Challenges of Learners with Special Educational Needs In Lesotho Mainstream Classrooms

1,MC Morena, 2,MM Nkoane

1,2,University of Lesotho, Faculty of Education

I.   INTRODUCTION

This intellectual piece is outlining an analysis of a line of discourse on how best the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho Ministry of Education with a specific focus on the basic education department could achieve education for all. The discourse was triggered by an introduction of policy imperatives within the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho Ministry of Education coined as Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy in the year 2000. This policy is informed by the following objectives *"... to make basic education accessible to all learners; to make education equitable in order to eliminate inequalities; to guarantee that every Mosotho child completes the primary education and ensure that education is affordable to Basotho (McConkey & Mariga, 2011:18).* This intellectual piece is couched within a Critical Pedagogy as a conceptual framework of choice. This conceptual framing amplifies the significant narratives of relations of learning and pedagogic praxis, whereby learners gain critical consciousness and social awareness. The methodological approach of choice for this intellectual piece was participatory action research (PAR), for data generation and data collated was analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). This intellectual piece concludes by emphasizing that for Lesotho Ministry of Education to realize education for all significant intellectual spaces within the Ministry of Education should be revisited, areas such as pedagogic praxis and creation of sustainable learning environment to enable an accessible intellectual spaces for all learners especially those with special educational needs.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK : This intellectual piece adopted Critical Pedagogy as a conceptual framing, to provide a philosophical stance that guides the conceptualization of constructs under discussions. Myriads of diverse gist of Critical Pedagogy have been theorized by various scholars, and all seems to amplify and trouble the notion of oppression as an operational element that calls for empowerment for transformation to be realized (see: Moreeng & Twala, 2014:495; Wink, 2005:1; and Kincheloe, 2005:157). However, in this intellectual piece, we align with definition of McKernan (2013:425) who defines Critical Pedagogy as a movement that involves relationships of learning and teaching whereby learners gain critical consciousness and social awareness; as a result, they take suitable measures against oppression is adopted. We track down the evolution of critical pedagogy (CP) as it traces its origin from the tradition of critical theory of the Frankfurt School and influenced heavily by the work of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire. He is the most celebrated critical educator, who is generally considered to be the germinal philosopher of critical pedagogy(McLaren, 2000:1).Critical Pedagogy was first described by Paulo Freire and further sophisticated by the likes of Henry Giroux and other scholars as a praxis-oriented educational movement, guided by passion and principle to enables learners to advance consciousness of emancipation, recognize tendencies of authoritarianism and connect knowledge of empowerment and find an intellectual space of taking a constructive action (McLaren, 2015:120).

Critical pedagogy as a conceptual framework automatically became an appropriate choice which is suitable for this intellectual piece as it recognizes lived experiences and social realities in which learners live. Thus meaning authors of this piece considered the experiences and social realities participants in this study. According to Aliakbari and Faraji (2011:80), critical pedagogy main concern is about transformation and empowerment to change the social stations of oppressive power that cause people to be oppressed. Authors of this piece hold the view that people should be treated equally, with no one seen on the periphery and others holding the center stage. The choice of this conceptual framing assisted in defusing the dominant discourse which regard *"other(s)"* as superior above others. In this study, all research participants were regarded equally and hence were referred to as co-researchers. Equality forms the base in this study and find prominence in order to trouble discourses of oppressive practices towards others. Important as well, was the view that all people should be free. It is clear, therefore, that critical pedagogy was therefore an automatic choice in this study. This intellectual piece amplifies the notion of emancipation to enable participants to communicate freely and partake with clear consciousness. Co-researchers were highly treasured and treated with respect, and they become highly committed to share their lived experiences with unconditional honesty. Freire's concept of praxis (Giroux,

