THE CHALLENGES OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS IN
THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS OF LESOTHO

By

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fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of
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The challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream schools of Lesotho
DECLARATION

I, Mantoa Macheli, hereby declare that this dissertation submitted in part fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education (Special Education) degree is original. It is entirely my own work except where reference to other sources has been indicated. I further certify that the script has not previously been presented for a degree to this or any other university/faculty.

Mantoa Macheli
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, 'm’e 'Maseara Alice Macheli and ntate Macheli Samuel Macheli, for bringing me up, shaping my future and helping me realize my potential and goals. My husband, Nika Phela, for his support and taking care of our child, while I was pursuing my studies and my beloved son, Soyiswaphe Sipho Phela, for enduring long days of longing for my presence at home and giving me the much needed emotional support.
APPROVAL

This dissertation by Mantoa Macheli is approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education (Special Education) of the University of Zambia.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: __12/10/07________

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at investigating the challenges of visually impaired (VI) learners in the mainstream schools of Lesotho. This aim was achieved by reviewing relevant literature with the purpose of finding out what the authorities regard as the challenges of visually impaired pupils in the mainstreams.

Empirical research was also conducted in order to elicit VI learners, sighted learners and their teacher’s views about the challenges the VI learners encounter in the mainstream. Also considering the importance of Quality Education for All, they were to indicate whether adequate arrangements were made prior integrating the VI learners in the regular school system.

The study revealed that the mainstream curricular was not responding to the needs and interests of the VI learners. Teachers were also not adequately trained to teach VI learners in the regular system. Further more, there was insufficient teaching and learning resources to assist the VI learners to learn smoothly in the system.

On the basis of these findings, recommendations were made so that due attention could be given to issues of concern by the relevant powers. It is hoped that this study will be an invaluable contribution to the improvement of education, particularly special education in Lesotho.
CHAPTER ONE

The Challenges of Visually Impaired Learners in Lesotho Primary Schools

1.0 Background to the study

Inclusive education has captured the attention of educators and the general public globally and has therefore led education into a paradigm shift since the end of the last century. Education plays a significant role in the lives of individuals, and all those individuals who experience need or at-risk of experiencing significant and continuous difficulties in learning and adjusting to normal educational opportunities made to other persons. According to Lesotho Education policies and priorities (1987:41), basic education is to be provided to all and that students with special educational needs are to be integrated into regular school system.

Prior to the establishment of the first school for the blind in 1784 in Paris, France and the mushrooming of other residential schools thereafter throughout the world, blindness was viewed as the greatest punishment by the gods and the greatest misfortune that could befall a person. Most blind persons were viewed as utterly helpless, fools, unfortunate, gullible people and miserable human beings. Furthermore, countries like Italy, Greece and some African countries such as Lesotho and South Africa encouraged the killing of blind infants since they were a burden to the State. After the first school for the blind was established in 1784 in Paris, the attitudes of the public in general began to change as they realized that the blind persons were competent. At the same time the change came as a result of the
introduction of the belief that blindness led to purity and sweetness of the soul (Scott 1982:34).

In developing countries, missionaries built many schools for the blind while preaching the philosophy of protection. The majority of schools were residential with students living there throughout the school year, returning home only for vacation periods. This, therefore, compelled the visually impaired learners to move out of regular education environment to schools for the blind because the specialized help was only available for them in schools for the blind.

Until recently, it was believed that learning in a segregated setting had more harm on an individual VI pupil’s potential and competence. Segregated settings often caused those involved not to fully enjoy the adventures of life.

Moreover, the visually impaired children, if hoped to live and compete in a sighted society, had to be taught together with the sighted. Many visually impaired learners and their families believed that living at home, playing with children in their neighbourhood and attending the local schools would give them more opportunities for reaching their goals. According to Scott, as cited in Jan, Freeman, Scott (1977:284), charity, pity, generosity and sympathy were helpful to the blind in the past, but have today, turned to have negative effect on their rehabilitation.
1.1 Statement of the problem

The education for the visually impaired children at the primary level in Lesotho had been assigned to St. Bernadette Primary School. This School had mainstreamed the V.I in its five streams (class 3-7). The primary purpose of the government was to give the VI an opportunity to have appropriate peer modeling as well as the opportunity to be exposed to the richness of the curriculum. Moreover, being a low-incident disability, all the visually impaired learners of varying degrees are compelled to be mainstreamed at St. Bernadette Primary School. Scott (1982:2) states that, visual impairment is classified as a low-incidence disability compared to other disabilities like dyslexia, mental disability, hearing loss, and cerebral- palsy. This therefore suggests that the VI should be taught in one school so that it enhances an effective monitoring and supplying of adequate relevant teaching-learning resources.

Although quality education is the right of every Mosotho, as Lesotho Education Policy and Priorities (1987:11) stipulate, basic education is to be provided for all and those students with special educational needs are to be integrated into regular school system. Those visually impaired learners can manage and cope with the regular school work because the deficit is only the sense of sight not their intellectual abilities. There are few teachers trained in the teaching of VI. Yet all the visually impaired learners of varying degrees are integrated into St. Bernadette. It is this concern which has therefore prompted the researcher to find out what the challenges are for the VI in the mainstream schools.
1.2 Objectives of the research

The broad objective of this study was to establish the challenges of visually impaired learners who are integrated in regular primary schools of Lesotho. The following specific objectives were derived from this aim:

(1) to establish the extent to which curriculum is made accessible to the visually impaired.

(2) to establish whether the regular primary school curriculum responds to the needs of the visually impaired learners.

(3) to examine whether the visually impaired acquire necessary knowledge and skills.

(4) to ascertain whether the VI show sufficient competence and confidence in their academic work.

1.3 Research Questions

This study used the questions below to seek answers to the stated objectives above:

(1) to what extent is the curriculum accessible to the visually impaired learners in the mainstream?

(2) does the regular primary school curriculum respond to the needs of the visually impaired learners?

(3) are the visually impaired learners acquiring necessary knowledge and skills?

(4) do the VI learners show sufficient competence and confidence in their academic work?
1.4 Significance of the study

For years the visually impaired learners have been denied the opportunity to learn in same schools as their sighted counterparts. It is hoped that this study may reveal useful information to a number of stakeholders. The teachers may use this information in their daily planning and teaching activities to ensure that they provide adequate skills when they teach the visually impaired learners. The school authorities may use this information during the recruitment and appointment of new teachers in their schools to enable them select teachers who will be able to work effectively with both groups of learners at the same time. The Ministry of Education too, may use this information in their plans to put more appropriate measures in schools, which cater for both the visually impaired and the sighted learners to enable both teachers and learners operate effectively. The teacher training college may also use this information in developing fully equipped programmes which may equip its trainees with adequate and relevant skills that may enable its products to be able to work effectively and efficiently with visually impaired learners in the mainstream schools.

1.5 Limitations

The research was carried only at St. Bernadette Primary school, as it is the only primary school, which integrates the visually impaired learners in Lesotho. Also the study was limited to the five classes that integrated the visually impaired at St. Bernadette. Due to the distance between Lesotho and Zambia where the researcher studied, the data were collected in February and March to avoid repeated trips to and from Zambia.
1.6 Delimitations

The research was conducted in February and March 2007 at St Bernadette Primary School in Maseru district. All the visually impaired learners in class 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 formed the sample group. Teachers who taught them and the principal of the school were interviewed. The sighted learners in the sampled classes were interviewed too.

1.7 Definition of terms

(a) **Mainstreaming:** Wyne and O’connor (1979:525) define mainstreaming as the administrative practice of placing handicapped children in regular classroom setting generally involving the provision of supportive education services such as a resource room.

(b) **Inclusive education:** Espouse the philosophy that all students with disabilities, regardless of the nature or the severity to their disability, receive their total education within the regular education environment.

(c) **Special education:** Mariga and Phachaka (1993:17) define special education as, provision of education to children with special needs, including those with physical sensory impairment or those whose behaviour cannot be readily contained in regular schools.

(d) **Visual Impairment/handicap:** According to the Report of the Committee for Differentiated Education and Guidance (1976:3), VI refers to all children (blind and
the partially sighted) who, as a result of their visual defect, receive instruction by means of special educational methods and with assistance of special educational aids.

(e) **Totally blind**: Heward (2003:405) defines totally blind children as “students who receive no useful information through the sense of vision and must use tactile and auditory senses for all learning.”

(f) **Partially sighted**: Charles & Milian (1980:197) describe partial sightedness as, the ability to see at no more than 20 feet that which normal people can see at 70 feet. Neisworth & Bagnato (1987:476) cites partially sighted children as “persons who are able to use print, with or without visual aids as their medium for schoolwork.”

