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# Exploring the Implementation of Sesotho Home Language Curriculum Content and Pedagogy in Higher Education Classrooms

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## Abstract

This study examines the practical realities of teaching Sesotho through direct classroom observations, which is essential for understanding how pedagogical strategies, curriculum goals, and linguistic practices align or fail to align in actual teaching environments. The study explores the implementation of the Sesotho home language (HL) curriculum content and pedagogy within higher education institutions. It uses the Curriculum Alignment Theory (CAT), which focuses on aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A qualitative case study approach was adopted to focus on four lecturers from the Faculties of Humanities and Education at a single university. Data were gathered through classroom observations and analysed using thematic analysis. Lecturers highlight a significant tension between the sequencing of curriculum content and pedagogical approaches, as well as between shifting policy objectives and the practical realities of the classroom. The findings underscore the lecturers' need for varied strategies to align curriculum content with pedagogy, supporting curriculum reform that equips preservice teachers with the necessary knowledge to teach Sesotho effectively.

## Keywords

curriculum implementations, higher education, indigenous languages, pedagogy and content knowledge, sesotho home language

## INTRODUCTION

Developing indigenous African languages, such as Sesotho, in higher education is essential for promoting linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and epistemic justice in post-apartheid South Africa (Ntentema, 2021; Stroud, 2021). As a home language for millions and one of the country's official languages, Sesotho is vital in preserving heritage and enabling meaningful access to knowledge for its speakers. Despite policy frameworks that support the intellectualisation of African languages in universities, the practical implementation of Sesotho as a medium of instruction and subject of academic inquiry remains uneven (DHET, 2018; Ngubane, 2024; Ntentema, 2021; Siziba, 2024). One of the key challenges lies in aligning curriculum content and pedagogy; what is taught must correspond with how it is taught, especially in teacher education programs that prepare preservice teachers to teach Sesotho in schools. A significant gap in existing research concerns the role of lecturers in mediating this alignment. While there is growing interest in multilingual education and curriculum transformation, limited studies have explored how lecturers interpret, adapt, and deliver the Sesotho home language curriculum in higher education classrooms (Makumane et al., 2024; Mokala et al., 2022; Motaung, 2021). This gap is critical, as lecturers are the primary agents through whom curriculum and pedagogical intentions are realised or undermined. The current study, therefore, seeks to explore how the Sesotho home language curriculum content and pedagogy are implemented in higher education institutions, with a specific focus on lecturers' practices and the challenges they face in their lectures. In line with this objective, the research question driving this article is: How is Sesotho home language curriculum content and pedagogy implemented in the classroom of higher education institutions? Understanding this dynamic is crucial for informing curriculum reform that better supports preservice teachers and higher education's broader goals for implementing home language development.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper draws on the Curriculum Alignment Theory (CAT) articulated by Fenwick W. English in the early 1990s. Curriculum alignment, according to Web (2010), refers to the degree to which expectations [i.e., standards] and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and do.” Regarding the CAT, Fenwick emphasises the tight interrelationship among the three curriculum domains: the coherence and consistency between curriculum goals, instructional strategies, and assessments, as also shown in Figure 1, which visually displays significant alignment of the three steps to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum between what is happening in Sesotho content and didactics modules.

