



INCLUSION THROUGH THE VOICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A CAPABILITIES PERSPECTIVE

Motlalepula Alphonci Khumaloⁱ,
Maqenehelo Letseka-Manka

Faculty of Education,
National University of Lesotho,
Lesotho

Abstract:

The government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Education and Training, introduced the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018). The purpose of the policy is to provide quality education to learners, including those with diverse needs at all levels. This implies that schools, through the principals, are vested with the responsibility to implement the policy to ensure that all learners, irrespective of their status, receive a quality education. The study explored the principals' perceptions of the implementation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) through the lens of the capabilities perspective. The participants of the study were comprised of five purposively selected principals from the Nazareth cluster in the Maseru district. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were adopted to collect data. Data was organised and analysed through the themes that were derived from the collected data. The findings of the study reflect that principals have not received any comprehensive training on what they are expected to do to implement the policy. It was further revealed that schools do not have proper infrastructural facilities that would cater for disabled students. Driven by the findings of the study, the concerned ministry is urged to engage in the dissemination of information and provide adequate support for schools to effectively implement the policy.

Keywords: diverse needs, education, inclusive education, capabilities perspective, mainstream education

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is an approach to *“schooling in which students with many different kinds of disabilities and learning needs are educated in classes with non-disabled and typically developing students”* (Kirschner, 2015, p. 1). Inclusive education is conceptualised as a whole-school environment and classroom restructuring (Kirschner, 2015). The initiative was triggered by the conception that education is a basic human right and the

ⁱ Correspondence: email alphoncikhumalo@gmail.com

fundamental backbone for advancing a more just society (Ainscow, 2020a; 2020b; Ackah-Jnr, 2020). In this comprehensive praxis, inclusive education incorporates “*persons with physical and mental impairments, such as sensory or mobility limitations, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, language disorders, behaviour disorders and autism spectrum disorders*” (Kirschner, 2015, p. 2). In addition, inclusive education extends beyond physical impairments but also to children and learners “*who can face exclusion or disempowerment due to their ethnicity, social class, gender, culture, religion, immigration history or other attributes*” (Ainscow, 2020a; Kirschner, 2015). Inclusive education thus acknowledges that all children can learn and that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Arguably, inclusive education incorporates all learners with diverse needs in mainstream education to give them equal opportunity with their peers to have access to quality education in the same schools and or classrooms. In this context, inclusive education is envisioned as a decolonising transformative approach that intends to dismantle the education system that marginalises learners with special needs. Inclusive education is embraced by advocating and advancing an all-encompassing inclusive education environment that provides all learners with access to quality education (Andiyanto & Hariri, 2022). In this space, inclusive education endorses social justice by destroying the inequalities brought by the past education system. Consistent with the idea, Broodryk (2006, p. 4) argues that,

“One of the goals of social justice is social equality, which refers to the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society’s major institutions, such as schools, churches and other organisations, and the socially supported substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realise their choices.”

By implication, inclusive education supports and promotes diversity; thus, every learner matters (UNESCO, 2017) and matters equally. The phenomenon became a global concern upon realizing that in most countries, there are children who are out of school. This is evident, as UNESCO (2023) recognises that globally, one in five children, adolescents, and youth are entirely excluded from education (UNESCO, 2023). The global community took initiatives through policies to enhance and foster inclusive education across the globe (Khumalo & Mosia, 2023). The call for education for all by the United Nations advocates for decolonising the education system, which excluded learners with diverse needs and calls for the inclusion of all with equal opportunities.

Various studies have been conducted concerning LIEP 2018. From the findings of the study conducted by Khumalo and Mosia (2023), it was revealed that there are serious challenges concerning the implementation process of the policy. It is implied that principals and the Ministry of Education and Training possess limited knowledge of what they are expected to do to implement the policy. From the foregoing exposition, the study adopted a capability approach to explore principals’ perceptions of the implementation of LIEP 2018 in the Nazareth cluster in the Maseru district.

