2.2 Supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream schools in Lesotho**

Once teachers are aware of learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms, they should provide the learners with the necessary support so that they are able to learn optimally within the classroom (Naude & Meier, 2019). Research indicates that better-integrated learner support is essential for facilitating an enriching and quality learning environment in the classroom (Gregori et al., 2018). One way that teachers can provide integrated learner support is through the use of differentiated

instruction. Tomlinson (2017) defined differentiated instruction as teaching informed by the view that learners learn best when their educators allow for the variances in their levels of preparedness, their well-being, and their learning outlines. In addition, differentiated instruction also includes the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom (Tomlinson, 2017). Abodey and AtoAnsah (2017) maintain that differentiated instruction is a suitable approach to assist learners who experience barriers to learning to access the curriculum. Within differentiated instruction, Tomlinson (2017) refers to four elements that teachers can differentiate in a classroom: content, process, product, and learning environment. Differentiated instruction also includes differentiating teaching strategies and teaching methods (Tomlinson, 2017). Limited research has been conducted on how teachers are supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho. However, a recent study conducted by Leballo et al. (2021) in Lesotho in two mainstream schools, one public and one private, investigated the consistency of differentiated instruction among teachers. Teachers in their study all indicated that they had some knowledge about differentiated instruction and that they practiced some form of differentiated instruction in their classrooms (Leballo et al., 2021). Teachers in the public school indicated that they used peer-to-peer learning as a method of differentiated teaching as their class sizes are considerable and they do not have the time to provide learners with individual support (Leballo et al., 2021). In contrast, teachers in the private school indicated that they were able to provide individual support 50% of the time to learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms (Leballo et al., 2021). This may be due to smaller classroom sizes in the private mainstream school (Leballo et al., 2021). Thirty percent of the teachers in the public mainstream school indicated that they only rarely used specialized plans and technology media, in comparison to 10% of the private school teachers. This seems to indicate that differentiation using special plans occurred more frequently in the private school's classrooms (Leballo et al., 2021), which could once again be attributed to the smaller class sizes in private schools, and the better availability of resources (Leballo et al., 2021).

In an effort to provide learners experiencing barriers to learning with support, the MOET's Special Education Unit (SEU) also employed experts in various barriers to learning areas such as visual, physical, hearing, and intellectual impairment to provide teachers with guidance on how best to support these learners in their classrooms (Mateusi et al., 2014). However, these experts only visit the schools a few times a year and teachers may require more support than only a few times a year (Leballo et al., 2021).

In conclusion, in order for teachers in Lesotho to be able to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classroom they need to be able to understand how to identify these learners as well as provide them with support through differentiating instruction.

### **1.2.3 Challenges teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream schools in Lesotho**

In the last couple of years, there has been a trend to include learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho (Ralejoe, 2016). However, there are various challenges involved in including learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho (Eriamiatoe, 2013; Mateusi et al., 2014; Ralejoe, 2016). The challenges faced by teachers in Lesotho include lack of knowledge about inclusive education in mainstream schools, negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education, inadequate infrastructure design, limited resources, curriculum, assessment, and lack of parental involvement (Eriamiatoe, 2013; Mateusi et al., 2014; Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2016).

Teachers in mainstream schools teaching learners who experience barriers to learning are often not trained to address barriers to learning in inclusive settings effectively (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). A study conducted in Maseru, Lesotho by Mateusi et al. (2014) found that teachers believed that they did not receive adequate training on how to address barriers to learning in learners in mainstream schools. This is despite literature stating that it is important for teachers to receive adequate training in order to alleviate poor perceived self-efficacy and self-doubt (Boucher, 2018). This will respond

to the diverse needs of learners in inclusive settings as a result (Boucher, 2018). Therefore, since teachers in Lesotho are not adequately trained on how to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools, it is important for the MOET to provide more training to teachers and provide them with resources (Thwala, 2015).

The negative attitudes teachers have towards the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning is a further challenge that was reported (Mateusi et al., 2014). A study conducted by Mateusi et al. (2014) found that teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusive education as they often become frustrated with learners experiencing barriers to learning. Also, teachers reported that the learners cannot keep up with the work that needs to be done, and teachers often have to adapt the curriculum for these learners which takes up a great deal of their time.

The lack of relevant facilities and materials coupled with a hostile infrastructure is a major obstacle to the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho (Ralejoe, 2019). According to Ralejoe (2019), many mainstream schools in Lesotho are not equipped to accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning. For example, some schools do not have bathrooms for learners in wheelchairs, and the classrooms are not always on the same level. Evidently, students in wheelchairs are not able to attend class in classrooms on the second floor since the school does not have an elevator to access the second floor (Ralejoe, 2019). This creates a problem for the teachers as the learners are unable to attend their classes.

Furthermore, it seems as if many mainstream schools accommodating learners experiencing barriers to learning in Lesotho do not have teaching and learning materials, specifically braille textbooks, Perkins Brailers, and magnifying machines for learners who are visually impaired (Ralejoe, 2021). This creates a further challenge for teachers as the learners with visual impairment are unable to follow when the teacher is teaching or cannot do their homework. They are unable to read the work as it is either not in braille or adapted for the hearing impaired.

Another challenge teachers experience when teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning is the rigid curriculum and assessment strategies (McKenzie, 2020). Despite the implementation of the integrated curriculum in 2012, teachers are often unable to adapt the curriculum and assessment methods for learners experiencing barriers to learning as the curriculum does not allow for the adaptation for learners' specific educational needs (McKenzie, 2020).

Lastly, another challenge teachers in Lesotho face when teaching learners who experience barriers to learning is the lack of parental involvement. Various studies have reported on the benefits of parental involvement in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning that include improved academic outcomes, better school attendance and homework completion rates, improved self-esteem, and higher teacher morale (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017). There are several factors that might influence the parents' involvement in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning face increased challenges concerning balancing work and family commitments and often have negative attitudes or perceptions regarding parental involvement in education issues (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Furthermore, teachers have also indicated that parents of learners who experience barriers to learning are less involved in school activities such as volunteering in their child's classroom, communicating with teachers, and attending school meetings (Amalki et al., 2021). This may also be because the school does not provide sufficient opportunities, support, and encouragement for parents to explore how they can become more involved in their child's education. Involved parents and teachers are of key importance throughout the year in the education of children who experience barriers to learning because a school is a learner's second home, (Mosola, 2020). A study conducted by Teba-Teba (2016) in Mphahlele's hoek, Lesotho, found that parental involvement in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning are poor due to various reasons such as parents' low level of education, poverty, poor communication, and time constraints which had a significant influence on the learners' academic success. In addition, Ralejoe (2021) stated that parents revealed that their work commitments prevented them from attending parent-school meetings, workshops, and conferences while some did not feel

the need to help. It is therefore important to ensure that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning are involved in their child's education (Teba-Teba, 2016; Ralejoe, 2021).

In summary, teachers in inclusive mainstream settings in Lesotho face several challenges when teaching learners who experience barriers to learning. These challenges may hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education for these learners in mainstream schools in Lesotho (Mateusi, et al., 2014).

#### **1.2.4 Teachers' views on the support needed for effective inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream schools in Lesotho**

As mentioned in section 1.2.3, teachers reported that they are not adequately trained to address barriers to learning (Eriamiatoe, 2013; Mateusi et al., 2014; Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for the MOET in Lesotho as well as the school management team to provide teachers with training on how to address barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Furthermore, Mosia and Phasha (2017) reported that teachers were of the opinion that higher education institutions in Lesotho do not provide student teachers with sufficient training on how to address barriers to learning in learners in inclusive settings. It is therefore important that educational institutions for higher learning consider whether their curriculum is providing teachers with adequate practical and theoretical training on how to address barriers to learning in inclusive settings.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Mateusi et al. (2014) found that teachers teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools also mentioned that they have limited time to address the barriers experienced by learners. They suggested that providing teachers with classroom assistants would allow teachers more time to provide these learners with the necessary support.

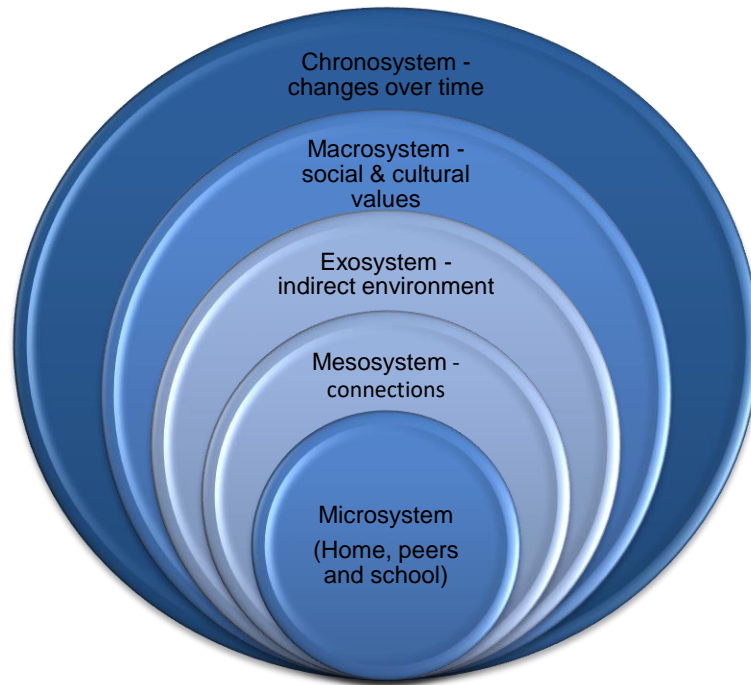
Lastly, according to Mosia (2019) teachers believe that education support services (ESS) in Lesotho have an important role to play in the support for learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. The concept of ESS can generally be viewed as support from various non-teaching professionals, such as educational

psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, and remedial therapists. In Lesotho, itinerant ESS professionals are based in different districts to provide support to mainstream teachers (Mosia, 2019). However, due to a shortage of ESS professionals and financial resources in Lesotho, many schools do not have sufficient ESS available to provide learners with the necessary support. Therefore, ESS professionals often have high caseloads and are not able to provide teachers with strategies regularly and also unable to provide learners with the support that they require daily (Mosia, 2011; 2019). This in turn creates frustration and negative attitudes among teachers as they feel that the quality of services delivered by the ESS professionals is poor (Mosia, 2011; 2019).

In conclusion, without the necessary support teachers are unable to provide learners experiencing barriers to learning with the necessary support and are therefore unable to address their needs.

### **1.3 Theoretical framework**

The researcher found Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to be appropriate for the current study. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory concentrates on the different ecological environments with which a learner interacts and which in turn influence the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, the ecological environment involves different systems with different levels starting from the outside to the inside. It consists of the chronosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) (see Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: The different ecological systems in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory**

This theory provides a comprehensive framework to view the different systems which have an impact on or influence a learner's environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). The different levels in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory warrant further discussion since they can be applied to the developing learner and also the different aspects of the study.

### **1.3.1 The chronosystem**

The chronosystem gives an overview of the different patterns which vary over time in an individual's life (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). In this study, the focus is on the history and trends of teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho.

### **1.3.2 The macrosystem**

The macrosystem refers to the different belief systems, resources, structures, threats, lifestyles, and disciplines in all of the systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, the macrosystem focuses on policies related to the support of learners experiencing



barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs, including schools in Lesotho.

### **1.3.3 The exosystem**

The exosystem can be defined as one or more settings that do not involve the learner as an active participant, but where events happen that can affect the environment containing the learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, these settings that do not directly involve the learner include the school management team, district and the higher education institutions training teachers.

### **1.3.4 The mesosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the mesosystem refers to the relationship between two or more settings where the developing learner actively participates. This includes the relationship between the learner's home environment and the school. In the current study, the mesosystem consists of the partnership between the home and the school.

### **1.3.5 The microsystem**

The microsystem is the foundation of Bronfenbrenner's model and influences and is influenced by all other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem includes the individual and his/her immediate context. In this study, the major microsystems involved are the learner's home environment and the school environment which play an important role in ensuring the active participation of the learner in the school.

## **1.4 Problem statement**

The constitution of Lesotho mandates quality education for all learners including those who experience barriers to learning (Eriamiatoe, 2013; MOET, 2019). However, the majority of learners who experience such barriers are not placed in mainstream schools. Instead, they are placed in special education needs schools mainly located in the capital city, Maseru (Eriamiatoe, 2013) and Leribe district (MOET, 2019). This might be due to the availability of schools that cater for learners who experience barriers to learning which is a feature lacking in other districts (MOET, 2019). There are a few mainstream

schools in Lesotho that accommodate learners experiencing barriers to learning (Eriamiatoe, 2013), but there is limited data available on whether the teachers in the mainstream schools are able to support these learners (Mosia & Phasha, 2017). The researcher identified a gap in the literature, as limited research has been conducted on teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho. By conducting the study, the researcher may obtain valuable information from the teachers teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho regarding how they are supporting these learners. Furthermore, the results may provide more information on the challenges teachers experience when supporting these learners.

## **1.5 Research questions**

The short literature review revealed the dearth of information available about teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools and led to one main research question and four sub-questions.

### **1.5.1 Main research question**

What are the perspectives of teachers on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?

### **1.5.2 Secondary research questions**

- How do teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- How do teachers provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- What challenges do teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- What are teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?

## **1.6 Research methodology**

Research methodology is concerned with the theory, methods, conceptualization, and justification of the procedures used in research (Creswell, 2018). It includes the research approach, design, and methods that will be used. These aspects will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.6.1 Research paradigm**

According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a research paradigm is a set of commonly held beliefs and theoretical frameworks which researchers use to understand and study the reality of the world. There are three main types of paradigms, namely interpretivist, positivist, and critical theory (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The current study was located within the interpretivist paradigm as it aimed to find out what teachers' perspectives are on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The research also proposed to reveal how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning, how teachers provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning, the challenges teachers face when supporting the learners experiencing barriers to learning, and teachers' views on support needed to effectively include these learners in the mainstream school.

### **1.6.2 Research approach**

According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative research is an interactive process used to understand a question in a naturalistic way, therefore gaining insight into a specific topic based on people's beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and behaviour. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study since the researcher was able to collect data on a specific phenomenon in order to better understand what has been observed (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, Shokane et al. (2018) stated that qualitative research involves data collection methods such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and document analysis. In the current study, the researcher interviewed teachers to obtain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Also, the researcher analysed different documents such as policies, lesson

plans, and teachers' files. Therefore, the teachers constituted the unit of analysis and there was no direct contact with the learners.

### **1.6.3 Research design**

The researcher incorporated a case study design in the current study. According to Yin (2014), a case study design is often used to add new information about people, groups, or societies and more information on socio-economic-related phenomena. Furthermore, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) state that a case study can involve individuals such as teachers, a group of people, an individual learner, a school, or even a society. In the current study, the case included all the teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

## **1.7 Data collection**

### **1.7.1 Research participant and sample selection**

The researcher purposely selected participants who would best help to answer the research questions that were posed in the study (Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher used purposive sampling, and only teachers who teach learners experiencing barriers to learning in the selected public mainstream primary school in Lesotho were included in the study. Twenty-four teachers were teaching at the school at the time of data collection. Since Creswell (2018) states that 5-25 participants are sufficient in case study designs, the researcher selected 12 participants to participate in the study. All of the teachers had to have a post-secondary qualification in education to be able to participate in the study. The research methodology will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.7.2 Data collection methods**

Data were collected through semi-structured telephonic interviews and document analysis which will be discussed in the next section. Initially, the researcher had planned to conduct observations in the classroom, but due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns in Lesotho, the researcher had to forego observations and focused instead on the interviews, follow-up interviews, and document analysis.

### **1.7.2.1 Individual interviews**

Interviewing is considered the predominant research method in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The interview process aims to build a social relationship as well as to gain quality information in exchange (Creswell, 2018). To maintain social distancing and limit physical contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, semi-structured telephonic interviews were deemed the most appropriate data collection instrument. The researcher used semi-structured telephonic interviews to obtain an understanding of the participating teachers' perspectives and points of view regarding supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning. In order to improve the overall effectiveness and truthfulness of the study, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with the participating teachers (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

### **1.7.2.2 Document analysis**

Document analysis involves the study and interpretation of existing documents in order to discover deeper meanings of the phenomenon under study or to better understand the content of the documents at hand (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Different sources, which may include primary and secondary sources, can be used during data analysis. Primary sources refer to original documents about the author's own experiences, whereas secondary sources are derived from someone else as the original source (Maree, 2016). In the current study, the researcher reviewed various documents such as teachers' differentiated lesson plans, teachers' files, and school policies related to inclusive education in Lesotho.

## **1.8 Data analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research refers to the decreasing of large volumes of raw data, then identifying important patterns or themes, and thereafter constructing a framework to interpret the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the data processing and data analysis procedures followed in the study.

## **1.9 Setting of the study**

The research site can be defined as the physical, cultural, and social site where the actual research study is conducted (Creswell, 2018). The current study was conducted in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho where teachers are teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in general education classrooms. The researcher will provide more detail on the setting of the study in Chapter 3.

## **1.10 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) suggest that measures of trustworthiness should be used to determine the accuracy of the findings and interpretation when evaluating the quality of qualitative research. In this study, trustworthiness was determined using the following strategies: credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). These constructs were followed when conducting the in-depth telephonic interviews and document analysis that will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.11 Ethical considerations**

The researcher behaved responsibly towards the teacher participants in the research project and reported the findings honestly and accurately (Creswell, 2018). The guiding principles as they were applied to the current study are listed and discussed in Table 3.2 in Chapter 3.

## **1.12 Definition of key concepts**

The following concepts were used in the dissertation:

### **Barriers to learning**

The term 'barriers to learning' refers to any difficulties that arise within the education system, the learning site, and/or the learner him/herself which prevent access to learning and development (DoE, 2014).

## **COVID-19**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), COVID-19 can be defined as a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV 2, a new coronavirus that was discovered in 2019. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks (Li et al., 2020).