(g) **Multiply disabled child**: Wolf and Anderson as cited in Thomas (1973:7) define a multiply disabled child as, a child with two or more handicapping conditions.

(h) **Blindism/stereotypic behaviour**: Neisworth & Bagnato (1987:476) define blindism as, “mannerism common to most blind people, - rocking, eye pocking and finger flicking, etc”.

(i) **Dry eyes**: is the imbalance in the substance that make-up the tear film. When there is an imbalance in this tear system, a person may experience dry eyes. When tears do not adequately lubricate the eye, a person may experience:
Pain
Light sensitivity
A gritty sensation
A feeling of a foreign body or sand in the eye
Itching
Redness
Blurring of vision

(j) **Trachoma:** is an infectious disease of the eye caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia Trachomatis*. The bacteria can be spread easily on an infected person’s hands or clothing, or may be carried by flies that have come in contact with discharge from the eyes or nose of an infected person. Because trachoma is transmitted through close personal contact, it tends to occur in clusters, often infecting entire families and communities.

(k) **Gonorrhea:** is a sexually transmitted disease (STD). This means that a person can get it by having oral, anal, or vaginal sex with someone who has gonorrhea. It’s caused by a type of bacteria that can grow in warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract, like cervix, uterus and fallopian tubes in women as well as the urethra in men and women. Gonorrhea can also grow in the mouth, throat, eyes and anus.

(l) **Chlamydia:** is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a tiny bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*. 
(m) **Measles**: is a highly contagious but rare respirator infection, that’s caused by a virus. It causes a total body skin rash and flu like symptoms, including fever, cough and running nose.

(n) **Brain damage**: is the destruction or degeneration of brain cells.

(o) **Eye injuries**: range from the very minor, such as getting soap in the eye to catastrophic resulting in permanent loss of vision.

(p) **Prenatal (congenital) defects**: are the defects that happen/occur before the baby is born while still in the mother’s womb.

(q) **Viral infections and other infectious condition**: are caused by the presence of a virus in the body, viruses can infect almost any type of the body tissue from the brain to the skin.

(r) **Malnutrition**: is a general term for the medical condition caused by an improper or insufficient diet. It mostly refers to under nutrition resulting from inadequate consumption, poor absorption or excessive loss of nutrients.

(s) **Ocular trauma**: occurs when the eyeball is hit, lactated or punctured.
(i) **Hereditary/Genetic causes:** is the transfer of characteristics from parents to offspring through their genes.

(ii) **Prenatal causes** (during pregnancy): are causes before birth.

(v) **Natal causes** (during / directly related to delivery): are causes that come during delivery.

(w) **Postnatal causes** (occurring after the child was born): are causes occurring after birth.

(x) **Refractive errors:** the size and shape of the eye prevent the light rays from focusing clearly on the retina.

(y) **Structural impairments:** visual impairments can be caused by poor development of, damage to, or malfunction of one or more parts of the eye's optical or muscular systems. Cataracts and glaucoma are the two main causes of visual impairment due to damage or disintegration of the eye itself.

(z) **Cortical visual impairments (CVI)** refer to decreased vision or blindness due to known or suspected damage to or malfunction of the parts of the brain that interpret visual information. Causes of CVI include insufficient oxygen at birth (anoxia), head injuries, hydrocephalus and infection of the central nervous system.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of the researcher in this chapter is to explore various people's views about the challenges of visually impaired children in the regular educational environment in order to distinguish whether the placement is appropriate for the visually impaired children's developmental needs and interests. The chapter will further discuss the causes of visual impairment and the significant impact of visual impairment on both the normal development and education of visually impaired children.

The following aspects are the specific areas of focus;

(a) Causes of visual impairment.

(b) Impact of visual impairment on normal development.

(c) Educational implication of visual impairment.

2.1 Causes of visual impairment

Sack (1998), Stiles & Knox (1996) as cited in Heward (2003:407), state that, damage or disturbance to any part of the eye, optical, muscular or nervous systems can result in impaired vision. However, different people have different beliefs about what causes visual impairment (blindness).

Sack (op.cit) Stiles & Knox (1996) as cited in Heward (2003:407) have grouped the causes of visual impairments into three broad categories as;

(a) Refractive errors

(b) Structural impairments

(c) Cortical visual impairments (CVI)

Werner (1987:244) goes on to describe these causes of visual impairment in children as being;

(a) Dry eyes

(b) Trachoma

(c) Gonorrhea

(d) Chlamydia

(e) Measles

(f) Brain damage

(g) Eye injuries

(h) Problems such as arthritis, leprosy, brain tumors or certain medicines.

Kapp (1991:360) agrees with Werner (1987:244) & Charles and Malian (1980:198) when he states that the causes of blindness include;

(a) Prenatal (congenital) defects

(b) Viral infections and other infectious condition

(c) Malnutrition

(d) Ocular trauma
In Suran & Rizzo (1983:254), Frzer & Friedman (1968) classify the causes of visual impairment into five categories;

   (a) Hereditary/Genetic causes
   (b) Prenatal causes (during pregnancy
   (c) Prenatal causes (during / directly related to delivery
   (d) Postnatal causes (occurring after the child was born
   (e) Complex hereditary and environmental causes (includes combination of the above).

From the researcher’s point of view, the most prominent causes of blindness, particularly with regard to the school age children are often due to prenatal causes many of which are hereditary.

2.2 The impact of visual impairment on normal development

The sense of vision is fundamental to the development of the child because it enables the child from an early age to effectively interact with his/her environment and understand it more meaningfully. Further, the child gets stimulated and motivated to explore more in order to gain a deeper understanding of his/her environment.

Scott (1982:34) describes vision as much more efficient for information gathering than all the other senses combined. Vision has a great asset of providing information about an object as a whole at one time and gives the opportunity to compare that object with other objects. Scott further stipulates that, none of the other senses can give this comprehensive information.
Similarly, Best (1992:16) states that even at an early age of infancy vision is vital to the child in his/her development. He/she is using his/her vision to direct his/her reaching and monitor his/her finger movements as he/she tries to grasp objects. He/she can monitor the effect of his/her behaviour on other people by looking at their faces. He/she is able to link between cause and effect.

Scott (ibid) further states that, our awareness and understanding of the world we live in are largely based on observations made in our daily life about colours, sizes, shapes and location of people and objects in our immediate environment. According to Scott, because the main channel of learning is absent or impaired, the young visually impaired child is almost totally dependent on the adults in his life for all aspects of his/her development. This, therefore, suggests that visual absenteeism compel a child to depend solemnly on other people around him/her to bring the world to him/her and interpret it for him/her. He argues that, impaired vision is not impaired ability. Visually impaired students can excel in Maths, match in play in the school band, edit the school paper, and coach fellow students in French, dance, skate and date. These students can learn to do most things other students do. This signifies that visually impaired children are capable of developing to the normal rate for his/her age and stage although due to the nature of their impairment they lag in certain areas because they are unable to reach out to explore their environment.

According to Best (1992:16) developmental delay/lag come as no surprise that children with visual impairment often show a developmental lag in many areas. That
The lag can be clearly measured as early as 6 months and it may be quite pronounced by 12 months. The lag is not inevitable and appropriate, early intervention can overcome many difficulties in some areas of development but without clear vision the process of development is likely to be delayed. Similarly, Scott (1982:24) shares the same view that, developmental delay and uneven development are common in visually impaired children whose parents do not have access to early intervention programmes. Such programmes provide parents with emotional support and information about the special needs of their child and how the needs can be met at the appropriate time.

Furthermore, Scott emphasizes that, because the development of visually impaired child depends so much on the active involvement of his/her parents and others in his/her life, it is not surprising that development is frequently uneven. However, the developmental delays are more prominent in the following areas:

(a) Communication and language development.
(b) Social and emotional development.
(c) Motor development.
(d) Cognitive development.
(e) Adaptive development
2.2.1 Communication and language development

Jan, Freeman & Scott (1977:113) define speech as not the same as language. Speech refers to the process of vocalization or articulation, therefore to spoken language and word production. On the other hand, language is a system of symbols, symbolic codes. On the same point Lilly (1979:175) cites that communication involves the transmission of messages such as information about needs, feelings, knowledge, desires and so forth. Children use communication and language skills when they receive information from others, share information with other individuals and use language to mediate their actions and effectively control the environment. This domain encompasses all forms of communication development including a child’s ability to respond non-verbally with gestures, smiles or actions and the acquisition of spoken language- sounds, words, phrases, sentences and so on.