1997:101) and the emancipatory nature of critical pedagogy assisted this study in encouraging active participation.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Each learner, regardless of differences, needs access to the meaningful curriculum that allows a learner to use his or her strengths. However, curriculum seems to be one of the barriers to learners with special educational needs. According to Education White Paper No:6 (DoE, 2001:19) curriculum is one of the significant barriers to learning for learners with special educational needs (SEN). Education White Paper No:6 (DoE, 2001:20) further highlights that, in many contexts, curriculum is centrally designed and rigid; it leaves very little flexibility for alterations for learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs are, therefore, faced with poor performance due to the curriculum that does not meet their needs. Clough (1998:27) highlights that the curriculum can be biased, appealing to learners who are regarded as able, but degrading to learners with special educational needs. Furthermore, the syllabus requirements of different curricula and assessment procedures created problems for teachers and administrators. Assessment was also not embedded in teachers' practices (Bricker, Yovanoff, Capt &Allen, 2003:28). In India, many parents reported that their reason for not sending their learners with special needs to school was the irrelevant curriculum that is not geared towards real life (Peters, 2004:18). Lesotho also still offers a performance-based curriculum, the goals of which do not include learners who do not meet pre-formulated norms and standards (Mosia, 2014:306). Offering the same standard of education is still a challenge as far as the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms is concerned (Lewis & Norwich, 2005:1).

Another challenge with regard to the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms is pedagogical praxis that do not meet the needs and interests of learners. According to research conducted by Moloi, Morobe and Urwick (2008:615) in Lesotho, pedagogy that is restrictive towards learning and particularly unaccommodating for learners with special educational needs, was identified. In Lesotho, a low-income country which, before the 1990s, had very little educational provision for learners with special educational needs, there are just four special schools and no inclusive provision for learners with special educational needs (Urwick & Eliot, 2010:142). A typical lesson consists of a class teacher teaching the learners, learners independently completing or copying class work from the board and then go in line to the teacher to be marked; learners with special educational needs are taught individually in any spare time at the discretion of the teacher (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009:140). Pedagogic praxis that are predominantly teacher-centered and promote seems to produce learning that is more inclined towards rote learning, whereby learners become passive and the teacher is the only source of knowledge. Freire (1970:477) refers to this pedagogic praxis as banking methods, which he highly contests as an apt pedagogic praxis. Teacher-dominant pedagogic praxis tends to treat the learners as hopeless, and denies them opportunities to interact with other learners, which leads to demoralization and under performance (Bonner, 2010:178). In a teacher-centered classroom, materials often used, are books, and assessment implies paper-pen assessments.

The teaching and learning materials and the assessment methods that are used do not cater for learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Teachers who still regard themselves as the only knowledge holders in the education system are, therefore, a big challenge towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. As long as teachers do not consider the knowledge of other stakeholders, they are prone to oppress others. Furthermore, Moloi et al. (2008:614) identified pedagogy in Lesotho that is restrictive towards learning and particularly unhelpful for learners with special educational needs. Another significant factor for successful inclusion is valuable parental involvement in the education of learners with special educational needs is parental participation. Parental participation is defined by Jeynes (2005:245) as the participation of parents in their learners' learning. Parents are the first educators of their learners. They are the key authorities on their learners needs and have distinctive knowledge on strategies for successful inclusion (Hill & Tyson, 2009:740). Clearly therefore, parents should be seen as equal partners in the education sector. Despite Bandura's (1997:754) emphasis that self-efficacious parents regard education as shared responsibility, parents of learners with special educational needs are seen as not actively involved in the learning of their learners. In the same manner, Swart and Phasha (2005:92) hold the view that a mutual relationship between parents and teachers is more beneficial to the learners' behaviour than either party trying to deal with it alone. However, many parents of learners with special educational needs are not involved in their learners' education (Margalit & Raskind, 2009). According to Turnbull and Turnbull (2001:91), although parents attend meetings, they are not involved in the objectives development, interventions and assessment methods. Parents complain that teachers concentrate on their learners' restrictions and do not listen to them enough or keep parents updated on how their learners' needs are met (Lindsay & Dockrell,2004:983).