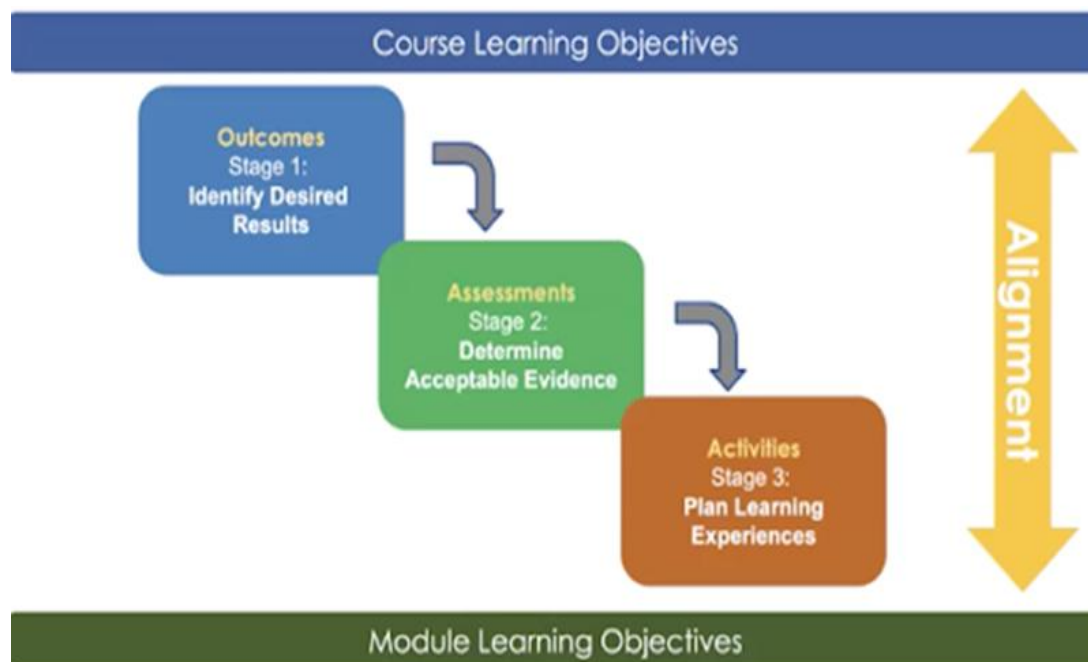


Fig. 1 Stages in the backward design process

Source: Wiggins & McTighe, 2005

According to English (1978), when learning outcomes, assessments, and instructional activities are fully aligned, the result is a “tight” curriculum that maximises student learning and enhances accountability. More recently, Funk (2024) expanded on this concept by highlighting how lecturers’ teaching approaches reflect the priorities of the Sesotho Home Language (HL) curriculum or revert to traditional Western pedagogical models. For proper alignment, lecturers must meaningfully incorporate Sesotho HL linguistic content into their lesson planning and classroom practices (Siziba, 2024). This involves teaching the language’s structural components and employing pedagogies grounded in Sesotho cultural frameworks. Therefore, achieving curriculum alignment requires a coherent integration of content knowledge and pedagogical strategies to ensure effective and efficient course delivery.

The current study examines the perspectives of university lecturers on teaching content and didactics in undergraduate modules taught in Sesotho HL. To determine this alignment, university lecturers were interviewed one-on-one to clarify how they perceive and implement Sesotho HL content and didactics curricula. The CAT is suitable for this study because it helps establish whether the content offered in Sesotho modules aligns with the content taught in Sesotho HL didactics. Stockwell et al (2025) argue that curriculum misalignment challenges student learning in higher education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews existing literature to identify gaps in implementing the Sesotho home language curriculum content and pedagogy in higher education classrooms. The review is organised around four key sub-themes: (1) curriculum policy and design for African languages, (2) pedagogical approaches used in teaching Sesotho, (3) lecturer competency and professional development, and (4) the availability and use of teaching and learning resources. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive lens to examine the complexities and challenges surrounding the teaching of Sesotho in higher education institutions.

### Curriculum Policy and Design for African Languages

The policy frameworks guiding African language curricula are crucial in shaping how languages like Sesotho are taught at higher education institutions. Historically, African languages have been marginalised within formal education systems, often overshadowed by colonial languages such as English and Afrikaans (Diko, 2025; Diko & Celliers, 2024; Guzula, 2022). In response, post-apartheid South African education policies, such as the Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997) and the Higher Education Language Policy (DHET, 2020), have sought to promote multilingualism and elevate the status of indigenous languages. However, while these policies provide a progressive framework, their implementation at the curriculum level is often inconsistent (Mogale et al, 2023; Ominde, 2021). Curriculum development for African

languages, such as Sesotho, is usually hindered by a lack of standardised guidelines, inadequate institutional support, and a minimal alignment between policy intentions and actual classroom practices in higher education.

Moreover, translating policy into effective curriculum design faces practical and ideological challenges. Institutions may struggle to integrate Sesotho into mainstream academic programs due to inadequate funding, limited availability of academically rigorous materials, and a shortage of trained curriculum developers who are fluent in both the language and pedagogical theory (Basha, 2023; Noroozi, 2024). As a result, lecturers are often left to interpret broad policy directives without detailed curricular guidance, which affects the coherence and quality of the Sesotho curriculum. This disconnect between policy frameworks and classroom realities underscores the need for more context-sensitive, well-resourced, and collaboratively developed curricula that reflect both national language goals and the lived realities of lecturers and students (Holden, 2025; Saud, 2025). Without more substantial alignment, the transformative potential of language policies for African languages in higher education remains largely unrealised.