Jan, Freeman & Scott further describe the normal blind child as just like the sighted child begins to vocalize at eight months, squeals with pleasure and talks when spoken to at twelve weeks, says syllables, “ba, ka, da”, at twenty-eight weeks may say one word with meaning and imitates sounds at forty-eight weeks and may have two to three meaningful words in his vocabulary by one year of age. After this stage, the severely visually impaired child’s language development usually slows down.

Burlingham as cited in Jan, Freeman, Scott (ibid 113) argues that, the delay that occurs after the first words are learned is because parents use many words with visual meaning which are difficult for the child to understand.
According to Best (op.cit), language development may also be affected. The sequence of development may be the same as for sighted children, although the route the blind child uses to move between stages and the age at which developments take place may be affected.

Scott (1982:31) stipulates that the person with little or no useful vision is completely unaware of the visual aspects of communication. He/she is restricted to receiving information from the actual words spoken and the tone of the speakers’ voice, both of which may be open to misinterpretation. Because the words are all important for his/her comprehension, it is extremely important that the visually impaired child understands what the words mean. In actual practice he/she may be able to say the word and use it, but not have the faintest idea of what that word means. Similarly, Best (1992:18) has observed that, although children with visual impairment will use many other words appropriately they may attach a slightly different meaning based perhaps on their tactile and auditory experiences. Other words will be used with out direct experience of the concept they represent such as, ‘ceiling’ ‘moon’ ‘horizon’ ‘gallop’.

This therefore, may suggest that visually impaired children are sometimes unfamiliar with words because they are not able to explore their environment visually, they seldom go through the question-asking stage of pointing and saying ‘What’s that?’ as most sighted children do to learn the names of objects in their home and
neighborhood. At times the visually impaired child maybe unaware that those objects even exist. Although a visually impaired child maybe fluent like sighted children subsequently, there are a lot of factors that influence his/her language development. Jan, Freeman & Scott (1977: 114) argue that, subsequent speech and language development will be influenced by multiple interacting factors. The blind child should not be viewed in isolation without the influence of his/her family and the environment. Clinicians frequently state that the delay of speech and language of the blind child is most commonly caused by emotional and environmental factors. The importance of the love bond between the mother and her blind child must be strongly emphasized, since rejection is a common cause of speech and language delay. One sometimes sees “blind babies who have spent much of their first year in sensory desert-babies who have worn a groove in their crib mattress, babies who make no sound who rarely smile and who spend most of their 24 hours a day in sleep”. The child who is not talked to may have markedly delayed speech and language.

According to Scott (1982:32) language delay in visually impaired child is due to the fact that the child cannot look around and see topics for conversation and may have not learned to relate experiences, he/she literally has nothing to talk about. Heinze (1986) in Etheridge and Mason (1994:96) state that the visually impaired children, particularly those with little or no vision, do not display the same range of facial expressions because they have not seen what other people do with their faces when happy or angry or sad and they have been unable to watch themselves make faces in a mirror, they cannot consciously assume any specific expression when asked to do
so. Being visually impaired implies that communication is lost. Worst of all, the visually impaired children are unable to judge the meaning of silence. They cannot see the mood or expression accompanying silence or words.

2.2.2 Social and emotional development

Visual impairment by virtue of its nature tends to isolate those students who cannot recognize familiar faces nor make the preverbal eye contact that normally precedes any social interchange. The visually impaired student is prevented from making casual social contacts, which would grow into friendship. In addition, sighted students are not likely to make friendly overtures when visually impaired students do not return a smile and seem to ignore them.

Similarly, Erin, Dignan & Brown (1991) as cited in Heward (2003:410) have observed that, compared with normally sighted children, children with visual impairments interact less during free time and are often delayed in the development of social skills. Some young children with sensory impairments experience difficulty in receiving and expressing affection, behaviours that have been shown to facilitate future developments in other areas of social competence.

Rosenblum (2000) as cited in Heward (2003:412) points out that, because of the low incidence of the disability, many children with visual impairments are unable to benefit from peers or adult role models who experience the same challenges because of visual impairments.
Similarly, Scott (1982:163) has observed that, many visually impaired students have never met or even heard of any successful blind or partially sighted people, except perhaps the legendary Helen Keller. So they have few, if any role, models. They literally do not know what to strive for. Being an odd-man-out in a population of sighted students does not give them an idea of what a blind or partially sighted person could be except they know that they cannot be sighted. For this reason it is important for visually impaired students to have an opportunity to meet with other blind and partially sighted students of different age groups after school, on weekends or during vacations so that they can share experiences. It can be tremendously reassuring to discover that there are other visually impaired students like themselves who are undergoing the same kind of experiences with the same kind of feelings. The opportunity to meet and talk with students who are one or two grades ahead lets them know that visually impaired students are successful. That can be reassuring as can meeting or at least hearing about visually impaired people who are successful in a variety of careers.

According to Jan, Freeman, Scott (1977:292) visually impaired children together gain a feeling of camaraderie and equality of competition that is good for the self-concept. It is motivating for them to realize that if others with the same handicap can achieve, so can they.
Furthermore, Scott (1982:161) states that, a visually impaired student may exhibit forms of behaviour that turn other people off. Some have mannerisms or blindism; these are repetitive forms of physical activity common to many children with severe visual impairments such as rocking, eye pressing, head turning and hand flapping. Such mannerisms are likely to occur when a student is listening intently or is tense or nervous.

Heward (2003:412) states that, stereotypic behaviour can place a person with visual impairments at a great social disadvantage because these actions are conspicuous and call for negative attention to the person.

2.2.3 Motor development

Babies come into this world capable of many reflex movements. During the last eleven months of their first year, most of the reflex movements disappear.

Jan, Freeman & Scott (1977:97) state that, vision plays a crucial role in the life of the sighted children because they learn by imitation. The sighted children have something to see as long as there is light, and various objects in their environment constantly attract the sighted children’s curiosity, and triggers off their motor activity.

According to Best (1992:17), a visually impaired child cannot easily monitor his movement and so may have difficulty understanding what happens when he moves or stretches a limb, bends at the waist or roll over. If he is not able to see other

21
people clearly, he/she will have no model to copy. A child with visual impairment must then be helped to use his/her motor function. He/she must be taught how to do all early actions such as; to reach and grasp, to sit, to crawl and walk, by his/her parents.

Wilmot, as cited in Jan, Freeman, Scott (1977:97) emphasizes that, the blind child needs more quantitative and qualitative opportunities for learning motor skills. No person can truly be a substitute for informed and learning parents who can provide the opportunities. Likewise, parents must be creative enough to motivate the children to ensure that the activities are rewarding enough so that the child wants to repeat them. Without frequent repetition the child will not become skilled enough for the activity to become automatic. He/she can be helped to tumble around in places where he/she cannot get hurt. He/she needs opportunities to exercise his/her muscles, which other children develop without help.

Scott (1982:24) argues that visually impaired children are not receiving visual stimuli, children with little or no sight tend to be passive and “good babies”. They are not self-starters when it comes to initiating an activity and need parents to suggest what to do or play with next, because they cannot look around and see objects or toys waiting to be played with. Many partially sighted and blind youngsters spend a lot of time doing nothing because they are not told what to do and as results do not learn to use their bodies skillfully.
Similarly, Best (1992:17) has observed that, lack of effective vision may remove an important source of motivation for a child. There may not be attractive objects to encourage him/her to attempt to crawl across a room or to reach out to a mobile over his/her head.

Sonksen (1984) as cited in Best (1992:157) has suggested seven ways in which the motor development of the blind children may be constrained;

(a) Diminished drive  
(b) Poor body image  
(c) Reduced opportunity  
(d) Delay in formation of basic concepts  
(e) Sensory-motor integration  
(f) Fear  
(g) Attitudes

Without clear vision, there may be orientation problems caused by the difficulty in creating a mental map of his/her surroundings. For example, he/she may not know which direction to go to find the door, toy, biscuit or parent. He/she may not know how to find his/her way round obstacles to get to his/her goal. Uncertainties about his/her surroundings may lead to a lack of confidence in moving.

2.2.4 Cognitive development

Since many concepts are largely learned through visual means, students with visual impairment have difficulty in learning some concepts. According to Hallahan and

Warren (1981) as cited in Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:309) state that, blind people are at the distinct disadvantage because they are unable to use sight to help them develop integrated concepts. Totally blind children experience problems when coming to abstract thinking. This is because even though they can visualize an object by means of scale model, it can be impossible to differentiate some important traits of that object.

