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Investigating the Status of the Consumer Science Curriculum in Accommodating Learners with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract

The implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini schools has encountered challenges, particularly the low academic performance of learners with special educational needs (LSEN) integrated into mainstream classrooms. Given the curriculum's role as the cornerstone of education, this study aimed to determine whether the curriculum, in its entirety, considering each of the ten curriculum concepts outlined in Van den Akker's curricular spider web, accommodates these learners. The study employed a descriptive design and utilized a mixed methods approach. Two data collection methods were employed: semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires. The findings revealed that the curriculum exhibits certain limitations in accommodating LSEN. These limitations can be categorized into teacher-related, pupil-related, school-related, and content-related factors. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the curriculum undergo a comprehensive review, taking into account all ten curriculum concepts. Additionally, the concept of inclusive education should be incorporated into the school syllabus to raise awareness among students. Schools should be provided with inclusion specialists to offer teacher and learner support for LSEN, and Consumer Science teachers should receive inclusion training at the undergraduate level.

Keywords: Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN), Inclusive Education, Curriculum and Limitations

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and an essential prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. Access to quality education is the cornerstone of sustainable development (Babaci-Wilhite et al., 2012). According to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, target 4.5, countries must eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including individuals with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children

in vulnerable situations by 2030. In line with this goal, Eswatini has committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all children and youth. To this end, new policies, such as the Draft Inclusive Education Policy of 2008, have been implemented to ensure the inclusion of all children. In 2010, the Education for All Policy was introduced, which served as a catalyst for the integration of inclusive education into mainstream schools. UNESCO (2017) emphasizes that a flexible and adaptable curriculum is a key indicator of successful inclusive education. Prior to the introduction of inclusive education, Eswatini had three special schools: Ekwetsembeni, St Joseph's, and the School for the Deaf. These schools placed a strong emphasis on developing flexible curricula to accommodate learners with special educational needs (LSEN). According to Madan and Sharma (2013), tailoring the curriculum to meet the individual needs of each child is central to the philosophy of an inclusive education program. Ralph Tyler defines the curriculum as all learning experiences planned and directed by the school to achieve its educational goals. The core of a curriculum typically focuses on the aims and content of learning. It is complemented by several components that serve as the building blocks of a cohesive curriculum. These components are effectively represented in van den Akker's curricular spider web, which encompasses the rationale, aims and objectives, content, learning activities, teacher role, materials and resources, grouping, location, time, and assessment (Khoza, 2023). To ensure effective curriculum adaptation, it is crucial to employ a systematic approach that involves scrutinizing, adapting, and interlinking each of these concepts to maximize the curriculum's flexibility.

Problem Statement

Inclusive education, characterized by the integration of all students regardless of their gender, race, social status, ability, or disability, has become a cornerstone of educational philosophy. However, preliminary investigations suggest that Consumer Science, a subject traditionally associated with domestic and household skills, has experienced significant gender imbalances, with a disproportionate number of female students pursuing it from high school through tertiary education. This disparity can be attributed to prevailing gender stereotypes that portray Consumer Science as a field primarily aligned with feminine roles.

Furthermore, preliminary studies on the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools highlight the challenges faced by teachers, including a lack of adequate resources and large class sizes. These factors align with several of the ten curriculum concepts outlined by Van den Akker's curricular spider web. To effectively accommodate learners with special educational needs (LSEN) into mainstream classrooms, it is essential to adapt the curriculum as a whole, ensuring that it caters to the diverse learning needs of all students. Consequently, a comprehensive examination of the current Consumer Science

curriculum is warranted to assess its capacity to accommodate LSEN.

Literature Review

Eswatini, a small nation in southern Africa, is divided into four regions and has a population exceeding one million. Within Eswatini's borders, three special schools cater to the educational needs of individuals with disabilities: St. Joseph Integrated School, Ekwetsembeni Special School, and Siteki School for the Deaf. As documented by Mabundza (2021), the first schools in Swaziland specifically designed for students with disabilities were established by missionaries in the 1950s. Despite the existence of these institutions, many individuals with disabilities remained at home, often hidden away by their families due to societal stigmas surrounding disability. Some parents perceived sending their children with disabilities to special schools as a waste of resources, while others viewed these institutions as mere dumping grounds, enrolling their children at the beginning of the academic year and only retrieving them at its conclusion. Children with disabilities are commonly referred to as Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) (Zimba, 2011).