## **Curriculum differentiation**

Curriculum differentiation is the process that allows for the curriculum to be changed or modified in order to meet the different needs of learners in a class to ensure that no learner is left out due to their barrier to learning (Abodey & Ato Ansah, 2017). It is essential to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Tomlinson, 2017).

## **Education support services**

Educational support services are all services that come from different non-teaching professionals such as itinerants, social workers, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and educational psychologists to provide support in either mainstream or special schools (Mosia, 2019). These services are meant to help learners reach their academic goals and professionals must work together in order for all learners to benefit (Mosia, 2019).

## **Inclusive education**

According to MOET (2019), inclusive education refers to a process of addressing and responding to various needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It ensures that all children including those who experience barriers to learning receive quality education in general education classroom settings (MOET, 2019).

## **Learner support**

The term 'learner support' typically describes what teachers or instructors can do to help learners further than the formal delivery of content or skills training. Learner support appreciates that learners will grow at their own pace towards their maximum level of

independence in learning by using their own learning styles (Bouwer, 2016). It includes the collaboration amongst various professionals such as teachers, paraprofessionals, and the ESS (Bouwer, 2016).

### **Learning resources**

According to Alkhaldeh and Khasawneh (2021), learning resources are tools that are used by teachers to present and transmit the intended content to learners in a better and easier way. These resources are vital tools needed for teaching and learning to improve teachers' efficiency as well as students' performance (Olayinka, 2016). These learning resources are also referred to as instructional materials or teaching aids and include images, maps, photographs, newspapers, and written material (Alkhaldeh & Khasawneh, 2021).

### **Mainstream school**

A mainstream school, in this context, refers to a school where persons with disabilities are placed with the understanding that they will adjust to the standard requirements of that institution, its curriculum provision, and educational facilities (MOET, 2019). It suggests that persons with disabilities have the same rights as or similar rights to anyone in society (Swart & Pettipher, 2016).

### **Public school**

A public school is a type of school that is wholly managed in terms of government regulations and where no tuition fees are charged (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017).

## **1.13 Chapter outline**

This dissertation consists of five chapters with the following layout:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter provided an overview of the topic, the background of the study, theoretical framework, problem statement and rationale, research questions, research



methodology, data collection, data analysis, setting of the study, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, definition of key concepts, and chapter outline of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter focuses on the applicability of the theoretical framework and literature related to teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs. The literature includes:

- History in the global context of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning
- Trends in teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in HICs
- Trends in teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in LMIC.
- Policies and legislation related to teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs, LMICs, and Lesotho in particular
- Curriculum differentiation for learners experiencing barriers to learning in HICs and LMICs.

## **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm, approach, and design used in the study. The sampling procedures, setting, research participants, and methods of data collection are discussed. Lastly, the trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were followed in the study are discussed.

## **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the results obtained from data collected through semi-structured telephonic interviews and document analysis. Data were organized and themes were identified. Lastly, the results were interpreted and infused with literature.

## **Chapter 5: General discussion, recommendations and conclusion**

This chapter presents a general discussion of the study, including practical implications and conclusions drawn from the study. The researcher also points out the strengths and limitations of the study and offers recommendations for future research.

### **1.14 Syntheses**

This chapter served to introduce the study, its theoretical framework, problem statement, rationale, and various aspects relating to the research methodology that were employed. Key concepts were defined, and the structure of the study was outlined. Chapter 2 focuses on the applicability of the theoretical framework and the literature related to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

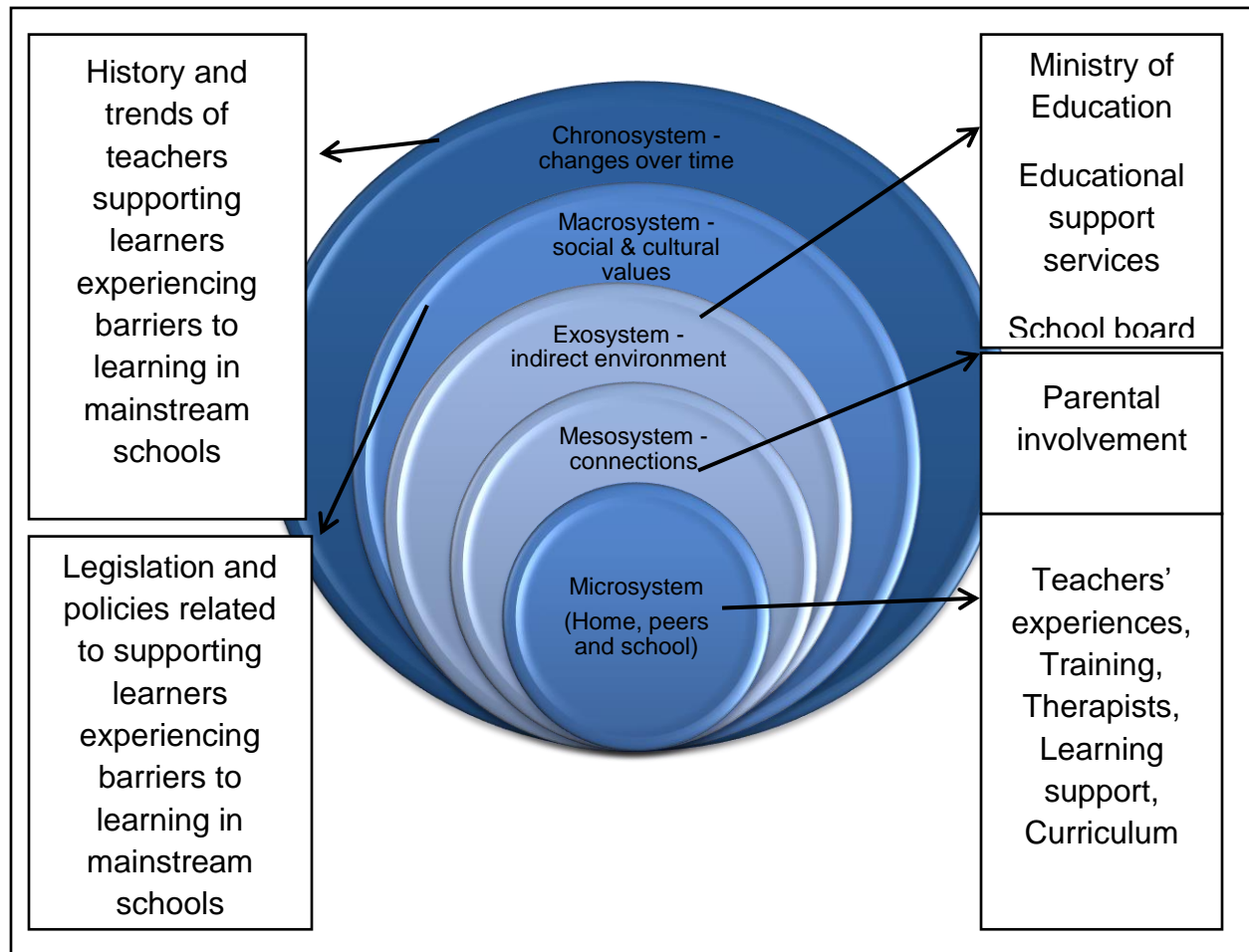
In Chapter 1, the relevance of the study was shown by discussing literature relating to teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream primary schools. The researcher also briefly discussed the theoretical framework, problem statement, research questions, and various aspects of the research process. Key concepts were defined and the outline of the report was provided.

In Chapter 2, the focal point was the applicability of the theoretical framework and literature relating to teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in HICs and LMICs.

#### **2.2 Pertinency of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory**

The major challenge about inclusion is understanding the complexity of the influences, interactions, and interrelationships between the individual learner and other systems that influence the learners (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). Learners do not exist in isolation from surrounding systems. Learners who experience barriers to learning are influenced by the systems in their environment and need to be understood within a framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a broad framework and explains the direct and indirect influences on a learner's life by referring to five systems or levels of the environment that influence development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994). This theory applies to the current study since it emphasizes the interaction between the learners' development and their environment. Utilising this theory, the researcher was able to better understand teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho by explaining the relationships between the different systems. Figure 2.1 describes the applicability of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in this study by identifying five environmental systems in which human beings

develop, namely, the chronosystem, macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and microsystem.



**Figure 2.1: The applicability of the study employing Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner's, 1979; 1994)**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was used to discuss the literature reviewed in the study. The outer level of Figure 2.1 refers to the chronosystem that focuses on the history and trends of supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs. The level that follows is the macrosystem which refers to the legislation and policies relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Next is the exosystem which refers to the influences of the different social settings that affect the learner, even though the learner is not in direct contact with these systems. They include the ESS and school management. The exosystem is followed by the mesosystem which focuses on the

interactions and relationships among two or more settings in the microsystem. This includes the partnership between the home and the school or between the school and the peers. The mesosystem, in this study, will include parental involvement and its influence on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. Lastly, the microsystem refers to the different aspects within a learner's direct environment that influences them.

## **2.3 The chronosystem**

This section of the literature defines the history and trends relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs.

### **2.3.1 Previous research concerning the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream primary schools around the globe**

Worldwide, supporters of inclusion in education advocate that learners who experience barriers to learning should be educated in regular school settings together with their typically developing peers (Fareo, 2020). Teachers who wish to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning teachers are responsible for modifying their physical environment, teaching methods, and teaching strategies, adapting the curriculum, and providing alternative learning materials as well as additional support (Pillay, 2019).

In many HICs, such as the United Kingdom (UK), US, France, Canada, and Australia, learners experiencing barriers to learning were initially segregated in disability-specific schools (Donohue & Bornman, 2015; Pillay, 2019). However, after the Education for All (EFA) initiative was introduced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), learners experiencing barriers to learning were accommodated in mainstream schools where they could receive quality basic education whilst learning with their typically developing peers in the same classrooms (UNESCO, 1990). Furthermore, in 1994 UNESCO published the Salamanca Statement which focused on the necessity for educational policies to move from exclusion to inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994).

Previous research conducted in LMICs, such as Iraq, SA, Botswana, and Lesotho, indicated that a similar trend was followed as in HICs (MOET, 2016; Wapling, 2016; DoE, 2001). These countries also adopted the Salamanca Statement of Inclusive Education and the EFA declaration, and therefore wanted to ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning were included in mainstream schools (DoE, 2001; MOET, 2016; Wapling, 2016). South Africa adopted an inclusive education policy after the demise of apartheid (DoE, 1995). The Bill of Rights, included in the Constitution of SA, indicated that all South African citizens have the right to basic education, regardless of barriers to learning (DoE, 1995). Although SA intended to include learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classes, the majority of learners experiencing barriers to learning are currently still placed in disability-specific schools and therefore not accommodated in mainstream schools (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Erasmus et al., 2019; Evans, 2016; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). In South Africa's neighbouring country, Botswana, learners experiencing barriers to learning were initially segregated in special school settings after independence in 1966 (Mukhopadhyay, 2015). This situation remained in place until 14 March 1995 when Botswana ratified the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Thereafter the government of Botswana enacted several key policies around national development and the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning. In the 1980s the Botswana government abolished the trend set by non-governmental organizations of building more special schools and opted to use special units within mainstream schools to provide educational services for these learners (Government of Botswana, 2008). Later the Revised National Education Policy on Education (Government of Botswana, 1994) stated that learners should be educated in mainstream schools to prepare them for social integration. Despite the intentions of the government of Botswana to include learners experiencing barriers to learning in regular schools, the majority of learners with barriers remain largely unaccepted in mainstream schools (Mangope et al., 2018). In Lesotho, the government attempted to address the barriers of learning in learners experiencing barriers to learning through the MOET by establishing the SEU in 1989 to implement inclusive education (MOET, 1990). Since 1990 the MOET has developed the following policy statements for the provision of educational opportunities for learners experiencing barriers to learning: National Policy

of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (MOET, 2006), Education Act (MOET, 2010), Children's Protection and Welfare Act (Government of Lesotho, 2011), National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (MOET, 2011a), National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (MOET, 2013), Education Sector Plan 2016-2026 (MOET, 2016), Inclusive Education Policy (MOET, 2019). Even though learners experiencing barriers to learning are supposed to be educated in mainstream schools in Lesotho, very little has been done to provide the necessary support services to these learners in mainstream schools (Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2016).

### **2.3.2 Trends in the support provided to learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools in a few HICs**

- **United States**

In the US, schools support learners experiencing barriers to learning by appointing teaching assistants to provide learners with more support (Chambers & Forlin, 2015). In addition to teaching assistants, schools in the US have paraprofessionals, such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, social workers, and educational psychologists, who provide learners experiencing barriers to learning with additional support within their classrooms (Chambers & Forlin, 2015; Wentzel, 2016). Teachers also support learners experiencing barriers to learning by differentiating the curriculum and physical environment as well as adapting their teaching methods and strategies (Mackey, 2014).

- **Denmark**

To support learners experiencing barriers to learning, schools in Denmark provide learners experiencing barriers to learning with augmentative and alternative communication devices as well as adapted teaching and learning materials that meet their needs (Agrawal et al., 2019). The schools also employ teaching assistants to assist teachers in the classrooms to support learners experiencing barriers to learning (Agrawal et al., 2019).

- **Canada**

In Canada, learners experiencing barriers to learning are included in mainstream schools and are supported by various stakeholders that include teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and educational assistants (Agrawal et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers differentiate their curriculum by adapting teaching and learning materials for learners' diverse needs (Agrawal et al., 2019).

- **Netherlands**

As in Canada, the Netherlands also have a support team that consists of teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, educational psychologists, remedial teachers, and educational assistants (Agrawal et al., 2019). The support teams provide the learners with augmentative and alternative communication devices and visual schedules so that they may be successfully included in mainstream classrooms (Maciver et al., 2017). Teachers also differentiate the learning environment by making adaptations to the physical environment as well as their teaching and learning materials (Maciver et al., 2017).

### **2.3.3 Supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools in a few LMICs**

- **Botswana**

To include learners experiencing barriers to learning, teachers in Botswana differentiate the curriculum by adapting the teaching and learning materials as well as their teaching strategies (Mrstik, 2017). Their strategies include peer tutoring, repeat/rephrase, small group instruction, reduced assignments, extended time on assignments, and adapting the learning environment (Mrstik, 2017). In addition, Mangope (2017) indicated that teachers always group students in two or more and give them straightforward instructions with an audible voice. Collaboration with other teachers and peer tutors is also one of the common instructional strategies used in classes (Mangope, 2017).



- **Tanzania**

In Tanzania, teachers differentiate teaching and learning and use assistive devices such as Braille machines (Zubeda, 2020). In the study conducted by Namamba and Rao (2017), teachers reported that they use differentiated teaching techniques such as peer tutoring, group discussions, and re-teaching.

- **Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, teachers use differentiated teaching and learning methods and materials such as timers, visual schedules, and symbols to orientate learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms (Zulfiqar et al., 2018).

- **Kenya**

In Kenya, teachers support learners experiencing barriers to learning by differentiating learning, teaching, and assessment (Mulinge, 2016). These differentiations include using assistive devices such as Braille machines, core boards, visual schedules, magnifying glasses, and a larger print (Mulinge, 2016). Furthermore, the schools in Kenya have Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs) for all learners experiencing barriers to learning (Mulinge, 2016). The support team involved in the IEPs includes the parents, teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and education psychologists (Elder & Kuja, 2018).

- **South Africa**

To support learners experiencing barriers to learning in SA, the schools have a school-based support team and the district-based support team is usually also involved (Pillay, 2019). The school-based support team consists of physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and education psychologists (Pillay, 2019). Teachers also use the screening, identification, assessment, and support document (DoE, 2014) to respond to the diverse needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

- **Lesotho**

The development of education in Lesotho, including education for learners who experience barriers to learning, initially followed the same trends as in most other LMICs. In the study by Leballo et al. (2021), teachers in both government and public schools in Lesotho used differentiated teaching techniques such as collaboration, peer-tutoring, and group work in their classes (Leballo et al., 2021). In addition, teachers provide learners with support by being available after school for remedial classes (Phethoka, 2020).

## **2.4 The Macrosystem**

The macrosystem comprises cultural values, beliefs, resources, societies, and political and economic systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In this study, the macrosystem includes policies and legislations which are relating to the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs and LMICs.

### **2.4.1 Policies and legislations relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs, LMICs, and specifically Lesotho**

For years, learners experiencing barriers to learning were educated in disability-specific schools around the globe (Erasmus et al., 2019; Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). However, for the past thirty years, legislation and policies have been developed to abolish discrimination against learners experiencing barriers to learning. In the following section, the researcher focused on discussing key policies and legislation relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in HICs and LMICs.

#### **2.4.1.1 Policies and legislation relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in HICs**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was published in 1948 and since then, the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning was recommended. The key policies and legislations developed in HICs include:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights endorses the right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children (1948).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which endorses the right of children to receive a quality education without any discrimination (1989).
- The World Declaration on EFA, that set the goal of Education for All (1990).
- The UN Standard Rule on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which affirms equal rights of children, youth, and adults with barriers to education and also indicates that education should be provided in mainstream schools (1993).
- The Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education stipulates that schools should accommodate learners regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or any other barriers to learning (1994).
- The World Education Forum's Dakar Framework for Action, with its achievement of EFA goals and Millennium Development Goals, stipulated that all children should have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education by 2015 (2000).
- The EFA Flagship on the Rights to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion, which focuses on the fact that all learners have the right to education regardless of their barriers to learning (2001).
- The UN Disability Convention focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006).
- The UN Education 2030 Framework for Action emphasizes inclusion and equality as the foundations for quality education (2016).

Many HICs have embraced the ideology of including learners with barriers to learning in mainstream schools.

#### **2.4.1.2 Policies and legislation relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in LMICs**

Like many HICs, some LMICs have also adopted inclusion policies and legislation to help support learners experiencing barriers to learning. For example, in Kenya, the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education developed the following policies on the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning: Special Needs Education Policy Framework (Government of Kenya, 2009), Basic Education Act (Government of Kenya, 2012), Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (Government of Kenya, 2018). These policies are in place to ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning receive a quality education in Kenya regardless of their barriers to learning.