Poter (1995:143) points out that, children who are visually impaired, follow four major cognitive developmental stages, although they pass through these stages more slowly than their sighted peers. The lag has been attributed to the lack of vision and that is part of the reason why visually impaired usually progress more slowly than do sighted children. Kapp (1991:362) states that, the unity and intactness of the sensory system are closely related to the learning ability of the child. The senses compliment each other and often function simultaneously. In normal circumstances the visual sense is responsible for some 85% of all sensory impressions from the environment. The implication of this in learning are that the blind child lacks comprehensive sensory experience which seeing children spontaneously enjoy throughout their waking hours. Consequently cognitive development is impeded in both blind and partially sighted children.
According to Charles & Malian (1980:199), certain concepts or questions in classroom would require students to have first hand experience to be able to answer and define concepts. A visually impaired child develops this in a rather abnormal way. He/she will take a longer period to learn the word ‘mother’ and associate it with his/her mother because he/she has no vision to supplement his/her learning, while the sighted child of the same age will gain experience through vision. The disadvantage of a child with visual impairment is that he/she experiences through hearing and touching and it is impossible to differentiate some important traits of objects and graphic materials.

Scott (1982:34) maintains that the deficit in the visually impaired children’s information- gathering system makes it more difficult for visually impaired children to acquire an understanding of concepts. The visually impaired children get their information in bits and pieces and often that information is too incomplete for them to form a logical concept, and the one they do form may be faulty.

Best (1992:158) emphasizes delays in formation of basic concepts particularly up to the age of eight. Moving around requires an understanding of concepts such as, ‘in front of’ ‘behind’ ‘here’ ‘above’. For several reasons including lack of motivation and lack of experience at perceiving spatial relations, children with visual impairments are likely to be delayed in acquiring a concept of permanence, of objects and in the formation of basic concepts.

2.3 Educational implications of visual impairment

In 1971 the United Nations officially adopted as Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserting that everyone has the right to education. To meet this basic learning
need, the declaration proclaims that, every person—child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs (Haddad, 1990:10).

The World Declaration of Education for All (Article 3.5, 1990) stipulates that every country has to provide equal access to every category of disabled person as an integral part of education system. This dimension of basic education for all recognizes that every person has the right to appropriate and relevant education.

Although the above declaration has been followed and implemented by some countries, the education of the visually impaired is still inadequate in terms of quality and quantity. According to the MoE – Clarification of Lesotho’s Education Policies and Priorities (1987) - not all the centres for the disabled persons such as the Resource Centre for the Blind offer the kind of expert care and education which would justify the economic investment and family disruption. Disabled children are placed in centres often without specialized help. They live in overcrowded conditions, and are in programmes without well-formulated specific objectives.

2.3.1 Problems related to equipment

Teachers are confronted with problems of translating ordinary reading books into Braille for the visually impaired learners. This as a result consumes a lot of time on the part of the teachers and leads to overloaded work and frustration, as they also have to transcribe the class work for the teachers who do not posses the Braille skills. Moreover, for the teachers to bring the media of the outside world into the classroom, it is difficult as there are no Braille newspapers available. Patsi (1989:8)
states that the insufficiency of instructional materials does not only affect the visually impaired child. The teacher also cannot do effective and sufficient instruction without adequate teaching tools.

One of the problems encountered in mainstream schools is in relation to provision and distribution of equipment. Certain items have been in use for years, almost as long as the Braille system itself, and others which are quite old such as Braille books, have been improved with the needs of small children in mind.

2.3.2 Lack of expertise

Special expertise is necessary for dealing with the visually impaired children. There are however, no appropriate educational placements available in mainstream schools as few teachers are qualified to undertake the education of these children. Clarification of Lesotho’s Education Policies and Priorities (1987:13) stipulates that, no teacher-training college at present offers appropriate training in education for the blind. Prospective teachers for the blind usually undergo training in ordinary teacher-training colleges and then learn Braille and pursue a diploma course in special institutions abroad. Further Clarification of Lesotho’s Education Policies & Priorities stipulates that, only a very limited number of teachers receive any type of special education training. Specialists in special education are even more limited. There are approximately five teachers trained for the education of the visually and hearing impaired children in special centres.

2.3.3 Social interactions/ behaviour

Due to the lack of opportunity to learn through visual observation, blind individuals have need for more help in their individual functioning and participation in the usual
situation. Often the visually impaired children avoid social contacts or use defensive or hostile responses to avoid the likelihood of having to deal with other people socially. In this way their behaviour is shaped by their feelings and expectation about themselves and their conditions. As social skills are therefore important for the pupils’ success, they need appropriate ways of interacting with others.

Hallahan and Kauffman (1991:13), for instance, believe that when those who are non-disabled do not accept visually impaired individuals, it is because some of them have difficulty attaining certain social skills such as exhibiting facial expression. Without being aware of it, a visually impaired student may exhibit forms of behaviour that turn people off. As noted above some have mannerisms or blindness. Scott (1982:162) views these as repetitive forms of physical activity common to many children with severe visual impairments, such as rocking, eye pressing, head turning and hand flapping.

2.3.4 Parents’ attitudes

Parents tend to develop a non- caring attitude, which mostly occur especially when the mother has had the special problems to meet the bringing up of the family. The birth of a blind baby in the family changes the whole set-up and plans. This situation therefore causes the mother to handle the child with distaste and tends to ignore him/her as much as possible. She is likely to apply to the local authority for the child to be cared far away from home as soon as possible.
Kapp (1991:364) states that the blind will have difficulty in accepting his/her handicap if his/her parents are negative towards his/her impairment. The attitude of parents sometimes implies excessive expectations of the child. As a result the child experiences tension and insecurity. Patisi (1989:7) states that young people with disabilities need positive models and need to develop a positive sense of personal worth. Therefore the situation in which they live and learn should be such that they have regular interaction with contemporaries and a community, which encourages a positive sense of identity.

2.3.5 Sensory- motor integration

Bowley & Gardner (1972:142) states that for blind learners' particular difficulty is adjusting to changes in position, for instance moving around the room. They cannot do this as they do not have a fixed point of view and for them a change in position may result in difficulties. However, if left to themselves the visually impaired children tend to be passive and sedentary. Gulliford (1971:161) states that if left to him/herself too much, the child may have recourse to internal stimulation- rocking, eye pocking, odd finger movements- or may be rather passive, falling seriously behind in the development of fine co-ordination and larger movements.
CHAPTER 3

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an exposition of the methodology that was used in data collection of this study. According to Wellington (2000:22), methodology, is a vital part of any research project. It is defined as “the activity or business of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods you use”.

On the basis of this definition, literature on research methodology was reviewed in order to study and select the methods that were used in the collection and analysis of data for this study. Justification for the choice of certain methods over others was also given, stating how these apply in this research project. The data that were collected and analyzed in the manner were discussed to form a basis for the generalizations that were made regarding the degree of challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream primary schools of Lesotho.

3.1.1 Research Design

Before outlining the approaches and procedures that were followed in conducting this research, it is important to first define research. According to Leedy (1997:3), research is “a rigorous process that is systematic and concerned with the collection and analysis of data”. Tuckman (1988:3) shares the same view and also describes the task of the investigator as that of uncovering facts and then formulating a generalization based on the interpretation of those facts.
This study had adopted a case-study design. Anderson (1998:152) defines a case-study as a holistic research method that uses multiple sources of evidence to analyze or evaluate specific phenomenon or instance. Therefore, on the basis of this definition, the researcher chose a case-study design over other designs because it was going to permit her to seek to bring to life a case and allow an in-depth study of the case in its natural setting, as this study was basically based on one school in the Maseru urban. It was intended to be cross-sectional so that the researcher could take a cross section of the population and observe it for a minimal time.

Moreover, according to Yin (1994) as cited in Anderson (1998:153) the case-study inquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion and as another result. These, therefore, implied that both the qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. The reason for using both the qualitative and quantitative methods was that of gaining an insight from the visually impaired learners and making it possible to establish the relationship. On the other hand, when used jointly, these approaches contribute in improving the trustworthiness of the results of the study and the subsequent generalizations and recommendations.

3.1.2 Qualitative approach

Qualitative approach is an approach that relies on observations of interactions and interviews of participants to discover patterns and meanings. These patterns and meanings form the basis for generalization, which are then tested through further
observation and questioning. According to Bell (1999:7), researchers adopting a qualitative approach are more concerned in understanding individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis.

3.1.3 Quantitative approach
Quantitative approach is described by Burgess (1985:1-2) as a positivist, objective and rigorous approach to research that uses numbers instead of natural language. Quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationships of one set of facts to another. They use techniques that are likely to produce quantifiable and if possible, generalisable conclusions.

3.1.4 Triangulation
One of the reasons of using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection was to ensure that the data collected would be trustworthy and dependable. One of the means of accomplishing this trustworthiness is through the use of the process of triangulation.