1.1 Capabilities Perspectives

This study employs the capability approach as a theoretical framework, emphasising the moral imperative of freedom to achieve well-being, which is defined in terms of individuals' capabilities. The capability approach highlights the development of capabilities by examining social provisions, political freedoms, economic opportunities, and protective security as means to enhance individuals' freedom and overall well-being (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). In the literature, the terms 'capability approach' and 'capabilities approach' are used interchangeably, though the latter is often associated more specifically with Nussbaum's partial theory of justice (Nussbaum, 2011a). The capability approach also critiques frameworks that focus solely on hedonistic theories of well-being, arguing that such perspectives, while relevant to personal well-being, are insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of human flourishing (Sen, 2008). Additionally, the capability approach serves as a framework for assessing individual well-being and evaluating social structures despite ongoing philosophical debates regarding its precise definition. It prioritises individuals' characteristics, behaviors, and opportunities to realise essential aspects of their lives, such as education (Robeyns, 2016). By recognising human diversity, the capability approach challenges normative theories like distributive justice and is particularly valued by scholars concerned with issues of care and disability. It addresses the limitations of mainstream moral and political philosophy, which often overlooks the experiences of marginalised groups, including people of color, individuals with disabilities, and women (Khader, 2008; Terzi, 2010). We, therefore, find the capabilities theory suitable for this study, particularly in exploring inclusion through the voices of school principals.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Despite the efforts that the government has made to include all learners with diverse needs in mainstream education, it appears that the schools have not yet started implementing the policy because of a lack of knowledge and resources (Khumalo & Mosia, 2023). It is, therefore, the intention of the paper to encourage the Ministry of Education and Training, particularly to reflect and assess its role towards the implementation of the policy. Through the theoretical framework we have adopted for this study (capability approach), the study would be helpful to all the stakeholders to realise that there's a need to capacitate the implementers of the policy. This can be done by going through what the policy is saying to agree on what schools are expected to do in order to implement the policy. The concerned parties would realise that concerted efforts are needed to implement the policy, and as such, no one should be left out in the preparation and operation of the policy in schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Principals' Roles in Inclusive Education

Principals play a crucial role in creating a welcoming, respectful, and appreciated environment for diverse learners, promoting participation and reducing

underachievement, particularly for those with learning difficulties, by utilizing inclusive language, encouraging empathy, and establishing an accepting atmosphere (Billingsley *et al.*, 2018; Abrol, 2023). Principals shape budgets, distribute resources, provide professional development, hire and evaluate teachers, and set expectations (Leithwood *et al.*, 2008). Other studies emphasize the principal's role as an instructional leader who builds teacher capacity, sets high expectations, and demonstrates special education expertise (Billingsley *et al.*, 2014). According to Woodcock and Woolfson (2019), many of the fundamental difficulties in attaining successful inclusion are related to school climate and culture, both of which are heavily influenced by school and systemic leadership. A Scottish study discovered that teachers' sentiments of self-efficacy in teaching children with intellectual disabilities were predicted by favorable assessments of the school environment or climate, which included the principal's leadership connections (Wilson *et al.*, 2020).

2.2 Lack of Supportive Resources for Inclusive Education

The term "resources" refers to the physical and human resources available to teachers in their schools. Traditional special education methodologies, as well as additional materials and human resources, must be incorporated into ordinary schools in order to teach inclusively (Chimhenga, 2016, p. 527). Schneider *et al.* (2018) identify three types of resources in inclusive education: people resources (teaching and non-teaching staff), teaching materials, and special resources. Material resources include funding, classroom equipment, educational devices, computers, and accessible programmes for all learners. Kapur (2019) argues that teaching materials have been used in education since antiquity. However, a lack of resources, whether human, teaching materials or special resources, could hinder the implementation of educational policies meant to improve accessible and quality education. Numerous studies have found that inadequate classroom space and other amenities in secondary schools negatively affect inclusive education for students with disabilities (Chimhenga, 2016, p. 527). According to Malale and Zwane (2018, p. 391), there is a severe lack of educational materials, which suggests that even in inclusive classrooms, children with special education needs have limited mobility and feel less than their "normal" classmates.