South Africa adopted a Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996) that enshrined the basic human rights of all South African citizens. A few key inclusive education policies, legislations, and initiatives that were developed in South Africa include: the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997a), National Commission on Special Needs in Education Committee for Education Support Services report (1997b), White paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995), Draft Guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive Education (2002), Draft guidelines for inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2005), National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoE, 2014), White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) (2015).

In Uganda, the Ugandan government has adopted several laws and policies about people with barriers to learning in mainstream schools: the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (Government of Uganda, 1995), the Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (Government of Uganda, 1998), The National Policy on Disability (Government of Uganda, 2006), Inclusive Education Policy (Government of Uganda, 2011, 2017), Inclusive education in Uganda project 2017-2019 (Government of Uganda, 2016). These policies and legislation were implemented to ensure that all learners experiencing barriers to learning receive a quality education in Kenya (Adoyo & Odeny, 2015).

In Pakistan, the government has also adopted several laws and policies concerning people experiencing barriers to learning: the National Policy for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (Government of Pakistan, 1986), the National Policy for Special Education (Government of Pakistan, 2002), the National Education Policy Framework (Government of Pakistan, 2018), and the Draft National Education Policy (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

India developed different policies relating to inclusive education such as the National Education Policy (Government of India, 2020) which upholds different provisions and rights (Government of India, 2020). Other laws and policies include the National Policy on Education (Government of India, 1986), Integrated Education of Disabled Children Scheme, the Right to Education Act (Government of India, 2005), and the National Policy for People with Disabilities (Government of India, 2006).

The Philippines enshrined the right to quality and accessible education for all citizens. A few laws, policies, and legislation relating to the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning that were developed include the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Government of Philippines, 2013), Education Plan (Government of Philippines, 2015), and Philippine Constitution (Government of Philippines, 1987).

#### **2.4.1.3 Policies and legislations relating to teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho**

The government of Lesotho developed the SEU in 1991 to support the attainment of education for all and include Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) in regular classrooms. In 2005 the Lesotho Government through the MOET developed the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2005-2015 that focused on the provision for equal and quality education for all learners including those with barriers to learning (MOET, 2005). Furthermore, the ESSP promoted the inclusion of LSEN in the regular school system at all levels to enable them to acquire appropriate life skills and education. In 2010, the Government of Lesotho developed the Education Act that emphasised that all learners experiencing barriers to learning should receive quality education in accordance with the provision of section 28 of the constitution (MOET,

2019). It aligns the education laws with the decentralisation of services (MOET, 2010). The current Education Sector Plan(ESP) 2015-2026 aims to ensure that every citizen in Lesotho receives quality education services and has the opportunity to become literate and productive (MOET, 2016).

To integrate children with disabilities into the education system, the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (2013) was also developed. It stipulated that children with disabilities shall be identified at birth and included in pre-school and school services. Parents and guardians of those children shall be offered early childhood services (MOET, 2013).

In 2018, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) was formulated to make sure that all learners, including learners experiencing barriers to learning, are afforded opportunities that enable them to acquire high-quality instruction which enables them to form positive social relationships with peers and fully participate in the learning community. It aims to eliminate the exclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning from regular classrooms and to protect their rights (MOET, 2019).

## **2.5 The exosystem**

Bronfenbrenner's exosystem can be defined as one or more settings that do not include the learner as an active participant, but where events occur that can affect the environment containing the learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, the development of the learner is affected by the environment and other settings to which he/she has access, although the learner is not actively involved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The settings may include the education system, local community organizations, health services, or a parent's workplace (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). In this study, the settings that do not directly involve the learner include the school management team and the post-secondary training institutions that provide training to teachers on inclusive education in Lesotho.

### **2.5.1 Post-secondary training institutions for teachers**

Inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning requires that teachers are adequately trained on how to support the learners at school (Nandini & HaseenTaj, 2014). Previous research emphasized the importance of teacher training on inclusive education in post-secondary training institutions (Ledwaba, 2017; Pillay, 2019; Sharma, 2018). Teachers who are not adequately trained at the post-secondary level are unable to provide learners experiencing barriers to learning with the necessary support in schools (Collins et al., 2018). It is therefore imperative that post-secondary institutions provide teacher training on inclusive education to ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to support the learners who experience barriers to learning in their classrooms (Collins et al., 2018; Ledwaba, 2017).

Studies conducted in HICs such as the US, Japan, Canada, and Australia found that teachers believe they do not receive adequate training on how to support learners experiencing barriers to learning whilst studying education at post-secondary institutions (Collins et al., 2018; Ferguson et al., 2019; McKay, 2015; Yada et al., 2018). Zagona et al. (2017) stated that theoretical and practical modules on inclusive education should be compulsory subjects in the curriculum for all students enrolled in an education degree at post-secondary institutions. It is important that individuals studying to become teachers should acquire the basic knowledge and skills on how to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms (Ferguson et al., 2019). After completing a degree in education, teachers should be able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning, understand the impact of these barriers to learning on their education, and have the knowledge and skills to differentiate the curriculum to meet their needs. If individuals studying to become teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills about inclusive education, they will be better able to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools (Sharma & Loreman, 2014).

In Lesotho, the National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (MOET, 2011a) prescribed that inclusive education should be incorporated into the teacher training curriculum. In particular, the Lesotho College of Education(LCE) is currently providing an introductory programme on inclusive education for both lower basic and secondary school teaching

students, as well assign language training to support learners who have hearing impairments (MOET, 2011b; Mosia, 2014). Furthermore, the National University of Lesotho (NUL) currently offers an advanced degree in inclusive education among its specialization programmes (MOET, 2011b; Mosia, 2014; Mkandawire et al., 2016). The advanced degree in inclusive education includes a theoretical and practical module on inclusive education in the curriculum of individuals studying to become teachers (Mosia, 2014). Therefore, individuals studying to become teachers in Lesotho should have the necessary skills and knowledge to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom, as the content is covered in their post-secondary training at the NUL and the LCE.

### **2.5.2 School management**

For a school to be successful in the implementation of inclusive education, the school management should be involved by ensuring that they provide their staff with the necessary support for them to be able to support the learners experiencing barriers to learning (Fajarwati, 2017). According to LIEP, it is the responsibility of the school management team to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education (MOET, 2019). The school management team should ensure that: 1) learners experiencing barriers to learning are included and not excluded in their schools; 2) teachers have the necessary qualifications and training to support learners experiencing barriers to learning; 3) they provide ESS to learners experiencing barriers to learning; 4) the infrastructure is maintained and accommodates learners experiencing barriers to learning; and 5) they have inclusive education policies in place for staff to implement (MOET, 2019). The school management needs to appoint support teams, such as an ESS team, as they are responsible for identifying barriers to learning in learners, developing strategies and programmes which teachers can implement in their classrooms to support the learners experiencing barriers to learning, providing training for teachers on inclusive education so that they can support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms, facilitating the sharing of resources, and making sure teachers share ideas (Landsberg & Matthews, 2016). In Lesotho, however, support in the form of ESS teams for learners experiencing barriers to learning falls far below



international practices in both special and mainstream schools are there are insufficient human and financial resources (Mosia, 2014). In conclusion, the exosystem discussed in this section emphasizes the important role that the school management team plays to ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning receive the necessary support.

## **2.6 The mesosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the mesosystem refers to the relationship between two or more settings where the developing learner actively participates. This includes the relationship between the learner's home environment and the school, including their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the current study, the mesosystem referred to the relationship between the home of the learner and the learner's school. At home, the learner would typically interact with members of the household including parents, siblings, and grandparents. At school, the learner interacts with other learners, teachers, paraprofessionals, members of the school administration, and school management. As mentioned earlier, the mesosystem is characterized by the relationships between two or more settings containing the developing learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1994) later added further types of interconnections between settings which include multi-setting participation, intersecting communication, and intersetting knowledge. Intersetting knowledge refers to communication between one setting and another, for example, communication between parents and teachers or the school. For inclusive education to be successful, parents must be involved in their child's education (Pillay, 2019). Therefore, parents should be aware of their roles, responsibilities, and expectation towards inclusive education in the school.

## **2.7 The microsystem**

The microsystem is the core of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model and influences and is influenced by all other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem includes the individual and his/her immediate environment, such as the learner's home environment that may consist of parents/guardians, siblings, and grandparents, whereas the immediate environment at school may include the teachers and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swart & Pettipher, 2016). For this study, the major

microsystems included the learner's home environment and the school environment, both of which play an important role in ensuring the active participation of the learner in the school.

### **2.7.1 Home environment**

For the implementation of inclusive education to be successful, parents are required to be involved in their children's education and poor parental involvement may hinder the successful implementation of inclusion in the school context (see section 2.6) (MOET, 2019).

### **2.7.2 School and classroom environment**

In Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model, the school is part of the microsystem and can either help the learner develop skills and knowledge or hinder learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Strategies that may help develop or support the learner include teaching strategies and methods, differentiation of the physical environment, and differentiation of the curriculum, as well as various other methods of support from paraprofessionals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

#### **2.7.2.1 Learning support**

Inclusive education gives learners experiencing barriers to learning an opportunity to learn alongside their typically developing peers in mainstream classes (Zagona et al., 2017). Teachers must be able to identify the different barriers to learning that learners may present with, whether the barriers are intrinsic or extrinsic (Swart & Pettipher, 2016). According to Swart and Pettipher (2016), intrinsic barriers refer to barriers such as intellectual impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairment, physical impairments, reading difficulties, and speech-language difficulties, whereas extrinsic barriers to learning refer to external factors that hinder learning such as the language of teaching and learning, poverty, illiteracy of the parents, inadequately trained teachers, lack of support services, and poor parental involvement. In addition to identifying the learners experiencing barriers to learning, teachers should also support these learners by differentiating the curriculum and differentiating the physical environment (Bouwer,

2016). Furthermore, learning support also includes collaboration amongst various professionals such as teachers, paraprofessionals, and the ESS (Bouwer, 2016). Teachers must consult documents about learners' backgrounds, medical history, family, and schooling history to complete learners' learning profiles so that they can involve the relevant stakeholders to provide the learners with the necessary support.

### **2.7.2.2 Curriculum**

In 2018, the government of Lesotho (through the MOET) introduced the new integrated primary school curriculum, designed to respond to the changing needs of education in Lesotho (Ralebese, 2018). The integrated curriculum draws together knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from within or across subjects to develop a more powerful understanding of key ideas. This involves the development of critical thinking skills, instead of the subject-based approach which encouraged rote learning (Ralebese, 2018). It is also very practical. The intention is that learners should learn by doing and learn many practical skills as well as academic skills, which will help them be more successful learners (Ralebese, 2018). With the new integrated curriculum and assessment process, teachers should be able to prepare flexible, active learners, who can succeed in the world outside the formal education system as well as in the classroom (Ralebese, 2018). The new curriculum uses continuous assessment, a move away from the traditional ways of assessment which are very limited. For example, the traditional assessment provided learners with a mark (e.g. 7/10 or 10/20) but did not provide any indication of what the learner can do. The new integrated curriculum and assessment process provides statements about the learner's progress and ability (Ralebese, 2018). This enables teachers and parents to know exactly what a learner has learned and is capable of learning as well as the areas where they need more support (Ralebese, 2018).

### **2.7.2.3 Curriculum differentiation**

Curriculum differentiation is the process of adapting the curriculum to accommodate learners of different needs, levels, and abilities in the classroom so that no learner is left behind as a result of any barrier to learning (Abodey & Ato Ansah, 2017). Tomlinson

(2017) mentioned that readiness level, interests, and learning profiles are important factors to consider when differentiating the curriculum.

- Readiness level

Readiness level can be defined as the learners' current proximity to specified knowledge, understanding, and skills (Tomlinson, 2017). Since learners' readiness is always changing and evolving, teachers are expected to recognize and respect the varying degrees of readiness so that all learners can learn to the best of their potential (Tomlinson, 2017). It is impacted by the child's natural ability and learning experiences (Prast, et al., 2015).

- Learners' Interests

The term "learners' interests" refers to activities or content that engage the learners' attention, curiosity, and involvement (Tomlinson, 2017). The participation of learners in learning tasks can be affected by their interest in the topic or task (Tomlinson, 2017). When learners are interested in a certain topic, they become more involved, pay more attention to what is being taught, and connect new learning to prior knowledge (Cash, 2017).

- Learning profile

Teachers need to know the learner's profile (Pillay, 2019). Knowing a learner's profile will enable the teachers to be able to identify any barriers to learning based on the information provided in their profile, which usually includes information about the strengths, needs, preferences, culture, language, personal characteristics, background, and challenges of the learner and their family (Pillay, 2019). The MOET does not have a formal document to obtain information on the learner's background (personal communication with the special education manager, 2021). The document the MOET uses to collect information about a learner asks questions about the learner's medical history, developmental history, and family history (personal communication with the special education manager, 2021). It is therefore important for the MOET to consider developing a formal document that teachers can use to determine the learning profile, a

document that would include other information as well so that teachers have the necessary information about a learner's needs, strengths, abilities, and preferences. With this knowledge, they will be able to support the learners better and to differentiate the curriculum's content, methods of instruction and assessment, and learning environment (Pillay, 2019).

- Differentiation of content

According to Abodey and Ato Ansah (2017), curriculum content refers to information that is taught to learners and the methods learners use to access the learning materials. By differentiating the curriculum, teachers are presenting the content in different ways to allow learners to fully participate and understand the content (Abodey & Ato Ansah 2017).

- Differentiation of instruction and assessment

West et al. (2017) describe the differentiation of instruction and assessment as the way teaching methods and teaching strategies are differentiated for learners to help them understand the content better. These teaching methods may include peer tutoring, re-teaching, flexible grouping, individual support, designing down, scaffolding, and alternative learning materials.

- Peer tutoring

Peer tutoring refers to the support learners give to one another by being peer tutors, peer buddies, or helpers to help their peers understand the content being taught better (Davidson, 2015).

- Re-teaching

Re-teaching refers to teaching the content again so that learners who have not mastered the content can master it completely (Oktaviany et al., 2018). This post-instructional strategy is introduced by teachers to support learners who did not grasp the content from the first teaching and learning activities (Bellert, 2015).

- Flexible grouping

Brulles and Brown (2018) define flexible grouping as a process where learners are grouped in different ways. For example, learners may be grouped at different times as a whole class, a small group, or with a partner (Brulles & Brown, 2018). These groups will change depending on the lesson and the content being taught and will ultimately allow learners to work with different peers both similar to and unlike them (Brulles & Brown, 2018).

- Individual support

Landsberg and Matthews (2016) indicate that learners experiencing barriers to learning may at a certain point in time require individualized support. It is therefore important for teachers to be able to identify which learners experience barriers to learning and require individualized support.

- Designing down

Designing down refers to breaking down content or an assessment to build it up again in a logical way (Semeraro et al., 2020). The process begins with dividing the minimum expected standard for the year-end into smaller more achievable components throughout the year.

- Scaffolding

According to Landsberg and Matthews (2016), scaffolding refers to the personal assistance, support, or guidance given by the teachers to learners. During scaffolding, teachers help learners to master the concept that they initially were unable to grasp independently by demonstrating to students how to solve the problem and letting the learners do it themselves thereafter (West et al., 2017).

- Alternative learning materials

Alternative learning materials refer to alternative ways in which teachers teach content to learners for example e-learning, auditory or visual means, or other options

(Kaur, 2017). The content is then differentiated so that teachers are able to meet the needs of learners (Kaur, 2017).

- Differentiation of learning environment

According to Tomlinson (2021), the learning environment refers to the concrete elements of the classroom which include the psychosocial and physical features of the classroom. The psychosocial learning environment includes social and psychosocial factors such as interpersonal cooperation, harassment, effective and ineffective communication, and classroom culture. The physical environment includes the classroom space, classroom display and resources, arrangement of furniture, class size, and level of noise (Pillay, 2019). It is therefore important for the teacher to consider these factors when determining the needs of a learner and to use strategies and methods to differentiate them if necessary.

## **2.8 Syntheses**

In this chapter, the applicability of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was discussed and literature was infused to support the applicability of the theory for the current study. The next chapter, Chapter 3, will discuss the methodology followed in the study.

## Chapter 3

### Research methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature findings regarding teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. This chapter concentrated on the research aims, research methods, sampling procedures, participants, setting, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration relating to the current study.

#### 3.2 Research aims

The study was directed by the research questions formulated in the first chapter, which were reformulated as research aims.

##### 3.2.1 Main and sub-aims

###### **Main aim:**

To explore teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

To achieve the main aim comprehensively, four sub-aims were generated.

###### **Sub-aims:**

- To investigate how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.
- To explore how teachers provide learning support for learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.
- To establish what challenges teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.



- To understand teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

### **3.3 Research methods**

The methodology that was selected to investigate the phenomenon for this study encompasses the research paradigm, research approach, and research design.

#### **3.3.1 Research paradigm**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), a research paradigm can be defined as a model which social scientists use to view the objects of the research. A research paradigm also refers to why the research is being conducted and how it will be conducted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

In the current study, the researcher used a constructivist paradigm. This paradigm suggests that knowledge is constructed within the human mind and that it does not have to match any real-world reality (Bada, 2015; Creswell, 2018). Reality and its meaning are therefore only known by those who personally experience it (Bada, 2015; Creswell 2018). Those who are experiencing it personally can then derive their mental model of the real world from their perceptions of that world (Bada, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In order to understand the reality of a situation better, it is important in research to include participants who have personally experienced the situation. Since the researcher is a teacher herself who also works with learners experiencing barriers to learning, she was able to understand teachers' views and opinions and could construct knowledge based on her personal experiences. The research paradigm used in this study gave the researcher the opportunity to co-construct understandings relating to the experiences of the participants by collecting data using qualitative methods which included interviews and document analysis.

### **3.3.2 Research approach**

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) stated that qualitative research methods are used to seek an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, situation, problem, or event in a naturalistic setting. In addition, qualitative research involves non-statistical methods and small sample sizes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In this study, the researcher found qualitative research to be the most appropriate approach since the purpose was to find data-rich descriptions of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. For that reason, the researcher collected data through telephonic semi-structured interviews and document analysis. It should also be noted that the researcher originally planned to conduct observations as well to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing protocols, this was not possible.

