

Government Support to Selected Primary School Learners with Disabilities in the Kingdom of Eswatini

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Abstract

The study sought to establish the governmental support for a selected primary school in Eswatini to realise the right to education of learners with disabilities in accordance with the Suitability, Availability and Equitability (SAVE) Framework. The regular schools in Eswatini fail to educate learners with disabilities, which is against the right to education of learners with disabilities. A qualitative approach was used, employing a case study design to study one primary school. The participants included two teachers, the school principal, a National Curriculum Centre director, a senior inspector of Special and Inclusive Education, and a parent of an out-of-school child with a disability. The researcher used the findings to produce a framework that could assist the school to work with the government to comply with the SAVE Framework to realise the right to education of learners with disabilities. The study shows that government support for the school did not comply with the minimum standards of the SAVE Framework; hence, the school was not ready to educate learners with disabilities. The government grants to the school did not accommodate learners with disabilities and the school has never contacted the government for assistance in handling learners with disabilities. The school must work with the government to assist learners with disabilities. The findings of this study suggest that people should educate their children with disabilities within their community. Quantitative research that could involve many primary schools in investigating the state's compliance with policies in all primary schools is necessary. Researchers should investigate teachers' attitudes when teaching learners with disabilities in regular schools.

Keywords: regular schools; minimum standards; learners with disabilities; right to education

Introduction

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (hereafter Swaziland Constitution) guarantees learners with disabilities the right to education in all public primary schools (Swaziland 2005, s29). This right is guaranteed not only by the Swaziland Constitution but also by the Children's Protection and Welfare Act, Act 6 of 2012 (Swaziland 2012, s9) (hereafter Children's Protection and Welfare Act) and the National Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, Ministry of Education and Training [MoET] 2018, s11). It is, therefore, imperative that the Ministry of Education and Training supports primary schools to realise the right to education of learners with disabilities.

Primary schools are supposed to provide a welcoming learning atmosphere for learners with disabilities (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2.2). Tesemma (2012, 210) compiled the Suitability, Availability and Equitability (SAVE) Framework, which works as a measure for ensuring the rights of children with disabilities. Learning technologies, accessible buildings, and school principals and teachers with experience working with learners with disabilities will all contribute to a positive learning climate. The government, in collaboration with schools, is implementing inclusive education to cater for learners with disabilities. Primary schools are expected to provide an environment conducive to learning for children with disabilities. If the cooperation between government and schools is not functional, these learners will experience difficulties in their learning.

When the government urged parents to send all children to school, regardless of disabilities, school principals argued that they would not be able to accommodate these learners (Okekea and Mazibuko 2014, 11). This indicated that the school principals needed support from the Ministry of Education and Training to accommodate children with disabilities in regular schools. The school buildings were built several years ago without the capacity for learners with disabilities to navigate the schools without assistance. Classroom furniture should allow learners in wheelchairs to move around, but in some schools, the large number of learners in each classroom prevents this. Moreover, teachers should be capacitated to teach learners with intellectual disabilities. However, most teachers are not ready to teach such learners.

As indicated above, regular schools experience challenges in educating learners with disabilities. This disregards the right to education of these learners. It is, therefore, imperative that the government ensures that the schools are supported in terms of teaching materials and capacitating teachers to promote quality education for learners with disabilities.

The current study aimed to determine government support in the selected primary school to realise the right to education of learners with disabilities, following the SAVE Framework in Eswatini.

The following objectives assisted in achieving the aim of the study:

- to determine **the support** required to guarantee the rights of learners with disabilities in line with the SAVE Framework in one primary school located in rural Eswatini; and
- to determine **the interventions** required to ensure the right to education of learners with disabilities in the selected primary school.