According to Baker (1999:225), triangulation is the process of collecting research evidence from as many sources as possible to answer the research question. Isaac and Michael (1981:92) recommend the use of triangulation and maintain that once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. They also argued that there are
serious risks in making recommendations based on a single criterion which fails to consider the whole outcome of an educational process.

In this research triangulation was employed by using different data collection methods namely questionnaires, interviews and naturalistic observation. This is what Zulkardi:(2007) (South Africa) refers to as methodological triangulation, describing it as involving the use of more than one method in order to overcome the weakness of intrinsic biases.

3.1.5 Validity

Validity is described by Isaac and Michael (1981:120) as the degree to which a test is capable of achieving what it was intended to achieve. Anderson (1990:175) gives a similar description and argues that the major safeguard with regard to validity is to obtain confirmation from as many data sources as possible through triangulation. He insists that with proper triangulation, it would be difficult to refuse conclusions which follow logically from multiple data sources.

3.1.6 Reliability

According to Wallen & Fraenkel (1991:95), reliability is the consistency of scores or answers, how consistent they are for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another. A similar definition is given by Isaac and Michael (1981:125) who further argue that “any direct
measurement of such consistency evidently calls for a comparison between at least two measurements”.

3.2 Population

The target population for this study was all the 28 visually impaired learners at St Bernadette primary school.

3.2.1 Sampling procedures

According to Wallen and Fraenkel (1991:129), a sample refers to any group that is selected from a larger group on which information is obtained. Borg (1981:73) agrees with his view and indicates that the size of the sample and the procedure used in selecting it determines the degree of confidence with which the researcher can apply the research findings to the population.

The sample for this study was selected through purposive sampling because it would enhance an equal and proportionate presentation of all the different degrees of disability. The criteria for sample selection were the degree of disability, academic performance, age and sex. The study sample was all the 28 visually impaired learners from five inclusive grades/classes (class 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). For the purpose of obtaining quantitative data twelve teachers of the visually impaired learners were also selected through the use of purposive sampling technique.
3.2.2 Purposive sampling

The method of sampling that was used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher specifies persons with specific characteristics to participate in a study. By using this kind of sampling, the researcher was looking for a special characteristic from the population.

3.3 Research instruments

In this section, the aim is to discuss research instruments that were employed in this study to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Three data collection instruments namely interviews, questionnaire and focused group discussion, were used and the reason for using them will be stated respectively.

3.3.1 Interviews

Anderson (1990:222) states that, an interview is a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject- matter. He argues that, when used with care and skill, interviews are an incomparably rich source of data. One of its advantages is that the interviewer can clarify questions and probe the answers of the respondent, providing more complete information than would be available in written form.

3.3.2 The questionnaire

A questionnaire is described by Borg (1981:84) as a measurement procedure that usually contains questions aimed at getting specific information on a variety of
topics. Anderson (1990:209) agrees and maintains that a questionnaire, if well structured, permits the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data relatively simply, cheaply and in a short space of time.

3.3.3 Focused group discussion

Anderson (1998:200) defines focus group as a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where one person’s ideas bounce off another’s creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue. Its main purpose is to address a specific topic in-depth in a comfortable environment to get a wide range of opinions, attitudes feelings or perceptions from a group of individuals who share some common experience relative to the dimension under study. One of its advantages is that it not only discloses what is important to individual respondents, but the group setting attempts to create a synergistic environment resulting in a deeper, more insightful discussion. However, the focus group elicits a unique type of in-depth qualitative data which could not be obtained as efficiently as in any other way.

3.4 Data collection procedures

In this study the visually impaired learners, the principal and the sighted learners were interviewed in order to obtain their opinion regarding the challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream. Interviews were used, as they make it more viable to find exhaustive information because of the interaction that would allow the researcher to probe for answers.
Before conducting the interviews, interview questions were prepared in writing in a form of interview schedule. This schedule served only as a reminder to the researcher regarding the important questions to ask and it had not been strictly adhered to. According to Tukman (1988:393), it is essential to prepare an interview schedule, because it helps in maximizing the neutrality of the approach used and the consistency of the findings. Appointments were made by the researcher with the principal, the VI and the sighted learners to arrange the time and place that would be most convenient for them and highlight the aim of the interviews.

Furthermore, 12 questionnaires were handed-out to teachers of the visually impaired learners. These questionnaires were distributed in person by the researcher and they were collected three weeks of their delivery. The researcher made a follow-up on the questionnaires delivered to the respondents in a week's time to ensure that all questionnaires were being filled and provide assistance in case of those who needed it. The questionnaire was used because the researcher had liked to obtain the data as objectively as possible as the questionnaire would be complete in her absence.

Moreover, for this study a pilot study was conducted using the visually impaired learners at St Bernadette Resource for the Blind in Maseru. A pilot study is defined as a small-scale study conducted to the actual research. Anderson (1990:11) argues that a pilot study is conducted in order to test the procedures and techniques to see that they work satisfactorily.
Tuckman (1988) agrees and states further that a pilot study best uses a group of respondents who are part of the intended test population but who will not be part of the sample. In addition, Isaac & Micheal (1981:34) state that, a pilot test is an essential step in research because it often provides the researcher with ideas, approaches and clues not foreseen prior to the pilot study. The researcher went to interview the three VI of whom two were in the same class. The responses that were given indicated a clear understanding of the questions that were asked.

3.5 Data analysis

The aim of this subsection is to discuss the steps and procedures that were followed to interpret and analyze the obtained data. Regarding the importance of this part in research, Bell (1999:171) argues that the data collected by means of questionnaires, interviews, dairies or any other method mean very little until they have been analyzed and evaluated.

Eichelberger (1989:220) agrees and insists that after data are collected in a study, the researcher must analyze them to derive frequencies, means, standard deviations and other summaries of data.

Quantitative data were interpreted and presented in different ways depending on the type of question analysed. Among the methods that were used were summary sheets, tables and graphic presentations such as bar charts. In the case of qualitative data, data were transcribed and analysed from the transcripts based on emerging themes.
CHAPTER 4

Presentation of results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the investigation into the challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream will be presented.

4.1.1 Qualitative data results

The aim of this section is to analyze, interpret and report the data that were collected by using the qualitative method of interviews. This method was used in order to compare data obtained through the questionnaires and interviews to check for consistency and ultimately the validity of the results. Twenty-four VI learners, eight sighted learners and the principal were interviewed.

4.1.2 Data results from the visually impaired learners

Question 1(d) was meant to determine the type of visual impairment in the respondents. The responses indicate that a larger majority, fourteen (58.3%) of the VI learners were congenitally blind, while ten (41.7%) were adventitiously blind (See table 1).
Table 1: Type of visual impairment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congenital blindness</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventitious blindness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1(e) was meant to establish whether the VI learners had other additional disabilities. The responses reveal that fourteen (58.3%) had no other additional disabilities, five (20.8%) had hearing loss, two (8.3%) had mental retardation; one (4.2%) had physical disabilities, one (4.2%) had learning disabilities and the other one (4.2%) had cerebral palsy. The responses to this question are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Other types of disabilities VI learners had

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No other disabilities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing loss</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental retardation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral palsy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 2(a) was meant to determine the first enrollment of VI learners into the current school. The responses reveal that in 2001 one (4.17%) VI learner enrolled, 2002 two (8.33%) VI learners enrolled, 2003 five (20.83%) VI learners enrolled, 2004 six (25%) VI learners enrolled, 2005 two (8.33%) VI learners enrolled, 2006 six (25%) VI learners and 2007 two (8.33%) VI learners enrolled. The responses to this question are presented in Fig 1.

**Fig.1: First enrollment of VI learners into the mainstream school**

Question 2(b) was meant to establish the initial schools where the VI learners had enrolled prior to the current one. The responses to this question reveal that ten (41.67%) attended in the special school, thirteen (54.17%) attended in the regular
system and one (4.17%) stayed home. The responses to this question are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Schools VI learners initially enrolled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of school</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular school</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2(c) was meant to determine whether VI learners enrolled in the current education system on their own choice. The responses indicate that seventeen (70.83%) VI learners enrolled on their own choice, while seven (29.17%) enrolled on their parents’ choice. Table 4 is the presentation of responses to this question.

