

The Education System in Lesotho: Social inclusion and exclusion of visually impaired and hearing-impaired persons in the Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract

For a long time the education system in Lesotho has socially excluded persons with disabilities since it was heavily skewed in favour of those who were socially considered to be able. Gradually the system has changed to include those who have disabilities though the extent of their inclusion is still subject to scrutiny.

Society demands that such persons should be taught alongside other children who have no disabilities and yet the latter and the teachers have not been psychologically and academically prepared to deal with those who have disabilities. Teacher training leaves out the important teaching facilities and aids that are suitable for teaching the disabled in the same classroom with the normal ones. The conditions are such that they are all treated the same and yet others have special needs that require specialized equipment. While efforts are improving with the inclusion of the blind into primary up to higher learning, the same cannot be said about the deaf. They are still being socially excluded.

In-depth interviews were undertaken with students and staff in the institutions of higher learning such as the National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education. The findings indicated that the Ministry of Education has made efforts to

formulate the National Teacher Education Policy that incorporates the integration of the disabled. The Education Strategic Plan has also included strengthening of the Special Education Unit to enable it to operate effectively. The findings also indicate that while integration into the mainstream is the most preferred mechanism, children with disabilities especially the blind and the deaf from birth, are still socially excluded to a certain extent. Since special education has not yet been introduced at a higher level, lecturers are still challenged to learn the language that is appropriate to the deaf and the use of computers fitted with screen reading software that is used by the blind. The education system has a long way to go towards social inclusion of the blind and the deaf.

Introduction

Disability among the Basotho has always been a taboo. Traditionally in Lesotho, children with disabilities were the most disadvantaged in terms of education. Parents chose to leave them indoors and not expose them to the school system. These children were therefore socially excluded and never received proper education that could give them social and economic independence.

The Government of Lesotho took no efforts to ensure their training. Non-Governmental agencies and the churches were the ones that took initial steps towards inclusive education of such children though their efforts proved to be limited by resources (Mariga and Phachaka, 1993). It was only in 1991 that the Government established the Special Education Unit that has always been poorly staffed despite the amount of work that had to be done. It started with five qualified staff some of which have since moved on. Some of the remaining staff members were due for retirement that pointed towards more problems for the programmes within the unit.

Lesotho observes Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948, which stipulated emphasis for everyone's right to education. The country has adopted and ratified the World Declaration on Education for All. In order to achieve the objectives of this declaration, the government has introduced the policy of Free Primary Education. One of the aims of this policy is to provide

basic education to every Mosotho child, including children with disabilities. Gradually, children with special needs have been integrated into regular school system at primary level especially the blind.

In this paper, we examine the extent to which the visually impaired and the hearing-impaired have been socially included and excluded in institutions of higher learning. In order to understand the magnitude of the problem, we have found it imperative to examine efforts that have been made at the lower educational levels that determined the extent of inclusion or exclusion at the higher levels. What was important to note according to the interviews was that everybody had disability, what differed was the degree.

Objectives

This study was carried out with the aim of determining the extent to which students with disabilities especially those who were blind or visually impaired and the deaf or hearing-impaired were socially excluded and included in institutions of higher learning especially, the National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education. Specifically, the study wanted to find out the admission and assessment criteria of the blind and deaf; to establish the kind and adequacy of the services they were offered; to find out their experiences and those of the lecturers; to find out the challenges that faced the students, lecturers, institutions and the Ministry of Education that formulated and implemented policy.

Conceptual framework

Below is the conceptualisation of the major terms that were used in this paper. They included social exclusion and social inclusion, inclusive education and special education and others.