### **Pedagogical Approaches Used in Teaching Sesotho**

Instructional strategies for teaching Sesotho must account for its linguistic complexity and cultural relevance, similar to those used for other indigenous African languages. Effective strategies often include a communicative approach that emphasises active student participation, real-life language use, and contextual learning (Mokhaba, 2020). Incorporating storytelling, songs, and oral literature engages learners and preserves cultural heritage. Code-switching between Sesotho and more dominant languages, such as English, can aid comprehension, especially in multilingual classrooms (Khoalenyane et al., 2025; Motaung, 2024; Setai, 2014). Moreover, integrating visual aids and digital resources has enhanced Sesotho's vocabulary acquisition and reading skills, especially among young learners. These strategies encourage learners to develop functional fluency while also appreciating the sociolinguistic richness of the language.

However, the success of instructional strategies for Sesotho often depends on systemic support, including teacher training, curriculum design, and the availability of quality teaching materials. Many teachers report that they receive insufficient professional development opportunities for teaching Sesotho effectively (Chere-Masopha et al., 2022; Gladys et al., 2022; Makokotlela et al., 2025; Mojapelo & Dlodlo, 2015). Additionally, the language is often marginalised in the formal curriculum, leading to a lack of motivation among learners and educators. A more inclusive and well-resourced educational framework is necessary to improve the efficacy of instructional strategies. This includes policy-level recognition of Sesotho as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), alongside investment in linguistic research and material development tailored to different educational levels (Bamgbose, 2011; Demuth, 2022; Seleke et al, 2025). Thus, while instructional strategies are central to teaching Sesotho, their impact is mediated by broader sociopolitical and institutional factors.

### **Lecturer Competency and Professional Development**

Academic staff expertise and ongoing training are critical to effective teaching and learning in higher education. The quality of instruction is significantly influenced by the depth of subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the ability of lecturers to adapt to evolving educational demands (Winoto, 2022; Zhao et al, 2024). In the context of indigenous language education, such as Sesotho, there is a growing need for academic staff to be fluent speakers and to possess formal training in language pedagogy and curriculum development. According to Ndebele and Hlalele (2020), many lecturers in South African universities lack formal training in indigenous language instruction, which hampers their ability to deliver content effectively and to innovate in response to students' diverse needs. This gap underscores the importance of structured professional development programmes aligned with linguistic and technological shifts in education.

Furthermore, ongoing training ensures that academic staff remain updated with contemporary teaching strategies, digital tools, and assessment methods. As Mokoena (2020) highlighted, continuous professional development fosters reflective practice and enhances lecturers' ability to incorporate blended learning and culturally responsive pedagogy. This is particularly important in multilingual contexts, where academic staff must navigate linguistic diversity and institutional expectations. Without sustained investment in training, even highly qualified academics may become stagnant, limiting their impact on student engagement and academic performance.

### **The Availability and Use of Teaching and Learning Resources**

Access to and utilisation of educational resources remain fundamental in shaping teaching effectiveness and student outcomes, particularly in under-resourced contexts, such as Indigenous language education (Kukulaska-Hulme et al., 2023). Despite policy efforts to promote equity, disparities in access to textbooks, digital tools, and language-specific materials persist, undermining the teaching of languages like Sesotho. According to Mahlangu and Mapotse (2021), many schools and tertiary institutions in South Africa still face shortages of culturally relevant and linguistically accurate Sesotho learning materials. These shortages hinder learners' ability to engage meaningfully with the curriculum and limit lecturers' capacity to apply diverse instructional strategies. Furthermore, infrastructure constraints such as limited internet connectivity and inadequate digital literacy exacerbate the digital divide, making it difficult to fully integrate modern educational technologies into language instruction (Mokone, 2022).