2.3 Insufficient Funding for Inclusive Education

Studies indicate that a lack of enough funding in schools becomes an obstacle for principals to implement educational policies in schools. Marfo *et al.* (2020, p. 30) state that there is not enough money to purchase teaching and learning tools to support learners with special educational needs (LSEN). The data clearly shows that using subpar teaching and learning strategies along with inadequate resources has a detrimental impact on the inclusive education implementation process. Resources that are formerly allotted to segregated systems should be moved straight to supporting inclusive placements, and inclusive education must be encouraged. Lumina and Hodgson, 2023, p. 6) highlight that, "While a significant percentage of the government's budget is allocated to education in general, little of this budget is allocated for – or spent on – inclusive education." Similarly, the study

conducted by Khumalo and Mosia indicated that schools do not receive enough funding from the government. As a result, the school administration failed to adopt and implement the current LIEP 2018. This concurs with Donohue and Bornman (2014), who acknowledge that teachers fail to implement policies due to a lack of funding. Policies such as inclusive education are symbolic since they are developed to adhere to international standards rather than as a direct result of changes driven locally. Khumalo and Mosia (2023) recommend that the government should relieve the burden on caregivers of children with disabilities and facilitate access to schools by allocating sufficient resources, including financial, human, technological, and other resources

2.4 Principals' Training and Professional Development in Inclusive Education

The Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (MoET) (2018) states that MoET shall coordinate the provision of compulsory pre- and in-service IE training for teachers (MoET, 2018). Teachers, including principals, are drivers of educational initiatives within the school setting. Therefore, the successful implementation of LIEP depends on the availability of competent and dedicated education providers (principals) equipped with the requisite skills that can enable them to effectively execute the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho. However, Lumina and Hodgson (2023) note that teacher skills training and professional development in inclusive education are still significantly inadequate in Lesotho, resulting in gaps in the appropriate adaptation and modification of the teaching and learning environment for learners with disabilities. Since the majority of school staff, including the principals, lack the appropriate preparation for inclusive practices, inclusive education principles appear to be difficult to implement. Khumalo and Mosia (2023) recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training facilitate teacher training and professional development in accordance with the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) 2018.

3. Materials and Methods

Grounded on an interpretivist paradigm (Niewenhuis, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018), a qualitative design was adopted for this study. A qualitative research methodology was deemed necessary for this study as it enabled us to obtain first-hand and in-depth knowledge and experiences from the participants in their social world. In this way, qualitative research collects information and helps us to understand the phenomenon in a natural setting in which the participants are free to air their views. In this naturalistic approach, our role in this instance was to interpret the world from the reference point of the participants' worldview in their natural setting. Framed from a qualitative approach, we adopted semi-structured interviews.

We conducted the interviews with the principals to elicit information from their natural world. A purposive non-probability sampling approach was adopted to select a sample of five principals in the Nazareth Centre in the Maseru district. Purposive non-probability sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) was adopted for this study to select principals who have been in the office since the inception of the policy in 2018.

These principals were chosen because they have in-depth knowledge and experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) in creating a welcoming environment in their schools. Nazareth Centre comprises schools at the foothills of Maseru and others in the highlands of Maseru district. Three schools located at the foothills of the Maseru district and two schools in the highlands of Maseru were selected to form a sample of the study.

We then conducted semi-structured interviews with the principals individually, each from his/her school. The participants were given the freedom to choose the language in which to respond to questions. To adhere to ethical considerations of the research, participants' real names were not used, but pseudonyms ranging from 1-5 were employed to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were audio-recorded, and verbatim transcriptions of each were made separately.

In this study, an inductive qualitative data analysis was carried out to view principals' perceptions of the implementation of LIEP 2018 through a capability approach. A phenomenological approach to analysing data was employed. The approach helped us to understand the participants' lived experiences from their social world in their natural setting (Van Manen, 2014). Data from the transcriptions was read and rereading of data, which helped us to examine, compare and contrast information (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) obtained from the participants. Thematic analysis of data was employed. In this space, data related to the objective of the study was coded, organised and categorised into sub-themes and themes that were interwoven from the participants and such themes were used to analyse data.

4. Results and Discussion

The themes were organised from the findings as headings. The purpose of this study was to investigate inclusion through the voices of school principals from a capability perspective. The analysis of the responses obtained from the participants revealed seven main themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. These themes were thoroughly explored in the following sections, incorporating verbatim quotations from the participants' responses obtained from the interviews to ensure that their voices were effectively heard.

4.1 Knowledge and Understanding of the Policy

The participants were asked to determine the extent to which they are informed about the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018.