- **Social exclusion and inclusion**

Social exclusion is a multi-faceted concept with various definitions and that is difficult to measure (Levitas, n.d.) since different people that could be exposed to the same situation that could be termed, as exclusion may not necessarily be socially excluded. According to the International Labour Organisation, social exclusion refers to 'a state of poverty in which individuals cannot access the living conditions which would enable them both to satisfy essential needs (food, education, health, etc) and participate in the development of the society in which they live', (Smelser. and Baltes, 2001). This definition concurs with that of the European Union which maintains that social exclusion occurs 'when people cannot participate or contribute to society because of the "denial of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights". It is a result of combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, bad health and family breakdown. Giddens (2001:323) argued that 'in order for a full and active life, individuals must not only be able to feed, clothe and house themselves, but should also have access to essential goods and services such as transportation, a telephone, insurance and banking services'. Social exclusion in this study therefore referred to those processes that when combined deny the disabled person a chance to contribute meaningfully to the development of the society by not getting quality education that they deserve, social inclusion considered those aspects of integration into the larger society. Bezuidenhout (2004: 182), argued that 'While many disabled individuals receive some form of financial support and care, many do not. The disabled meet with physical and social barriers to employment, education and other means by which they can improve their quality of life. Many disabled people are therefore excluded from mainstream society and forced to live in poverty.'

Inclusive education

According to Stubbs (1997:8), as quoted in Brandon and Williams (2000), inclusive education is 'a strategy contributing towards the ultimate goal of promoting an inclusive society; one which enables all children and adults, whatever the gender, age, ability, disability and ethnicity, to participate in and contribute to that society.

Difference is respected and valued. Discrimination is actively combated in policies, institutions and behaviours. Inclusive education is more than school, it incorporates a range of strategies within a community or of that community, and which will help develop their potential.' In this study we have applied inclusive education to include integration of blind and deaf children in the mainstream where they could effectively receive the same education as other children without discrimination. It involves those mechanisms that also equip lecturers and students with skills and facilities that would facilitate smooth inclusion of the deaf and blind in the education system of higher learning.

- **Special education**

According to Mariga and Pachaka (1993), special education refers to provision of education to children with special needs, which is over and above what regular schools offer. In our case we are interested in the provision of needs for the blind and the deaf. These include specialised computing and Internet facilities, language, library material, trained lecturers and assistants, to mention a few.

- **Institutions of higher learning**

We understand institutions of higher learning to include those institutions that offer education beyond the secondary education, whose duration is two or more years. They include the tertiary, the seminaries and the universities. In Lesotho such institutions include: Lesotho College of Education, Machabeng College, Centre for Accounting Studies, Lerotholi Polytechnic and the National University of Lesotho. However, the policy recognizes the National University of Lesotho, and the Lesotho College of Education.

- **Visually-impaired and hearing-impaired**

Visually impaired entails those who are partially sighted and the blind. We were particularly interested in the blind children whose needs are more specialised than the partially sighted, though we found out that in some cases it was better not to separate them as the partially sighted could effectively assist the blind. . With regard to the hearing impaired there were also those who were hard-of-hearing and the deaf. Like the blind, of interest to us were the deaf from birth. This was influenced by the thought that their needs were more demanding in terms of understanding and using the appropriate language, unlike those who were hard-of-hearing that required technologically advanced hearing aids, with which they could meaningfully participate in inclusive education without the need for sign language.

Methods of Data Collection

The study involved desktop analysis of reports and documents from government and the National University of Lesotho. An elaborate Internet search was also employed to further understand social exclusion and inclusion of children with disabilities within the education system, in particular, at the tertiary level. In-depth group interviews with the visually impaired students at the National University of Lesotho and their office personnel were also undertaken. There were five visually impaired students, three males and two females who were attending at the National University of Lesotho. They were all selected for the interview.

The visually impaired receptionist at the National University of Lesotho was also interviewed in order to get his views on the education system and his overall experiences with regard to education and employment. Interviews were also conducted with the lecturers concerned at the university with the teaching of the visually impaired. A sample of four lecturers selected conveniently from the Faculties of Education and Humanities was individually interviewed. We interviewed lecturers because inclusive education is a two-way process whereby the teachers' feelings and experiences are as significant as the learners' (Corbett, 2001).

According to Green, et al (1999) it is the task of the teacher to make it possible for learning to occur.