### **3.3.3 Research design**

The researcher incorporated a case study design in the study. In a case study design, researchers examine a bounded system or case over time and in-depth, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). According to Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers are most interested in the meaning participants give to their life experiences by using some form of case study to involve themselves in the actions of a single person or a small group of people so that they are able to obtain a better understanding of their world. A case study was deemed appropriate for the current study because the researcher wanted to obtain a better understanding of the teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the Faculty of Educations' Research Ethics committee at the University of South Africa (See Appendix A).

After the researcher obtained ethical clearance, she requested permission to conduct research from the MOET (See Appendix B) and the principal of the selected school (See Appendix C). Both the MOET and the principal of the school provided the researcher with written permission to conduct research at the selected school.

During the course of the study, the researcher acted responsibly and honestly towards the participants and continued to protect their rights, and honoured the promises she made to them by reporting the results honestly, truthfully, and accurately (Harriss et al., 2017; Grady, 2018).

The ethical principles which guided the study are listed and discussed in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Ethical Principles applied in the study

Principle	Application to study
<b>Avoidance of harm: Research involving human subjects is based on the principle that it should be conducted in a way that minimizes harm or risk (Leedy &amp; Ormrod, 2019)</b>	The researcher made sure that the participants, i.e. the teachers, are not exposed to any risks and avoided harm.
<b>Voluntary participation: Participants will not be forced to participate in the study (Marshall et al., 2014).</b>	The teachers formed the unit of analysis in the study. Informed consent letters were sent to all the teachers (See Appendix D) Only teachers who provided consent to participate in the study were included. None of the teachers were compelled to participate in the study and they could withdraw at any time.
<b>Informed consent: Respect for individuals requires that all participants be informed about the purpose of the study and what will be required from them in the study (Manti &amp; Licari, 2018; Harriss et al., 2017).</b>	The participants were given an informed consent form (See Appendix D) where the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the study and teachers were given the option to give or reject the consent to participate in the study.
<b>Anonymity and confidentiality: Information collected in the study is treated as confidential and the providers of the information remain anonymous to ensure the privacy of participants (Coffelt, 2017).</b>	The researcher and her supervisor were the only ones that had access to the data collected from the interviews (See Appendix F) and document analysis (See Appendix E). The research report did not disclose the name of the school, principal, or teachers, nor will it be disclosed in any publications.
<b>Action and competence of the researcher: Researchers are obligated to act ethically and be competent when undertaking a research investigation (Harriss et al., 2017; Grady, 2018).</b>	The researcher has an Honors degree in Inclusive Education and is a teacher by profession. Furthermore, she has 13 years of experience in the teaching field. She is therefore competent and familiar with the context in which she conducted the research.

### **3.5 Setting**

In Lesotho, 40% of children with barriers to learning between the ages of 5 and 10 do not attend primary school while 23% of children with barriers to learning between the ages of 10 and 20 do not attend high school (Eriamiatoe, 2013). Therefore, although the constitution of Lesotho affirms the right of all children to education, the majority of children with barriers to learning is not included in the education system and is placed in segregated schools mainly located in the capital city, Maseru and Leribe (Eriamiatoe, 2013; MOET, 2019).

Before conducting the research, the researcher consulted with the MOET in Lesotho and requested a list of mainstream schools that include learners experiencing barriers to learning. MOET reported that there are twelve mainstream public schools in Lesotho: six primary schools and six high schools (Personal communication with the special education manager, 2021). However, due to financial constraints and the constraints related to the geographical accessibility of the schools, the researcher decided to conduct a case study at only one of the mainstream public schools in Mafeteng, Lesotho.

The school where the research was conducted was established in 1886 (personal communication with the principal, 2021) and is situated in the urban area of Mafeteng. The school currently accommodates approximately 1170 learners between the ages of six and eighteen years. It is unclear, however, how many learners have barriers to learning in the school as it is not well documented. From the interviews and documents analysed it appears that the learners experience various barriers to learning which include, but are not limited to, hearing impairments, visual impairments, intellectual impairments, and physical impairments. Currently, there is no ESS team at the school to support learners who experience barriers to learning (personal communication with the principal, 2021).

### **3.6 Participants**

The target population included Grade 1 to Grade 7 teachers working in the public mainstream primary school. The teachers teach various subjects such as Sesotho,

English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Arts and Entrepreneurship, and Life Based and Sexuality Education. To keep the information anonymous in the research, participant codes were assigned to the transcribed responses (P=Participant 1-12). The sampling methods, selection criteria, sample size, and participant description will be presented in the following sections.

### 3.6.1 Sampling methods and selection

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in the current study. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) stated that purposive sampling refers to a non-probability sampling method where participants are chosen based on the purpose of the research. Thus, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate as the researcher collected data from teachers teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in their schools. There are 24 teachers in the school, but only four teachers per phase (Foundation, Intermediate, and Senior) consented to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- The teachers currently teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning at the primary mainstream school were included in the study.
- Only teachers who gave consent were included in the study.

### 3.6.2 Sample size

The sample size consisted of twelve teachers currently teaching at the public mainstream primary school.

### 3.6.3 Participant description

Table 3.2 provides a detailed description of the participants in the study.

Table 3.2 General participants description (n=12)

Participants (p)	Population group	Gender (Male=M female=F)	Subjects which the teachers are teaching	Qualification	Training on inclusive education	Years of teaching experience
P1	Black	M	All subjects (grade 7)	BEd Honours in Inclusive Education	Yes	20 years
P2	Black	F	All subjects	Lesotho In-	Yes	45 years

			(grade 2)	service Education Programme for Teachers		
<b>P3</b>	Black	F	All subjects (grade 2)	BEd in Primary Education	Yes	30 years
<b>P4</b>	Black	F	All subjects (grade 2)	Diploma in Primary Education	Yes	5 years
<b>P5</b>	Black	F	Sesotho and English (grade 5)	Diploma in Primary Education	No	5 years
<b>P6</b>	Black	M	English, Sesotho, creative and entrepreneurship (grade 6)	Diploma in Primary education	Yes	19 years
<b>P7</b>	Black	F	All subjects (grade 4)	BEd in Primary Education	Yes	12 years
<b>P8</b>	Black	F	All subjects ( grade 4)	Diploma in Primary education	No	9 years
<b>P9</b>	Black	F	Sesotho (Grade 7)	National Professional Diploma in Education	Yes	15 years
<b>P10</b>	Black	M	Mathematics and Science (grade 7)	Diploma in Primary education	Yes	5 years
<b>P11</b>	Black	F	All subjects (grade 2)	BEd in Primary Education	No	32 years
<b>P12</b>	Black	F	All subjects (grade 4)	Diploma in Primary education	No	30 years

As can be seen in Table 3.2, participants were requested to provide the researcher with information on their population group, gender, subjects they teach, qualifications, training on inclusive education, and years of teaching experience.

All participants, 100% (n=12) in this study belong to the black population group and 75% (n=9) of participants were females while 25% (n=3) were males. The results are in agreement with Dhal (2016) who stated that in many HICs such as Australia, Canada, and the UK as well as LMICs such as Lesotho, Sri-Lanka, and Samoa, women represent a significant majority of the teaching workforce. Research has confirmed that more women than men are studying to become teachers in Lesotho. According to

George et al. (2018), there were approximately 6400 females enrolled in the faculty of education in 2018 and only 2600 men.

In this study, 66.7% (n=8) of participants teach all the subjects. This is in agreement with a study conducted by Mabejane (2015) who stated that primary school teachers in Lesotho are expected to teach all the subjects.

Of the twelve teachers, 58.3% (n=7) had a Diploma in Primary education or a National Professional Diploma in Education. Twenty-five percent of the teachers had a BEd qualification. Only one teacher, 0.08% (n=1) had Bed honours in inclusive education, and one teacher is enrolled in the in-service teaching programme to become a qualified teacher. A possible explanation why more than half, 58.3%, (n=7) of the teachers in the current study only had a diploma in education and not a degree might be the financial implications of studying further to obtain a degree (Chere-Masopha, 2018).

Although 66.7% (n=8) of participants indicated that they had training on inclusive education, it appeared from the interviews that 75% (n=9) of the teachers were of the opinion that they lacked training on inclusive education and therefore experienced various challenges which hindered successful implementation of inclusive practices. Khoaeane and Naong (2015) likewise reported that many teachers are not trained on inclusive education and are therefore unable to respond to the diverse needs of learners in the classroom.

Sixty-six percent (n=8) of the teachers in the current study indicated that they have more than 10 years of teaching experience. This is in agreement with the report by Turugare and Rudhumbu (2020) that teachers in their study in Lesotho had more than 10 years of experience in teaching.

### **3.7 Data collection techniques**

The following material and apparatus were used for data collection



### **3.7.1 Material**

#### **3.7.1.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Interviewing is often seen as the predominant research method in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The researcher initially planned to conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniel, 2020), the researcher had to maintain social distancing and conduct semi-structured, telephonic interviews with the participants. The semi-structured interviews included questions that provided the researcher with the opportunity to probe and clarify answers to questions (Newcomer et al., 2015). These interviews, which were the primary data collection method used in the study, enabled the researcher to gather information from participants about their opinions, feelings, and experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The interviews allowed the researcher to obtain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

The semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted with the teachers between April and June 2021. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the teachers to confirm their responses and clarify answers. The researcher arranged the interviews after school to avoid any interference with the teachers' school programme. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and was recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). By recording the interview, the researcher was able to listen to the interviews again when needed. The procedure allowed the researcher to focus on the interview itself and build rapport without worrying about the information that may be lost during note-taking (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interview schedule included a set of open-ended questions that permitted the researcher to obtain information on the phenomenon under study (See Appendix F).

The interview questions for teachers included questions aimed at obtaining demographic information -the population group to which teachers belong, their gender, the qualification they have, the number of years they have been teaching, whether they have had training on inclusive education – as well as questions that focused on their

views on the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream schools, how they identify the learners experiencing barriers to learning, how they support learners experiencing barriers to learning, the challenges they experience when teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning, and their views on support needed for successful implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho.

### **3.7.1.2 Document analysis**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), document analysis is also considered to be a data-rich source. Document analysis involves the study and interpretation of existing documents in order to discover deeper meaning or to understand the content of the documents at hand better (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

In the current study (See Appendix E), analysis of the following documents helped the researcher answer the research questions:

- Teachers' files – the files included electronic lesson plans as well as any information on how teachers supported learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- School policies with regards to inclusion.
- LIEP (MOET, 2019).
- Education Act 2010 (MOET, 2010).
- ESSP 2005-2015 (MOET, 2005).
- ESP 2016-2026 (MOET, 2016).
- Inclusive Education Teachers' guidelines on how to interact with and support learners with disabilities (MOET, 2011b)

These specific documents were viewed in order to answer the research questions posed in the study. Furthermore, the documents provided more evidence on how teachers were supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning at school as well as which policies supported inclusive education. Lastly, the documents supplemented the interview responses.

The documents were obtained in the following way:

- Permission was obtained from the principal and teachers to obtain the documents.
- The documents were viewed at a pre-arranged time.

### **3.7.2 Apparatus**

During the semi-structured telephonic interviews, the researcher used a notebook and a pen to write down any additional information. Also, during the interviews, the researcher recorded the interview using her phone and it was done with the permission of the participants. Phone recordings allowed the researcher to refer to the exact words spoken by the participants when analyzing data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

### **3.8 Data collection**

The following section will focus on the process the researcher followed in order to obtain the information needed to answer the research questions.

#### **3.8.1 Data collection procedure**

After ethical clearance for the study had been obtained, data collection proceeded as follows:

- The researcher scheduled the appointment with the principal of the school and requested permission from the principal to conduct the research at the school.
- Next, the researcher discussed specific dates with the principal to conduct the research with the teachers teaching at the school.
- Subsequently, the researcher also gave teachers information letters with consent forms to read through and complete.
- Thereafter, the researcher collected the completed consent forms from teachers.
- The researcher arranged specific dates and times to conduct interviews with teachers telephonically and also to obtain lesson plans.
- Before the main research investigation, the researcher conducted a pilot study with three teachers to see if the data collection instruments truly answered the research questions or if some questions needed to be changed.

- After the pilot study, the researcher examined the data and there were no changes made since the teachers' answers represented the phenomenon measured in the study.
- Thereafter, the researcher started with the main investigation.
- The researcher conducted all twelve interviews with the teachers over the phone and asked the teachers to email her their differentiated lesson plans for learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- Follow-up interviews were conducted with the participants to confirm the answers or change where necessary and to triangulate the data.
- The researcher transcribed the interviews and recorded data collected from the documents analysed.
- After the data had been collected, the researcher qualitatively analysed the data and wrote up the findings. Lastly, the researcher completed the research project.

### **3.8.2 Data processing and data analysis**

Data analysis involves the decreasing of large volumes of raw data, identifying patterns or themes, and thereafter constructing a framework to interpret the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Furthermore, it includes a range of methods and procedures whereby the researcher obtains explanations, understandings, or interpretations from the qualitative data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The data collected through interviews and documents analysed were read and reread to identify the themes.

The researcher used Creswell's (2018) model for analyzing data. Firstly, the researcher organized data immediately after completing the data collection process. This consisted of sorting data according to different sources, which were interviews and documents analysed, and transcribing the individual interviews from the telephonic recordings. Next, the researcher read through all the data and in this manner obtained a sense of the information and was able to reflect on the overall meaning of the information. Thirdly, the researcher began analysing data by starting to code the data into smaller pieces. The researcher segmented sentences and paragraphs into categories and

labeled the categories with a name. Lastly, the researcher used a coding process to generate a small number of themes and sub-themes for the study (Creswell, 2018).

### **3.9 Trustworthiness of the study**

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). In this study, the trustworthiness was determined by ascertaining credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings approximate reality and are judged to be accurate, trustworthy, and reasonable (Maree, 2016). In this study, the researcher used the following strategies to ensure credibility: triangulation, development of familiarity with participants, and detailed collection methods.

Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of various methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Carter, 2014). In this study, the researcher used different data sources, namely semi-structured telephonic interviews, follow-up interviews, and document analysis to triangulate data (Creswell, 2018). During data collection, the researcher extended her engagement with the teachers to ensure that they trusted her and answered the questions honestly. The researcher, therefore, developed a sense of familiarity with the teachers. Several distinct questions were asked regarding teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews until data saturation was achieved (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

The researcher further ensured credibility by conducting member checking. Member checking in this study included sharing the transcripts, feedback, and conclusions with the teachers in order for them to corroborate that the researcher transcribed the information correctly (Creswell, 2018). All twelve teachers verified that the data collected was correct.

### **3.9.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). It was hoped that the results about teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school could be transferred to a wider population of teachers working with learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools in Lesotho.

### **3.9.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the extent to which the same results can be replicated if the same research instruments were used with similar participants under similar conditions (Creswell, 2018). In the current study, to ensure dependability, the researcher requested her supervisor to check the accuracy of the data and the researcher asked one of her colleagues to review the interview questions. By so doing the researcher improved the dependability of the study (Creswell, 2018).

### **3.9.4 Conformability**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), conformability refers to the data and interpretations of the findings not being fictions of the researcher's imagination but simply based on the data obtained. In this study, the researcher ensured that the results were not biased and were purely objective by submitting data to her supervisor and the teachers to confirm the findings.

### **3.10 Syntheses**

In this chapter, the researcher gave an in-depth view of the research design and methodology used in this study. This included a discussion of the research aims, methods, ethical consideration, setting, participants, material and apparatus, data collection, and trustworthiness of the study. The following chapter, Chapter 4, will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the data.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Presentation, discussion and interpretation of results**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data obtained from the semi-structured, telephonic interviews with the teachers and the documents that were analysed. Themes and sub-themes were used to structure the findings. Furthermore, the researcher infused literature to discuss the findings and ended with the conclusions that were drawn.

In the following section, the research questions that guided the study are discussed.

##### **4.1.1 Key research question**

What are the perspectives of teachers supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?