In addition, there is a misunderstanding between parents and teachers on how much to be involved. Teachers complain that parents like to control the running of the school, while parents complain that teachers are concentrating on their learners' limitations (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004:984). In addition, teachers tend to see themselves as experts in all areas of learners' schooling. They seem not to give parents enough chance to be actively involved in their learners' learning. This behaviour leads to the disparity of power relations between parents and teachers, which results in parents becoming self-protective or feeling intimidated by the school (DoE, 2005:22).

Learners with special educational needs can only be effectively included in a barrier free environment. According to Eloff, Engelbrecht, Swart and Oswald (2002:12), the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms needs appropriate infrastructure, facilities and assistive devices, which are currently lacking in most schools. By facilities and assistive devices, Eloff et al. (2002:12) refer to more accessible buildings, equipment and appropriate instructional materials. An inaccessible learning environment, which is a serious challenge, leads to learners with special educational needs who are supposed to be attending school, being unable to attend; this way, learners are marginalized and excluded from school. According to Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger (2010:76), the physical environment of many schools is not accessible to learners with special educational needs and such an environment can affect the learning of such learners directly. Similarly, Eleweke and Rodda (2002:116) point out that the essential facilities for educating learners with special educational needs in many schools are lacking or inadequate, if available. McNary, Glasgrow and Hicks (2005:16) highlight that in some areas in developing countries, the idea of inclusion is undermined due to some barriers, including the absence of support services, large class sizes, inadequate facilities and poor infrastructure. Lesotho is not an exception in this regard. Lesotho, as one of the world's least developed countries; as a result, schools also suffer Chitereka (2010:83). It is reported that the quality of primary school education in Lesotho has declined under the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy due to insufficient teaching and learning materials, high teacher-learner ratios and congestion in classrooms (Jopo, Maema & Ramokoena, 2011:5). In addition, Mosia (2014:295) strongly emphasises that inclusive education cannot exist in an environment that still compares learners against performance or predetermined standards.
Mosia (2014:295) further states that it is difficult to include learners with special educational needs effectively and efficiently, without sufficient support, such as financial support, devices for those who need them, the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the diversity of learners, and specialists who support the teachers and schools that need assistance. Most Lesotho schools are reported to be in a situation where they cannot control instructional practice due to the lack of resources (Moloi et al., 2008:620). Many schools suffer from insufficient general teaching facilities, space, textbooks, furniture and qualified teachers (Moloi et al., 2008:620).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This intellectual piece adopted participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological approach, which was a means of operationalizing the critical pedagogy (CP) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used in analyzing the data. Included in the study were the school principal, four teachers, three parents, two learners with special educational needs and one learner without special educational needs, all from one school in which the study was conducted. The reason for choosing all co-researchers from one school was to contextualize challenges of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. Participatory action research (PAR) can be referred to as an alternative to scientific and traditional social research, as it moves an investigation from a linear cause and effect perspective to a more participatory framework that considers the context of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:480). PAR allows the participants to be actively involved in solving their problem. Co-researchers become actively involved in the quest for ideas and information to guide their future actions, rather than being passive (Whyte, 1991:21). According to Telford, Koch and Kralik (2006:459), collectively, the researcher and the co-researchers engage in social investigation and take action with the purpose of improving a problem or situation. PAR recognizes the need for people being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases of any research that affects them (Vollman, Anderson & McFarlane, 2004:129). Thus, PAR is a process of investigating a problem, using social methods whereby the affected people are involved in posing and solving their problem. In PAR, co-researchers, together with the researcher, actively participate throughout the research process. The definition of Kearney,Wood and Zuber-Skerritt(2013:115) that PAR involves the participants as equal partners in all phases of the research "designing, implementing, acting and evaluation" will be used in this study.PAR was a methodological approach of choice because it enables the stakeholders to take ownership of the process of transforming their own social reality (Cargo & Mercer, 2008:327) and share their experiences with regard to inclusion of learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. In PAR, the researcher is free to include people who face and are affected by the problem at hand.