At the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) telephone interviews were held with the administrator and the two lecturers that taught the visually impaired students. Circumstances did not allow interviews with the two blind students that were attending at LCE. Personnel from the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education were also interviewed.

Limitations of the Study

This study covered only two institutions of higher learning in Lesotho due to resources and also that it was aimed to be a basis for further research. The conclusions that were derived out this study were meant as a basis for a more careful study that could be conducted for improved understanding and appreciation of the extent of exclusion of the visually impaired and the hearing impaired in tertiary education. More research is required that will inform policy on the inclusion of those students with special needs.

The National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education were studied. The information gathered revealed that not much has been done in the integration of the congenitally hearing impaired. It is therefore advisable to treat this information with caution, as it is just an indication of the fact.

Findings

The data has analysed qualitatively using the thematic approach. Because of their nature, the results cannot be generalised to the larger population of either the visually impaired or the deaf, as their sampling framework in the whole country is not known. The analysis was based on a small sample of the blind that were currently attending at the National University of Lesotho.

The findings indicate areas in which such children have been socially excluded and those in which they have been included from primary level upwards. As indicated, the results are based on in-depth interviews of the visually impaired who have been enrolled and those that have already graduated, the lecturers that teach these students and the institutions that are involved with policy and its implementation.

Integration of the disabled at primary and secondary levels

The study ventured into the investigation of the integration of children with special needs from the primary level. The argument was that for these children to be admitted at the tertiary level they should have had a good background at the primary level. It was important for us to learn more about their background. Education of children with special needs was maintained to be the responsibility of their parents, government and churches.

According to the interviews the Government of Lesotho joined late in the formulation of policy and establishment of infrastructure that took care of those children with special needs. Below we look at the different roles played by the different stakeholders in the education of these children.

a. Parents contribution to social exclusion of their children

For a long time some of the parents who had children who were disabled were reluctant to send their children to school either because they were poor or that they felt that it was a waste of time and money since according to them no-one was going to hire them. This was the reason even before the fact that there were no facilities or that such facilities were far away. Children were never given a priority when it came to education. They were considered a stigma to the family to the extent that their exposure was very limited. In those poor families, these children were a burden since they required a separate caretaker and specialised schools, which were outside the country and were not affordable. Apart from that the same parents were reluctant to invest in the education of the disabled for different reasons.

b. Government's contribution to social exclusion

The Government of Lesotho never took a lead in the education of children with special needs until very late in 1991. The education system as it was left out those children. To date a large number of schools at primary, secondary and tertiary levels were found to be ill equipped to cater for the needs of such children. Special education component never formed part of the curriculum at these levels as a result there were very few teachers who were endowed with any of the skills required by children with different special requirements. Teachers and lecturers were found to lack skills of

identifying and assessing children with special needs. What it meant was that children got inappropriate treatment because of the incapacity of teachers. For instance, it took long for teachers to realise children with hearing problems, especially those whose hearing deteriorated with time who required special hearing aids like amplifiers. In the case of those who could not lip-read, sign language became a necessity but because it was not offered as part of the curriculum, children ended up being socially excluded from the education that was their right. Those who were visually impaired also require specialised equipment, which the lecturers should know how to use in order to assist in the training of such students.

The government was therefore found to have contributed to the social exclusion of such children because of the delays in policy formulation and implementation, as well as in the provision of essential facilities for teaching. The fact that churches and NGOs were the ones that initiated the training of the blind and deaf children also points to the government's delay and hence narrow inclusion of those with disabilities

c. Attempts for inclusion of children with disabilities by government

Education has become compulsory and free at primary level in Lesotho. This has somehow forced parents with children who are disabled to send them to appropriate schools. However the quality of teaching those with special needs leaves a lot to be desired. In an attempt to address the needs of those children, the Government of Lesotho established the Special Education Unit in 1991. This has had important contribution in the social inclusion of children with special needs. The Unit's responsibility lies with the development of teaching materials for those children with special needs. They have also been instrumental in the training of teachers at primary level who could identify and assess children with special needs.