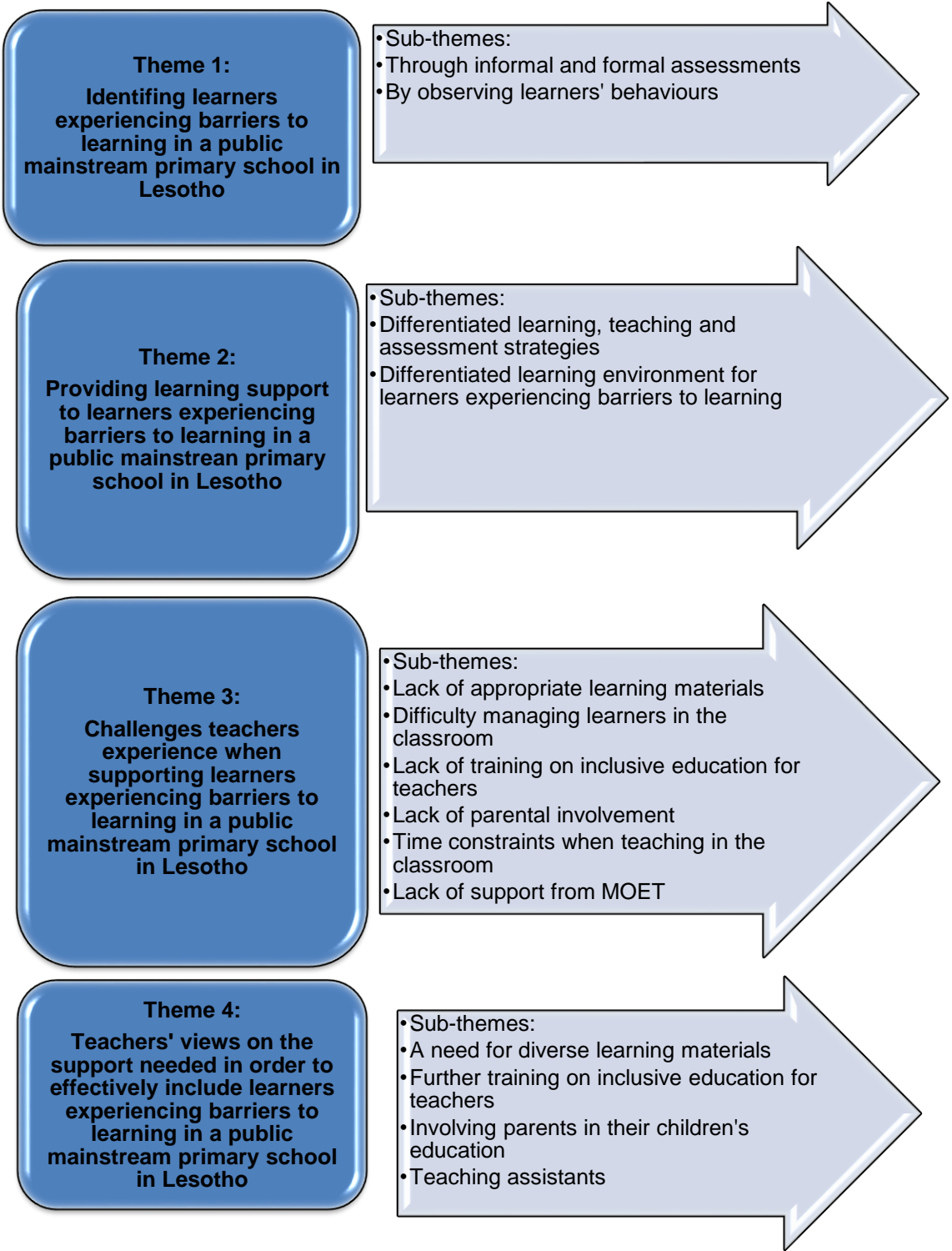
##### **4.1.2 Sub-questions**

- How do teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- How do teachers provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- What challenges do teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?
- What are teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho?

### **4.1.3 Results of the study**

Figure 4.1 outlines the themes suggested by the research questions and sub-themes identified by the researcher from the data that were collected. These sub-themes helped the researcher in addressing the research questions.





**Figure 4.1: Themes and sub-themes identified in the study**

## **4.2 Theme 1: Identifying learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see 2.7.10), the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory involves individuals closest to the individual and focuses on the relationship between them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the first theme of the current study, the focus was on the relationship between the learner and the teacher and specifically how the teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom. As can be seen in Figure 4.1, two sub-themes were identified by the researcher: these learners are identified a) through informal and formal assessments and b) through observation of learners' behaviour.

### **4.2.1 Sub-theme a: Through informal and formal assessments**

The National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (MOET, 2013) in Lesotho stipulates that teachers should ensure that learners experiencing barriers to learning are identified early (between the age of 2 and 6 years) and receive the support required. If learners at risk of experiencing barriers to learning are identified early, they are able to receive the support earlier and therefore reach their potential (Hlosta et al., 2017). Failing to identify the reasons why learners experience the barriers to learning will prevent them from getting the help they need to reach their potential, both in school and later on (Lovett et al., 2017). In order to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning before they are enrolled in primary school, teachers need to know what barriers learners can present with (Ledwaba, 2017). Furthermore, teachers should be familiar with the screening and assessment tool developed by the MOET to identify the learners experiencing barriers to learning. The current screening and assessment tool developed by the MOET has not yet been standardized for use in public mainstream schools within Lesotho and is only known as the 'assessment form' (Personal communication with special education manager, 2021).

In Lesotho, the MOET provides ongoing training on inclusive education which includes how to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning (MOET, 2019). However, according to previous studies conducted in Lesotho, there is a lack of understanding

amongst teachers in mainstream schools of what constitutes inclusive education as well as how to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning (Mosia, 2014). Furthermore, teachers believe that they haven't received sufficient training on how to implement inclusive education in their classrooms (Ralejoe, 2016). In the current study, 66.7% of teachers (n=8), reported that they received training in the past on inclusive education. However, not all the teachers were aware that there were screening and assessment tools available from the MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is evident, therefore, that they were not adequately trained on how to identify learners who experience barriers to learning. The results of the current study are in agreement with the study conducted by Ralejoe (2016) in a secondary school in Lesotho. Ralejoe (2016) found that teachers in a mainstream secondary school in Lesotho were of the opinion that they were not adequately trained on the implementation of inclusive education and did not have access to screening and assessment tools (see Appendix G) which the MOET should be providing to teachers so that they can identify learners experiencing barriers to learning. In addition, the results of this study are also in agreement with a study conducted in an independent mainstream high school by Pillay (2019) who found that teachers were not using the SIAS documents to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning and were mostly using their own screening tools to identify these learners. In the current study, all the teachers (100%) (n=12) reported that they have yet to receive any screening and assessment tools from the MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in the school. A possible explanation why teachers were not using the screening and assessment tools developed by the MOET may be that they had not yet been trained on how to use these tools at school or they were not aware that the screening and assessment tools existed. Instead, all the twelve teachers (100%) (n=12) were using different informal assessments to identify whether learners presented with barriers to learning or not. The following verbal quotes are a reflection of what teachers mentioned during the interviews about how they were identifying learners experiencing barriers to learning.

*“When learners come to school, I assess them by giving them activities, simple activities, and basic activities looking at the level of functioning. It is easy to see if a*

*learner does not perform well in certain activities that they might experience a barrier or have a disability.”* (Participant 1[P1]).

*“Normally, in the first weeks, I make simple tests to identify people with a disability such as those who are visually impaired or those who cannot hear properly.”* (Participant 6 [P6]).

*“We identify them ourselves by doing informal tests then we diagnose them that this learner has a specific problem and needs special attention.”* (Participant 5 [P5]).

In conclusion, the findings indicated that all of the teachers (0%) (n=12) were disregarding the LIEP policy implemented by the MOET by not using the screening and assessment tools developed by the MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning. Therefore it is evident that the microsystem in this study, the teachers influenced the learner’s development since they were not using the screening and assessment tools as stipulated in policies developed by the MOET. It is therefore important that the MOET provide teachers with the necessary training on inclusive education so that they can implement the policy on inclusive education in their classrooms and be familiar with the screening and assessment tools to be able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning.

#### **4.2.2 Sub-theme b: By observing learners’ behaviours**

Although teachers were not using the screening and assessment tools developed by MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning, they were able to identify these learners by observing their behaviours. Through the interviews with the teachers, it became apparent that several learners in the public mainstream primary school experienced barriers to learning. These learners presented with disabilities relating to vision, speech, language, hearing, reading, writing, and/or comprehension that cause a barrier to learning. Ninety-one percent of teachers (n=11) indicated that they were able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning by observing their behaviours in the classroom as well as on the playground or hallways. The following are verbal quotes from teachers confirming the various types of barriers to learning learners experience based on their observations.

*“Ok, mostly the visual impaired, they normally blink too many times and you will see that this one might have a problem, others will need to come closer to the chalkboard, you will see that “Aa, this one does not see” (Participant 3 [P3]).*

*“Sometimes, the communication between the child and other children in the classroom and also the communication between you and the child, may be difficult for you to understand each other this is when you will be able to see that ok, this child has got a hearing impairment.” (Participant 7 [P7]).*

*“Let’s say is the first day you meet those learners in the beginning of the year, may be asking them their names, when I get to that one, she might just stare at you, or just nod or do something else rather than speaking or answering what you have just asked so you have go to repeat what you have just said until you identify that this one needs my special attention.” (Participant 8 [P8]).*

Findings from this study are in agreement with a study conducted in Lesotho by Mosia and Lephoto (2015). The study found that teachers who did not use assessments to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning were able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning by observing learners’ behaviours and were then able to identify whether they presented with barriers to learning or not (Mosia & Lephoto, 2015). It is evident that although teachers were able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning based on their behaviours, the policies on inclusive education developed by the MOET in Lesotho were poorly implemented in the public mainstream primary school. It is therefore important for the MOET to ensure that teachers have access to the screening and assessment tools to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning and to provide them with more training on the implementation of inclusive education.

In conclusion, the majority of the teachers, 91.6% (n=11) mentioned that they identified learners experiencing barriers to learning by observing the learners in the classroom as well as on the playground and in the hallways. None (0%) (n=12) of the teachers were using the screening and assessment tools developed by the MOET in Lesotho to identify barriers to learning in learners. It is therefore vital that teachers receive the

necessary training on inclusive education so that they can implement the policies in practice.

### **4.3 Theme 2: Providing learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

This theme provided details on how teachers provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho through curriculum differentiation. According to Ledwaba (2017), curriculum differentiation refers to the curriculum being adapted by making changes to the teaching, learning, and assessment strategies, materials, and the learning environment in order to support learners experiencing barriers to learning. As noted in Figure 4.1, two sub-themes were identified: a) differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies and b) differentiated learning environment.

#### **4.3.1 Sub-theme a: Differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies**

Even though the MOET does not have an official policy on curriculum differentiation for teachers to use when teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning (personal communication with special education manager, 2021), it is positive to see that all teachers (100%) (n=12) in the interviews stipulated that they were using differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. These strategies include alternative learning materials, peer coaching, flexible grouping, individual support, and alternative teaching methods. The verbal quotes below are an indication that teachers were using differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies in their classrooms.

- **Alternative learning materials**

*“We use the pictures, as I am teaching the young ones, we are always using pictures in class, and they like those pictures. Even if they can’t follow what you are doing, they just look at the picture and you will find them they enjoy. Sometimes they follow a little bit.”*  
(Participant 12 [P12]).

- **Peer coaching**

*“They discuss things together in order to help one another with a specific task or problem, through group work or teamwork.” (P1).*

- **Flexible grouping**

*“Sometimes, we use grouping methods. So, we group learners with specific interests together so that they are more engaged in the tasks.” (P5).*

- **Individual support**

*“I make sure that while I’m teaching, individual support is the method that I use most. I teach the whole class thereafter I come to that one individual, it helps a lot.” (Participant 9 [P9]).*

- **Re-teaching**

*“I repeat my instructions time and again.” (P1).*

*“Then those who are very slow, I tend to go too many times with that person until I see that ok, until I see this one did what I wanted him to do.” (P3).*

- **Varying teaching methods**

*“Then, to those who are not hearing, I go with the sign language even though I don’t know it very well and I also ask others to help me to help them go until they get what they need to know. I also use visual supports for them in the classroom.” (P3).*

The results of this study are in agreement with a study conducted in Australia by Mills et al. (2014). The researchers investigated the extent to which teachers in high schools differentiate the curriculum by using different teaching methods and strategies. The results of the study revealed that teachers were using similar teaching methods and strategies to respond to learners’ diverse needs such as peer coaching, flexible grouping, and individual support (Mills et al., 2014).

In addition to the interviews, the researcher also reviewed the lesson plans of the teachers and found that teachers were using various other teaching, learning, and assessment strategies which they did not refer to in the interviews but which were mentioned in their lesson plans. The teaching, learning, and assessment strategies that they referred to in their lesson plans included giving learners multiple-choice options, varying assessment tasks, role-playing scenarios, discovering and manipulating materials, and presenting an oral story illustrating new information (Tomlinson, 2017). The results of this study are also in agreement with the result of the study conducted in Lesotho by Ralejoe (2016). In his study, some teachers indicated that they used the discovering and manipulation of materials method to differentiate the curriculum (Ralejoe, 2016). In addition, the results are also in agreement with a study conducted in Zambia by Mwendalubi (2020), who found that teachers were using various teaching, learning, and assessment strategies to manage the learning process. In the Zambian study, the teachers were using multi-tasking approaches, such as role-play and presenting an oral story by illustrating new information. Therefore, even though the MOET did not have specific curriculum differentiation guidelines for teachers, it is positive to see that they are using a variety of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies to respond to the needs of learners. However, the MOET in Lesotho needs to develop curriculum differentiation guidelines for the teachers so that all teachers are aware of the different teaching, learning, and assessment strategies that can be used to respond to learners' diverse needs.

In conclusion, all teachers (100%) (n=12) differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies in order to support learners who were experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Lastly, the findings correspond with the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This level focuses on the individual and his/her immediate context and the influence this has on the individual. In this study the microsystem included the learner and his her classroom environment, which included the teacher. The findings showed that teachers were using various methods to respond to the learners' developmental needs and therefore positively influencing their learning environment.



#### **4.3.2 Sub-theme b: Differentiated learning environment for learners experiencing barriers to learning**

Responses from the interviews indicated that 50% of teachers (n=6) were differentiating the learning environment for the learners experiencing barriers to learning. They did this by adjusting their physical environment through rearrangement of the classroom and alternative seating. The verbal quotes below show how teachers adjusted their classrooms.

*“I try by all means; I put him next to me. Some will have hearing problem, I will put him next to me too, I will make sure that whenever I speak, he or she will lip-read.”*  
(Participant 4 [P4]).

*“I make sure that those learners sit in front in class or choose those seats which suit them best, where they will feel comfortable, so when teaching and learning has taken place, I make sure that I face them when speaking so that they can lip read.”*  
(Participant 10 [P10]).

The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Hassan et al. (2015) in Pakistan. These researchers explored teachers' experiences and practices in inclusive classrooms in Pakistan. Teachers indicated that learners with poor vision were placed in the front rows of the classroom for them to be able to see the board better and so that the teachers could help them when they saw that they struggled (Hassan et al., 2015). The findings of the current study show that teachers were using some strategies to physically adjust their classrooms to assist learners experiencing barriers to learning.

To conclude, 50% of teachers (n=6) mentioned that they differentiated learning environments for learners experiencing barriers to learning. It is important for the MOET to provide teachers with more training on how to differentiate the learning environment so that more teachers will know how to implement strategies in their classrooms that make them more inclusive.

#### **4.4 Theme 3: Challenges teachers experience when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

As presented in Figure 4.1, this theme outlined the challenges twelve teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Six sub-themes were identified: a) lack of appropriate learning materials, b) difficulty managing learners in the classroom, c) lack of training on inclusive education for teachers, d) lack of parental involvement, e) time constraints when teaching in the classroom, and f) lack of support from MOET.

##### **4.4.1 Sub-theme a: Lack of appropriate learning materials**

Thirty-three percent of teachers (n=4) indicated that they did not have access to appropriate learning materials for learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprabhan (2016) reported that the education system has failed learners experiencing barriers to learning by not equipping them with appropriate learning materials or resources. If learners experiencing barriers to learning do not have access to appropriate learning materials they might be unable to learn to their fullest potential as they are not given appropriate resources to meet their needs (Okongo, Ngao, Rop, Nyokesa, 2015). Below are the verbal quotes which confirm that teachers lack access to appropriate learning materials for learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms:

*“Appropriate materials or learning resources is one of the challenges, that’s not what is there to most schools in our country more especially, mainstreaming. We even improvise in order to meet their challenges.”* (P1).

*“The other thing is the material; we don’t have enough material to help them.”* (P3).

*“We are trying really to help them but if there are no materials to use to meet their needs it is very difficult.”* (P7).

*“We don’t enough appropriate learning material; we have to search them for ourselves if you like.”* (Participant 11[P11]).

The results of this study are in agreement with a study conducted by Sauchez et al., (2019) in Spain. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that learners experiencing barriers to learning do not have access to appropriate learning materials and this, in turn, created more barriers as learners were unable to participate in learning activities with their peers (Sauchez et al., 2019). In addition, the findings of the current study are also in agreement with the studies conducted in Lesotho regarding challenges related to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015; Mateusi et al., 2014; Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2019). In the study conducted by Ralejoe (2019), teachers reported that they experienced challenges in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning as they were extremely under-resourced in terms of learning materials. The teachers mentioned that they do not have access to various learning materials for their learners such as braille typewriters, braille textbooks, magnifying glasses, or other assistive technologies (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015; Ralejoe, 2019).

In conclusion, 33.3% (n=4) of teachers stated that one of the challenges they experienced is a lack of access to appropriate learning materials and resources for learners experiencing barriers to learning. Teachers often had to improvise and create their own learning materials or resources in an attempt to meet the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. It is therefore crucial that the MOET together with school management teams ensure that teachers have access to learning materials and resources in order to effectively support the learners with and without barriers to learning in their classrooms.

#### **4.4.2 Sub-theme b: Difficulty managing learners in the classroom**

It emerged from the initial and follow-up interviews that teachers were experiencing difficulties in managing learners with and without barriers to learning in their classrooms. 66.7% (n=8) of teachers were of the opinion that it was difficult to manage learners with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom. Below are the verbal quotes which reflect teachers' challenges regarding the management of learners with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom.

*“Managing them is a bit of a challenge in that, they are not doing the same activities, because once you give them the same activities, that says you’re going to take the same time, so sometimes you would find that is not that easy depending on the level of the learners at which grade as well and the level of content.” (P1).*

*“It is not that easy to manage them. Learners with barriers need more attention and I need to explain work to them many times. Then other learners get bored. They also disturb the classroom.” (P3).*

*“It is difficult to manage them, but it is true that we are trying to make them be aware that are still human beings and they have to behave like one but it is not that much easy because they think always they are being ill-treated.” (P7).*

*“I try to manage all learners, basically you find that we have too many learners, 75 per class, it’s too much but now we try to divide them into two classes; some outside some inside, so it makes it more easier, but I try but it is not easy.” (P9).*

These statements indicated that teachers found it difficult to manage both learners with and without barriers in one classroom. It emerged from the interviews that teachers were frustrated about having to manage learners with and without barriers to learning in one classroom. Furthermore, teachers mentioned that learners without barriers to learning often became bored while they were explaining the content to learners experiencing barriers to learning.