P1 explained:

"I am aware of the policy, but I was supposed to implement it at my school. You can tell it still has to be clarified; it is hazy. I need help comprehending the policy."

P2 shared the same breath:

"We are aware of the policy, but we do not fully comprehend what it involves because some terms require explanation."

P3 also explained further:

"I do not know the policy since I am new in the office. I do not know what to say about it."

P4:

"I am unfamiliar with the policy. Since I do not understand what we are expected to do with it, it is tough for me to articulate what the policy is all about."

Utterances from the participants indicate that they have limited knowledge and understanding of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018. While some are aware of its existence, they struggle with comprehension due to unclear terminology. One participant admitted to not knowing the policy at all due to being new in the role. Others expressed confusion about how to implement it in their schools. Overall, there is a need for further clarification and support to enhance understanding and effective application of the policy.

4.2 Dissemination of the Policy by MoET

Participants were asked to share their knowledge of whether the Ministry of Education and Training disseminated the policy to them. Here is the insight they provided.

P1 stated:

"MoET officials gave us a one-day workshop, and then we were in turn expected to disseminate the policy to the whole school community. To be honest, we are still struggling to understand what the policy entails."

P2 explained:

"We are quite aware of the policy because when it was first introduced, a workshop was held at the District Education Office entitled. However, we would be lying if we told you what the policy wants because even the officials were just highlighting certain aspects of the policy."

P3 differs from all participants:

"I did not attend the workshop. It is my first-time hearing from you that there is a new policy regarding learners with special educational needs, and I do not have a copy of the policy."

The findings reveal gaps in the dissemination of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). Some participants attended a one-day workshop but still struggle to fully understand the policy. Others recall a district-level workshop but felt it only covered selective aspects, leaving them uncertain about its full intent. One participant, however, was completely unaware of the policy, having never attended a workshop or received a copy. This suggests that dissemination efforts were inadequate, leading to confusion and inconsistent awareness among principals.

4.3 Learners with Diverse Needs

The respondents were asked whether they have enrolled students with diverse needs in their schools.

P1 highlighted:

"I do enroll learners with diverse needs, especially the ones with a walking disability because MoET wants all children to be at school."

P2 stated:

"I accommodate learners with minor challenges in my school because teachers are unable to handle learners with autism spectrum disorders since they need special attention."

P3 explained:

"Children have the right to be at school; however, at my school, it is not easy to accommodate learners with visual impairment. I do not know how to handle them since I received no training."

P4 further explained:

"There are those learners with severe disabilities like social behaviour who beat others or find themselves alone or lonely. The challenge is how to handle them."

It is evident that principals must accommodate learners with various needs in their schools according to the Ministry of Education and Training policy. However, some children with severe disabilities are not accommodated in schools. These children include learners with vision impairments and autistic spectrum disorders. Principals stated that they are unable to manage them because of their significant disabilities.

4.4 School Climate Concerning the Policy

When asked about whether their schools meet the required standards for accommodating learners with diverse needs, participants lamented that their schools are not accessible to learners with diverse needs;

P1 explained:

"There are no ramps for learners who use wheelchairs, and this makes it difficult for them to access the classrooms."

P2 elaborated:

"Some schools are old, and even the surroundings are not paved, therefore, it becomes more difficult for learners who use wheelchairs."

P3 stated:

"The environment is not conducive at all. The classrooms were designed for normal learners only. The chalkboards are not accessible for learners who use wheelchairs."

P4 posited:

"Learners with visual impairment still face challenges to be accommodated in our schools because there are no facilities such as Braille, audiotape, or enlarged print as some of them are very expensive for our schools."

P5 added that:

"Our school landscape is rocky, there is no way a wheelchair could move; our classes do not have ramps; even the administration block is not accessible to such learners."

From the above responses, it could be deduced that schools do not meet the required standards for accommodating learners with diverse needs. Participants reported a lack of ramps, making classrooms inaccessible for wheelchair users. Some schools have old infrastructure with unpaved surroundings, further limiting mobility. Classroom designs cater only to non-disabled learners, with chalkboards out of reach for wheelchair users. Learners with visual impairments face challenges due to the lack of Braille, audiotapes, and enlarged print materials. Additionally, rocky landscapes and inaccessible administration blocks further hinder inclusion.