Theoretical Framework

The study used the SAVE Framework that was adapted from the Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability Scheme (Tomaševski 2001, 14). This scheme failed to address the human rights and educational needs of learners with disabilities, as the scheme was only designed to analyse the obligations of governments to realise the right to education (Tomaševski 2001, 14). The SAVE Framework addresses the core subject of the study, which is learners with disabilities. Although other frameworks have been used by developing countries, such as Eswatini, learners with disabilities are not supported in regular schools; hence, the study employed the SAVE Framework (Riggall and Croft 2016, 2–3). The framework was used in the study to measure the support given to learners with disabilities by using the suitability, availability and equitability standards. Each of these standards has its own requirements for the education offered to learners to ensure that the standard is fulfilled.

Figure 1 below depicts the SAVE Framework.

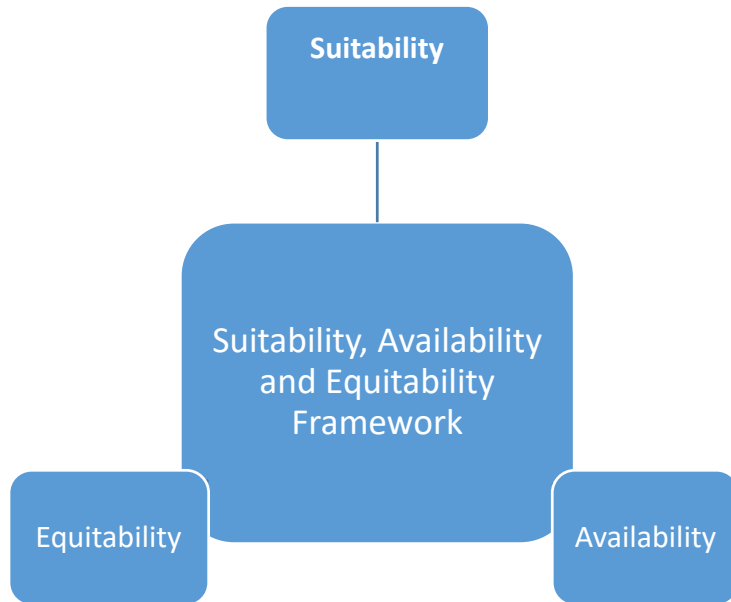


Figure 1: The Suitability, Availability and Equitability Framework. Source: Adapted from Tesemma (2012, 210)

The Concept of Disabilities

It is important to conceptualise learners with disabilities so that the context of the study is understood. Disabilities affecting learning may be classified as physical, sensory, neurological, cognitive, and psychiatric. Physical disability refers to learners with difficulty in mobility, such as struggling to move an arm or speech problems. The impairment may be temporary or permanent, but it is nevertheless a barrier to learning (University of Washington n.d.). Sensory disability is understood to be a hearing impairment or a sight problem (World Health Organization [WHO] 2011, 4). Neurological problems are displayed when the learners have challenges stemming from the nervous system, causing learners to experience migraines, epilepsy, or any other neurological disorder (Epilepsy Society 2015, 1). Cognitive limitations may be the result of genes inherited from parents, which may include autism, Asperger's syndrome, and other intellectual limitations and/or the presence of syndromes (Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria [CDDHV] 2008). Finally, psychiatric disorders are caused by an imbalance in the chemistry of the brain, which may result in conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and chronic depression (Khanna and Aeri 2018, 2–3).

The Human Rights Perspective in the Education of Learners with Disabilities

The human rights perspective in the education of learners is supported by international human rights instruments, which regard inclusive education as an appropriate education. The Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education focuses on the perspective of inclusive education principles regarding the rights of learners with disabilities (United Nations [UN] 1993, par. 15–41). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states:

1. children with disabilities must be able to access an inclusive, quality, and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
2. there must be reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements and provision of the support required to facilitate their effective education;
3. governments must facilitate the learning of Braille and other relevant communication formats; orientation and mobility skills; and peer support and mentoring;
4. governments must ensure that education for children who are blind, deaf or deafblind is delivered in the most appropriate languages and means of communication for the individual and in environments which maximise academic and social development; and
5. governments must employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and train education professionals in disability awareness and use of relevant communication formats, educational techniques and materials to support people with disabilities. (UN 2006, art. 24)

The Kingdom of Eswatini is in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, because free primary education is in place. However, learners with disabilities still face challenges in regular schools (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2.3). The international human rights instruments state that governments should be mandated to ensure the right to education of learners without discrimination (African Union [AU] 2018, art. 16; UNESCO 2014, art. 3). This should alert the Kingdom of Eswatini to the need to make regular schools accessible to all learners, including those with disabilities. There is already a policy in the Kingdom of Eswatini that requires that learners with disabilities in regular schools should be given appropriate support (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2.3).