The results of this study are in agreement with the findings from a study conducted by Jia and Santi (2020) in mainstream schools in the Shuangliu District in China. Teachers in the study by Jia and Santi (2020) reported that they experienced various barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education in their classroom, which included managing learners with and without barriers to learning. The teachers stated that they often felt frustrated as some learners without barriers to learning disrupted their classrooms while they were supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning, as they were bored. Furthermore, the findings are also in agreement with a study conducted by Al-Subaiei (2017) in English language institutions in Canada. The study investigated the challenges experienced by teachers in mixed ability classes in English

language institutions. The study found that teachers were often frustrated having to teach students with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom as they were not able to create a conducive teaching and learning environment for all learners (Al-Subaiei, 2017). The teachers in the study also mentioned that learners without barriers to learning often became bored in the classroom where learners with barriers to learning were taught as teachers had to spend extra time explaining content to them. It is evident from the findings that teachers found it difficult to manage learners with and without barriers to learning in one classroom as they were unable to provide all learners with equal attention and were also unable to effectively implement inclusive education practices as was expected from them.

In conclusion, more than half of teachers 66.7% (n=8) stipulated that they found it difficult to manage learners with and without barriers to learning in one classroom and that they often felt frustrated with the situation. Managing learners with and without barriers to learning in one classroom poses a huge challenge for teachers in Lesotho and affects their ability to effectively implement inclusive education practices.

#### **4.4.3 Sub-theme c: There is a lack of training on inclusive education for teachers**

Fifty-eight percent (n=7) of teachers noted that they lacked training on addressing barriers to learning in inclusive settings and they were, therefore, unable to provide sufficient support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. The following are verbal quotes that reflect teachers' concerns about the lack of training on addressing barriers to learning in learners with barriers in the mainstream school.

*“Training has helped, but since we are not normally refreshed, it takes us a longer time to do what is supposed to be done. We just go on our own way, it has a help but it needs to be done regularly.”* (P3).

*“I think I need further training. I feel overwhelmed.”* (P4).

*“To be precise, we were not trained for such learners.”* (P6).

It emerged from the initial and follow-up interviews in the current study that teachers were of the opinion that they lacked adequate training on addressing barriers to learning

in learners in inclusive settings. Although some teachers indicated that they received training on addressing barriers to learning in learners in inclusive settings, the training was vague and not frequent enough. Consequently, they felt overwhelmed and lacked confidence in providing the learners experiencing barriers to learning with the necessary support. Findings from the current study are in agreement with a study conducted by Pillay (2019) in an independent mainstream school in SA. The researcher reported on the challenges teachers experienced when addressing barriers to learning in an independent mainstream high school in SA. She found that teachers were of the opinion that they lacked sufficient training on addressing barriers to learning and therefore did not have the necessary skills to be able to adapt the curriculum in order to meet the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning (Pillay, 2019). In addition, the findings of the current study are also in agreement with a study conducted by Yada et al., (2018) in Finland and Japan. Teachers in the study believed that they were not fully trained on addressing barriers to learning and therefore lacked the necessary skills to support the learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms sufficiently (Yada et al., 2018). These findings indicate the importance of providing teachers with sufficient training on addressing barriers to learning in learners so that they can implement inclusive practices and feel confident while doing it.

In conclusion, more than half 58.3% (n=7) of the teachers felt that they needed further training on addressing barriers to learning in learners in inclusive settings and that they require the training to be more regular.

#### **4.4.4 Sub-theme d: Lack of parental involvement**

Sixty-six percent (n=8) were of the opinion that parents were not sufficiently involved in their children's education. Parental involvement has always been a very important aspect in the promotion of effective implementation of inclusive education practices and there are several benefits when parents are involved in their children's education (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Some benefits include improvement in the academic performance of learners, increased discipline amongst learners, and higher teacher morale (Ntekane, 2018). The verbal quotes below reflect the teachers' opinions about parental involvement.

*“The parents of this kind of learners usually are that they not doing their best for the kids, usually, you call them, they don’t come often, and so is like they are relieved when they sent their kids to school.” (P1).*

*“Not all the parents help, they turn to be too busy, they normally don’t come to school so that we talk about these learners, before the pandemic they weren’t involved a lot but now they are even less involved.” (P3).*

*“But as for other parents, they do think that those kids can do anything better, others cannot support their children in their education because of their financial status maybe.” (P7).*

*“Parents are not involved in their children’s education enough and do not support me because they don’t have any attention to their attendance, they even say “Ao, it was raining, we didn’t wash his clothes, ao, he will come next week.” It’s like they have just given up. Majority of them isn’t involved in their children’s education” (P11).*

The findings from the current study indicated that 66.7% (n=8) of the teachers were of the opinion that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning were often not involved in their children's education. Teachers were of the opinion that if parents were more involved in their children's education their children would show more improvement in their academic performance. Furthermore, teachers often have teacher-parent meetings, but the teachers mentioned that parents seldom attended these meetings and did not feel that it was necessary to be involved in their children's education as they believed there was nothing wrong with their children. In addition, since this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic learners were not attending school every day and teachers noted that parents were less involved in their children's education than before the pandemic. The results from the current study are not in agreement with a study conducted by Toquero (2020) in the Philippines. The researcher found that teachers were of the opinion that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning were more involved in their children's education as the learners were taught online when schools closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Toquero, 2020). Teachers reported that they involved parents through online communication, providing

them with strategies on how to help learners at home and teaching learners through online platforms (Toquero, 2020). Furthermore, teachers in the study by Toquero (2020) believed that learners experiencing barriers to learning required more support from their parents to be able to learn online during the pandemic, and parents were therefore obligated to be more involved in their children's education if they wanted them to make progress. Another study conducted by Patton (2019) in the USA also found that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning are more involved in their education. According to Patton (2019), the majority of parents felt responsible for their children's education. They provide their children with a quiet place free from distraction so that they can concentrate on their school assignments, again previous knowledge they have of education helps them to assist their children (Patton, 2019). It is evident that there are many benefits to the involvement of parents in their children's education (Morena & Nkoane, 2021), but in order for parents to be more involved in their children's education, the school and MOET should create more opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education. These opportunities may include regular check-ins with families either through in-person meetings or informal conversations over the telephone, involving the parents in the decision-making process when deciding on learners' goals, inviting parents to school activities, and hosting parenting workshops where they can learn how to respond to their children's diverse needs at home (Boonk et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the findings from the current study showed that more than half of the teachers 66.7% (n=8) were of the opinion that parents were not sufficiently involved in their children's education, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This in turn posed a challenge for teachers in successfully addressing barriers to learning in the learners in the public mainstream school in Lesotho. Furthermore, the findings concur with the mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This level focuses on the influence of two or more settings on a learner's development. In this study, it referred to the relationship between the school environment and the home environment, which included the involvement of parents in their child's education. Since 66.7% (n=8) of the teachers felt that parents were not involved in their child's education as much as they should be, it had a negative effect on



their academic success. It is therefore important that the school as well as the MOET implement more strategies to improve parental involvement.

#### **4.4.5 Sub-theme e: Time constraints when teaching in the classroom**

Seventy-five percent (n=9) of the teachers indicated that they did not have enough time to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. The following are the verbal quotes reflecting that teachers did not have enough time to help these learners.

*“They need a lot of time which we don’t have. It is even worse when we are now having this new normal where we spend three to four hours at school and that time is very limited for the disabled learners and they need a lot of time even the remedial classes are needed for them. Now that we are living in a new normal whereby we are to follow all the COVID procedures, we start at 9 at school and around 12 we are to knock off, that time is very limited.”* (P10).

*“More time is needed, I don’t have enough time. More time is needed for me to perform that task, again they are many, because of corona, they come in number of days; three days after every week.”* (P11).

Since the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers indicated during the interviews as well as in their lesson plans that they did not have enough time to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classrooms as there had been a few times the past eighteen months where the schools were closed due to rising COVID-19 infections in Lesotho. In addition, when the schools were open teachers were only at school for a few hours per day as instructed by the MOET (personal communication with the principal, 2021). Furthermore, learners were not coming to school every day as the school had a schedule where they alternated which grades were allowed to come to school. Teachers also mentioned that the lack of time available to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a mainstream classroom was not something new, it has always been a problem; however, it became even worse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results from the current study are in agreement with a study conducted in China by Jia and Santi (2020). The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that they had significantly less time to support learners experiencing barriers to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jia & Santi, 2020). This was due to teachers having to switch to online teaching and having limited time to prepare lessons for online learning environments. Furthermore, although many measures were issued and implemented by the schools to provide education for the learners in the mainstream schools, there was no time for the teachers to adopt these measures for learners experiencing barriers to learning (Jia & Santi, 2020).

Furthermore, findings from this study also concur with the results of the study conducted by Leballo et al. (2021) in Lesotho. Teachers in their study reported that there has always been a lack of time to implement inclusive education strategies for learners experiencing barriers to learning and that it only became worse during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leballo et al., 2021). Teachers mentioned that the time constraints were mostly related to administrative duties which included marking, setting exams and test papers, preparing lessons for online teaching, and upgrading teacher files (Leballo et al., 2021). Therefore, it is evident that teachers had time constraints that may hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education practices in the classroom and that this had been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicated that the majority of teachers (75%) (n=9) were of the opinion that they did not have enough time to support learners experiencing barriers to learning during and before the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore important for the school and the MOET to provide teachers with more support, for example by appointing teaching assistants, so that they are able to have more time to help the learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom.

#### **4.4.6 Sub-theme f: Lack of support from the MOET**

Eight teachers (66.7%) reported that they did not receive enough support from the MOET in order to help learners experiencing barriers to learning. The school under study does not have its own policy on inclusive education but uses the LIEP (2019) provided

by MOET (Personal communication with the principal, 2021). Some teachers are not aware that these documents even exist, as was mentioned in section 4.2.1. Therefore, during the interviews teachers indicated that they did not have access to all the inclusive education policy documents developed by the MOET, that the MOET did not provide them with enough learning resources, and that they were not adequately trained on addressing barriers to learning in learners in the mainstream school (see section 4.4.3). Teachers also indicated that the MOET officials did not visit their schools often enough to determine whether teachers require more support. Consequently, teachers felt extremely frustrated as they did not feel that they were sufficiently supported by the MOET and therefore experienced challenges in effectively implementing inclusive education practices in their classrooms. The following verbal quotes reflect teachers' concerns regarding the lack of support from the MOET.

*“The officials will come once, maybe quarterly, she comes once, yet my expectations will be maybe weekly or fortnightly. They will come and maybe ask you questions with regard to the learners but in most cases when you show them the need for the kids, they say that the government does not have enough resources to cater for such learners.” (P1).*

*“We have got one person that the ministry normally sends to school but you find that she is only there to ask us as to how do you cope, what do you think can be done, all those things of which some of the things that we raise, such as more training, they cannot even do them, I don't know but that is really a poor support.” (P7).*

*“Their (MOET) support is not enough because it depends, sometimes we even call her to come and see we are having these kind of children, what do you say? ‘Ah, parents have to do this, I told them to go where and where, go to the doctors, be given such a certificate so they can be accepted in those schools in certain areas, so it's the parents' duty, I am just given this.” (P11).*

Results from the current study are in agreement with a study conducted in Lesotho by Mkandawire et al. (2016). The study revealed that there are only a few MOET officials available in Lesotho who are supposed to support teachers of 156 primary schools

when addressing barriers to learning in learners (Mkandawire et al., 2016). The MOET officials are not providing teachers with enough training opportunities on inclusive education nor are they providing teachers with documents or resources in order to support the learners experiencing barriers to learning (Mkandawire et al., 2016). This study also concurs with a study conducted in Swaziland by Zwane and Malale (2018). The study investigated barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that the ministry of education and training failed to provide teachers with adequate training in order to support learners experiencing barriers to learning, especially visually impaired learners (Zwane & Malale, 2018). Teachers in the current study believe that they did not receive adequate support from the MOET in Lesotho and that it hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education. It is therefore important that the MOET investigate how they can support their teachers better so that they can in turn support the learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms to the best of their potential.

In conclusion, more than half of teachers 66.7% (n=8) raised their dissatisfaction about the support they receive from the MOET concerning supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning. The lack of support from the MOET greatly impacted the teachers' ability to effectively implement inclusive education in their classrooms. Therefore, the findings also concur with the exosystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This level focuses on the influence a setting, in which a learner is not an active participant, has on the learner. In this study, it referred to the influence of the MOET and school management and their influence on the learner. Since the MOET did not provide enough support to the teachers they were unable to provide the learners with the necessary support.

#### **4.5 Theme 4: Teachers' views on the support needed for effective inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

This theme outlined teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in

Lesotho. As presented in Figure 4.1, five sub-themes were identified: a) a need for diverse learning materials; b) further training on inclusive education; c) teaching assistants; d) involving parents in their children's education.

#### **4.5.1 Sub-theme a: A need for diverse learning materials**

Responses from the teachers' interviews showed that 75% (n=9) of the teachers in the current study were of the opinion that there was a need for more diverse learning materials in order to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Furthermore, it was evident when analysing the documents, such as lesson plans, that teachers did not have access to a variety of teaching and learning materials to respond to the diverse needs of learners. The following verbal quotes reflect teachers' views in relation to the need for diverse learning materials.

*"We need the resources, if we have diverse teaching and learning material, I think that would be a bit better because we will let them to use the material and then we can be more inclusive than now."* (P3).

*"We need materials for them because we have already started making sure that the community knows more about sign language and people with disability."* (P6).

*"We need appropriate materials for them because as they have unique needs"* (P12).

It is evident from the interviews and the documents analysed that there was a need for a variety of teaching and learning materials in order to meet the diverse needs of learners in the classrooms. The findings of this study are in agreement with a study conducted by Mapepa and Magano (2018) amongst teachers in two provinces in South Africa. The study investigated teachers' reflections on support devices needed for them to address barriers to learning in learners who are hard of hearing (Mapepa & Magano, 2018). Their findings indicated that teachers were of the opinion that there is a lack of adequate teaching and learning materials available to support the learners. In addition, the results of this study are also in agreement with a study conducted in high schools in Gege branch, Swaziland by Zwane and Malale (2018). The study investigated the

barriers in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools intending to find lasting solutions to inform research and government policy (Zwane & Malale, 2018). The findings of this study revealed that teachers were of the opinion that it is important to have appropriate teaching and learning materials for learners experiencing barriers to learning as the lack of such materials hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education (Zwane & Malale, 2018).

In conclusion, the majority of teachers (75%) (n=9) indicated that there was a need for a variety of teaching and learning materials in order to effectively respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. It appears to be imperative, therefore, that the MOET in Lesotho provide teachers with appropriate teaching and learning materials so that they can effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms.

#### **4.5.2 Sub-theme b: Further training on inclusive education for teachers**

Although eight teachers (66.7%) indicated that they received training on inclusive education, as reported in section 4.4.1, they further indicated in section 4.4.3 that their training on inclusive education was not sufficient. They required refresher courses from the MOET so that they are able to respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Responses from the interviews indicated that 91.7% (n=11) of teachers mentioned that they needed further training on inclusive education so that they will be able to address the barriers to learning in learners in their classrooms more effectively. Below are verbal quotes confirming that teachers felt that they needed more support from the MOET in the form of training in order to effectively address barriers to learning in learners in the school.

*“From Ministry of education, we need refresher courses, as much as I am experienced and having been trained, there are some new trends which need much more attention as to what are the recent ways of dealing with kids with different educational needs.”*  
(P1).

*“May those people from the MOET, once in a while give us the training even if it can be the school based training, at least it will equip us with methods, strategies, approaches to those learners, if it is something possible, may they do that. We need training.” (P5).*

*“I think we need them to hold us the workshops, the trainings for the teachers” (P7).*

The findings of this study indicated that teachers felt that they needed more training on how to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Results from this study agree with the study conducted by Mag et al., (2017) in the UK. The study investigated the benefits of inclusive education. The study revealed that teachers need pre-service and in-service training as such training is fundamental in making educational settings more inclusive (Mag et al., 2017). These teachers indicate that they need to stay up-to-date with current thinking and to keep building their professional expertise since new research is continually bringing to light new knowledge (Mag et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results of this study concur with the study conducted by Zwane and Malale (2018) in high schools in Gege branch, Swaziland. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that they did not have sufficient training and were unable to respond to the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning as they lacked knowledge on how to accommodate the learners (Zwane & Malale, 2018).

In conclusion, almost all teachers (91.7%) (n=11) indicated that they required additional training on addressing barriers to learning. It is therefore crucial that the MOET and the school offer training on this topic so that teachers are able to respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Failure to respond to the diverse needs of learners may have a negative impact on the academic performance of the learners as they may not receive the support needed in order to reach their potential.

#### **4.5.3 Sub-theme c: Involving parents in their children’s education**

As mentioned in section 4.4.4, teachers were of the opinion that parents were not sufficiently involved in their children’s education. Three teachers (25%) stipulated in the interviews that, in order to effectively address barriers to learning in learners, parents had to be more involved in their children’s education.

Below are verbal quotes which confirm that teachers were of the opinion that parents had to be more involved in their children's education.

*“Besides, school has to engage parents.”* (P1).

*“I do need support from the parents and even from the ministry of education.”* (P4).

*“I think one of the supports can be the point of awareness to parents also, hence others are not aware that they should be involved in their children's education.”* (P6).

The findings of the current study concur with the findings from a study conducted in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia by Adams et al. (2018). The findings indicated that when parents are more involved in the education of their children, it contributed to a more inclusive classroom environment where teachers were able to address the barriers to learning more effectively (Adams et al., 2018). In addition, the findings of the current study are also in agreement with a study conducted by Ralejoe (2021) in a secondary school in Lesotho. The findings indicated that poor parental involvement led to teachers being unable to effectively address barriers to learning in learners in their classrooms. Furthermore, teachers in the study by Ralejoe (2021) also indicated that it is important that the school should create more opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education as this will have a significant impact on inclusion in the classroom.

In conclusion, twenty-five percent (n=3) of teachers expressed the need for parents to be more involved in their children's education as this will improve inclusion within the classroom. Furthermore, the findings concur with the mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This level focuses on the relationship between two or more settings in which the learner is an active participant. In this case, the relationship between the home environment, which included parent's involvement in their child's education and the school environment. Some of the teachers felt that if parents were more involved in their child's education they may do better in school. It is therefore proposed that the school investigate how they can involve parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning to a greater extent within the school setting. If parents



are more involved in their children's education, they will be able to better support teachers as well as their children in their education.