Consumer Science, also known as Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), is a broad field of study that encompasses a wide range of topics related to food, nutrition, personal finance, family relationships, housing, and textiles. While FCS curriculum is generally designed to provide all students with essential life skills, there are concerns about its effectiveness in accommodating learners with special educational needs (LSEN). This literature review will explore the limitations of a curriculum in terms of its accessibility, flexibility, and adaptability to meet the diverse needs of LSEN students (Mabuza, Makhanya, & Simelane, 2022).

Firstly, Barret et al. (2019) noted that accessibility is one of the primary limitations in most curricula as its lack of accessibility for LSEN students. Traditional classrooms often rely on visual and auditory instruction, which can pose significant challenges for students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, or cognitive disabilities. Additionally, hands-on activities, a hallmark of FCS instruction, may not be accessible for students with physical limitations or sensory sensitivities. Secondly, flexibility, the rigid structure of most conventional classrooms can also hinder its ability to accommodate LSEN students. The curriculum often follows a one-size-fits-all approach, with little flexibility to adapt content or instruction to meet the individual needs of students (Zimba, 2011). This lack of flexibility can make it difficult for LSEN students to fully participate in classroom activities and achieve learning objectives.

Lastly, adaptability, the curriculum may not be sufficiently adaptable to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of LSEN students (Agbo, 2015). Traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and demonstrations, may not be effective

for students with learning disabilities or attention difficulties. Additionally, the curriculum may not provide adequate opportunities for students to learn through alternative methods, such as visual aids, hands-on activities, or technology-based instruction. To effectively accommodate LSEN students in Consumer Science classrooms, a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can be applied to create a more inclusive learning environment. UDL emphasizes the use of flexible learning materials, diverse teaching methods, and multiple assessment options to cater to a wide range of learners (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012).

Also, teacher training and professional development opportunities can be provided to help teachers develop the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively teach LSEN students. This includes training on adaptive instructional strategies, assistive technology, and differentiated instruction. Further, curriculum collaboration between teachers and special education teachers can facilitate the development of individualized education programs and ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the specific needs of LSEN students. Inclusion of LSEN students in curriculum planning can provide valuable insights into the challenges they face and help identify potential solutions (Abduramanova, 2021). This can be achieved through student surveys, focus groups, or parent-teacher conferences. Lastly, regular evaluation and assessment of the curriculum is essential to ensure that it remains accessible, flexible, and adaptable to the needs of all learners, including LSEN students. Agbo (2015) suggests that individual study plans can be successful in promoting inclusive education. These plans involve giving priority to each individual student's needs and allowing stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and children, to decide on the type of curriculum considered most useful and constructive for each student. A range of possibilities could provide equal educational opportunities to students with and without special educational needs.

On the other note, Haug (2017) posits that inclusive education is the basis for the elimination of educational and social exclusion. It is a medium for the abolition of discrimination against people who are different and allows them to achieve social inclusion in the broadest sense. Furthermore, researchers (Madan & Sharma, 2013; UNESCO, 2017; Babaci-Wilhite et al., 2012) have identified a number of factors that are said to be required for effective inclusive education: appropriate training and education for teachers seem to at top priority. Teachers need to be trained in how to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs. Establishment of the right of mainstream teachers to choose whether or not to teach inclusive classes is the right for every teacher but cultivating a positive attitude can be the best solution. This may encourage teachers to develop proposals for the implementation of inclusion which may further promote a collaborative relationship between teachers of mainstream and special education.

However, the focus must be on the needs of students, not on ideology of inclusion. Once the teachers' focus is aligned, a tailor-made curriculum to meet the needs of all

students, including those with special needs is assured. Lastly, the parents need to come to party, their involvement and participation in the educational process and decision-making is crucial for sustainability of any intervention.

Methodology

This research work is grounded on a pragmatism paradigm that emerged as a philosophical movement in the late 19th century, challenging the dominant positivist and interpretivist paradigms in social science research. Pragmatists, led by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, argued that traditional paradigms were too rigid and limited to adequately capture the complexities of human experience and social phenomena. They advocated for a more flexible and practical approach to research, one that emphasized the usefulness of knowledge in addressing real-world problems. The nature of this study on the status of Consumer Science curriculum, involving use of human interactions and experiences, depended greatly on pragmatism's key principles problem-centeredness and contextuality.