However, access alone does not guarantee effective utilisation. The ability of educators and students to use available resources depends on adequate training, institutional support, and the relevance of materials to the learners' linguistic and cultural contexts. Mothibi and Khoza (2023) argue that many educators lack the pedagogical skills to adapt

and integrate Open Educational Resources (OERs) or e-learning platforms into language teaching, especially in rural areas. Therefore, enhancing access and utilisation requires a dual focus on resource provision and capacity building, ensuring that educational materials are available, usable, adaptable, and contextually appropriate for teaching Sesotho and other indigenous languages.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2012). This approach is particularly valuable for capturing detailed descriptions, personal experiences, and participants' perspectives through words rather than numerical data (Hammarberg et al., 2011; Lim, 2025). As Tracy (2024) noted, qualitative research enables researchers to closely engage with participants within their real-world contexts, allowing for a richer and more nuanced analysis of their views and experiences.

An interpretive paradigm was adopted to observe classroom practices during the teaching and learning of Sesotho content and pedagogy modules at the selected university. This paradigm enables researchers to explore the world through the participants' perceptions and lived experiences, using these insights to construct and interpret meaning from the collected data (Thanh, 2015). By drawing on participants' varied interpretations of their experiences, the interpretivist approach provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the issues being investigated.

This study employed a collective case study research design, focusing on four Sesotho Home Language lecturers responsible for content and pedagogy modules across various faculties of Humanities and Education in the Free State Province. A collective case study involves examining multiple cases to gain a deeper understanding of a particular issue (Creswell, 2017). This approach was chosen to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As Alordiah et al. (2024) note, sampling in qualitative research typically involves the purposeful selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and sufficient data to address the research questions.

Convenience sampling was employed to select two faculties within a single institution, as their shared geographical proximity helped reduce transport and other logistical costs during data collection. Additionally, purposive sampling was employed to select four lecturers—two from each faculty—based on their extensive experience teaching Sesotho, ranging from the school level to higher education. These lecturers were deliberately chosen for their potential to offer rich, in-depth insights and detailed responses relevant to the research questions guiding this study.

Lesson observations were used to collect data from the four lecturers. Each of the four lecturers was observed teaching three times. Each lecture slot was two hours long, and the researcher observed the whole lesson as a non-participant observer. Using a non-participatory observation approach, I could focus solely on how the lecturers conducted their teaching, without disrupting the natural flow of the teaching and learning process (Formisano et al, 2024; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The reasons for making the three observations were dual. Firstly, the researcher aimed to mitigate the “observer effect” (Ponelis, 2015), which refers to the phenomenon where students tend to alter their behaviour due to the researcher's presence. Secondly, when the researcher returns for the second and third times, students will have become accustomed to her presence, so they will likely behave as they usually do in their lessons. This means that the researcher will make authentic observations that yield data that can be trusted. It allowed teachers and students to interact normally in all the other lessons. I concentrated on observing how the lesson unfolded, noting the key activities that the lecturers and student-teachers engaged in, using the observation protocol. “Practically all the senses – seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling – are integrated into observations”, observes Flick (2014, p. 308). The table below shows the profiles of the four lecturers observed in this study.

**Table 1** Profiles of the university and the lecturers

Institution type faculty	Faculty	Name of participant	Gender	Age	Area of specialisation	Module	Teaching experience
Public university	Humanities	LC1	Male	56	Linguistics, Translation, Editing, and Interpreting	Sesotho HL content module	25
	Humanities	LC2	Female	40	Language structure and literature	Sesotho HL content modules	12
	Education	LD3	Female	45	Language structure and Literature, Editing	Sesotho HL content modules	23
	Education	LD4	Male	48	Language Structure and Literature	Sesotho HL content modules	20

The University of the Free State (UFS) granted ethical clearance for this study under permission number UFS-HSD202/2600. A gatekeeper letter from UFS was also obtained, granting the researcher permission to conduct data collection. Before collecting data, assent forms were distributed to all participants, and the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the study's purpose and procedures to ensure informed consent. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned: Lecturers 1 and 2, who taught Sesotho content, were labelled as LC1 and LC2 (Faculty of Humanities), while Lecturers 3 and 4, who taught Sesotho didactics, were labelled as LD3 and LD4 (Faculty of Education). The data collection process lasted eight weeks, allowing for meaningful and in-depth engagement with participants.

## PRESENTATION OF DATA

The data gathered through lecturers' observations while teaching are presented and analysed in the sections below using a thematic approach. These themes were generated from the lesson observation schedule, which the researcher developed to

guide the lesson observations. Six themes were generated from the observation schedule and are presented in sections below, organised by theme.