#### **4.5.4 Sub-theme d: Teaching assistant needed in classrooms**

It emerged from the interviews that some teachers (58.3%) (n=7) were of the opinion that they required the help of teaching assistants in their classes to help them with learners who experience barriers to learning. The teachers stated that if they have teaching assistants in their classrooms, they will be able to focus on implementing more inclusive education practices. The verbal quotes below substantiate that teachers felt that they needed more support in the form of teaching assistants in their classes.

*"I need an assistant, because I've got that problem of hearing, it is difficult to hear, so I want the person who can help me while interpreting when they don't understand me even me if I don't understand some people can understand better than me."* (Participant 2 [P2]).

*"It needs the government to help us with teaching assistants that can help us in our classroom so that we can be in a position to go a bit faster, if that is the case because if the helper is there, you be concentrating on these ones and then the helper will be on those ones and then you will go vice versa, that is what I think."* (P3).

*"Ministry of education should hire teaching assistant who can help us in the classrooms with these kids."* (P8).

The results from the current study are in agreement with the study conducted by Jia and Santi (2020) in China. In their study, the researchers report that teachers would prefer having a teaching assistant in their classrooms to help them effectively implement inclusive education (Jia & Santi, 2020). The current results also concur with the findings from a study conducted by Breyer et al. (2020). The researchers found that teachers in regular schools in given European Countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovakia, and the UK) were of the opinion that they require the help of learning and support assistants in their classrooms to help them respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms (Breyer et al., 2020).

In conclusion, more than half of the teachers (58.3%) (n=7) stated that they required more support in the form of teaching assistants in their classrooms to help respond to the diverse needs of learners. As mentioned in section 4.4.5, teachers stated that they did not have enough time to respond to the diverse needs of learners. If the MOET were to appoint teaching assistants, teachers will be able to implement inclusive education practices more effectively.

#### **4.6 Syntheses**

In this chapter, the researcher presented an analysis and interpretation of the findings and placed them in the context of findings from comparable studies. The next and final chapter will focus on the summary of the findings relating to the research questions, a critical evaluation of the study, recommendations for future research, and a general conclusion.

## Chapter 5

### General discussion, implications and conclusion

#### 5.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The main aim was organized into four sub-aims: 1) to investigate how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho; 2) to explore how teachers support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho; 3) to establish the challenges that teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho, and 4) to understand teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

There is inadequate research on how teachers are supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools in Lesotho (Ralejoe, 2019). The current study contributes knowledge on this noteworthy topic.

In this chapter, the major findings of the study were summarised. The theoretical framework and practical implications were discussed and infused with recent literature to reflect the significance of the study. Lastly, the research study was critically evaluated, recommendations for future research were given and a conclusion was drawn.

#### 5.2 Theoretical implications of the study

The results of this study were interpreted using Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1-2.7.2), the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory includes the learner and the

learner's immediate environment which in this study was represented by the home, school, and classroom environments. The mesosystem (see Chapter 2, section 2.6) focuses on the relationship between two or more settings where the developing learner is an active participant, and in this study, the focus is on the relationship between the home of the learner and the learner's school. Furthermore, the exosystem (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1-2.5.2) refers to one or more settings that do not include the learner as an active participant, but where events happen that can affect the environment containing the learner. In this study, the exosystem included the post-secondary training institutions that provide training on inclusive education to teachers in Lesotho as well as the school board, ESS and the MOET. Lastly, the macrosystem within Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model comprises cultural beliefs, resources, societies, political and economic systems. The current study highlights the key policies and legislation relating to supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in HICs and LMICs, specifically Lesotho (see Chapter 2.4.1-2.4.1.3). It is evident that various environments are influencing the learner, and it is important to also take into consideration the relationships between the developing learner and these environments when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning.

### **5.3 Identifying learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

This study investigated how teachers identify learners with barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Teachers used informal and formal assessments as well as observations to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms as well as on the playground or in the hallways.

According to Lesotho's MOET, a screening and assessment tool, referred to by the MOET as the 'assessment form' (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.1), is available for teachers to use to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. However, all teachers (100%) (n=12) reported that they have yet to receive any screening and assessment tools from the MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning. Instead, all the teachers (100%) (n=12) were using informal and formal assessments to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning. Although the

MOET has the 'assessment form' available for teachers to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning, a possible explanation why teachers did not have the 'assessment form' may be that MOET has not made this form readily available to teachers. The findings of this study concur with a previous study conducted by Ralejoe (2016) in a secondary school in Lesotho. Teachers in the study conducted by Ralejoe (2016) indicated that they experienced challenges when having to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning within their classrooms as they did not have access to screening and assessment tools and had not received sufficient training on inclusive education. It is therefore of paramount importance that the MOET provides adequate training for teachers on inclusive education and how to use the 'assessment form' so that they can identify learners experiencing barriers to learning and implement inclusive education practices within their classrooms. Furthermore, the MOET should ensure that all teachers have access to the 'assessment form' as some teachers in the current study were aware of the form but did not have access to it. Future research should establish what the MOET is currently doing to provide teachers with the necessary support to be able to implement inclusive education practices within mainstream schools.

Secondly, although teachers were not using the screening and assessment tool developed by the MOET to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning, it is positive to see that most teachers (91.7%) (n=11) were able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning by observing their behaviours. During the interviews with the teachers, it became apparent that several learners in the public mainstream primary school experienced barriers to learning. These learners presented with barriers to learning caused by problems with aspects such as vision, speech, language, hearing, reading, writing, and/or comprehension. Findings from this study are in agreement with a study conducted in Lesotho by Mosia and Lephoto (2015). The study found that teachers who did not use assessments to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning were able to identify these learners by observing learners' behaviours. It is evident, though, that while teachers were able to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning based on their behaviours, the policies on inclusive education developed by the MOET in Lesotho were poorly implemented in the public mainstream primary school. It is therefore important for the MOET to ensure that teachers have access to

the screening and assessment tools to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning and to provide them with more training on the implementation of inclusive education. Future research is needed to determine the challenges experienced by the MOET in the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools in Lesotho.

In summary, the findings of this study revealed that teachers used formal and informal assessments and observations of the learner's behaviour to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning as they did not have access to the 'assessment form' developed by the MOET that help them identify the learners with diverse needs.

#### **5.4 Providing learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

The current study investigated how teachers provided learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The support included differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies, and a differentiated learning environment.

Firstly, all teachers (100%) (n=12) in the current study reported in the interviews and their lesson plans that they used various differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. These strategies included alternative learning materials, peer coaching, flexible grouping, individual support, and alternative teaching methods. The results of this study are in agreement with a study conducted in Australia by Mills et al. (2014). The Australian researchers investigated the extent to which teachers in high schools differentiate the curriculum by using different teaching methods and strategies. The results of the study revealed that teachers were using similar teaching methods and strategies to respond to learners' diverse needs such as peer coaching, flexible grouping, and individual support (Mills et al., 2014). In the current study, teachers used differentiated learning, teaching, and assessment strategies to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms despite the fact that the MOET did not have an official policy on curriculum differentiation for teachers to use when teaching these learners. It is incumbent upon the MOET to develop policies with

guidelines on curriculum differentiation so that teachers can use the policy documents as a guideline when responding to the diverse needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning.

Secondly, six teachers (50%) in this study mentioned that they differentiated the learning environment for learners experiencing barriers to learning. They did this by adjusting their physical environment through rearrangement of the classroom and alternative seating. For example, learners who had visual or hearing impairments were placed in the front of the classrooms. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Hassan et al. (2015) in Pakistan. These researchers explored teachers' experiences and practices in inclusive classrooms in Pakistan. Teachers indicated that learners with poor vision were placed in the front rows of the classroom for them to be able to see the board better and so that the teachers could help them when they saw that they struggled (Hassan et al., 2015). Since only 50% (n=6) of the teachers in the current study differentiated the learning environment for learners experiencing barriers to learning, it is important for the MOET to provide teachers with more training on how to differentiate the learning environment as this will enable more teachers to implement relevant strategies in their classrooms.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that all teachers (100%) (n=12) differentiated the curriculum, but only 50% (n=6) of the teachers differentiated the learners' learning environments when responding to their diverse needs. Therefore, it is important that the MOET provide teachers with more training on inclusive education practices, such as curriculum differentiation, as well as develop policies on curriculum differentiation for teachers to use as guidelines in their classrooms. Future research should be conducted on the level of alignment between the national inclusive education policy in Lesotho and the school curriculum.

### **5.5 Challenges teachers experience when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

The current study investigated the challenges teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream school in Lesotho. The

challenges included lack of appropriate learning materials, difficulty managing learners in the classroom, lack of training on inclusive education for teachers, lack of parental involvement, time constraints when teaching in the classroom, and lack of support from the MOET.

Firstly, 33.3% (n=4) of the teachers indicated that they did not have access to appropriate learning materials for learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Teachers often had to improvise and create their own learning materials or resources in an attempt to meet the needs of these learners. The results of this study are in agreement with a study conducted by Sauchez et al. (2019) in Spain. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that learners experiencing barriers to learning do not have access to appropriate learning materials and this, in turn, created more barriers as learners were unable to participate in learning activities with their peers (Sauchez et al., 2019). In addition, the findings of the current study are also in agreement with the studies conducted in Lesotho regarding challenges relating to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015; Mateusi et al., 2014; Mosia, 2014; Ralejoe, 2019). In the study conducted by Ralejoe (2019), teachers reported that they experienced challenges in supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning as they were extremely under-resourced in terms of learning materials. The teachers mentioned that they do not have access to appropriate learning materials for their learners such as braille typewriters, braille textbooks, magnifying glasses, or other assistive technologies (Khoaeane & Naong, 2015; Ralejoe, 2019). It is therefore crucial that the MOET together with school management teams ensure that teachers have access to learning materials and resources to effectively support the learners with and without barriers to learning in their classrooms. Future research should be conducted in mainstream schools in Lesotho to determine what teaching and learning materials teachers need in their classrooms to aid with the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Secondly, it emerged from the interviews in this study that 66.7% (n=8) of teachers felt frustrated about having to manage learners with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom, as some learners were disruptive when they become bored while the



teachers explained the content to learners experiencing barriers to learning. The results of this study are in agreement with the findings from a study conducted by Jia and Santi (2020) in mainstream schools in the Shuangliu District in China. Teachers in the study by Jia and Santi (2020) reported that they experienced various barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education in their classroom, which included managing learners with and without barriers to learning. The teachers stated that they often felt frustrated as some learners without barriers to learning disrupted their classrooms while they were supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning because these other learners were bored. Furthermore, the findings are also in agreement with a study conducted by Al-Subaiei (2017) in English language institutions in Canada. The study investigated the challenges experienced by teachers in mixed ability classes in English language institutions. The study found that teachers were often frustrated having to teach students with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom as they were not able to create a conducive teaching and learning environment for all learners (Al-Subaiei, 2017). It is crucial that the school management and the MOET provide teachers with the necessary support so that they feel less frustrated when supporting learners with and without barriers to learning in the same classroom. A possible solution to the problem is to appoint ESS teams at every school to support the learners experiencing barriers to learning as well as provide teachers with strategies on how to support the learners in their classrooms.

Thirdly, more than half (58.3%) (n=7) of the teachers reported that they lacked training on inclusive education and that they were, therefore, unable to provide sufficient support to learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Findings from the current study are in agreement with the results of a study conducted by Nishan (2018) in the Maldives. Teachers there reported that they do not receive sufficient training on inclusive education and therefore do not have the necessary skills to be able to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Furthermore, the results are also in agreement with a study conducted by Zwane and Malale (2018) in Swaziland. The study investigated barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that the Ministry of Education and Training in Swaziland

failed to provide teachers with adequate training in order to support learners experiencing barriers to learning (Zwane & Malale, 2018). Teachers in the current study were of the opinion that they did not receive adequate support from the MOET in Lesotho and that it hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education. It is therefore important that the MOET provide teachers with more training opportunities on inclusive education in Lesotho so that they are able to successfully implement inclusive education practices in their classrooms. Future research should focus on the specific areas teachers require training on within the inclusive education framework.

Fourthly, findings from the current study indicated that 66.7% (n=8) reported that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning were often not involved in their children's education. Teachers reported that they often schedule teacher-parent meetings, but parents seldom attended these meetings and told the teachers that they did not think there was anything out of the ordinary about their children. In addition, since this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, learners were not attending school every day and teachers noted that parents were less involved in their children's education than before the pandemic. The results from the current study are not in agreement with a study conducted by Toquero (2020) in the Philippines. Teachers in the Philippines were of the opinion that parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning were more involved in their children's education as the learners were taught online when schools closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Toquero, 2020). Teachers reported that they involved parents through online communication, providing them with strategies on how to help learners at home and teaching learners through online platforms (Toquero, 2020). Furthermore, teachers in the study by Toquero (2020) were of the opinion that learners experiencing barriers to learning required more support from their parents in order to be able to learn online during the pandemic, and parents were therefore obligated to be more involved in their children's education if they wanted them to make progress. However, results from the current study are in agreement with a study conducted by Marais (2019) who investigated how involved parents of learners experiencing barriers to learning are in the education of their children. Marais (2019) found that parents often did not attend teacher-parent meetings or attend to their children's homework. Therefore, in order for

parents to be more involved in their children's education, the school and MOET should create more opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education. These opportunities may include regular check-ins with families either through in-person meetings or informal conversations over the telephone, involving the parents in the decision-making process when deciding on learners' goals, inviting parents to school activities, and hosting parenting workshops where they can learn how to respond to their children's diverse needs at home (Boonk et al., 2018). Furthermore, limited research has been conducted on the involvement of parents in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning in Lesotho. Future research on this topic might provide stakeholders with information on how they can involve parents and what support parents require for their children.

In the fifth place, 75% of teachers (n=9) indicated that they did not have enough time to help learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Since the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers indicated during the interviews as well as in their lesson plans that they did not have enough time to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classrooms, especially since there had been a few times the past eighteen months where the schools were closed due to rising COVID-19 infections in Lesotho. In addition, when the schools were open, teachers were only at school for a few hours per day as instructed by the MOET (personal communication with the principal. 2021). Furthermore, learners were not coming to school every day, as the school had a schedule where they alternated which grades were allowed to come to school. Teachers also mentioned that the lack of time available to support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a mainstream classroom was not something new, it has always been a problem. However, it became even worse during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from this study concur with the results of the study conducted by Leballo et al. (2021) in high schools in Lesotho. Teachers in their study reported that there has always been a lack of time to implement inclusive education strategies for learners experiencing barriers to learning and that it only became worse during the COVID-19 pandemic (Leballo et al., 2021). Therefore, it is evident that teachers had other time constraints which may hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education practices in the classroom and that this has been

worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since limited research has been conducted on the challenges experienced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, it might be of significant value to conduct a comparative study of the challenges teachers experienced with regards to inclusive education before and during the pandemic.

Lastly, the results of this study indicated that 66.7% (n=8) of teachers are of the opinion that they did not receive sufficient support from the MOET in order to help learners experiencing barriers to learning. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1), teachers were not aware that there is an 'assessment form' available to identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classroom, which reflects the poor involvement of the MOET in the school. Furthermore, the MOET had no policy on curriculum differentiation (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1-4.3.2) for teachers to use as a guideline when responding to the diverse needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. In addition, the teachers reported that they had not been adequately trained by the MOET to support learners experiencing barriers to learning. Lastly, the MOET had not appointed an ESS team at the school to help teachers support learners experiencing barriers to learning. This study concurs with a study conducted in Swaziland by Zwane and Malale (2018). The study investigated barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools. The researchers found that teachers were of the opinion that the Ministry of Education and Training failed to provide teachers with adequate training in order to support learners experiencing barriers to learning (Zwane & Malale, 2018). It seems predictable, therefore, that teachers in the current study would be of the opinion that they do not receive adequate support from the MOET in Lesotho and that this lack of support hinders the effective implementation of inclusive education. It is of high concern that the MOET investigate how they can support their teachers better so that they can support the learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms to the best of their potential.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that teachers encounter many challenges when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Teachers experienced a need for adequate training on

inclusive education which will equip them with the knowledge and skills to help learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms.

### **5.6 Teachers' views on the support needed for effective inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

The current study investigated teachers' views on the support needed for the effective inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. It was evident from the findings in the current study that teachers required additional support when addressing barriers to learning in learners in mainstream schools. These forms of support included the provision of diverse learning materials, further training on inclusive education, teaching assistants, and parental involvement in learners' education.

Firstly, 75% (n=9) of teachers revealed that they needed more diverse learning materials in order to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Furthermore, it was evident when analysing the documents, such as lesson plans, that teachers did not have access to a variety of teaching and learning materials to respond to the diverse needs of learners experiencing barriers to learning. It was evident from the interviews and the documents analysed that there was a need for a variety of teaching and learning materials in order to meet the diverse needs of learners in the classrooms. The findings of this study are in agreement with a study conducted by Mapepa and Magano (2018) amongst teachers in two provinces in SA. The study investigated teachers' reflections on support devices needed for them to address barriers to learning in learners who are hard of hearing (Mapepa & Magano, 2018). Their findings indicated that teachers were of the opinion that there is a lack of adequate teaching and learning materials available to support the learners. It is regarded as imperative that the MOET in Lesotho provide teachers with diverse teaching and learning materials so that they can effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. Future research should be conducted in multiple public mainstream schools across Lesotho to determine whether teachers from other schools have different support needs.

Secondly, the findings of this study revealed that 91.7% (n=11) of teachers were of the opinion that they required further training on inclusive education and that they needed refresher courses from the MOET so that they are able to adequately respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Results from this study are in agreement with a study conducted by Mag et al. (2017) in the UK. The British study investigated the benefits of inclusive education. The teachers who participated in the study reported that they need pre-service and in-service training as it is fundamental in making educational settings more inclusive (Mag et al., 2017). It is therefore crucial that the MOET and the school offer training on this topic so that teachers are able to respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Failure to respond to the diverse needs of learners may have a negative impact on the academic performance of the learners as they may not receive the support needed in order to reach their potential.