In 2004, out of the 1500 primary schools operating within Lesotho, 83 of them have had 7 teachers per school that received training. A total of 581 teachers at primary level have been trained. Where teachers have been trained for inclusive education, they have also been provided with teaching materials for the partially blind. The government recruited 5 itinerants who also assisted teachers in the 83 primary schools with the identification of children with

special needs. None of the teachers at secondary and tertiary levels had been trained for the integration program.

Since its establishment, the Unit has been working towards the inclusion of children with special needs at the primary level. Of these, the partially sighted have been integrated. Regarding the fully blind, efforts were found to be very slow, for their integration. There was only one resource centre in the whole country that specialised in their training. From The Resource Centre for the Blind they got integrated into the mainstream education when they were at standard 3. The only school that had facilities for them was St. Bernadette Primary School that was run by the Roman Catholic Church. From here they could only be admitted at St. Catherine's High School, an Anglican Church run school where they enjoyed the same curriculum as other students up to form C. Beyond this level they were exempted from doing courses like mathematics, Science and Geography due to lack of equipment that could facilitate reading formulas and maps. These already channelled them into specific courses that did not require those subjects.

The integration of children who were completely deaf, in the mainstream education was near zero due to lack of interpreters at higher levels. These children were taught at St. Paul School of the Deaf from Standard 1 up to Standard 3. Thereafter, they were integrated at Mount Royal Primary School at Leribe district. That was also a church-run school. Interpreters were required in all classes and this made it very difficult for these children to be integrated beyond primary level. According to the interviews, only three deaf pupils had managed to pass Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) since their integration, as there were not enough interpreters and parents may have lost interest in training them further. Unfortunately it was not established as to how they managed to pass without interpreters. It could only be assumed that they received special attention from either their parents or hired interpreters.

Social inclusion and exclusion of the disabled at tertiary level and the University

We investigated the admission criteria at both the National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education, which showed the extent of exclusion or inclusion of the visually

impaired. We further wanted to find out whether there were any concessions made for such students. It was found out that there was no special education component in the institutions of higher learning in Lesotho especially at the National University of Lesotho. However through the interviews, we found indications that the Faculty of Education was already working towards launching one.

What became more glaring was that Lesotho has personnel problems in the integration of special learning due to non-inclusion in the curriculum, and yet very little had been done in that regard. Asked whether they have received any training regarding disability, all lecturers' pointed out that they had never received such training. The argument is that, lack of training poses serious problems in the education of the blind. As Page (1995) points out, untrained teachers either ignore the blind child in their classroom or smother the child with inappropriate attention. For him, it is not enough for teachers to have knowledge of the subject they teach, but more importantly they must master the skills of blindness.

Education of the visually impaired and the hearing impaired at the tertiary level depended very much on their education at the lower levels. Since we have already pointed out that children who were completely deaf did not go beyond primary school, we were forced to concentrate on the visually impaired. According to the interviews it became evident that these children went through the same training using the same curriculum as other students within the mainstream, which meant that they were socially included to a certain extent. It therefore followed that their admission criteria at the institutions of higher learning shared no special treatment or exemptions for the blind. The problem arose with the university requirements that included courses like mathematics and statistics that required specialised equipment for their translation into Braille language. It therefore followed that their admission became problematic in those programmes that required mathematics and statistics.

Not long ago in 1999, the National University of Lesotho admitted one visually impaired student who graduated in 2003. The second one was admitted a year later and graduated in 2004. During the time of our study in 2005, the university had five visually impaired students. Four of them were completely blind and one was partially blind. Such students had been admitted in the

faculties of Law and Humanities. Some of these students had applied for admission in the Faculty of Social Sciences but according to the interviews with the Admissions Officers, the students were not successful. The Faculty of Social Sciences found it problematic to admit them since they would require statistics and mathematics in all their courses and the faculty was not willing to waive its regulations. Such rigid faculty regulations left very little room for flexibility and exemption of visually impaired students. Lecturers found it difficult to waive regulations in favour of the visually impaired. One of the arguments raised was that admitting and enrolling the blind in the courses in which they would not cope because of the mathematical and statistical components of some of the courses was detrimental. Exemption in the beginners' statistics and mathematics or in those courses that had such components was felt that it would negatively affect the quality and standards of the disciplines.