### **Theme 1: Lesson Preparation**

Before observing the lesson, the researcher checked for the lecturers' lesson preparation. In the first observation, LC1 had prepared for the topic "Historical Poems (Figures of Speech)". He had lecture slides aligned with three lesson objectives as part of the preparations. The objectives of the lesson were to:

- i. Identify literary devices used by historical poets (such as metaphors, similes, imagery)
- ii. Understanding their significance in conveying meaning and themes.
- iii. Understanding historical context.

The class was ready for the lesson as the students were quietly seated in the lecture theatre waiting for the lecture to start. After greeting the students, the lecturer introduced the lesson by projecting the lesson title and objectives. He explained that the lesson focused on figures of speech based on historical poems. He began the introduction by addressing the students' prior knowledge.

LC2 also had a good lesson setup. The students were disciplined and well-prepared in the lecture theatre, waiting for the lecturer to begin the lesson. The day's lesson was on literary genre: "the characteristics of a plot". The focus of the lesson was on analysing the plot of a drama based on the seven components of a story, which are the plot, character, setting, theme, etc, using a prescribed drama book called '*Lejwe la kgopiso*', which can be translated to "The course of the conflict" in English. The objectives of this lesson were:

- To analyse components of a storybook.
- To analyse character development.
- Identifying theme.

She introduced the lesson by discussing and previewing the analysis of the prescribed drama's components with the students.

The lecture room for the third lecturer, LD3, was well-organised, with all necessary materials and equipment in place. Students were seated promptly, prepared with required materials, and maintained discipline as they settled quietly for the session. The attendance was also good. The day's topic was 'How to promote speaking skills at the Intermediate Phase'. The following were the objectives of the lesson:

1. Developing vocabulary and sentence structure.
2. Encouraging confident verbal expression.
3. Promoting active listening and turn-taking.

The LD4 lecturer class's readiness includes a well-equipped lecture setup with functional technology and resources. Students arrived on time, prepared with necessary materials, settled quickly, and maintained respectful discipline, actively engaging in the learning process throughout the session. He prepared the topic of poems under the sub-topic, "How to teach, analyse and tell the functions of the figures of speech of the poem," when teaching learners in the Senior and FET Phases. The objectives of the lesson were to:

1. Identify and use figures of speech correctly.
2. Develop poem analysis skills.
3. Enhance critical thinking and interpretation.

Reflecting on all four lessons observed, the researcher noted that the lecturers prepared adequately for their classes. Lesson objectives were also well aligned with the lesson topic. The researcher then observed how the lesson progressed.

### **Theme 2: Lesson Progression**

In the lesson progression phase, the researcher assessed how the lecturer engaged students, delivered content, managed time, incorporated teaching aids or technology, and adapted pedagogy to students' responses. Attention was also given to classroom atmosphere, student participation, discipline, and the overall effectiveness of instructional strategies throughout the lecture session.

The lesson by lecturer LD3 began with the use of teaching aids, including visual flashcards and role-play prompts, to stimulate fluent speaking. These materials were strategically used to encourage discussion, provide context, and guide structured speaking activities. Student teachers were shown how to incorporate real-life objects and multimedia resources (like videos and story prompts) to support vocabulary development and encourage verbal expression in young learners. By observing and participating in these demonstrations, student teachers could understand the value of using age-appropriate and engaging audio-visual materials to spark interest and enhance comprehension during speaking activities.

Student engagement was maintained throughout the lesson through interactive methods, including group discussions, peer teaching, and micro-teaching simulations. The content delivery was clear, scaffolded, and aligned with the cognitive and language development levels of primary school learners. The lecturer modelled best practices for prompting dialogue, using open-ended questions, and encouraging active listening. The classroom atmosphere was collaborative and supportive, fostering a safe space for student teachers to practice and reflect on their teaching techniques. Instructional strategies such as think-pair-share, role-play, and guided practice were effectively demonstrated, emphasising learner participation and communicative competence. Overall, the lesson progression allowed student

teachers to grasp theoretical concepts and apply practical strategies for promoting speaking skills in a primary school classroom.