The researcher acknowledges that the alliance of individuals with varied knowledge, skills and expertise advances the sharing of knowledge development. Stakeholders in education help advance a more compelling and a clearer agenda for social research by incorporating ethical concerns and projects for social transformation into educational research and practice (Kompridis, 2006:390). PAR is suited for research with side-lined individuals (MacDonald, 2012:40). However, in this study, the focus was on learners with special educational needs who are regarded as a side-lined group. PAR acknowledges people with special needs; hence it was regarded a suitable methodological approach to conduct this study of challenges of learners with special educational needs in Lesotho mainstream classrooms. PAR, as a methodological approach, was followed because it recognizes the voices of oppressed and marginalized people (Mahlomaholo, 2009:225). It commits the researcher to work with members of communities that have been oppressed and exploited in an effort to bring about social change (Nkoane, 2012:100).

IV.   PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSIONS

Data were presented under the following main intellectual elements: curriculum issues, pedagogic praxes, parental participation and learning environments. These constructs form the foundation of challenges that seems to push learners with special educations needs to the periphery.

During our discussions with the co-researchers, the centrally designed and rigid nature of the curriculum seemed to be a serious challenge:

> **Mrs Moyo** *highlighted the following: curriculum is a problem because we are not even consulted or involved when it is developed, yet it is expected that every learner be taught in the same manner, at the same time and be tested at the same way.*
> **Ms Lebo** *added: The curriculum treats these learners as if they are the same, that's why we progress with those who show progress and ignore those with special needs.*
> **Mrs Tau** *also added sadly: Another point is that it is expected that we finish the syllabus at a certain time, otherwise we are regarded incompetent.*

The assertion by Mrs Moyo that ―curriculum is a problem because we are not consulted or involved when it is developed" is understood in this context to mean that teachers are not involved or consulted in the development and planning of the curriculum. Mrs Moyo might be aware that when teachers are not consulted or involved in curriculum development, they face challenges when they have to implement such a curriculum at class level. She might also be aware that if teachers were involved in curriculum planning, the curriculum planners would understand that a uniform curriculum is not effective. This reference "it is expected that every learner be taught in the same manner, at the same time and be tested at the same way" is understood to mean that the curriculum that is used, does not cater for all learners, especially learners with special educational needs. The fact that a uniform curriculum is not effective, is seen in Ms Lebo emphasis that "the curriculum treats learners as if they are the same". This statement, in this context, is understood to mean that learners are not the same, but the curriculum does not cater for learners with special educational needs.

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

Discussions about curriculum in our meetings led to discussions on how pedagogical approaches can be a challenge faced by learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms.

> **Mrs Ntsonyana** *raised a concern: The way teaching is done, cannot help all the learners. I once arrived in one classroom and found a teacher sitting down holding a book reading for the learners, all learners looking at her, holding a stick in the other hand and I asked myself whether they were learning or fighting!*
> **Mr Andreas** *emphasized: Remember we said teacher tuition with regard to teaching these learners was a problem. We use teacher-centered methods because of overcrowded classrooms and lack of teaching materials.*

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

The scenario that Mrs Ntsonyana gives, where the teacher was the only one holding a book and the learners were looking at her, reveals the classroom environment whereby the teacher used the traditional methods of teaching. The teacher was transmitting knowledge to the learners and the learners were passively involved. According to Degener (2001:716), learners should be actively involved in their learning. The teacher holding a stick in her hand demonstrated that there was no freedom in that class. The issue of power residing in the teacher can also be depicted from this scenario. An adult holding a stick is a sign that he or she is dominant and holds authority. Furthermore, the Basotho cultural practice of the parent-child relationship between learners and teachers can be depicted as well. According to the Basotho cultural practices, parents are knowledgeable, superior and intelligent, and learners should submit to parents and learn from them. Hence the learners were listening attentively to their teacher. The reference Mrs Ntsonyana made of "a teacher sitting down, holding a book, reading for learners and all learners looking at her" is understood to mean that the teacher was reading for the learners.