4.5 Benefits of the Policy

When asked about the benefits brought by the introduction and the implementation of the policy in their schools, all the participants reiterated that the policy is beneficial to learners with diverse needs because they now have access to education irrespective of their status.

P5 added that:

"The policy has brought social justice to all learners who have been marginalised by virtue of their diverse needs and are now free to engage in mainstream education."

Participants show that the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018 has positively impacted learners with diverse needs. Participants agreed that it promotes access to education for all, regardless of their circumstances. One respondent emphasized that the policy fosters social justice by integrating marginalized learners into mainstream education. It ensures that no learner is excluded due to their diverse needs. Overall, the policy has transformed the education system in Lesotho, making it more inclusive.

4.6 Challenges of the Policy

The participants were asked about the challenges that they encountered when implementing the policy.

P1 shared:

"We are implementing a policy that was not disseminated adequately to us, we do not know what we are expected to do when we have enrolled learners with diverse needs in our schools. The MoET held one workshop for us, and that was it, so the policy is not clear to us."

P1 further highlighted:

"We do not have infrastructural facilities that could accommodate such learners in our schools."

P3 added:

"Our schools are old, and the classrooms were constructed without considering that one day we will be compelled to enroll learners with diverse needs."

P3 further clarified:

"Due to the rationalization of fees by the MoET, we do not have funds to refurbish the school environment to make it accessible and user-friendly to learners with diverse needs. We do not have funds to cater for teachers to attend workshops that are intended to capacitate them."

P4 further added:

"The policy places a burden on the schools because there is no funding that we get from the government that would assist the schools to create a learner-friendly environment that would cater for learners with diverse needs."

P5 pointed out:

"The teachers are not trained on how to handle learners with diverse needs as a result, most of the time, such learners are continually marginalised."

P5 further added:

"There are no teaching and learning materials which cater to and suitable for learners with diverse needs."

The implementation of the LIEP 2018 seems to be clouded with a lot of challenges that inhibit the effective implementation of the policy. Participants expressed that the policy was not adequately disseminated, leaving them unclear on how to implement it. A major concern is the lack of infrastructure, as schools were not designed to accommodate learners with diverse needs. Financial constraints due to the Ministry of Education and Training's fee rationalization make it difficult to renovate facilities or train teachers. The absence of government funding further burdens schools, limiting their ability to create an inclusive learning environment. Additionally, teachers lack training on handling diverse learners, leading to continued marginalization. The shortage of teaching and learning materials suited for these learners further hinders effective implementation. Overall, numerous challenges obstruct the policy's success in schools.

4.7 Suggestions to Improve Inclusive Education in Lesotho Schools

The participants were asked to come up with suggestions that could be adopted to effectively implement the policy. Here are their views.

P5 stated:

"The policy should be reviewed as it does not state what schools are expected to do to implement the policy."

P2 added:

"The government should provide funding that would help schools create a conducive learning environment for learners with diverse needs."

P3 posited:

"The MoET must provide continuous training and support to all schools."

P4 added:

"The government should establish schools that would accommodate learners with diverse needs, where relevant human and non-human materials would be provided."

Participants suggest several improvements for the effective implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho schools. Participants emphasized the need to review the policy to clearly outline schools' responsibilities. They highlighted the importance of government funding to create a conducive learning environment for learners with diverse needs. Continuous training and support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) were recommended to equip teachers with the necessary skills. One participant suggested establishing specialised schools with adequate resources for learners with diverse needs. Overall, these measures would enhance the successful implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho.

LIEP 2018 has been implemented in Lesotho schools to accommodate learners with diverse needs in mainstream education. LIEP informed that there would be pre-service and in-service training provided for teachers in inclusive education (MoET, 2018). In contrast to what the policy is saying, the findings of the study revealed that the schools are implementing the policy, although it was not adequately disseminated, and consequently, they lack knowledge and understanding of what they are expected to do to implement the policy effectively. It could be deduced that there was no proper and sufficient training for the school community to effectively implement the policy (Lumina and Hodgson, 2023). Consequently, a lack of teacher skills training and professional development results in gaps in the appropriate adaptation and modification of the teaching and learning environment for learners with disabilities. Since the majority of school staff, including the principals, lack the appropriate preparation for inclusive practices, inclusive education principles appear to be difficult to implement.