This study was conducted in the Hhohho and Manzini regions of Eswatini. The target population was high schools offering Consumer Sciences in their curriculum. Teachers are well-positioned to describe and facilitate the functioning of all components of the curriculum. This qualified teachers as suitable respondents and participants for obtaining data that would provide a comprehensive report on how the Consumer Sciences curriculum accommodates learners with special educational needs.

Systematic random sampling was employed to select the schools that were used as the sample, resulting in a sample of sixty (60) teachers. Elfil and Negida (2017) define systematic random sampling as a procedure that ensures an equal chance (probability) of selecting each unit from within the population when creating the sample. To gather information from these respondents about the challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education in consumer sciences, the author developed a questionnaire. Questionnaires were used to generate data specific to the researcher's own research and offer insights that might otherwise be unavailable. The questionnaire was divided into different sections, each with structured questions aimed at generating data to respond to each research objective. Demographic data was also collected to help the researcher define the sample more concisely.

Prior to administering the questionnaire, letters were written to the Ministry of Education and Training and school principals, seeking permission to collect data from schools. The researcher distributed questionnaires to the Consumer Science teachers from the selected schools. Follow-ups were made through phone calls where necessary. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to summarize and interpret quantitative data, such as the measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation). Statistical

Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 was used to analyze the data and it was presented using tables. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics; the frequencies, means and standard deviation. It was classified, tabulated and analyzed according to the objectives of the study.

As the study adopted a mixed method approach, a total of ten (10) teachers were selected as participants and a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to these participants. Convenience sampling technique was used to select these participants due to their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Emerson, 2015).

Permission to interview them was first sought through a consent letter. Upon agreement, the interview guide was sent prior to the interview so that they could familiarize themselves with the questions. They indicated their most suitable time for the interview. Once all this information was obtained, the researcher created a schedule for the interviews. On the scheduled day and time, calls were made, and interviews were conducted. The researcher used a call recording application to capture the interviews. The participants were assured of strict confidentiality of the responses. Consent for voice recording was sought. Recorded interviews were carefully transcribed as soon as they were recorded from the field. Thematic analysis was preferred due to its flexibility and thus not tied to one philosophical orientation. The goal was to identify, analyze and describe patterns or themes across the data (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Results and Findings

Limitations of the Consumer Science Curriculum in Accommodating LSEN

Consumer Science teachers were asked to assess the limitations of the Consumer Science curriculum in accommodating Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). The results presented in Table 1 generally indicate that teachers slightly agree that the Consumer Sciences curriculum has some limitations in accommodating learners with special educational needs ($\overline{x}$ = 3.91). The results of the study specifically indicate that teachers in Eswatini have little or no training in inclusive education and that they are not competent on the subject of inclusion. Teachers also feel challenged in teaching learners with special educational needs (LSEN) and believe that having LSEN in a mainstream classroom has a negative impact on both their academic performance and their social lives. Additionally, teachers believe that the school environment is not well designed to accommodate LSEN and that schools are not able to offer psychosocial support for LSEN. There is also a lack of teacher support for teaching learners with special educational needs provided by the school. Finally, leaders at all levels of the education sector are not able to articulate consistent policy goals to develop inclusive and equitable educational practices. The standard deviation (SD = 1.37) indicates an insignificant variation in the teacher responses.

Table 1: Limitations of the consumer science curriculum in accommodating LSEN

Limitations	**Mean**	**STD**	**DE**
1. I have little or no tertiary training in inclusive education	3.73	1.52	SLA
2. I have never received in-service training in inclusive education	3.97	1.66	SLA
3. I am not competent on the subject of inclusion	3.53	1.51	SLA
4. I am challenged in teaching LSEN	4.27	1.40	SLA
5. Having LSEN in a mainstream has a negative impact on their academic performances	4.20	1.23	SLA
6. Placing LSEN in a mainstream affects their social lives negatively	3.87	1.40	SLA
7. The school environment is not well designed to accommodate LSEN	4.47	1.35	SLA
8. The school is not able to offer psychosocial support for LSEN	3.93	1.47	SLA
9. There is little or no teacher support for teaching learners with special educational needs provided by the school	4.00	1.54	SLA
10. The content taught in Consumer Sciences is not learnable by all.	3.53	1.27	SLA
11. The content taught in consumer sciences is not likely to positively influence a LSEN's self-concept positively	2.97	1.21	SLD
12. The National C.S curriculum and its associated assessment are not designed to effectively respond to all the needs of learners	3.83	1.20	SLA
13. There is a lack of systems in place to monitor the presence, participation and achievement of learners in C.S.	4.23	1.24	SLA
14. Leaders at all levels of the education sector are not able to articulate consistent policy goals to develop inclusive and equitable educational practices	4.20	1.17	SLA
Overall	3.91	1.37	SLA