The fact that the teacher was the only one holding a book and the learners were looking at her demonstrated that learning was teacher-centered. Teacher-centered methods are against the call of CP that the banking methods of teaching should be avoided, and an environment where learners and teachers are both playing the role of learning and teaching should be embraced. This scenario also gives a picture that it was normal in this school for a teacher to use teacher-centered methods. The response of Mr Andreas ascertains the use of teacher-centered methods … "*We use teacher-centered methods*" is understood to mean that Mr Andreas agrees and affirms that teachers in this school use teacher-centered methods of teaching. The phrase "*because of overcrowded classrooms and lack of teaching materials*", in this context, is understood to mean that teacher-learner ratio and insufficient learning materials are the bases of the pedagogical practices that are used in this school. Mr Andreas stressed overcrowded classrooms and insufficient materials as the major reasons why teachers were inclined to practice traditional teacher-centered methods. This response shows that he acknowledges that they might know of other teaching methods, but they use the teacher-centered methods because of the lack of teaching and learning materials and the overcrowded classrooms.

The statement "*teaching has always been teacher-centered*" is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo has known teaching as being teacher-centered. The phrase "a*nd I am comfortable teaching like tha*t" is understood to mean that Ms Tsebo uses teacher-centered methods and enjoys using them. From this response, it is clear that Ms Tsebo might not be aware of other methods that are not teacher-centered and that she is comfortable with the teacher-centered ones. However, critical pedagogy is concerned with empowerment and transformation, calls for classroom environment where all the power is shared by all class members. Parental participation entails the continuous support and encouragement of parents to take part in the education of their learners. According to Singh and Mbokodi (2004:301), parents should be meaningful partners with the school, working collaboratively to ensure quality education. The best practice is when parents are involved in all areas of the school, including determining school policies, implementing such policies and the day-to-day running of the school. Parental participation is regarded as one of the serious challenges faced by learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms.

Many parents of learners with special educational needs are not involved in their learners' education, while teachers complain that some parents are too much involved and want to control the school. They emphasize that parents are in denial about the state of their learners and are not cooperative. On the other hand, parents defend themselves, saying that their behaviour is due to the fact that teachers do not involve them enough in school matters. They complain that teachers do not listen to them; they concentrate more on their learners' disabilities than their abilities.

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

> **Mrs Moyo** *as the principal of the school stated: Parents give us problems because most of them never come to meetings, but are quick to judge the teachers.*
> **Ms Rapeisi** *mentioned: They are in denial of accepting that their learners have special needs. They expect that when they bring their learners with special needs to school, they should be healed.*
> **Ms Lebo** *postulated: Parents do not work cooperatively with the teachers.*

> *Ms Nthabeleng* added: There is really a misunderstanding between the teachers and parents, though I never encountered such parents myself.
> *Mr Andreas* held the view: Some parents believe that we waste their learners' time by saying they have special educational needs, yet they do not. You will sometimes see that they are so bitter that they can fight teachers.

Additionally, **Ms Tsebo** emphasized: The worst part is when parents send learners to school with neither a book nor pencil. However, **Mrs Lebusa** established: Teachers do not want to listen to us, yet we would help them on how to help our learners with special needs because we have more experience. Furthermore, **Mrs Lebusa** established: We are only called when the school wants to report something. Some of us wish to be involved, but it seems our ideas do not matter. In corroboration of Mrs Lebusa's idea, **Mr Kokolia** stipulated: Most of us are not as educated as the teachers, but when we are confused about what to do, they are not willing to guide us. The excerpts of Ms Rapeisi and Mr Andreas "*by saying they have special educational needs, yet they do not*" and "*they are in denial of accepting that their learners have special needs*" reveal that parents are in denial that their learners have special educational needs:"*They are in denial of accepting that their learners have special educational needs*" is understood to mean that some parents have not accepted that their learners have special educational needs. "*They expect that when they bring their learners with special educational needs to school, they should be healed*" is understood to mean that parents of learners with special educational needs hold the view that their learners are sick and that they will be healed when they are at school. The excerpts of Ms Lebo, Ms Nthabeleng, Mr Andreas and Ms Tsebo confirm that parents do not cooperate with teachers: "Parents do not work cooperatively with teachers" is understood to mean that parents do not work jointly with teachers. "*There is really misunderstanding between teachers and parents*" is understood to mean that there is a clash or squabble between parents and teachers. Also, "*parents send learners to school with neither a book nor pencil*" is understood to mean that parents send learners to school without writing materials, as they are uninvolved with their learners' education. To emphasize that parents are not cooperative, the principal, Mrs Moyo's response that "*most of them never come to meetings, but are quick to judge the teachers*" is understood to mean that in this school, parents who never attend meetings are the ones who are likely to judge the teachers.