Judging from the rigidity of the Faculty of Social Sciences, we can argue that the practice in this faculty misses an important aspect of inclusion, that which welcomes and celebrates differences and recognizes individual needs (Corbett, 2001: 11). According to Corbett, inclusion involves identification of individual needs and minimizing barriers to learning and participation. This implies that instead of rejecting blind learners the Faculty of Social Sciences should devise ways to accommodate the differences of these learners. Equal opportunities are at the core of inclusion (Phillips & Jenner, 2003).

However, if there was university policy regarding their admission and enrolment, it was felt that in courses like Anthropology, Sociology and Social Work where qualitative research methods were also applied such students could be waived some of the statistical components. While this could be true, it depended on the views of the concerned department. One of the students who were blind complained that the university was not offering courses that he wanted. He wanted to study Psychology, but the university management found it difficult to come up with a suitable programme that satisfied his interest. For them it was very difficult. In his own words he said, 'I find it very boring to stay at this university that is so rigid. I want to study Psychology but they cannot offer me courses in that regard. I have already applied to go

to a university in South Africa. I am going to leave soon because those people know what I want.'

Although students who were visually impaired were admitted into the institutions of higher learning, lecturers had not been prepared to handle such students. The interviews clearly showed that most lecturers spent most of the time writing on the board and reading from handouts, thus leaving out the students who were visually impaired. Lecturers were not aware that copies of the test questions had to be translated into Braille and by the time they were made aware of this other students had finished writing the test. It also meant that quizzes or impromptu exercises could not be given in class since this impacted negatively on the blind, as they needed translation before they could take such a test. However, if the lecturers were more skilled and more sensitive, it was felt that they could still submit to the assistant before class and just tell the students to proceed to the specialised room and return after writing.

Lack of proper facilities was also another factor that negatively affected the education of the visually impaired in the institutions of higher learning. For instance, at the National University of Lesotho, there was only one computer connected to the Internet that was supposed to be used by all five students who felt that this was creating problems in their studies, as that was the only tool through which they could conduct independent research. While this sounded normal, for the blind it was not. They required more time to spend on the computer than a normal student. All the books in the library were inaccessible to the visually impaired students until they had been scanned. The fact that visually impaired students were waived from the first year computer course deprived them of the opportunity to be equipped with the computer skills they needed to write their tests and assignments. Because they also had to use tape recorders in class, an effective public address system was a necessity for those lecturers who spoke softly or who moved around a lot. Such a system was not available in the classes. The classes were found to be unsuitable for the use of public address system since they had no sound proof materials.

The university had purchased 4 computers, 1 scanner, 1 Braille embosser and 1 Internet port. These were not enough to cater for the needs of the students and the growing number of students. Students bought their own tape recorders, which they brought to class and later transcribed into the Braille. As a plea to the

university, blind students at the National University of Lesotho wrote a long letter demonstrating their plight and requesting more equipment. Such a letter was made available to us during the interviews and they kept on referring to it during the group interview we held with them. They even demanded that it be included in our paper by way of reiterating their plea. Below is an excerpt of the letter that they wrote to the Dean of Students Affairs of the National University of Lesotho.