Table 4: Indication of choice of enrollment in the mainstream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2(d) was intended to establish if the VI learners are taught same subjects as the sighted learners. The responses show that twenty-one (87.50%) of VI learners
learn same subjects as sighted and three (12.5%) do not learn the same subjects as the sighted. The responses for this question are presented in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Indication of subjects VI's learn

Question 2(f) was intended to determine the learning pace of VI learners in comparison to the sighted learners. The responses reveal that seventeen (70.83%) VI learners learn at the same pace as the sighted, while the other seven (29.17%) VI learners are not able to learn at the same pace as the sighted learners. Table 6 is the presentation to responses to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>70.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>29.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: learning pace of VI learners

Question 2(g) was meant to establish whether the VI learners receive an additional assistance in their learning. The responses reveal that twenty-two (91.67%) VI
learners do receive an extra help, while two (8.33%) of VI learners do not receive extra assistance in their learning. The responses to this question are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Additional support VI receive in the learning process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>91.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2(h) was intended to determine the type of learning aids the VI learners use in their learning. The responses reveal that twenty-three (95.3%) use the slate and stylus and one (4.17%) use a Braille machine. Table 8 is a presentation of the responses to this question.

Table 8: Types of learning aids VI use in the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Learning aids</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slate and Stylus</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>95.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille Machine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2(l) was meant to establish the vitality of the subjects the VI learners learn for their future. The responses indicate that all the VI learners twenty-four (100%)
were assured that all the subjects they are learning had a significance importance in their future lives. Table 9 is a presentation of the response to this question.

**Table 9: Future relevance of subjects VI learners learn**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2(j) was meant to determine whether the VI learners were comfortable under the system of education they were in. The responses to this question were that nineteen (79.17%) of the VI learners were comfortable under the current system, while five (20.83%) were uncomfortable. The responses for this question are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Feelings of comfort in the mainstream system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3(b) was intended to establish the sighted friends of the VI. The responses to this question were that 25% of VI did not have friends, 12.5% had one friend,
20.83% had two friends, 20.83% had three friends, 4.17% had four friends and 4.17% had ten friends. The responses to this question are presented in Fig 2.

**Fig.2: Number of sighted friends VI learners had**

Question 3 (c) was meant to determine the helpfulness of the sighted friends of the VI learners. The responses to this question were that nineteen (79.17%) VI learners regard that the sighted friends are really helpful to them while, three (12.5%) do not see the sighted helpful to them and the other two (8.33%) VI learners did not respond to the question. The presentations of the responses are in Table 11.
Table 11: Indication of helpfulness of sighted learners to VI learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>79.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3(d) was intended to establish whether VI learners had role models in their lives. The responses reveal that twenty (83.33%) of the VI learners have role models while two (8.33%) did not have and the other two (8.33%) did not give their response. The responses to this question are presented in Fig 3.

Fig.3: Indication of role models of VI learners
4.1.3 Data results from the sighted learners

Question 1 was meant to establish the classes and number of the sighted learner’s interviewed. The responses thereof indicate that the number of learners interviewed was not the same in the three grades. Four learners in Grade 3, one in Grade 4 and three in Grade 6 were interviewed. The responses to this question are presented in table 12.

Table 12: Number and Grades of sighted interviewed learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade of respondent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4 was intended to determine the feelings of comfort from the sighted learners learning with the VI in their classes. The responses indicate that more sighted learners were comfortable in the current system. Six sighted learners (75%) were comfortable while two (25%) of sighted learners were not comfortable learning with the VI in their classrooms. Fig. 4 is a presentation of the responses to this question.
Question 8 was meant to establish whether the sighted learn the same subjects as the VI learners. The responses were that all the sighted learners (100%) learn the same subjects as the VI learners. Table 13 is the presentation of the responses to this question.

**Table 13: Indication of subjects VI learn**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 9 was intended to establish whether the VI learners were able to learn at the same pace as the sighted. The responses reveal that four (50%) of the sighted
learners learn at the pace as the VI and the other four (50%) of sighted learners do not learn at the same pace as the VI learners. The responses to this question are presented in table 14.

### Table 14: The learning pace of the VI learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 10 was intended to establish what perspectives sighted have on the subjects VI learns. The responses reveal that six (75%) sighted learners were assured that all the subjects the VI learners learn were significant. While two (25%) did not approve that those subjects were of significance in the life’s of the VI learners. Table 15 is the presentation of responses in this question.

### Table 15: Perceptions of sighted on subjects VI learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 15 was meant to determine the type of treatment the sighted offer the VI in and outside the classroom. The responses indicate that five (62.2%) sighted learners
give the VI appropriate treatment both in and outside the class room. While three (37.5%) of the sighted learners do not offer the VI appropriate treatment. Table 16 is the presentation of the data to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Type of treatment sighted offer VI

Question 17 was meant to establish how many of the sighted learners would opt to learn in the mainstream schools if they were to be visually impaired. The responses indicate that five (62.5%) seemed to be having problem learning in the mainstream, while three (37.5%) of the sighted learners did not approve learning in the mainstream. The responses to this question are presented in Fig.5.
Fig. 5: Indication of enrollment of sighted in the mainstream if they would become blind

4.1.4 Report of data from the Principal of St. Bernadette Primary School

In responding to the questions, the Principal started briefly by giving the objectives of the school. She stated that the school’s primary objective was to provide all learners whether able or disabled with quality education. She further stated that the school had advocated making both the sighted and the visually impaired to acknowledge the difference in each other, by teaching them how to share and play with each other in the school.

The principal further outlined that the school itself did not admit learners straight away from other socializing agents except those who had enrolled in the St Bernadette Resource Centre for the blind. This is because in the Resource Centre
they are being trained on how to write in Braille and other social skills that will enable them to cope better with the sighted later in their learning when they transit to the mainstream.

According to the Principal, there were twenty-eight (28) visually impaired learners integrated in the system. Out of the many classes only five classes (3-7) had the VI learners’ integrated. The reason as earlier stipulated in the above paragraph is that they were better able to cope and take good care of themselves in the mainstream at this stage.

There were no teachers who were professionally trained in the field of education of the VI learners except for the few who had attended workshops in the related field. She mentioned that they solely depended on assistance of the specialists in the St. Bernadette Resource Centre for the Blind. She further mentioned that the school and the teachers did their best to equip the learners with appropriate education which would enable them to compete in the sighted world market.

Asked about her view regarding the teaching of VI learners in the mainstream system, she said that it was actually the best thing the government did for the VI learners because the mainstream schools were able to bring the world closer to the VI learners and at same time able to equip them with relevant skills to cope in the sighted community because that’s where they come from and live.
However, she mentioned that there was still a long way to go in the integration of VI learners in the local schools because there were a lot of learning barriers which hindered the teaching/learning process of the VI learners. This therefore suggested that the government had done a good thing though its Ministry of Education should work closer with mainstream schools so that they could know the challenges these schools came across and would be better able to solve them together.

4.2 Quantitative data results

In this section data obtained through the use of questionnaires is presented. Before the presentation of each table, some comments are made on the information in each table. The other comments that are made follow from the open-ended questions that were asked.

4.2.1 Data results from the teachers’ of VI learners

Question 1 was intended to determine the number of VI learners in each of the five classes. The responses reveal that five (55.56%) teachers have three VI learners in their class; three (33.33%) teachers have one learner integrated in their class, while one (11.11%) teacher has six learners integrated. Table 17 is the presentation of the responses to this question.
Table 17: VI Children Integrated at various levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. of VI pupils</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2 was meant to establish the visual category enrolled in each class. The responses indicate that five (55.56%) teachers have both the adventitiously and congenitally blind learners in their class, one (11.11%) teacher has congenitally blind and three (33.33%) have the adventitiously blind learners in their classes. The responses to this question are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Category of Visual impairment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Visual impairment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventitious and Congenital</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congenital</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventitious</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3 was meant to determine the visual acuity of VI learners enrolled per class. The responses reveal that seven (77.78%) of teachers have both totally and partially sighted learners in their classes, while two (22.22%) of the teachers have
only the partially sighted learners in their classes. Table 19 is the presentation of the responses to this question.

Table 19: Visual Acuity of VI learners enrolled per class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acuity of VI learners</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally and partially blind</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4 was meant to establish the correspondence of the mental age and chronological age of VI learners in their respective classes. The responses show that six (66.67%) teachers have VI learners whose chronological and mental age tally, while three (33.33%) teachers have VI learners whose mental and chronological age do not correspond. The responses to this question are presented in table 20.

Table 20: Correspondence of mental and chronological age of VI learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5 was intended to determine VI learner’s developmental delays in their different classes. The responses indicate that six (66.67%) teachers do not have
learners with developmental delays, one (11.11%) teacher has learners who have
cognitive and concept development delay, one (11.11%) teacher has VI learners with
motor and mobility development delay and one (11.11%) teacher has VI learners
with social and emotional delay. Table 21 is the presentation of responses to this
question.