This response shows that Mrs Moyo, as the overseer of the school, has seen that this behaviour of parents of not attending meetings is giving them problems, hence the phrase *"...parents give us problems*". This phrase is understood to mean that parents are making it difficult for the school. However, the citation of Mrs Lebusa that "*teachers do not listen to us*" is understood to mean exactly that teachers do not listen to parents. "We would help them on how to help our learners with special educational needs" is understood to mean that parents promise that they would help teachers on how to deal with their learners". The phrase "we have more experience" is understood to mean that Mrs Lebusa regards parents as having better experience with learners with special educational needs than teachers. Similarly, the response that "we are only called when the school wants to report something" is understood to mean that in this school, parents are never called, except when something is to be reported to them. The statement "some of us wish to be involved" is understood to mean that some parents, including Mrs Lebusa, are willing to be involved in the school. The phrase "but it seems our ideas do not matter" is understood to mean that ideas of parents are taken for granted. Besides, the reference of Mr Kokolia that "*most of us are not as educated as teachers*" is understood to mean that many parents are not educated, and "when we are confused about what to do" is understood to mean that sometimes parents are confused by what they should do. The phrase "they are not willing to guide us" is understood to mean that teachers are not keen to guide parents. From these responses, it is evident that both teachers and parents were blaming each other for the lack of parental involvement in education. However, truth of the matter in this school was that there was limited collaboration between the school and parents. On the other hand, active participation is one of the principles celebrated by CP. According to CP, the learning of the teacher from other stakeholders as he or she teaches, is vital.

According to Prater (2007:238), the learning environment includes the physical layout of the classroom, the number of learners and the physical environment of the school. The learning environment is indicated as one of the barriers faced by learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. The idea of including them in the mainstream classrooms is undermined due to some environmental barriers, including poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, the absence of support services and large class sizes. Thriving inclusion needs appropriate infrastructure, appropriate facilities, support and assistive devices. The aim is to avoid isolation and segregation, thereby ensuring access and participation. In one of our meetings, the learning environment was also highlighted as a challenge towards the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms:

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

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

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

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

Emphasizing the issue of physical environment, **Mrs Ntsonyana** established: During our time, it was not easy to attend school when one had special needs due to the environment that was not conducive for them. It is surprising that even now learners with special educational needs still experience the same problem. The excerpts of Ms Rapeisi, Lineo and Mrs Ntsonyana confirm that infrastructure is a challenge in this school. "The buildings and the entire physical environment of the school is a problem" is understood to mean that the buildings of the school and the environment at large are a predicament in this school. "[E]specially for learners on wheelchairs and those with visual challenges" is understood to mean that learners on wheelchairs and visual challenges are affected more than other learners by the barrier of infrastructure. The citation of Lineo "*I wish I was able to get into those classes upstairs*" is understood to mean that this student is not able to access the classes upstairs and wishes to get there. "*Unfortunately, we are not able to get there with our wheelchairs*" is understood to mean that learners on wheelchairs in this school are not able to reach classes that are upstairs. This response gives a picture that the building of the school has some parts that are not accessible for learners with special educational needs. This is highlighted in Lineo's assertion "*I envy those who are attending in those classes*". This statement is understood to mean that she desires to be attending the classes upstairs. On the other hand, the excerpts of Mr Andreas and Mrs Moyo confirm that teaching and learning materials are a challenge tolearners with special educational needs. The response of Mr Andreas "we are facing a serious challenge with regard to teaching materials because our school is independent and the government does not fund us" is understood to mean that the school does not get any funding from the government because it is independent.