Legend	***Descriptive Equivalent***	***(DE)***
0-1.4	*Strongly disagree*	*(SD),*
1.5-2.4	*Disagree*	*(D),*
2.5- 3.4	*Slightly disagree*	*(SLD),*
3.5 - 4.4	*Slightly agree*	*(SLA),*
4.5 – 5.4	*Agree*	*(A),*
5.5 - 6	*Strongly agree*	*(SA)*

An analysis of the qualitative data reveals consistency with the findings presented in the quantitative data. During interviews, teachers expressed limitations in the curriculum's ability to accommodate students with special educational needs (LSEN). These limitations were categorized into three main areas: teacher limitations, pupil limitations, and school limitations.

Teacher Limitations

In addition to teaching academic subjects, teachers are also responsible for providing additional training, such as mobility and self-care training, and preparing teaching materials that address the needs of disabled children. They aim to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where LSEN are valued as integral members of the classroom community and positive interactions are emphasized. It is expected that teachers meet the needs of all learners and develop strategies to accommodate LSEN, ensuring their complete inclusion in the classroom.

Sadly, teachers face challenges when attempting to fully accommodate LSEN in Consumer Science classes. These challenges arise from a lack of training in inclusive education and time constraints. One participant stated, "I wish I could accommodate LSEN, but I struggle with it. I don't have enough time, and I haven't been trained for it." Teachers play a crucial role in the curriculum and have the responsibility to welcome and teach all students, regardless of their learning difficulties. However, they require specific skills to adapt their teaching to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. With the inclusion of LSEN in mainstream school settings, this skill becomes even more crucial. Unfortunately, it is unfortunate to hear that teachers often lack the necessary training to accommodate LSEN. This concurs with a study by Mabuza et al. (2022), who also found that teachers find the allocated time in Consumer Science insufficient to effectively accommodate LSEN. The process of accommodating LSEN should not be rushed, but teachers often feel pressured to complete the syllabus in time to prepare for end-of-year exams. As a result, they may prioritize completing the syllabus over providing individualized support to LSEN, who typically represent a minority in classrooms. These findings confirm Abduramanova (2021)'s explanation that syllabus coverage poses a challenge in inclusion, as accommodating the varied needs of learners can be time-consuming.

Teachers express a desire to accommodate LSEN, but they struggle due to a lack of patience and strategies. "I have zero training in inclusion, which makes it very difficult for me. I don't have the patience required to deal with such learners," one participant explained. This lack of training results in each teacher developing their own methods, turning the accommodation of LSEN into a trial-and-error process. Another participant revealed, "Due to the lack of training, you do what you think is best for the child, but sometimes you may be wrong." These challenges and frustrations often result in teachers being harsh towards LSEN. The study's findings correlate with those of Zimba (2011) and Zwane (2016), who also identified a lack of teacher training as a challenge in implementing inclusive education. Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2023) similarly found that a lack of teacher training poses a barrier to inclusive education.

It is evident that time constraints and a lack of training are significant challenges for teachers in their quest to effectively accommodate LSEN. Addressing these challenges

is essential to ensuring that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed in mainstream school settings.

Pupil Limitations

Students with special educational needs form a minority within mainstream schools, as these inclusive education policies have been relatively recently implemented. Consequently, these students often feel unaccommodated, as schools struggle to allocate sufficient resources to cater to the needs of a minority. Pupils with special needs face challenges such as physical inaccessibility, neglect, and negative attitudes from their peers. LSEN often face neglect from teachers and fellow students due to a lack of trained personnel and support systems. As Zimba (2011) noted, teachers require specialized training to effectively manage the complexities and sensitivities of their role in supporting LSEN. Many LSEN require special care or medical interventions throughout the day, raising questions about who should bear the responsibility for these procedures. This uncertainty can lead to neglect, hindering LSEN's ability to reach their full potential.

