

**IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA  
PRIMARY SCHOOL SETTINGS: AN EXPLORATION OF  
TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CURRICULUM,  
CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS AND CHILDREN WHO HAVE  
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mainstream education was declared by the government of Botswana as a priority for educating learners with special educational needs especially those with Learning Difficulties - LD since 1984. The Revised National Policy on Education (1994) articulates governments' commitment to the education of all children, advocating for an inclusive education as much as is feasible. This study is an exploration of what teachers do in their schools and/or classrooms to implement inclusive education particularly looking at how they understand curriculum, curriculum adaptations and what they do to differentiate for learners who have LD through their teaching. Six primary schools in urban, semi-urban and rural areas were purposively selected and data were collected through classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. Seventeen participants participated in the study.

The findings reveal that teachers' conceptualization and understanding of inclusive education seemed not to fit within the national requirements of using learner-centred approaches. The findings also reveal that the teachers' conceptualisation and understanding of inclusive education seem embedded within the cultural concept of 'botho' (respect for humanity), a discourse which takes into account accepting all individuals. Although participants embrace the concept of inclusive education, this seems to be on a theoretical basis since in practice it seems that learners who have LD were not given learning opportunities which allow them to participate in the teaching and learning process.

Finally, participants identify some barriers such as an examination oriented curriculum, class sizes and lack of teachers' skills and knowledge as areas which hinder the implementation of inclusive education. The study challenges the traditional use of authoritarian approaches of teaching as one way of perpetuating exclusionary circumstances within Botswana schools as it leaves learners who have LD with little chance of accessing the curriculum. A dynamic constructive relationship between curriculum, teachers and learners is suggested, moving from 'teaching the curriculum' to 'understanding and developing inclusive curricula' within a social constructivist discourse.

**Key words: Inclusive education, curriculum, curriculum adaptations, Learning Difficulties.**

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