According to this response, it is clear that independent schools do not get funds from the government. Furthermore, the emphasis that "it is very expensive to have appropriate materials because learners with special educational needs need special equipment" is understood to mean that appropriate materials and equipment for learners with special educational needs are expensive. However, the reference of Mrs Moyo "we have the problem of scarce materials" is understood to mean that the materials are available, but are limited. Mrs Moyo further states that, due to the problem of scarce materials, "it is difficult to meet the needs of each learner". This statement is understood to mean that the needs of some learners are not met, while other learners' needs are met. The statement "we end up giving them the same work due to lack of materials like photocopying machines" is understood to mean that teachers give different learners the same kind of class work due to lack of materials such as photocopying machines. The conceptual lens used in this study that is critical pedagogy, calls for stakeholders developing critical consciousness towards learners with special educational needs. When stakeholders are conscious about special educational needs, they work hard at creating an environment that is conducive for learners with special educational needs. When the environment caters for learners with special educational needs, they feel respected and cared for and they participate in their learning.

V.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study revealed that teacher-centered pedagogical praxis that are used, that creates and present a challenge to learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. Another finding was that inadequate parental participation was noted as another challenge faced by learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classrooms. The study further found that the entire learning environment, including the physical environment, is not appealing for learners with special educational needs. As a result, the intellectual piece recommends that the curriculum should be decentralized, and teachers should be included in the development of the curriculum. It is recommended that teachers adapt the curriculum in such a way that it meets the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, the context where the curriculum is going to be implemented, should be considered when developing the curriculum. It is also recommended that parents should be seen as active, equal partners in education. The study further recommended that the pedagogical approaches used

whereby learners with special educational needs are included in the mainstream classrooms should meet the needs of all the learners. Thus, when their needs are considered, the teaching methods are going to be learner-centered. To conclude, this intellectual piece recommends the creation of sustainable learning environments that is friendlier, welcoming and open and accessible to all leaners with a special focus to cater for learners with special educational needs.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Aliakbari, M. and Faraji, E. 2011. Basic principles of critical pedagogy. In 2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR (Vol. 17, pp. 78-85).
2. Bandura, A. 1997. Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: W.H. Freeman.
3. Bonner, J. 2010. Taking a stand as a student-centered research university: Active and collaborative learning meets scholarship of teaching at the University of Alabama. The journal of general education, 59(4):183-192.
4. Bricker, D., Yovanoff, P., Capt, B. and Allen, D. 2003. Use of a curriculum-based measure to corroborate
5. Clough, P. (ed.).1998. Managing inclusive education: from policy to experience. London: Sage. Eligibility decisions. Journal of Early Intervention, 26(1):20- 30
6. Chitereka, C. 2010. People with disabilities and the role of social workers in Lesotho. Social Work & Society, 8(1):82-93.
7. Cargo, M. and Mercer, S.L. 2008. The value and challenges of participatory research: strengthening its practice. Annual. Rev. Public Health, 29:325-350.
8. Degener, S.C. 2001. Making sense of critical pedagogy in adult literacy education. Annual review of adult learning and literacy, 2(1):26-62.
9. Eleweke, C.J. and Rodda, M. 2002. The challenge of enhancing inclusive education in developing countries. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 6(2):113-126.
10. Eloff, I., Engelbrecht, P., Swart, E. and Oswald, M. 2002, July. An emergent design for studying parents' experiences of inclusive education. In 25th International Conference on Applied Psychology (Vol. 7, p. 12).
11. Freire, P. 1970. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury Press.
12. Gal, E., Schreur, N. and Engel-Yeger, B. 2010. Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities: Teachers' Attitudes and Requirements for Environmental Accommodations. International Journal of Special Education, 25(2):89-99.
13. Giroux, H.A. 1997. Pedagogy and the politics of hope theory, culture, and schooling: A critical reader. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
14. Hill, N.E. and Tyson, D.F. 2009. Parental involvement in middle school: a meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. Developmental psychology, 45(3):740
15. Jeynes, W.H., 2005. A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. Urban education, 40(3), pp.237-269.
16. Johnstone, C.J. and Chapman, D.W. 2009. Contributions and constraints to the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 56(2):131-148.
17. Jopo, H., Maema, M. and Ramokoena, M. 2011. Quality of primary school inputs in Lesotho. SACMEQ, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