During the lecture observation of LC1, which focused on teaching *historical figures of speech in Sesotho*, the researcher observed several key pedagogical elements contributing to the session's effectiveness. The lecturer began by clearly outlining the objectives and introducing content through direct instruction and interactive questioning. Teaching aids such as charts illustrating examples of metaphor (*papiso*), hyperbole (*boikokobetso bo feteletseng*), or personification (*mothofatso*) in Sesotho oral literature were effectively used to contextualise the topic. The technology used primarily consisted of PowerPoint slides on praise poetry (*dithoko*), which enhanced the presentation and facilitated multisensory learning. Time management was handled efficiently, with the lecturer allocating moments for explanation, student feedback, and summary while remaining responsive to student cues and adjusting the pace as needed.

Student engagement is actively encouraged through culturally relevant examples and collaborative exercises such as translating modern expressions into traditional Sesotho figures of speech. The lecturer fosters a positive classroom atmosphere that promotes respect, curiosity, and participation. Students demonstrate a willingness to contribute and respond to questions, often engaging in brief peer discussions before sharing their answers. Classroom discipline is subtly maintained through consistent routines and mutual respect, minimising disruptions. The effectiveness of instructional strategies becomes evident in students' improved confidence in identifying and using figures of speech, as well as their ability to relate traditional forms to contemporary contexts. The lecture reflects a well-balanced integration of content knowledge, adaptive teaching, and culturally anchored instructional methods.

In the progression stage of LD4, the researcher noted how the lecturer skillfully engaged preservice teachers while teaching *figures of speech* and *poetry analysis* for Senior and FET Phase classes. The session began with a clear outline of learning outcomes, linking theoretical aspects of Sesotho figures of speech to practical classroom applications. The lecturer delivered content in a structured yet flexible manner, using relevant teaching aids such as annotated poem excerpts, visual charts, and a digital presentation that highlighted different *dibopeho tsa puo* (figures of speech), including *papiso* (simile), *medumommoho* (alliteration), and *karaburetso* (imagery). Audio recordings of Sesotho poems and praise songs could have been used to reinforce the oral tradition and help preservice teachers understand the rhythmic and tonal qualities of poetic language. Time was managed effectively, balancing content delivery, student interaction, and reflective discussions.

The classroom atmosphere was collaborative and supportive, encouraging active student participation. Preservice teachers engaged in group tasks such as analysing selected Sesotho poems, identifying figures of speech, and discussing their function and effect in learner comprehension. The lecturer demonstrated flexibility by adjusting teaching strategies based on students' responses, clarifying misconceptions, providing additional examples, and allowing peer feedback. Discipline was maintained through a respectful, learner-centred environment, where students were encouraged to reflect on how they would teach these concepts in real classroom settings. Instructional strategies were highly effective, blending content mastery with pedagogical techniques that catered to diverse learner needs within the school context. By modelling best practices and connecting theory to classroom implementation, the lecturer prepared preservice teachers to confidently teach and assess poetry and figures of speech in the Senior and FET Phases.

The LC2 lecturer conducted the lesson by demonstrating notable progression in delivering Sesotho content to diverse students from various departments. The lesson focused on teaching students how to identify the components of the prescribed drama "Lejwe la Kgopiso" and analyse its plot and characters. The lecturer effectively utilised various resources to engage students with the text, copies of poems, a whiteboard, and oral narration. Flexibility was evident as the lecturer adjusted explanations and examples to suit students with varying levels of Sesotho proficiency, occasionally switching to English for clarity. The content was well-structured and paced, beginning with a brief overview of the drama before further exploring its plot structure and character development. This approach helped students build a strong conceptual understanding while remaining actively involved throughout the lesson.

The classroom atmosphere was positive and conducive to learning, marked by mutual respect and a supportive dynamic between the lecturer and students. Student engagement was encouraged through thought-provoking questions, group discussions, and individual contributions, which allowed learners to voice their interpretations and apply critical thinking. Participation varied, with more confident students leading talks, although the lecturer deliberately tried to include quieter learners through targeted questions and collaborative tasks. The instructional strategies effectively combined direct instruction with interactive methods, promoting active learning. Overall, the lecturer's teaching methods fostered an inclusive and intellectually stimulating environment, allowing students to meaningfully engage with *Lejwe la Kgopiso* and develop their analytical skills in Sesotho literature.