Barriers to Learning of Learners with Disabilities

Learners with disabilities in the Kingdom of Eswatini, at the time of the study, faced challenges in accessing public primary schools due to conditions in the schools. Though

the schools are expected to support the learners, the intervention of the government is needed to ensure that these learners are assisted. The challenges faced by the learners become barriers when their individual needs are not accommodated. There are governmental barriers, funding barriers, classroom barriers and attitudinal barriers.

The lack of policies is a barrier to addressing the learning needs of learners with disabilities (UNESCO 2020, 38). However, in Eswatini there are several policies that have been put in place to address the learning needs of learners with disabilities, such as the National Curriculum Framework (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018), Standards for Inclusive Education (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2019, 2), and the National Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018). Unfortunately, the implementation of these three Eswatini policies has not had an effect on the education of learners with disabilities. On another note, addressing the education of learners with disabilities under different government ministries hampers the effective assistance of these learners. The different government ministries may come up with contradicting policies on issues concerning the education of learners with disabilities. In Eswatini, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Education and Training both provide services towards the education of learners with disabilities.

The lack of funds to implement inclusive education prevents learners with disabilities from receiving education (Zwane and Malale 2018, 4). The government must ensure that children with disabilities can access regular schools by providing teachers with adequate education, ensuring all school buildings are accessible, and centralising the ministries that govern the policies concerning learners with disabilities (Riggall and Croft 2016, 9). Most parents cannot afford to pay for their children to be educated in special schools. Since regular schools are unable to educate these children, children with disabilities may well not receive an education at all. The portion of the population in Eswatini living below the poverty line is estimated to be 42.3%, and these poor people are unable to send their children to school (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2019). The Eswatini government pledged to commit to ensuring that equitable education is achieved by making available teaching and learning material to regular schools so that children with disabilities attend schools alongside other learners in their communities (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2.3; Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2019, iv).

Classrooms in some public primary schools are integrated, but the conditions do not favour learning by learners with disabilities (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 3; Pather and Nxumalo 2013, 430). Some of the schools do not have any plan to capacitate the teachers to handle learners with disabilities in regular classrooms (Tesemma 2012, 210). Appropriate infrastructure in schools is important for the education of learners with disabilities. However, infrastructure in the schools does not support the learning of these learners (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par.1.2.1). For example, the infrastructure for the education of learners with physical mobility challenges should include things like pathways, toilets and playgrounds that cater for learners with

disabilities. On another note, the curriculum should be supportive of learners with disabilities, but the current curriculum in Eswatini does not accommodate these learners (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2). In countries such as the United States of America (McFarland et al. 2017), where inclusion is successful, the number of learners per class is low in most schools, while in Eswatini the number is high.

The generally negative attitude of the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini towards inclusion is a barrier to learners with disabilities (Riggall and Croft 2016, 13). The majority of teachers in regular schools feel that they are not trained to teach learners with disabilities, and believe only teachers in special schools are capable of performing this task (Zwane and Malale 2018, 4). A study from 2014 indicated that in some developing countries, such as Zimbabwe, teachers would not admit children with disabilities into their classrooms, because the teachers felt ill-prepared to teach such learners in the regular classroom (Deluca, Tramontano, and Kett 2014).

Government Support to Schools

The Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018) indicates that it is guided by the principles of international and regional conventions, national laws, policies, and regulations. The Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par.1.2.1) stipulates that its aim is “to ensure equitable access to inclusive, life-long quality education and training for all Eswatini citizens, through sustained implementation and resourcing of a comprehensive education and training policy.”