Physical inaccessibility poses a significant hurdle for students with disabilities, as they encounter barriers such as a lack of ramps or elevators in multi-level school buildings, heavy doors, inaccessible washrooms, and transportation challenges. This hinders their ability to thrive in the school environment. Participant 7 highlighted, "The learning environment is not suitable, and the equipment is not suited for them. Some students struggle to access restrooms and rely on assistance from friends, who may also get tired."

Furthermore, LSEN often experience neglect not only from teachers but also from their fellow classmates. This is primarily due to a lack of trained teachers and support. Teachers need training to understand the complexities and sensitivities involved in supporting LSEN adequately. Many LSEN require special care or medical interventions throughout the day. However, there is often uncertainty surrounding who should carry out these procedures, whether it should be teachers, parents, health personnel, specially employed staff, or others. Additionally, there are unresolved issues regarding who should bear the cost of these services.

As a result, LSEN often face negative attitudes from their peers, who perceive them as attention seekers or troublemakers due to a lack of understanding. Their cry for help may manifest as attention-seeking behavior, such as repeatedly seeking attention from the teacher, even when their classmates feel it is unnecessary. The so-called "normal" students may view LSEN as burdensome due to the constant need for assistance. Participant 2 described the situation, stating, "I have noticed that some 'normal' students develop a negative attitude towards LSEN because they feel delayed while accommodating them. They also feel burdened by constantly being required to assist LSEN, leading them to avoid these students."

Findings from the study indicate that LSEN, particularly those with physical disabilities, encounter significant barriers in accessing classrooms and essential facilities like restrooms. Teachers reported that the arrangement of laboratories often hinders the movement of wheelchair-bound students. High counters and working surfaces pose additional challenges, as do the stoves used in food and nutrition labs. These findings align with those of Zwane (2016), who also identified accessibility issues within the school environment as a significant challenge for LSEN. Similarly, Zimba (2011) emphasized the need for infrastructure modifications to accommodate LSEN, especially those with physical or visual impairments.

LSEN often face negative attitudes from their peers, who may perceive them as attention seekers or students with behavioral issues. This misunderstanding stems from LSEN's attempts to seek assistance, which may be misconstrued as attention-seeking behavior. Additionally, some students may view LSEN as a burden due to their constant need for help (Lindsay, 2007).

School Limitations

Incorporating learners with special educational needs (LSEN) into mainstream classrooms requires modifications to teaching strategies, learning activities, and school infrastructure, among other considerations. It is an ongoing process that aims to enhance learning and participation for all students. While it is an ideal to strive for, complete inclusivity is never fully achieved. It is not something that can be accomplished overnight. An inclusive curriculum is developed through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved in the school and those with an interest in the pupils and the school. Schools need to adapt their structures and resources, along with the attitudes and motivation of their staff. Every school staff member can take the initiative to start a school development process towards inclusion. For sustainable and comprehensive change, it is crucial to make the process transparent to everyone and to establish a common goal. A comprehensive approach to inclusive education in schools encompasses inclusive policies, among other components.

Teachers express concern that the issue of accommodating LSEN in mainstream Consumer Science classrooms still has a long way to go. Currently, schools face limitations such as: lack of finances, non-accommodative infrastructure, and lack of inclusive policies. "Change infrastructure, train teachers, train pupils as well on the subject of inclusion, research and develop policies that will guide the school towards successfully accommodating LSEN," stated participant 4. These findings align with those of Zimba (2011), who identified similar limitations, including a lack of accommodative infrastructure, finances, and operational strategies. Facilities and infrastructure play a critical role in serving the needs of LSEN students (Allam & Martin, 2021). They provide

accessibility and should be aligned with the students' specific requirements. According to Apolinali (2007), Eswatini schools often lack or have minimal accommodative infrastructure, hindering the accommodation of LSEN.

Accommodating LSEN comes with a multitude of requirements, such as the need to adapt infrastructure to meet the needs of these individuals and the need to provide teacher or learner support, among others. These needs vary from pupil to pupil and from year to year, necessitating constant adaptation. Unfortunately, schools struggle with finances due to the socio-economic status of many Emaswati and limited government support. It therefore becomes difficult for schools to make means to accommodate each and every learner as the needs arise, especially because LSEN are a minority. "There is need to work on the structure of the school, it needs serious overhauling. The school should also buy more equipment for the department but we all know that we cannot afford that as a school, the funds are always a limitation," stated participant 8.