Thirdly, 25% (n=3) of the teachers believed that they required more support from parents and that parents should be more involved in their children's education. The findings of the current study are in agreement with results from a study conducted by Ralejoe (2021) in a secondary school in Lesotho. The findings indicated that poor parental involvement led to teachers being unable to effectively address barriers to learning in learners in their classrooms. It is strongly advised that the school investigate how they can involve parents of these learners to a greater extent within the school setting. If parents are more involved in their children's education, they will be able to better support teachers as well as their children in their education. As mentioned earlier in section 5.5, future research should be conducted on the involvement of parents in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning in Lesotho. The information gained from future research on this topic might provide stakeholders with suggestions on how they can involve parents more and what support parents require for their children.

Lastly, more than half (58.3%) (n=7) of the teachers stipulated that they required the assistance of teaching assistants in their classrooms so that they can better support learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. The teachers stated that the additional help of teaching assistants in their classrooms will enable them to focus

on implementing more inclusive education practices. In addition, results from the current study also concur with the findings from a study conducted by Breyer et al. (2020). The researchers found that teachers in regular schools in certain European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovakia, and the UK) were of the opinion that they require the aid of learning and support assistants in their classrooms to help them respond to the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms (Breyer et al., 2020). As mentioned in Chapter 4 section 4.4.5, teachers stated that they did not have enough time to respond to the diverse needs of learners. If the MOET were to appoint teaching assistants to help the teachers, they would be able to implement inclusive education practices more effectively.

In summary, it is evident that teachers in the current study require more support from various stakeholders such as parents, school management, and the MOET to effectively include learners with barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms.

## **5.7 Critical Evaluation of the study**

In the following sections, the researcher critically reviewed the strengths and limitations of the study.

### **5.7.1 Strengths of the study**

- The researcher used semi-structured telephonic interviews to obtain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. Teachers were able to express their opinions freely and the researcher was able to clarify answers when necessary.
- Data obtained from this study can be used to inform the school management team as well as the MOET about 1) how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning; 2) how teachers provide learning support to learners experiencing barriers to learning; 3) challenges teachers experience when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning, and 4) teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. The data may enable the school management

and the MOET to understand the challenges teachers experience better and to plan better support for them in the future.

- Limited research has been conducted on teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools in Lesotho. The study, therefore, contributes to the fields of knowledge and implications for public mainstream schools in Lesotho.

### **5.7.2 Limitations of the study**

- Since the study was conducted in only one public mainstream primary school in urban Lesotho, the results cannot be generalized to all public mainstream primary schools in Lesotho. Other public primary mainstream school teachers may have different opinions and teachers in rural schools may experience other challenges when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning.
- The sample size was small (12) and therefore results cannot be generalized to all contexts.
- The researcher is still a novice researcher.

### **5.8 Recommendations for future research**

- Future research should be conducted to establish what the MOET is currently doing to provide teachers with the necessary support to be able to implement inclusive education practices within mainstream schools.
- A few researchers have conducted research on the challenges experienced by teachers with regards to inclusive education in Lesotho, but limited research has been conducted on the challenges experienced by the MOET in the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools in Lesotho. It is therefore important that future research be conducted on this topic.
- Future research should be conducted on the level of alignment between the national inclusive education policy in Lesotho and the curriculum followed by the public mainstream schools.



- Research is needed to determine what teaching and learning materials teachers in all public mainstream schools in Lesotho require in their classrooms to aid with the successful implementation of inclusive education.
- Teachers mentioned that they require additional training on inclusive education. However, it might be beneficial to conduct research to determine the specific areas teachers require training on within the inclusive education framework.
- Furthermore, limited research has been conducted on the involvement of parents in the education of learners experiencing barriers to learning in Lesotho. Future research on this topic might provide stakeholders with information on how they can involve parents to a greater extent and what support parents require for their children.
- Limited research has been conducted on the challenges experienced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It might be of significant value to conduct a comparative study of the challenges teachers experienced with regards to inclusive education before and during the pandemic.
- Future research should be conducted in multiple public mainstream schools across Lesotho to determine whether teachers from other schools have different support needs from the MOET.

## **5.9 General conclusion**

The study revealed teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The results related to the first sub-aim contributed important information on how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms. The results indicated that teachers identify the learners using formal and informal assessments as well as observing the behaviour of the learners in the classroom as well as on the playground and hallways. The results from the second sub-aim provided data on how teachers were providing support to learners experiencing barriers to learning through curriculum differentiation. The third sub-aim provided information on challenges teachers experience when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in their classrooms which included lack of appropriate learning materials, difficulty managing learners in the classroom,

lack of training on inclusive education for teachers, lack of parental involvement, time constraints when teaching in the classroom, and lack of support from the MOET. The last sub-aim provided insight on teachers' views on the support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning. Teachers mentioned that they require more diverse learning materials, further training on inclusive education, parents who are more involved in their children's education, and teaching assistants. The study provided evidence that there is practical value in conducting research on teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethical clearance – Faculty of Education University of South Africa



#### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/03/10

Ref: **2021/03/10/60035897/16/AM**

Dear Mrs MI Maine

Name: Mrs MI Maine

Student No.:60035897

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2021/03/10 to 2024/03/10

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs MI Maine  
E-mail address: makhoanamakuba@gmail.com  
Telephone: (+266) 58094146

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Dr S. Erasmus  
E-mail address: sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com  
Telephone: +16474096309

#### Title of research:

**Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

**Qualification:** MEd Inclusive education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/03/10 to 2024/03/10.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/03/10 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



University of South Africa  
Pretter Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/03/10**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2021/03/10/60035897/16/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motthat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof PM Sebate**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za



University of South Africa  
Pretter Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## Appendix B: Request for permission to conduct research at the school (MOET)



### Request to conduct research at .....

Date: .....

Title of the research: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho

Dear .....

I, Mareaboka Maine, am doing research under the supervision of Dr Sumari Erasmus, an external supervisor in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

The aim of the study is to describe teachers' perspectives about supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. To meet the aim of the study, the following sub-aims were formulated. The sub aims of the study are:

- To investigate how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho;
- To investigate how teachers, support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho;
- To establish the challenges that teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho; and
- To understand teachers' views on the support needed to effectively support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

This school has been selected because the teachers are currently teaching learners experience learning difficulties in their classroom and meet the requirements for the study. The inclusion criteria for the participants are as follows:

- Teachers currently teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms.
- Teachers must be fully qualified educators.

The study will entail semi-structured telephonic interviews which will be conducted with the teachers at the selected school. The interview questions will include questions about the teacher's educational background, how they support learners experiencing barriers to learning, challenges they face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning and teachers' views on support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. The interviews will be conducted

after school at the time agreed upon by both the researcher and the teachers and will take approximately 20 minutes.

Lastly, the researcher will analyse various documents, lesson plans, teachers' files and policies related to inclusive education.

The study will contribute positively to teachers, as it will improve teacher support to learners experiencing learning difficulties. Teachers will be empowered with different strategies on how to support these learners and strengthen the implementation of inclusion.

The participants will not be exposed to any risk during the study. The researcher will not ask any uncomfortable questions. There will not be any reimbursement or incentive for participation in the study.

The feedback procedure will entail a teachers' information session where the results and findings will be shared with the teachers and the principal. I am happy to share the results of this study with you. If you are interested to receive a free copy of the results, please inform me. Should you require any further information, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



---

Mrs Mareaboka Maine

(+266 58094146)

[makhoanamakuba@gmail.com](mailto:makhoanamakuba@gmail.com)

MEd Student



---

Dr Sumari Erasmus

+1 647 409 6309

[sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com](mailto:sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com)

External Supervisor



**RETURN SLIP: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT .....**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name and surname) herewith give permission that Mrs Maine can conduct research titled: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The researcher, Mrs Maine, has informed me about the nature, process, risks, discomforts and benefits of the study. I am aware that the results of the study will be anonymously processed into articles and research reports. I have had time to ask questions and have no objection to participating in the study. Hereby also give/not give consent that the data may be used for future research.

Name .....

Signature.....

Date.....

## Appendix C: Request for permission to conduct research at the school (Principal)



### Request to conduct research at .....

Date: .....

Title of the research: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho

Dear .....

I, Mareaboka Maine, am doing research under the supervision of Dr Sumari Erasmus, an external supervisor in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

The aim of the study is to describe teachers' perspectives about supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. To meet the aim of the study, the following sub-aims were formulated. The sub aims of the study are:

- To investigate how teachers identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho;
- To investigate how teachers, support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho;
- To establish the challenges that teachers face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho; and
- To understand teachers' views on the support needed to effectively support learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

This school has been selected because the teachers are currently teaching learners experience learning difficulties in their classroom and meet the requirements for the study. The inclusion criteria for the participants are as follows:

- Teachers currently teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream classrooms.
- Teachers must be fully qualified educators.

The study will entail semi-structured telephonic interviews which will be conducted with the teachers at the selected school. The interview questions will include questions about the teacher's educational background, how they support learners experiencing barriers to learning, challenges they face when supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning and teachers' views on support needed to effectively include learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools. The interviews will be conducted

after school at the time agreed upon by both the researcher and the teachers and will take approximately 20 minutes.

Lastly, the researcher will analyse various documents, lesson plans, teachers' files and policies related to inclusive education.

The study will contribute positively to teachers, as it will improve teacher support to learners experiencing learning difficulties. Teachers will be empowered with different strategies on how to support these learners and strengthen the implementation of inclusion.

The participants will not be exposed to any risk during the study. The researcher will not ask any uncomfortable questions. There will not be any reimbursement or incentive for participation in the study.

The feedback procedure will entail a teachers' information session where the results and findings will be shared with the teachers and the principal. I am happy to share the results of this study with you. If you are interested to receive a free copy of the results, please inform me. Should you require any further information, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



---

Mrs Mareaboka Maine

(+266 58094146)

[makhoanamakuba@gmail.com](mailto:makhoanamakuba@gmail.com)

MEd Student



---

Dr Sumari Erasmus

+1 647 409 6309

[sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com](mailto:sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com)

External Supervisor

**RETURN SLIP: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT .....**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name and surname) herewith give permission that Mrs Maine can conduct research titled: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho. The researcher, Mrs Maine, has informed me about the nature, process, risks, discomforts and benefits of the study. I am aware that the results of the study will be anonymously processed into articles and research reports. I have had time to ask questions and have no objection to participating in the study. Hereby also give/not give consent that the data may be used for future research.

Name .....

Signature.....

Date.....

## Appendix D: Participant information and consent form (Teachers)



**Title: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Mareaboka Maine and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Sumari Erasmus, an external supervisor in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in a public mainstream primary school in Lesotho.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The study is expected to collect important information that could contribute positively to teachers, as it will improve teacher support to learners experiencing learning difficulties.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because you are currently teaching learners who experience learning difficulties in your classroom. The researcher aims to include twelve teachers from different races, genders and ages in the study. I will need to conduct telephonic semi-structured interviews with the teachers and analyse documents (i.e differentiated lesson plans, policies related to inclusive education etc). There will be no direct contact with the teachers as everything will be discussed telephonically and documents will be shared via email.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study will entail telephonic semi-structured interviews being conducted with you, the teacher. The interview will include information about your educational background, how you support children experiencing barriers to learning, challenges you face when

supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning and understand your views on the support needed to effectively include these learners in mainstream classrooms. The interviews will be conducted after school at the time agreed upon by both the researcher and the teachers and will take approximately 20 minutes. Lastly, the researcher will analyse various documents including your lesson plans, teacher files and policies related to inclusive education. The expected duration of participation will be for two months.

**CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO CONSENT?**

Participating in the study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you decide to take part, you will be given the information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

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

Teachers will be more knowledgeable of different inclusive practices. Teachers will be empowered with different strategies on how to support learners with barriers to learning and strengthen the implementation of inclusion in the classroom. Learners who have barriers to learning will thus be more confident in their education and develop a more positive self-esteem.

**ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no negative consequences for you to participate in the study. You will not be exposed to any risk during the study. The researcher will not ask any uncomfortable questions.

**WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and to ensure anonymity the researcher will code the teacher's interviews and documents. Apart from the researcher, no one else will know about your involvement in this research.

All information obtained from the research will be reported on anonymously as there will be no names on interview scripts and document analysis. No school information will be given.

Information collected might be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and /or conference proceedings. The researcher will ensure that anonymity and confidentiality of the school and teachers in such reports.

#### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for ten years in a locked cupboard or filing cabinet for future research or academic purpose; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer.

#### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no payment or any incentive for participating in this study.

#### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. A copy of approval can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

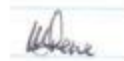
#### **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED WITH THE FINDINGS/ RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mrs Mareaboka Maine on +266 58094146 or email [makhoanamakuba@gmail.com](mailto:makhoanamakuba@gmail.com)

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact me.

Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Sumari Erasmus on +16474096309 or [sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com](mailto:sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.



---

Mrs Mareaboka Maine  
(+266 58094146)  
[makhoanamakuba@gmail.com](mailto:makhoanamakuba@gmail.com)  
MEd Student



---

Dr Sumari Erasmus  
+1 647 409 6309  
[sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com](mailto:sumari.erasmus01@gmail.com)  
External Supervisor



**REPLY FORM: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)**

I,.....(participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconveniences of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree with the recording of the interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant name and surname (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name and surname (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix E: Document analysis

### Written Document Analysis Worksheet

Type of document

- ..... Newspaper
- ..... Letter
- ..... Map
- ..... Report
- ..... Government document
- ..... Other:

Describe.....  
.....

Who wrote the document?

.....

What is the date of the document?

.....

For whom was the document for?

.....

List the important information in this document.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Why was the document written?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix F: Interview questions

### Interview questions

1. Which population group do you belong to?
2. Please indicate your gender.
3. What qualification do you have?
4. How many years have you been teaching?
5. What subjects are you currently teaching?
6. Have you ever been to training on supporting learners experiencing barriers to learning in mainstream schools (inclusive education)??
7. What are your views regarding the inclusion of learners experiencing barriers to learning in public mainstream primary schools?
8. How do you identify learners experiencing barriers to learning in your classroom? E.g do you use any documents provided by the Ministry of Education.
9. How do you support these learners in the classroom?
10. What strategies or methods do you use to differentiate the curriculum?
11. What challenges do you experience when teaching learners experiencing barriers to learning in the classroom?
12. What support do you feel you need from the school or Ministry of Education to be able to help these learners?

**Appendix G: Assessment form**

ASSESSMENT FORM

CHILD'S NAME:.....

SEX:..... AGE:.....

DATE:.....

CLASS:..... PERIOD IN SAME CLASS:.....

TRAINER:.....

SKILL ASSESSMENT

1. CHILD'S STIMULATION SKILLS:.....
2. MOTOR SKILLS:.....
3. SELF-HELP SKILLS:.....
4. COGNITIVE SKILLS:.....
5. SOCIAL SKILLS:.....
6. BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS:.....

REMARKS:.....

SIGNATURE:.....

he

CHILD'S HISTORY

A. PREGNANCY

1. DID MOTHER HAVE ANY FEVER OR OTHER DISEASE(S) DURING PREGNANCY?.....
2. IF YES, SPECIFY THE DISEASE.....
3. DID ANY PROBLEMS ARISE DURING PREGNANCY?.....  
IF YES, WHICH WERE THEY?.....
4. WAS THE MOTHER TAKEN TO HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT?.....  
IF YES FOR WHICH DISEASE/PROBLEM?.....  
WHAT TREATMENT/MEDICATION GIVEN?.....  
.....
5. WHAT WAS THE LENGTH OF THE PREGNANCY?.....
6. GENERAL FEELING ABOUT PREGNANCY.....

B. BIRTH

7. WAS THE CHILD BORN NORMALLY?.....
8. WERE THERE ANY PROBLEMS DURING THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD?.....  
IF YES, WHICH WERE THEY?.....
9. WHERE WAS THE CHILD BORN?-HOSPITAL/DISPENSARY/HEALTH-CENTRE MCH CLINIC/HOME/OTHER?.....  
IF OTHER SPECIFY.....
10. WHO HELPED IN THE DELIVERY?-DOCTOR/NURSE/MIDWIFE/BIRTH ATTENDANT/TRADITIONAL HEALER/ELDERLY LADY/HUSBAND?.....

C. POST NATAL/AFTER BIRTH

- DID THEY HAVE ANY ACCIDENTS?.....
- WHAT WAS THE CAUSE?.....  
.....

6. FAMILY HISTORY

TYPE OF DISABILITIES:

1. BROTHERS.....DISABILITIES.....
2. SISTERS.....DISABILITIES.....
3. WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE DISABILITIES?.....  
.....
4. IS THERE ANY MEMBER IN THE FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S FAMILY  
WHO HAS OR HAD THIS DISABILITY?.....
5. FATHER'S.....STATE THEIR FAMILY POSITIONS.....
6. MOTHER'S.....STATE THEIR FAMILY POSITIONS.....  
.....  
.....
7. IF THERE IS A RELATED GUARDIAN, STATE HIS/HER FAMILY HISTORY  
OF DISABILITY.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Appendix H: Letter from language editor

**ELSIE C NAUDÉ**  
DPhil Communication Pathology

Posadres/Postal address  
Cycadsingel 13/13 Cycad Crescent  
Sedgefield  
6573

E-pos/E-mail: [elsienaude@gmail.com](mailto:elsienaude@gmail.com)  
Tel: (044) 343 3018  
Sel/Cell: 082 825 6588

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2021-11-27

This is to affirm that the manuscript

**Teachers' perspectives on supporting learners  
experiencing barriers to learning in a public  
mainstream primary school in Lesotho**

**By**

**Mareaboka Irene Maine**

was edited by me with regard to language and style. Editing did not involve any structural re-writing of the content and did not influence the academic content in any way.

*ENaudé*

Elsie Naudé



## Appendix I: Turnitin

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### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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