18. McConkey, R. and Mariga, L., 2011. Building social capital for inclusive education: Insights from Zanzibar. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 11(1), pp.12-19.
19. Moreeng, B. and Twala, C. 2014. Monuments as Spaces for Enhancing Social Justice and Sustainable Learning in History Teaching: A Case of the Voortrekker Monument. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5(7):491.
20. McLaren, P. 2001. Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the politics of hope: Reclaiming critical pedagogy. Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies, 1(1):108-131.
21. McLaren, P. 2015. Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education. New York: Routledge.
22. Kearney, J., Wood, L. and Zuber-Skerritt, O. 2013. Community–university partnerships: Using participatory action learning and action research (PALAR). Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 6(1):113-30
23. Kompridis, N. 2006. Disclosure. Critical Theory between Past and Future.Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

24. Lewis, A. and Norwich, B. 2005. How specialized is teaching pupils with disabilities and difficulties? Special teaching for special learners? Pedagogies for inclusion:1-14.

25. Lindsay, G. and Dockrell, J.E. 2004. Whose job is it? Parents' concerns about the needs of their learners with language problems. The Journal of Special Education, 37(4):225-235.

26. MacDonald, C. 2012. Understanding participatory action research: A qualitative research methodology option. The Canadian Journal of Action Research, 13(2):34- 50.

27. Mahlomaholo, S. 2009. Critical emancipatory research and academic identity. Africa education review, 6(2):224-237.

28. Margalit, M. and Raskind, M.H. 2009. Mothers of learners with LD and ADHD: Empowerment through online communication. Journal of Special Education Technology, 24(1):39-49.

29. Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. 2006. The how of the study: Building the research design. Designing qualitative research:55-101.

30. Moloi, F. Morobe, N. and Urwick, J. 2008. Free but inaccessible primary education: A critique of the pedagogy of English and mathematics in Lesotho. International journal of educational development, 28(5):612-621.

31. Mosia, P.A. 2014. Threats to inclusive education in Lesotho: An overview of policy and implementation challenges. Africa Education Review, 11(3):292-310.

32. Nkoane, M.M. 2012. Critical emancipatory research for social justice and democratic citizenship. Perspectives in Education, 30(4):98-104.

33. Peters, S.J. 2004. Inclusive education: An EFA strategy for all learners. World Bank, Human Development Network.

34. Prater, M.A. 2007. Teaching strategies for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

35. Swart, E. and Phasha, T. 2005. Family and community partnerships. Addressing barriers to learning: A South African perspective. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

36. Telford, K., Kralik, D. and Koch, T. 2006. Acceptance and denial: implications for people adapting to chronic illness: literature review. Journal of advanced nursing, 55(4):457-464.

37. Turnbull, A.P. and Turnbull, H.R. 2001. Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Collaborating for empowerment. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

38. Urwick, J. and Elliott, J. 2010. International orthodoxy versus national realities: inclusive schooling and the education of learners with disabilities in Lesotho. Comparative Education, 46(2):137-150.

39. Vollman, A.L.R., Anderson, E.T. and McFarlane, J.M. 2004. Canadian community as partner: Theory and practice in nursing. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

40. Whyte, W.F.E. 1991. Participatory action research. London: Sage.

41. .