In addition, accommodating LSEN can be successful when all stakeholders are involved. Teachers and all staff members must understand the differences and come up with strategies on how to foster a sense of belonging in the school. This requires clearly defined policies that outline the roles of each stakeholder. Lack of policies leaves everyone confused and unaware of expectations, which becomes a limitation in accommodating LSEN. Teachers feel that with the presence of policies, it becomes clear as to what must be done and how. Unfortunately, teachers say schools lack these policies, making it difficult to accommodate LSEN because of the unclear roles. "There are no clearly defined roles. The school must create a policy on inclusion. This will enable the creation of a roadmap that will clearly state the role each stakeholder must play and also will assist in showing where its strengths are and where it lacks as far as accommodating LSEN is concerned," explained participant 6.

Successful accommodation of LSEN requires the involvement of all stakeholders. Teachers and staff members must understand the differences among students and develop strategies to foster a sense of belonging within the school. This requires clear, written policies that outline the roles of each stakeholder. Allam and Martin (2021) emphasize that a lack of policies leads to confusion and unclear expectations, hindering the accommodation of LSEN. Teachers believe that clear policies would clarify roles and responsibilities, facilitating better accommodation. Unfortunately, the absence of such policies creates ambiguity and hinders effective accommodation.

Overcoming school limitations requires a comprehensive approach that addresses infrastructure, finances, and policies. Schools must allocate adequate resources to create inclusive environments that support LSEN. Inclusive policies should be developed and implemented to provide clear guidance and expectations for all stakeholders. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively accommodate LSEN. By proactively

addressing these limitations, schools can create inclusive learning environments that support the success of all students.

Content Limitations

The Consumer Science curriculum is comprehensive and in-depth, encompassing various components such as nutrition, food preparation, family living, home management, health and hygiene, clothing and textiles, and laundry. In high school, it is bifurcated into two specialized subjects: Food and Nutrition and Fashion and Fabrics. All three subjects involve both theoretical and practical components. It is important to note that the weighting of theory and practical components differs, with theory taking precedence over practical. Teachers generally agree that the content is learnable for most pupils and provides valuable concepts that are relatable to learners regardless of their learning capabilities. "The content is learnable. Apart from being lengthy, it provides skills and is relatable for most people," highlighted participant 8. However, teachers also acknowledge that the content poses challenges in accommodating LSEN learners. These limitations stem from the extensive nature of the content and the practical component's requirement for specific equipment, which can be difficult for schools to procure. The lengthy syllabus places a strain on teachers, who must balance accommodating LSEN with ensuring that all students cover the entire curriculum in preparation for exams. The excessive content can overwhelm learners who struggle to grasp concepts, as there is simply too much material to cover (Mabuza, Makhanya, & Simelane, 2022). This can also negatively impact enrollment in Consumer Science classes, as students develop a negative attitude towards the subject due to the excessive workload and the need to sacrifice breaks, after-school hours, weekends, and holidays to complete the syllabus.

Teachers point to the lengthy syllabus as a significant factor contributing to the content's difficulty. This places teachers in a precarious position, balancing the need to accommodate LSEN learners with the obligation to ensure that all pupils cover the entire syllabus in preparation for examinations. The sheer volume of content can overwhelm learners who struggle with concept grasp, leading to a negative attitude towards the subject due to the extensive notes, the need to sacrifice breaks, after-school time, weekends, and holidays to complete the syllabus. This finding aligns with Mabuza (2020), who also identified the extensive content of Consumer Science as a challenge. Students often express frustration with the excessive amount of notes they are required to copy, leading to a reluctance to engage with the subject. "The syllabus is too long, especially at JC. This is what demotivates most learners to take up the subject. The notes are too much and therefore require extra time. For example, my colleagues will agree with me that FF can be boring. The fiber topic takes too long. By the time we do other topics, learners are also bored," stated participant 5. This disproportionately affects students with disabilities, as they may

require additional attention and individualized support. As a result, teachers advocate for modifications to the subject, particularly at the Junior Certificate (JC) level, to make it more appealing to learners and accommodating of LSEN students. "The content is clear but lengthy. I feel it needs a bit of cutting, especially JC, or just to have two subjects instead of the integrated form in JC," stated participant 9.