The Ministry of Education and Training recently developed the Standards for Inclusive Education (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2019), with which schools are expected to comply. The Standards for Inclusive Education comprise 10 standards that support inclusive education, which comply with the SAVE Framework (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2019). The leadership of schools should have admission policies that allow all learners from their community to be admitted to the school and should include learners with disabilities in the school budget (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2019, 1.8). Schools are also expected to make the school environment accessible to all learners in their communities. Although the Standards for Inclusive Education were developed in 2019, the schools had not started to implement the standards at the time of this study and were still busy with arrangements to adhere to these standards and adapt the policies of the schools.

The use of inclusive education in schools addresses the barriers to learning for learners with disabilities (UNESCO 2020, 139). A lack of funding is one of the barriers in realising the right to education of learners with disabilities (Mariga, McConkey, and Myezwa 2014, 36). A government is responsible for funding the learning of learners with disabilities. In the case of Eswatini, there are regular schools and special schools. These schools may need to be converted to provide inclusive education to learners with disabilities in the regular schools, just like the education provided to those learners

without disabilities. These special schools could be converted to resource centres for regular schools as suggested by Fakudze (2012, 75). Mariga, McConkey, and Myezwa (2014, 36) suggest that governments should solicit international donors and use the existing structures to undertake initiatives of inclusive education in schools.

Teachers in regular schools must be prepared to accommodate learners with disabilities (Zwane and Malale 2018, 9). Preparing the teachers could address the belief by regular schoolteachers that teachers at special schools are the only ones who can handle learners with disabilities. Fakudze (2012, 75) suggests that teachers should be professionally, psychologically and socially prepared to teach learners with and without disabilities in the same classroom. In the case of Eswatini, the government introduced inclusive education to tertiary institutions for teachers so that the teachers have some knowledge of handling an inclusive classroom.

Methodology

The research on which this article is based followed an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed in this research. There were six participants in the study, which included two teachers, a school principal, a National Curriculum Centre director, a senior inspector of special and inclusive education, and a parent of an out-of-school child with disabilities. One school in a rural area with a total enrolment of about 600 learners and not fewer than 40 learners per class in the Lubombo region was chosen. The participants from the school included the principal and two class teachers. The principal was chosen because she was responsible for the overall learning of learners in the school, while class teachers were involved in the learning of learners in the classroom. The senior inspector of special and inclusive education is responsible for ensuring that learners with disabilities in regular schools are well supported in their learning, while the director of the National Curriculum Centre leads the institution that produces the teaching and learning materials of all schools in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The parent of the out-of-school learner provided information about what prevented his child from attending school. All participants willingly participated in the study and were aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so.

School observation and recorded semi-structured interviews were used as data collection instruments for the study. The researcher observed the school buildings, the teaching and learning materials, the arrangement of furniture in the class, and the school grounds. The recorded semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from all the participants. After the participants had responded to each question, the researcher paraphrased their responses to guarantee that they meant what the researcher understood. In both observation and interviews, the researcher used the SAVE Framework standards.

Findings of the Study

The findings collected through observation and semi-structured interviews are presented here. Table 1 depicts the participants' biographical data.

Table 1: Biographical data of the participants

Participant	Years of experience in the position	Qualifications	Training in relation to special and inclusive education	Number of learners in class
Senior Inspector of Special and Inclusive Education	10+	Master's degree in Special and Inclusive Education and pursuing a doctorate in Special and Inclusive Education	Formally trained in Special and Inclusive Education	Not applicable
National Curriculum Centre Director	1	Master's degree in Education	No formal training	Not applicable
School principal	5	Bachelor of Education degree	No formal training	Not applicable
Teacher A	5	Bachelor of Arts degree; Postgraduate Certificate in Education	Workshopped on Special and Inclusive Education	42
Teacher B	8	Bachelor of Special and Inclusive Education degree	Degree in Special and Inclusive Education	80
Parent of out-of-school child	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

Table 2 below shows the data collected from the observation of the school infrastructure by the researcher.