Table 21: Area of Developmental Delays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Developmental delay</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive and concept development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Development and mobility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social and emotional development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 6 was meant to establish the teacher-pupil ratio in integrating the VI
learners. The responses show that two (22.22%) teachers indicate that there is a
teacher pupil ratio while the rest (77.78%) of teachers indicate that there is no
teacher-pupil in integrating the VI learners in classes. Table 22 is the presentation of
the responses to this question.
Table 22: Teacher-Pupil ratio...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7 was intended to determine the number of years VI teachers have taught the integrated classes. The responses reveal that three (33.33%) teachers had two years teaching experience in the integrated classes, two (22.22%) teachers have three years teaching experience in integrated classes, one (11.11%) teacher has six year teaching experience in integrated classes and three (33.33%) teachers have ten years teaching experience in teaching the integrated classes. Table 23 is the presentation of the responses to this question.

Table 23: Years of teaching integrated classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. of Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When responding to whether what they teach the VI learners was appropriate in order to have decent lives in future. The teachers responded by saying they try to do so but there are no teaching and learning resources to help them pass the massage as they would want.

Question 8 was meant to establish the relevant training/qualification of teachers in the field of teaching VI learners. The responses indicate that all teachers (100%) teaching the VI learners do not have relevant qualification/training in the teaching of the VI learners. Hence the VI learners experience/encounter academic problems such as, slow pace in learning, late work from the transcriber, lack of learning resources. Regarding the special adjustment they lag behind their sighted peers. Table 24 is the presentation of the responses to this question.

*Table 24: Teacher’s relevant qualification/training in teaching VI learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding how improvement can be done in the mainstreaming of VI learners, teachers gave the following suggestions that; there should be regular on going staff training in the field of VI teaching, relevant teaching and learning resources should be provided to schools with VI learners and “there should be a professional team which work closely with the teachers in classes”.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion of the research findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings of the study and the conclusions will be presented.

5.1.1 Summary of empirical research

The following are the results of the research that was conducted in order to determine the challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream primary schools of Lesotho.

The empirical findings of the study revealed that 58.3% of the VI learners were congenitally blind while 41.7% were adventitiously blind. Although the VI learners were integrated into the mainstream, it emerged that 41.7% had additional disabilities which further hindered the process of learning (See Table 4.1 and 4.2).

This finding are inline with the World Declaration for Education for All (1990) that every country has to provide equal access to every category of disabled person as an integral part of education. This dimension of basic education for all recognizes that every person has the right to appropriate and relevant education. Further the literature study revealed that, two-thirds of the VI children had one or more additional handicaps, ranging from minor muscle weaknesses to a combination of blindness, deafness, cerebral palsy and mental retardation (see 2.2). This maybe as result of more severely ill and very small premature babies who are saved.
The findings showed that the enrollment rate was high between 2003-2004 & 2006. This was as a result of the political stability that was in the country at the time as the school is in the capital city where a lot of government activities are. While the rate was low between 2001-2002, 2005&2007 (See Fig.4.3). Moreover, the study revealed that in one class there were more than two VI learners integrated with the different degrees of visual acuity and additional disabilities (see Table 4.5.1-4.5.5) this is attributed as result of lack of knowledge in working with the disabled learners. Once there are more than two disabled learners integrated in a class it tends to overburden the teacher and other learners as well because the demands become cumbersome for one to handle. It can therefore be concluded in this regard that, due to inadequate planning done to integrate the VI learners the curriculum was not made accessible to the VI.

The desk review carried out in offices revealed that the curricula for VI learners should respond to the needs of the learners in their respective situation. It therefore emerged from the empirical findings that 70.83% of VI learners enrolled into the mainstream on their own choice. This maybe attributed to the fact that most VI had been to the regular schools which oriented them about the sighted environment. Secondly, it may be as a result of them having role models who helped them to understand that they were not the only one’s experiencing the disability (See Table 4.4 & 4.14). This is inline with the reviewed literature which states that the blind children are together they gain a feeling of camaraderie and equality of competition that is good for the self-concept (Jan, Freeman & Scott, 1977:292).
Furthermore the empirical findings indicated that 87.50% of VI learners learn the same subjects as the sighted. This finding is inline with Scott (1982) is assertion that an impaired vision is not impaired ability. VI can excel in Maths, match in play in the school band, edit the school paper and coach fellow students in French, dance, skate and date. Contrary to this 12.5% do not learn the same subjects as the sighted due to the severity of their disabilities which agrees with Kirk & Gallagher (1993) and Mercer & Mercer (1989) who discovered in their studies that there seems to be little evidence to suggest that educable retarded placed in special classes improve their IQ scores when compared to similar children in regular programme and that mainstreaming has not resulted in significant social and educational growth for the handicapped learners. Moreover, 70.83% learn at the same pace as the sighted and 29.17% learn at a slower pace than the sighted learners. The lag/delay comes as no surprise that children with VI often show lag in many areas. Although the VI learners were learning the same subjects as the sighted, the findings reflected that the curriculum did not respond to their needs in the following ways;

(a) The content of the curriculum prescribed the subjects to which a great deal of teaching time was allocated. Of which the children with visual impairments need access to a number of additional curriculum areas such as tactile skills. It seemed most unlikely that these could be fitted into the school day timetable. Therefore this compelled the VI learners to learn that additional curriculum either after the school day or perhaps during school holidays.
(b) The standard set in the tests and examinations was not appropriate for the children with VI. The tests/examination needed altering to be accessible to the children with no vision. Things like diagrams needed to be transcribed into a form the children could understand. Items needed changing because of the great difficulties children had in achieving the same level of academic and cognitive development.

It emerged that the curriculum is tailored to suit the sighted learners and it has disadvantaged the VI learners. Learners with disabilities need a curriculum that will suit their special needs. The findings agree with those of Brennan (1985) and Chantmani who state that a special curriculum should be prepared to match the needs of the exceptional children and those pupils with special educational needs face more than time-content pressures. They are delayed in learning because of the effects of the disabilities; they however find themselves forced into the pattern of the curriculum developed to suit the majority of pupils who do not have special needs.

The findings from the teachers were that 100% of those who were teaching the VI learners had no training/qualification in teaching the VI learners (see Table 4.5.8). And because of this situation of not having adequate training the teachers had no confidence of making decisions with regard to the education of VI. This was attributed to the fact that the regular school had no readiness for the inclusive education of the visually impaired learners. This finding is in line with that of MoE-Clarification of Lesotho’s Education Policies and Priorities (1987) stating that, the
education of the VI learners is still in adequate in terms of quality and quantity. Disabled children are placed in centres often without specialized help. They live in overcrowded conditions, and are in programmes without well formulated specific objectives. The findings revealed that the VI learners were compelled to learn and write the same examinations and practical subjects which obviously were made not accessible to them due to lack of teaching and learning resources and inadequately equipped teachers in the field of teaching VI learners (See Table 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.8). The practical subjects create more of a challenge and require adaptation in teaching approach and the support of specialized equipment. This was as a result of the common examination policy from the Examination Council of Lesotho that each and every learner in the mainstream had to undergo the same examination process at the end of his/her primary education to enable him/her entering into higher education. This is contrary to the literature findings which note that, to maintain the flexibility and quality of education deemed desirable to meet the individual needs of each visually impaired student, there should be a variety of facilities and programmes available to him/her (Scott 1982).

However, it is worth noting that apart from the inadequately equipped teachers, the empirical findings indicated that 95.83% of VI learners use slate and the stylus as their learning aid while 4.17% used the Braille machine. Regarding other learning aids such as Braille text books, Braille paper, Braille maps, auditory aids, to name but a few they were not found to assist the VI learners. Hence, the VI learners mostly enjoyed the non-practical subjects. According to Best (1992) some curriculum areas can be made accessible through care in the presentation of materials, for many of the
arts-based subjects. Curriculum areas which involve practical activities create more of a challenge and will require adaptation in teaching approach and support of specialized equipment. It is evident from the results of this study that VI learner’s needs and interests were not catered for by the regular school curriculum (See Table 4.9).

It was learnt from the empirical findings that 100% of the VI learners were convinced that the knowledge and the skills from the mainstream were adequate to enable them to compete in the world market with the sighted (see Table 4.10). Though the VI were satisfied that they got necessary knowledge and skills, it was clear from the findings that there was still a long way to go in preparation of integrating the VI learners in the mainstream. However, from the teacher’s comments, it was appreciated that if teachers could be equipped with relevant skills to teach the VI learners perhaps they too would be convinced that they were doing an appropriate job in equipping the learners with the necessary skills. Moreover, the teachers also raised the point that the teaching & learning aids and modern technology equipment could be supplied to the VI learners to learn effectively like all the other learners in the mainstream. This finding is in line with those of Clunies-Ross (1984), Layer (1988), Chantimana (1992) and Shea & Bauer (1994) who established that teachers were willing to have the children with disabilities in their classroom so long adequate educational resources were provided to enable effective teaching and learning.
The findings of this study revealed that the VI learners were not competent and confident in their academic work because teachers ignored them during the teaching and learning process and attended to the sighted learners only. This was as a result of teachers wanting to finish the syllabus and prepare learners to write the examination at the end of the year. Also the high teacher-pupil ratio made it hard for the teachers to attend to the individual needs of each learner in class. Consequently they shifted their load to the sighted learners who were always willing to assist (see Table 4.3.4 & 4.5.6).