We are a group of visually impaired students at the National University of Lesotho. We humbly appeal to your office to take over for the resolution to the problems we are having in our academic world. These problems pertain to the great insufficiency of Internet port in our computer laboratory at the Academic Development Centre. We have only one computer connected to the Internet. It would be understandable that this creates difficulty in our studies as Internet forms the only direct means we can do researches on our own. This is because, all libraries are inaccessible so far as the materials therein, are on sighted reading and an assistant is unable to research in a field he did not study; for instance, law. Therefore, we need Internet to carry out our assignments as well as dissertations. Further, we have two Perkins Brailles and this means we are queuing for both Internet and the Braille so much that, one could spend plenty of time with his/her hands tied to do anything. Additionally, blind students are not provided a pre-course to enable them complete access to computers which forms the only way we can communicate to the lecturers. Besides, the special education office lacks technical skills to equip a blind student with necessary computer skills to enable independence on computer usage. We would definitely appreciate timely attendance to these problems as such would constitute a very important contribution towards the welfare of visually impaired students.

We found this letter to be a clear demonstration of the visually impaired frustrations and how they resolved to solve their own academic problems by requesting university management to assist them with equipment. However, this is a challenge that is facing the university since there is always a competition in terms of priorities. On the issue of inadequate equipment, Dyson and Forlin (1999) observed that inclusive education required a certain degree of capital investment. They further observed that in most countries,

for the fact that education has to compete with a wide range of other social and economic priorities – health care, defense, the institutions are under pressure to keep their education budgets under control.

The visually impaired students' experiences showed signs of frustration where they felt that they were not being given a fair chance as they were compared to other students. They could not use the library facilities since the books were written in small print. Their assistant who was working alone was expected to be competent in all courses across the board in order to make sense of the translation. This could not be the case.

On the other hand, the lecturers were also frustrated with the fact that they were not trained to deal with students with disabilities to the extent that they found themselves in a dilemma. They did not know how best they could handle the visually impaired. They found themselves being accused of being insensitive if they had specifically asked the same students if they understood the lesson for instance. At times the same students expected to be treated differently in that they wanted preferential treatment especially with marking. This was felt to be creating an unhealthy environment where the disabled could just be sulky without the lecturer knowing the problem. Sometimes they would sulk because the lecturer paced around while teaching having forgotten that their movement affected the recorded sound. The visually impaired would not remind the lecturer but would just keep quiet feeling badly treated and left out. From the interviews with the lecturers, it also became obvious that lecturers concentrated on what is wrong with blind learners, and not on what barriers are being experienced by these learners and how they can be addressed (Lazarus, *et al.* 1999). The frustration that some lecturers have due to lack of training, has resulted in some of them having negative attitudes towards the inclusion of these learners. Attitude is among the factors that affect the success or failure of inclusive education. Expressing her frustration, one of the lecturers at the National University of Lesotho said,

I find it difficult to teach blind students. One is never sure as to when one has treated them fairly or not. I always find myself writing on the board forgetting that the blind will not see. I also use expressions like 'you see', and the blind always feel left out. Sometimes I

single them out by name and ask them if they understand. They feel hurt that I have singled them out. In some cases I find myself pacing around as I teach unaware that I am doing that. Instead of telling me that my voice is becoming faint for their tape recorders, they will just sulk. So one wonders as to whether they should be treated differently and to what extent because of their disability or whether they should just be left alone.

At the Lesotho College of Education they had also admitted visually impaired students for the first time. The problem was that they had no special facilities that could be used by the students.

According to the interviews with the management, one student was studying on part-time basis, so there was no need for specialised equipment. The management felt that since the student was studying on a part-time basis, it was not their responsibility to ensure that there were appropriate facilities for the visually impaired. This state of affairs was contradictory since according to the same management, the other student had to repeat second year because she failed music as a result of blindness and lack of proper equipment. The administrator argued that, they did not know how to handle the visually impaired especially when it came to music as lecturers were not trained to teach blind students.

Challenges facing the Institutions of Higher Learning

The education system in Lesotho was highly challenged by mainstreaming visually impaired and hearing-impaired children at all levels. The biggest challenge lied with the education of deaf children who tended not to go beyond primary school level. So far the government has done very little to help these children. Only those whose parents could afford were found to cross the border into South Africa to seek better education for their children. But because the education system in Lesotho does not prepare the rest of the society to communicate with the deaf, their employment would still be challenged.