Table 2: Data on the school's infrastructure

SUITABILITY		
Suitability of buildings		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Are there ramps at the entrance of building structures?	No	There were no ramps at any of the classrooms.
Is the floor even in the classrooms?	No	Some classrooms were located on sloping areas. Classrooms were even, but with a slope.
Are there lifts that can be used by learners with mobility disabilities?	No	The buildings were on ground level; hence, lifts were unnecessary.
Classroom layout and design		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Are there spaces to manoeuvre wheelchairs?	No	In some classrooms the spaces were limited for a wheelchair to manoeuvre.
Does the classroom furniture cater for learners with disabilities?	No	Although the furniture was not very packed, it did not cater for learners with disabilities.
Communication modes		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Are noticeboards at an appropriate height?	No	Noticeboards were not available in the school.
Are there policies, rules and notices in Braille?	No	The school did not have written school rules in prospectus form.
Learning aids		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Are the teaching aids of an appropriate type for learners with visual impairments?	Yes	Some classrooms had teaching aids on the walls.
Are teaching aids of an appropriate size for learners with visual impairments?	Yes	The size of charts and objects used as teaching aids was suitable.
AVAILABILITY		
Distance to school		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Are learners with disabilities living within a reasonable distance from the school?	No	One of the learners with mobility disability stayed five kilometres away from the school and had to walk; the principal showed the area where the learner resided.

Toilets		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Do the toilet structures cater for disability?	No	The toilet structures did not accommodate learners with disabilities since the spaces were not large enough.
Is the location of the school toilets appropriate for learners with disabilities?	No	The distance to the toilets was appropriate, but did not accommodate learners with disabilities.
Availability of special school in the area		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Is the distance of the participant school from the special school reasonable?	Yes	The special school was about 20 kilometres from the school.
Does the school have a resource centre?	No	The school had no resource centre.
EQUITABILITY		
School culture		
Items	Yes/No	Field notes
Does the environment favour an inclusive culture?	No	The physical environment of the infrastructure did not portray an inclusive culture since the school was not accessible.

Source: Compiled by the researcher.

In the following sub-headings under the research findings, the researcher presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews with all the participants.

The School's Compliance with the Suitability Standard

This section presents the findings under the standard of suitability of the SAVE Framework using four themes. The findings portray that the support for learners with disabilities in the school generally did not align with the standard of suitability of the SAVE Framework.

a) Disciplinary measures

The minimum standard of suitability (Tesemma 2012, 210) requires that teachers should take care in disciplining learners with disabilities. The School Discipline Guidelines (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2020) have been put in place to replace corporal punishment in schools, which indicates that the government supports learners with disabilities by using the policy. The school is in line with the guidelines and requirements of the minimum standard of suitability, as it used positive discipline with all its learners. The principal said, "For us, we are using positive discipline. Every child undergoes positive discipline." However, the fact that some teachers had not been workshopped on positive discipline was worrying in fully aligning with this requirement of the minimum standard of suitability regarding disciplinary measures. Teacher A said, "I wish all the teachers were workshopped on positive discipline in the school."

b) Screening and identification of learners with disabilities

The minimum standard of suitability (Tesemma 2012, 210), which requires that the education system should be adapted to the child to ensure suitability, can only be adhered to if the barriers that each learner experiences are known. The Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 1.2.3) states that learners with disabilities should be identified early and interventions should be provided to learners with special needs. However, the government has not provided the school with any screening and/or identification instruments for learners with disabilities. The teachers in the school use their discretion to identify learners with disabilities, and this identification may not be accurate. This was confirmed by teacher A who said, “we identify them in class. I first make them sit randomly and identify their disabilities while teaching and learning sessions continue. Sometimes some parents notify me about the child’s disability.” The senior inspector of special and inclusive education also said, “teachers use their understanding to identify learners with disabilities.”

c) Curriculum matters

The minimum standard of suitability (Tesemma 2012, 210) speaks to flexible curricula and instructional sufficiency in schools for learners with disabilities to realise their right to education. The school viewed the curriculum as not accommodating learners with disabilities and therefore not adhering to the requirement of the minimum standard of suitability. Teacher B said, “the curriculum is not accommodating learners with disabilities.”