The practical component of the Consumer Science curriculum presents additional challenges for LSEN learners, particularly those with physical disabilities. Teachers note that the practical work can be discriminatory towards LSEN students, as the equipment available in schools may not be sufficient or adapted to cater to their needs. "The content must be reviewed really. It is challenging for LSEN and not accommodating of them. Let me make an example. In our case right now, we have someone in a wheelchair. She can't stand or hold some things, so it is very difficult for her. A lot of things must be changed in order to accommodate her. Even the equipment – maybe get labor-saving devices because those ones can really work for them. Other than having to work with the hand, now and again, some things need to be done with some machinery of some sort. Even the sewing machines we have – we need to get rid of them, the hand-sewing ones because they are not good for them," detailed participant 1. Some teachers express concern that the nature of the subject can even lead to LSEN pupils feeling like failures if they are unable to use certain equipment due to their disability during practical sessions. This can lead to frustration and potentially depression. "A child may feel like a failure and frustrated not because she can't perform certain tasks but because the equipment does not allow," stated participant 2.

Additionally, the practical nature of Consumer Science necessitates a significant amount of hands-on work. However, the practical component of the curriculum can be discriminatory to LSEN, particularly those with physical challenges. Teachers attribute this to the lack of adequate and adapted equipment in schools. This finding corresponds with Shongwe (2019), who also identified inadequate equipment as a challenge in accommodating LSEN in Consumer Science departments. The lack of appropriate equipment significantly hinders the learning experience of LSEN, as they are unable to fully engage in practical activities.

Comparison Practices of Teachers with Different Teaching Experience towards Accommodating LSEN

ANOVA was run to compare the practices of teachers with different levels of work experiences with regards to accommodating learners with special educational needs. Results presented in Table 2 indicate that there is a significant difference ($p<0.05$) in the practices of the teachers $F_{3.56}= 4.54$, $p =0.01$. Specifically, a post hoc analysis using Bonferroni indicates that there is a significant difference in the pockets of good practice between teachers with 1 to 5 years and those with 20 years and above of teaching experience, with the 1-5 years' experience group demonstrating more good practices in

accommodating LSEN. A distribution of the results displays that as teachers gain more teaching experience they become less accommodative of LSEN.

Table 2: Comparison Practices of teachers with different teaching experience towards accommodating LSEN

Experience	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**F**	**P**
1-5 years	22	4.73	0.66	4.54	0.01
6 - 9 years	18	4.39	0.76		
10 - 15 years	8	4.31	0.45		
20 and above	12	3.95	0.43		

*Sig at 0.05

Summary and Conclusions

Teachers face several challenges when attempting to fully accommodate LSEN in Consumer Science classes. These challenges include a lack of training in inclusive education, time constraints, and a lack of patience and strategies. Teachers often lack the necessary training to adapt their teaching to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. Additionally, they struggle to balance the needs of all learners within the limited time allotted. Finally, some teachers may lack the patience and understanding to deal with students who have special needs.

Students with special educational needs (LSEN) face several challenges in mainstream school settings. These challenges include physical inaccessibility, neglect, and negative attitudes from their peers. LSEN may encounter barriers such as a lack of ramps or elevators, heavy doors, inaccessible washrooms, and transportation challenges. They may also experience neglect from teachers and peers, who may lack the training or understanding to support them adequately. Additionally, LSEN may face negative attitudes from their peers, who may perceive them as attention seekers or troublemakers.

Schools face several challenges when accommodating LSEN. These challenges include a lack of finances, non-accommodative infrastructure, and a lack of inclusive policies. Schools may struggle to afford the necessary equipment and resources to accommodate LSEN. Additionally, school infrastructure may not be accessible to students with disabilities. Finally, schools may lack clear policies on how to accommodate LSEN, which can lead to confusion and frustration among teachers and staff.

In conclusion, the Consumer Science curriculum presents content and practical limitations that hinder the effective accommodation of LSEN learners. These limitations include an extensive syllabus, an emphasis on theory over practical components, a lack of adequate and adapted equipment, and the potential for feelings of failure among LSEN pupils. To address these limitations and promote inclusive education, it is crucial to review

the curriculum, provide appropriate resources, and implement strategies that foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Recommendations

To address the challenges faced by teachers, pupils, and schools, it is important to implement several recommendations. Teachers should receive training in inclusive education to better understand the needs of LSEN and how to adapt their teaching accordingly. Additionally, schools should allocate more time and resources to accommodating LSEN. Finally, schools should develop clear policies on how to accommodate LSEN, which will help to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

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