Cognizant of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Lesotho (1993), the policy strives to promote access to quality education for all learners with diverse needs. The findings of the study revealed that the policy is beneficial to learners with diverse needs as the policy intends to eliminate all the barriers that hinder learners' access to education (MOET, 2018). It could be argued that the policy envisages social justice for marginalized learners and consequently advocates for a decolonizing approach to education (Manka, 2022) where all learners with diverse needs are incorporated into mainstream education. By implication, the policy ensures open access to all learners. In this context, the MoET expects parents to take their children and refrain from hiding their children with disabilities.

Education is regarded as a fundamental tool that awakens and strengthens peoples' capabilities. In this instance, people gain knowledge and skills that could afford them an opportunity (Sen, 1999) to contribute meaningfully to their well-being. LIEP 2018 has not only ensured access to education but also to quality education that would enable learners to obtain skills and knowledge that would enable them to improve their well-being. The findings of the study further revealed that schools have started implementing the policy, and subsequently, learners are benefitting from the policy.

Moreover, the study has revealed that although schools have adopted and implemented the policy by enrolling students with diverse needs, the school climate and or environment is not conducive for them to feel comfortable and engaging in their learning process. By implication, schools encounter challenges that prohibit them from

effectively implementing the policy. The participants lamented that they have no infrastructural facilities that accommodate learners with diverse needs (Chimhenga, 2016). As noted by Malale and Zwane (2018), the lack of facilities and or amenities that support learners with diverse needs compromises their access to quality education. It could also be argued that failure to provide the required and appropriate infrastructure would mean learners are deprived of their school's sense of belonging. In this context, learners would feel a sense of placelessness (Manka, 2022), as the school does not satisfy their needs. Consequently, their engagement in the learning process is compromised. The implementation of policies requires funding that would ease its effective operation. The study revealed that since the inception of the policy, schools have not received any funding from the government. Khumalo and Mosia (2023) posit that the government has not allocated any funds to schools that would enable the implementation of the policy. Lack of funds would mean schools would not be able to provide the amenities that would accommodate learners with diverse needs. This implies that schools are not in a position to create a friendly and conducive environment for such learners. In this context, it could be deduced that schools are not prepared to implement the policy as expected. Marfo *et al.* (2020) argue that there is not enough money to meet the required standards, such as the appropriate materials that would welcome learners with diverse needs in their respective schools. Subsequently, their engagement and their mobility are restricted. As noted by Schneider *et al.* (2018), there are three types of resources in inclusive education: people resources (teaching and non-teaching staff), teaching materials, and special resources. In this study, it was revealed that there are no such resources ideal for LIEP 2018 in Lesotho schools. Teachers were not provided with the necessary skills to deal with learners with diverse needs.

Moreover, lack of funding for the schools has also made it impossible to take an initiative to capacitate teachers and provide them with appropriate teaching and learning materials. As a result, teachers do not know what they are expected to do for them to cater for learners with diverse needs. In this context, the provision of quality education is compromised.

5. Recommendations

To enhance the effective implementation of LIEP 2018, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) The government should allocate sufficient funding to support inclusive education by providing necessary resources and infrastructure.
- 2) Comprehensive pre-service and in-service training should be conducted to equip teachers with skills for inclusive education.
- 3) Schools should be provided with specialized teaching materials and assistive technologies to support learners with diverse needs.
- 4) Awareness campaigns should be conducted to ensure all stakeholders, including parents, understand the importance of inclusive education.

- 5) School infrastructure should be modified to accommodate learners with disabilities, ensuring accessibility and a conducive learning environment.
- 6) Regular monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to assess policy implementation and identify areas for improvement.
- 7) Collaboration between the government, NGOs, and the private sector should be encouraged to enhance resource mobilization.
- 8) Policies should be reviewed periodically to address emerging challenges in inclusive education.
- 9) More special education specialists should be recruited to assist teachers in implementing inclusive practices effectively.
- 10) A structured support system should be established to provide continuous professional development for teachers and school staff.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the LIEP 2018 policy aims to promote inclusive education in Lesotho, its implementation has faced significant challenges. The study revealed that despite schools enrolling learners with diverse needs, inadequate dissemination of the policy and lack of proper training have hindered its effectiveness. Teachers and school staff lack the necessary skills to implement inclusive practices, and the absence of funding has further restricted the provision of essential resources and infrastructure. As a result, the school environment remains unconducive for learners with disabilities, affecting their engagement and sense of belonging. The study emphasizes that without sufficient government support, including financial investment and professional development for teachers, achieving true inclusivity in education remains difficult. To address these gaps, it is recommended that the government allocate adequate funding to ensure proper training, provision of necessary resources, and an overall improvement in the school climate for learners with diverse needs.