The teachers highlighted that it is difficult to consider the learners with disabilities because the teacher–learner ratio is high. Teacher A said, “if the number of learners in a class is high, it becomes difficult because you cannot give enough attention to the slow learners due to time constraints.” Nevertheless, the senior inspector of special and inclusive education was of the view that if the teacher understands inclusive education, the teacher–learner ratio is not important. In light of the senior inspector’s comment, the teacher–learner ratio may remain the same. Hence, learners with disabilities suffer.

d) Classroom assessment

The minimum standard of suitability (Tesemma 2012, 210) requires proper academic testing/assessment of learners with disabilities, which was not the case in this school. The Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018) is consistent with this requirement, because it states that different assessment strategies appropriate for all learners should be used. However, in practice, there is no support provided to this school. The principal said, “government does not provide the school with any budget towards learners with disabilities so that we can have alternatives assessment strategies.”

The School's Compliance with the Availability Standard

This section presents the findings at the school under the availability standard using four themes. The support to learners with disabilities in the school generally was not in line with the standard of availability of the SAVE Framework.

a) Teacher training

The minimum standard of availability (Tesemma 2012, 210) requires that teachers should be equipped with skills to teach learners with disabilities. The government had introduced content on inclusive education in tertiary institutions to capacitate pre-service teachers. However, the teachers felt that it was not enough for them to handle the learners with disabilities in the school. The government has to monitor the school to ascertain whether teachers are implementing inclusive education. Hence, the school did not comply with this requirement of the minimum standard of suitability. The principal said, "in fact, we were not equipped enough to deal with inclusive education because the knowledge we have is little." It seemed to be true that teachers could not handle learners with disabilities, because the parent of the out-of-school child highlighted that his child was rejected by the school in his community. After all, the principal said the teachers could not handle the child's disability. The parent said, "the principal said the child's disability is beyond their school capabilities. We had a discussion with the school principal on the matter and she suggested that I send the child to a special school."

It was evident that teachers who specialised in inclusive education are more conversant with and confident regarding the handling of learners with disabilities than those with no formal training. Teacher A, who had no formal training, said:

I become frustrated when complex disability situations arise in the classroom. I think I sometimes get confused because I try to offer remedial teaching to a learner, but I fail to successfully assist the child, especially if the learner is a severe slow learner.

Teacher B said, "before my training in inclusive education, I used to struggle, but now I enjoy teaching an inclusive class."

b) Assistance provided by the Ministry of Education and Training, the National Curriculum Centre, and special schools

The right to education of learners with disabilities through inclusive education is possible if the government and its entities provide support to the schools (Tesemma 2012, 210). Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education and Training and the National Curriculum Centre did not assist this school in managing learners with disabilities in regular classes. The school did not contact the Ministry of Education and Training and the National Curriculum Centre for help. Hence, it did not receive any assistance. The principal indicated that even the grant from the government did not accommodate learners with disabilities. The principal said, "we have not received any assistance from special schools, but we have not approached them for help." However, the senior

inspector of special and inclusive education mentioned that schools are supposed to contact an officer in the Regional Education Office if they need assistance regarding learners with disabilities, which is in line with the Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par.2.2). Teacher A suggested that government instruction should request schools to submit to the government a list of learners with disabilities to monitor the progress. She said, “government should instruct us to identify children with disabilities. Government should then have a follow-up on their learning and support the school with the necessary assistance. The special school should share the knowledge on handling different disabilities.”