The other challenge was that of ensuring that the quality of education offered to the visually impaired was of high quality at par with the one that was offered to other students who were able so

that they could compete effectively in the job market. The choice of courses should be broadened to enable such a competition. During the interviews it was maintained that upon completion of their studies, a majority of the visually impaired worked as telephonists. Discrimination in the job market was said to be existent and was rife, as employers preferred people who were fully independent and who required no helping gadgets. A lot of advocacy was therefore required to help graduates with learning disabilities.

Because of specialised needs, the other challenge that faced the institutions of higher learning, involved tuition fees. The feeling was that such fees should be raised so that appropriate facilities could be made available and adequate without making the disabled feel discriminated against. They could be compared to those students who were taking the natural sciences who pay higher fees than the rest of the students at the National University of Lesotho. The other challenge connected to the fees was that of convincing the National Manpower Development Secretariat to waive their priorities for funding to the advantage of these students. In this regard, government budget for education was highly challenged so that the needs of the disabled could be accommodated.

What could be done to extend social inclusion at tertiary level?

We went further to find out from the respondents as to what could be done to improve inclusive education at the tertiary level. They maintained that improving and making available appropriate Information Technology as well as recruiting skilled operators at the institutions of higher learning could enhance the visually impaired learning capabilities. They again referred to the letter written to the Dean of Students' Affairs at the National University of Lesotho that confirmed their dire need for appropriate facilities. They expressed extreme need for extra computers and Internet ports. Their argument was that they had one port that they had to queue for, instead of having individual equipment that they could use comfortably to get information without extra external help. For the deaf, especially those born with the disability, interpreters in Sign Language should be recruited who would assist during lectures. They too should be able to take tape-recorders to class that could later be interpreted in the same way that the blind do.

The respondents expressed their expectation that parents have to take a leading role in the socialisation and training of their children with special needs. Such parents have to be well trained in the socialisation of those children. They have to be convinced that having a disabled child is no longer a stigma or a taboo.

Discussion of Results and conclusion

From the sources and the interviews, it was evident that the blind have to some extent been socially excluded at the tertiary level, the fact that less than twenty blind students have so far been enrolled and graduated at the National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education. Evidence has also shown that efforts have been made to integrate and address such students' special needs though resources were a problem. A lot of groundwork has to be done at the lower educational levels to equip the blind with skills they would require at the institutions of higher learning. For them computer literacy has to start at the lower levels. For the deaf, the National University of Lesotho had not done anything yet to include them due to the fact that there were no interpreters, which they required, and the lecturers themselves had no basic skills in their teaching.

Inclusive education for the disabled is a requirement and a right for those children with special needs that includes even those who are physically disabled, the blind and the deaf. Evidence has indicated a positive step in the integration of disabled children and students through the formulation of the National Teacher Education Policy. The institutions of higher learning were challenged to introduce curriculum and facilities for training those able students who would teach the disabled at different levels. At the point of writing this paper, not much had been done in terms of curriculum that was aimed at empowering the able students so that they could take over the job of teaching the blind and the deaf.

In terms of admission of the blind students, the institutions of higher learning have to work out mechanisms of inclusion without discrimination of either the able or the disabled students, which serves as the biggest challenge. The same applies to the assessment criteria to be applied when marking the blind students. A balance has to be struck between quality work and the fact that such students have special needs.

During the study we found out that the kind of services that were available to the visually impaired at both NUL and LCE were not satisfactory, though the institutions were making an effort. At the National University of Lesotho there were computing facilities though they were not adequate. At LCE, so far there were no facilities that suited students with special needs. In both institutions, the facilities were not blind user friendly in that students had no guides to the different places. The library facilities and materials are in soft print and require translation into Braille. What this means is that inclusive education is mandatory however it is costly and should receive adequate financing at all educational levels. It is a challenge to the institutions of higher learning and the Government of Lesotho to reserve a special budget for the blind and the deaf.

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