Funding Statement

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Authors have no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Motlalepula Alphonci Khumalo, a renowned academic, holds a PhD in Education (in progress) at the University of Johannesburg, a Master of Education in Inclusive Education from the National University of Lesotho and a Bachelor of Education with Honours in Inclusive Education from the University of South Africa. He also holds a Bachelor of Education from the National University of Lesotho in 2012 and serves as a part-time lecturer and educator for the Ministry of Education and Training. His research interests

include Technology, Numeracy and Literacy, Special Education, and Inclusive Education.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3502-4726>.

Maqenehelo Letseka-Manka holds a PhD in Policy Studies in Education obtained in 2023 at the University of the Free State. She also holds a Master of Education (2008), a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (2007) and a Bachelor of Education with Honours (2006) in Policy Studies and Governance in Education from the University of the Free State, respectively. In 2004, she completed her first degree in Education at the National University of Lesotho. She is currently employed as a part-time lecturer at the National University of Lesotho and a full-time educator at the Ministry of Education and Training. Her research interests include Educational Policy, Education Law and Pedagogy.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1967-2870>.

References

- Abrol, M. (2023). Role of Teacher in Promoting Inclusive Education, *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373922076_Role_of_Teacher_in_Promoting_Inclusive_Education
- Ackah-Jnr, F. R. (2020). Inclusive Education, a Best Practice, Policy and Provision in Education Systems and Schools: The Rationale and Critique. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 6, 171-183. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3605128>
- Ainscow, M. Inclusion and equity in education: Making sense of global challenges. *Prospects* 49, 123–134 (2020a). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09506-w>
- Ainscow, M. (2020b). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587>
- Andiyanto. D. and Hariri, H. (2022). Inclusive Education Schools: A Literature Review. *Journal Humaniora dan Ilmu Pendidikan (Jahidik)*, 1(2):121-127.
- Billingsley, B. & McLeskey, J. (2014). *Principal leadership for effective inclusive schools. The Handbook for Inclusive Education*. Routledge, Taylor-Francis: New York, NY. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S0270-401320160000032005>
- Billingsley, B., DeMatthews, D., Connally, K., & McLeskey, J. (2018). Leadership for Effective Inclusive Schools: Considerations for Preparation and Reform. *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education*, 42, 65-81. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jsi.2018.6>
- Broodryk, J. (2006). *Ubuntu: Life coping skills from Africa*. Randburg: Knowres. Retrieved from <https://search.worldcat.org/title/ubuntu-life-coping-skills-from-africa/oclc/842860058>
- Chimhenga, S. (2016). Resource material barriers: The challenges of implementing inclusive education in primary schools of Zimbabwe. *Global J. Adv. Res.*, 3(6), 526-

532. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/27156423/RESOURCE_MATERIAL_BARRIERS_THE_CHALLENGE_OF_IMPLEMENTING_INCLUSIVE_EDUCATION_IN_PRIMA_RY_SCHOOLS_OF_ZIMBABWE
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education*, 8th ed. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*, 4th ed. Los Angeles: Sage. Retrieved from https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf
- Donohue, D. & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realizing inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.15700/201412071114>
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking Leadership to Student Learning: The Contributions of Leader Efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44, 496-528. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321501>
- Lumina, M., & Hodgson, T. F. (2023). Failed implementation – Lesotho’s Inclusive Education Policy and the continued exclusion of children with disabilities: A briefing paper (Report). International Commission of Jurists. <https://icj2.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Lesotho-Inclusive-Education-Briefing-Paper-April-2023-FINAL.pdf>.
- Khader, S. (2008). Cognitive Disability, Capabilities, and Justice, *Essays in Philosophy*, 9(1): 93–112. Retrieved from <https://philpapers.org/rec/KHACDC>
- Khumalo, M. A., & Mosia, P. A. (2023). Reviewing Teachers’ Preparedness to Adopt and Implement the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018 in Lesotho Schools. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 4(5), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2023.4.5.736>
- Kirschner, S. R. (2015). Inclusive Education. In Scarlett, W. G. (Ed.) *Sage Encyclopedia of Classroom Management*: Sage. Retrieved from <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-classroom-management/book238737>
- Kapur, A. (2019). School as a site of Cultural Reproduction and Resistance: An inquiry into the school experiences of EWS children of private unaided schools of Delhi. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Delhi.
- Manka, M. (2022). Exploring the potential of Lesotho education policies to promote a sense of communitarian belonging (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of the Free State. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25339.28969>
- Marfo, R., Mensah, J. K. & Nantwi, W. K. (2020). Challenges and supports for pupils with special educational needs. *British Journal of Education Learning and Development Psychology*, 3(1): 18 – 32. Retrieved from https://abjournals.org/bjeldp/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/journal/published_paper/volume-3/issue-1/BJELDP_PPoOAmJe.pdf
- McMillan, J. and Schumacher, S. (2014). *Research in Education Evidence-Based Inquiry*, 7th ed. Edinburgh: Pearson. Retrieved from <https://www.pearson.com/en-us/subject->

- [catalog/p/research-in-education-evidence-based-inquiry/P200000007783/9780133846416?srsId=AfmBOoqCsR3fUCOhdUAnQWvzBzODOAzHxQOTHjPmYIdbZpkUERz30gNB](https://www.research-in-education-evidence-based-inquiry/P200000007783/9780133846416?srsId=AfmBOoqCsR3fUCOhdUAnQWvzBzODOAzHxQOTHjPmYIdbZpkUERz30gNB)
- Ministry of Education & Training (2018). Ministry of Education and Training Inclusive Education Policy Maseru Government of Lesotho. Retrieved from www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/education_sector_plan_2016-2026_lesotho.pdf.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2016). Introducing qualitative research. In Maree, K. (Ed.). *First steps in research, 2nd ed.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 50-70.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000). *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511841286>
- Nussbaum, M. (2011a). *Creating Capabilities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Creating_Capabilities.html?id=Gg7Q2V8fi8gC&redir_esc=y
- Robeyns, I. (2016). "Capabilitarianism", *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17(3): 397–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2016.1145631>
- Schneider, P. C., et al. (2018). T-Chamaeleontis-a Weak-Line Yy-Orionis Star. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, 614, A108.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf. Retrieved from <http://www.c3l.uni-oldenburg.de/cde/OMDE625/Sen/Sen-intro.pdf>
- Sen, A. (2008). The Idea of Justice, *Journal of Human Development*, 9(3): 331–342. Retrieved from <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674060470>
- Terzi, L. (2008). *Justice and Equality in Education: A Capability Perspective on Disability and Special Education Needs*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/14-%20Justice%20and%20Equality%20in%20Education%20A%20Capability%20Perspective%20on%20Disability%20and%20Special%20Educational%20Needs.pdf>
- UNESCO (2017). *Education Transforms Lives*. Retrieved from <https://www.unesco.org/en/education>
- Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Phenomenology-of-Practice-Meaning-Giving-Methods-in-Phenomenological-Research-and-Writing/vanManen/p/book/9781611329445?srsId=AfmBOoocY-6zhsO43XYMjxf-5iFpF-GgkQTO7rQh0zH2Td6GD9CuXoxZ>
- Wilson, C., Marks Woolfson, L., & Durkin, K. (2020). School environment and mastery experience as predictors of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards inclusive teaching. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24, 218–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1455901>
- Woodcock, S., & Marks Woolfson, L. (2019). Are leaders leading the way with inclusion? Teacher perceptions of systemic support and barriers to inclusion. *International*

Journal of Educational Research, 93, 232–242. Retrieved from
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.11.004>

Zwane, S. L., & Malale, M. M. (2018). Investigating barriers teachers face in the implementation of inclusive education in high schools in Gege branch, Swaziland. *African Journal of Disability*, 7, 391-401. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v7i0.391>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles, agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Open Education and E-learning Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind of content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).