c) Affordable disability-friendly transport services

The minimum standard of availability (Tesemma 2012, 210) requires that there should be affordable disability-friendly transport services, but learners with disabilities are not provided with such at this school. However, the school had not requested transport for these learners from the government, even though there are learners with mobility challenges in the school. The Education and Training Sector Policy states that learners with disabilities should be provided with transport to schools (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 2.2). The principal said, “we do have children with mobility challenges. They cannot walk well to and from school, but the government is not assisting; however, we have not notified the government.”

d) Reasons for non-attendance of schools within the immediate community

Providing enough schools of good quality within the communities of learners with disabilities is a requirement to ensure compliance with the minimum standard of availability (Tesemma 2012, 210). This is not true for this school, because it did not accommodate these learners. In theory, learners with disabilities should be able to attend schools in their communities, because regular schools are supposed to implement inclusive education following the Education and Training Sector Policy (Kingdom of Eswatini, MoET 2018, par. 2).

Another reason for parents not enrolling their children with disabilities at the school is that some believe special schools can handle these children better than regular schools. Teacher B said, “the parents only know the special schools as the only ones that can cater for children with disabilities. ... Parents are not comfortable sending their children with disabilities to regular schools because of the stigma they may experience.”

The School’s Compliance with the Equitability Standard

This section presents the findings at the school under the equitability standard using five themes. The support to learners with disabilities in the school generally did not comply with the standard of equitability of the SAVE Framework.

a) School policy and rules

The minimum standard of equitability states that schools should embrace inclusive education in their policies for learners with disabilities to access education (Tesemma 2012, 210). The senior inspector of special and inclusive education mentioned that the government assists schools to come up with a prospectus that embraces inclusion. Since this school does not have a prospectus, it means the government did not monitor the availability of a prospectus in all schools. She said, “we work with the schools in developing their policies.” It is difficult for the school population to adhere to and internalise rules that are not written down. The principal had this to say regarding the school prospectus: “We don’t have a specific written-down policy in the school, but we verbally communicate the rules to the learners.”

b) School budget

The minimum standard of equitability (Tesemma 2012, 210) requires that public funds should be allocated adequately to ensure inclusion. The grant that the school received for each learner was not sufficient to cater for learners with disabilities. Therefore, the school did not accommodate these learners in the budget. However, the school did not request financial assistance from the government to cater for learners with disabilities. The principal said, “government gives the school a small amount per child for the free primary education grant, which is not enough even for those without disabilities.”

c) Teachers’ attitudes towards learners with disabilities

The minimum standard of equitability (Tesemma 2012, 210) expects schools to implement inclusive education as a vehicle to equal access and is non-discriminatory regarding all learners. The government has to ensure that the attitudes of teachers is dealt with so that they welcome learners with disabilities in the regular schools. The participants wished that learners with disabilities were enrolled in the school. However, the non-inclusive conditions in the school, such as small budgets and teachers who are not trained to handle learners with disabilities, were some of the challenges. The teachers were not inclusive, since they felt they were not trained for inclusivity. Teacher A said:

You find some teachers calling names to the learners who do not perform well. We have one learner in the school that would now and again have saliva coming out of the mouth, and teachers would sympathise with the learner.

During the school observation, it was noted that some of the buildings were located on a sloping area and there were no ramps at any of the entrances to any of the school buildings. This portrayed the attitude of the school towards learners with disabilities.

d) Welfare matters

It is a requirement that learners with disabilities should have equal opportunities to participate in all school activities to ensure compliance with the minimum standard of

equitability (Tesemma 2012, 210). The government should ensure that all schools are accessible to all learners and that learners receive quality education in the schools. The learners with disabilities were allowed to be part of the sporting activities, but without addressing their limitations in this school. It was apparent from the participants that the learners with disabilities did not get a fair opportunity in the sporting activities, because they lacked support to perform at a similar level with other learners.