It is also worth noting that more often the VI learners found it difficult to cope smoothly because of the negative treatment given to them by the other sighted learners. The study discovered that 37.5% of the VI learners were being teased, called ugly names which apparently caused the VI a lot of discomfort in the regular school system (See Table 4.3.6). No blind/partially sighted learner likes to be set apart or treated differently. Each wants to conform and to be as much as possible like his/her classmates as possible. This view is consistent with the findings of Kasonde-Ngandu (1986) who in her study found that 67% of her respondents felt that the best place for the handicapped is a separate provision in special schools, because in separate schools the children are free from being laughed at, stared at and teased by the normal children.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and recommendations for the improvement of mainstreaming the visually impaired learners

In this chapter the conclusions are presented based on both the literature reviewed in the study and the empirical research conducted. The recommendations based on the findings and conclusions are also given, together with guidelines for further research.

6.1 Conclusion

In light of the research conducted aiming at determining the challenges of visually impaired learners in the mainstream schools of Lesotho, the results show that in the sighted world the visually impaired generally face problems namely: cognitive, perceptual, communication, development of independence and mobility problems.

Furthermore, the research has indicated that in Lesotho teachers of visually impaired learners are faced with challenges related to inadequate equipment and lack of expertise. The visually impaired learners, similarly, are faced with problems of inadequate equipment and textbooks, social interaction and limited opportunities to learn. The MoE should put more effort into the betterment of education of the visually impaired learners. Moorosi (1986:64) states that at the moment special education in Lesotho seems to be separated from the rest of the normal education and most of the teaching professionals, especially in the high educational institutions, are not trained in the education of the disabled.
6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the results/findings and conclusions of this study.

6.2.1 Role players

6.2.1.1 The Government (MoE) should:

(a) Provide regular school teachers with in-service and on-going training to equip them with appropriate techniques and skills for handling the visually impaired learners.

(b) Send teachers for training in other countries that are advanced in the field of special education to equip them with techniques of teaching the visually impaired learners, since qualified personnel are needed for deployment.

(c) Provide regular support services such as;

- Psychological/counseling services.
- Medical/Health services
- Frequent visits by the social workers.
- Orientation and Mobility (O & M) instructors.

(d) Through the School Supply Unit should provide the Braille textbooks and other educational materials.

(e) Provide schools not only with convenient facilities but also incentives, like good salaries for teachers should be given.
(f) Encourage the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL) to include special education programs in their curricular to equip teachers.

6.2.1.2 Parents

Parents should be encouraged to form associations that are independent or form parent-teacher associations. Parents should help and participate in the identification of the blind.

6.3 Weaknesses experienced

Generally, the whole experience of conducting this study was successful. However some problems were experienced such as:

(a) As it was proposed that the parents of the visually impaired learners would be interviewed, practically, it appeared impossible because most of them stayed in different remote areas of the country and their children only go home during long school vacations.

(b) The time that was speculated to be taken collecting the data was very little therefore the researcher was bound to extend it.

(c) Furthermore, although there was 100 percent return rate of the questionnaires, some respondents had to be chased to fill up the questionnaires. This was because they thought it was going to consume a good deal of their time.
6.4 Suggestions for further research

On the basis of the findings of this study it is suggested that further research should focus on how other countries have included the visually impaired learners in their mainstream schools and especially on how they have designed their curriculum to accommodate the needs and interests of the visually impaired learners.

There is also need to do follow up-studies on how the visually impaired learners from the mainstream schools progress in their future lives; for example to find out what problems they are experiencing in implementing what they were taught at school.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS

1 Personal Information
(a) Sex: □ Boy □ Girl
(b) How old are you? -------
(c) In which class are you? □ Class 3 □ Class 4 □ Class 5
□ class 6 □ Class 7
(d) When did you become visually impaired?

(e) Do you have any of the following additional disability?
   Cerebral palsy.
   Hearing disability.
   Mental retardation.
   Physical disability.
   Learning disability

2 Educational backgrounds
(a) When did you first enroll in this school?
(b) Initially what type of school did you attend?
   Special school. Regular school.
(c) Was it your wish to learn in this school or you had no choice?
   Yes □ No □
(d) Do you learn same subjects as the sighted?

(e) Which ones do you like? -----------------------------------------------
(f) Are you able to learn at the same pace as the sighted? Yes
   No

(g) Do you receive any additional support from the teachers or from
   the professional team (if any)? Yes No

(h) What type of learning materials do you use in your learning? -----

(i) In general, are you assured that all the subjects you are doing here
   are of vital importance in your future development? Yes
   No

(j) Are you comfortable that you are learning in a regular educational
   system with the sighted learners? Yes No

Comment:-----------------------------------------------

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(K) By virtue of your disability, what practical challenges do you
   encounter on a regular basis in the regular school.-------------------

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(l) The visually impaired learners and their families believed that
   by living at home, playing with children in their neighborhood and
   attending the local schools, they have opportunity for reaching
   their goals. What is your view regarding this statement?------------

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3 SOCIAL EXPOSURES

(a) Do you have friends?
(b) How many are sighted and how many are visually impaired?
(c) Are they helpful to you? Yes No
(e) How is their helpfulness assisting you to know them and being familiar with the school environment?
(f) How does it feel to have sighted friend?
(g) What particularly do you like or dislike about the sighted learners?
   i) Do you have a role model?
   ii) Why is this person your role model?
APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE SIGHTED LEARNERS

(1) How old are you? ........
(2) In which class are you? ........
(3) How many visually impaired learners are there in your class? ........
(4) Do you like being in the same class with the visually impaired learners? ......
(5) What do you like or dislike about them being in the same class or school?
................................................................................................................
(6) Among the visually impaired do you have any friends? ........
   If yes, how does it feel to have a visually impaired friend/s?
................................................................................................................
(7) What blindness behaviours do the visually impaired demonstrate most frequently in class?
........................................
(8) Do the visually impaired learners learn same subjects as you? ......
(9) Are the visually impaired learners able to learn at the same pace as you? ........
(10) Do you think all what they are learning are necessary and benefiting them? ........
(11) What type of assistance do the teachers provide them with during the teaching and learning process? ........
(12) Can you say that teachers are doing enough in assisting them to accesses the Curriculum? ...........

(13) Are there any special learning resources they use during the learning process? .........

(14) If yes what type of resources do they use?

.................................................................

(15) How do other learners treat them in the school?

.................................................................

(16) How would you like to see them treated?

.................................................................

(17) If you can become blind would you be comfortable to learn in the same school with sighted? .........
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

SECTION A
Indicate your answer in this section by ticking a box of an appropriate answer.

(1) How many visually impaired learners are integrated in your class?
   □ 1-2     □ 3 – 4     □ 5-6     □ 7-8     □ 9-10
   □ Other

(2) In which visual impairment category do they fall?
   □ Adventitious blind     □ Congenital blind

(3) What is the educational degree of the child’s visual acuity?
   □ Totally blind        □ Partially sighted

(4) Does his/her chronological age correspond with the mental age?
   □ Yes               □ No

(5) In which developmental area does/did he/she demonstrate any delay?
    □ Language & communication     □ Motor development & mobility
    □ Cognitive & concept development.     □ Social & emotional development
    □ Adaptive skills.

(6) Is there a standard teacher-pupil ratio in integrating visually impaired learners in classroom?
   □ Yes               □ No

(7) If yes, what number is that?
(8) For how long have you taught visually integrated class?

☐ 1 month – 1 year  ☐ 2-3 years  ☐ 4-5 years  ☐ 6-7 years  ☐ other (specify)

(9) Do you have any training/relevant qualifications in the teaching visually impaired?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

SECTION B
Answer the following questions using spaces provided below.

(1) What type of problems do the visually impaired learners encounter in the classroom in the following areas?
(a) Academic learning: ________________________________

(b) Orientation & Mobility: ________________________________

(c) Social Adjustment: ________________________________

(2) How appropriate is the education the visually impaired learners receive in preparation to work and live in the sighted world?________

(3) According to your observation, what additional support and subjects can be provided in order to bring the world to them? ______
(4) Generally, suggest how integration of visually impaired can be improved?