The principal stated, “the learners with disabilities are allowed to take part together with those without disabilities, but they are limited by their disabilities and would eventually fall out.” Teacher B said:

We give the learners with disabilities the opportunity to play together with those without disabilities, but we don’t provide extra support for them. It is not fair to subject them to the same conditions as those without disabilities in sporting activities.

e) Inclusive school culture

The school was not inclusive in terms of teaching methods, building structures, and attitudes towards disabilities in terms of sporting activities. For example, the school did not have a school prospectus as an instrument that guides an inclusive culture in the school. The principal complained that the school did not have personnel with expertise to handle learners with disabilities, and also mentioned that the school lacked the appropriate teaching and learning materials to include learners with disabilities. The infrastructure of the school was still wanting, as it was observed that the buildings, for example, did not accommodate learners with disabilities. Teacher B confirmed the problems with the curriculum by saying, “the curriculum is not accommodating the children with disabilities.”

Conclusions about the School Meeting Minimum Standards

In this section, responding to the research question, the researcher presents the conclusions of the study on the compliance of the school with the minimum standards of the SAVE Framework.

The infrastructure of the school did not accommodate the learners with disabilities, because the government did not monitor the school. The government did not provide support to the school in screening and identifying the learners with disabilities, because there was no instrument for this exercise. Therefore, learners with disabilities could not get the appropriate support for their learning. The curriculum did not accommodate the learners with disabilities, because the teaching and learning materials produced by the National Curriculum Centre were not adjusted to suit these learners. The teachers also did not adjust the curriculum to suit learners with disabilities.

Quality education was not available to the learners with disabilities, as the teachers felt that they needed training on how to handle these learners in an inclusive classroom, and teachers failed to pay attention to the special needs of each learner. The school did not

receive assistance from the Ministry of Education and Training, but the school did not consult with the Ministry of Education and Training, the National Curriculum Centre, and special schools to seek support to assist the learners with disabilities. Although the government has included inclusive education content in the pre-service training for teachers, the government did not follow up on whether the teachers were able to handle learners with disabilities.

Learners with mobility challenges went to school on their own, because there was no transport provided by the school. However, the school did not request transport services for the learners with disabilities from the government. The school did not have a prospectus that advocates for inclusion to act as a guide. The welfare of the learners had no backing, as the government did not ensure that the school has a prospectus. Government grants to the school did not accommodate the learners with disabilities; hence, the school did not include these learners in its budget. The school grounds, teaching methods, and building structures did not accommodate learners with disabilities; hence, the culture and environment did not promote inclusion.

Recommendations of the Study

In this section, the researcher makes recommendations in the form of a model on how the selected school can receive support from the government to ensure that learners with disabilities realise their right to education. The model for supporting learners with disabilities in a selected primary school, shown below, is the contribution of this study to ensuring that learners with disabilities are supported to realise their right to education.

Model for supporting learners with disabilities in a selected primary school

In chronological order, the school should do the following:

1. Request funding to level the school grounds, renovate toilets and construct ramps leading to all school building structures.
2. Encourage parents of the community to send their children with disabilities to the school.
3. Request permission to use the screening and identifying instrument from a special school so that the school can make a list of learners with disabilities to submit to the government.
4. Request that the government assist the school in liaising with the special school to use it as a resource centre.
5. Request transport to school from the government for learners with mobility disabilities.
6. Request the government to workshop its teachers on assisting learners with disabilities both outside and inside class.
7. Request the government (National Curriculum Centre) to adjust the teaching and learning material to suit the learners with disabilities in the school.
8. Request funding for teaching and learning materials to accommodate learners with disabilities present in the school.
9. Monitor to ensure that teachers employ teaching and assessment methods that accommodate learners with disabilities.
10. Request the government to visit the school annually to inspect if it is implementing inclusive education effectively.
11. Submit progress reports on learners with disabilities to the government.

Recommendations for Future Research

A quantitative study on principals' capabilities to handle learners with disabilities in regular schools is necessary. Such a study could help in the development of the pre-service course for primary school teachers in Eswatini.

The attitudes of teachers towards learners with disabilities and how to raise the competence of teachers should also be researched. Perhaps an extra certification in inclusive education could be presented by a nearby university. Classes could be taught during the months that the school is not in session and teachers could be paid a stipend to attend such courses.

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