### **Theme 3: Teaching Strategies**

This section highlights lecturers' instructional methods, focusing on their effectiveness in engaging students, delivering content, and facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

While observing LD3's lecture session, I noted that she modelled various teaching strategies to equip preservice teachers with the skills to teach speaking skills in primary classrooms. The session was highly interactive, with the lecturer engaging students through role-playing, think-pair-share exercises, and whole-class discussions. These activities maintained active participation and demonstrated how such strategies can be adapted for young learners in the Intermediate Phase. The lecturer began by outlining the objectives of a speaking skills lesson and used visual aids and

contextual prompts to guide preservice teachers through the stages of developing speaking activities. This approach emphasised the importance of scaffolding, using open-ended questions, and supporting learners in progressing from simple to more complex spoken responses.

I also observed the effective use of microteaching and peer teaching during the session. Preservice teachers were allowed to collaboratively plan and deliver short speaking activities, which were followed by peer and lecturer feedback. This practical component provided a hands-on practice of lesson delivery and classroom dynamics. Additionally, the lecturer incorporated various multimodal resources such as audio clips, short videos, and picture books to illustrate how different stimuli can encourage oral participation in young learners. Throughout the session, there was a strong focus on reflection, as students were encouraged to critique the strategies used and consider how they would implement them in diverse classroom settings. Overall, the session provided a well-rounded, practice-oriented approach to teaching speaking skills in the Intermediate Phase.

While observing the lecture session for LD4, preservice teachers in the Senior and FET Phase didactics course, I focused firmly on equipping students with content knowledge and pedagogical strategies for teaching and analysing poetry. The lecturer began the session by selecting a contemporary poem relevant to the learners' context, immediately capturing attention and modelling how to make poetry accessible and engaging in the classroom. Throughout the lesson, the lecturer demonstrated how to guide learners through a poem using a step-by-step approach, starting with pre-reading discussions to activate prior knowledge, followed by a detailed analysis of language, tone, imagery, and structure. This was done through open-ended questioning and group engagement, allowing preservice teachers to experience first-hand how to promote critical thinking and interpretation skills in learners.

The practical integration of teaching strategies that promote learner participation and deep textual engagement was particularly notable during the observation. The lecturer encouraged preservice teachers to consider different learners' interpretations, fostering an inclusive classroom culture where multiple meanings are valued. There was also a demonstration of how to link poetry to other texts and real-life experiences, making the content more relatable and engaging. The lecturer demonstrated how to assess students' understanding through informative tasks, including class discussions, paragraph writing, and oral presentations. By the end of the session, preservice teachers could analyse the poem themselves. They reflected on how they would teach it in a real classroom, showing clear growth in confidence and methodological understanding.

During the teaching strategies observation, LC2 demonstrated a well-structured and student-centred approach to teaching *Lejwe la Kgopiso* to students from diverse departments. The lesson aimed to develop students' ability to identify and analyse the components of drama, with emphasis on plot and character development. The lecturer began with an accessible overview of the drama, effectively scaffolding student understanding before guiding them through the plot structure using the classical dramatic arc. This progression ensured that students of varying academic backgrounds could easily follow the content. Linguistic inclusivity was a key strength, as the lecturer effectively switched between Sesotho and English to clarify complex ideas, thereby accommodating students with varying language proficiencies and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Interactive methods played a central role in the lesson's success. The lecturer encouraged critical thinking and interpretation through thought-provoking questions, group discussions, and individual input. Participation was varied, but quieter students were supported through targeted questioning and collaborative tasks, allowing all learners to contribute meaningfully. One major issue observed during the lesson was the insufficient focus on some of the preservice teachers present in the class. The class included students from various academic backgrounds, yet little was done to cater specifically to the needs of those training to become educators. Although these students are future teachers, there was a noticeable absence of reflective activities that discussed various teaching strategies or demonstrated presenting the material in a school setting. The preservice teachers were addressed the same way as general literature students, which meant there was no apparent effort to bridge the gap between content knowledge and pedagogical application. The lecturer failed to prompt these students to consider how they might teach literary devices, such as figures of speech, to school learners. This lack of targeted engagement highlighted a missed opportunity to prepare them for actual classroom practice and pointed to the importance of more intentional and inclusive lesson design.

A positive classroom atmosphere, characterised by mutual respect and openness, also contributed to students' confidence and engagement. LC2's flexibility in adjusting explanations based on students' responses reflected a responsive and adaptive teaching style. The instructional strategies observed promoted deep analytical engagement with the drama text and demonstrated best practices in delivering literature content to a multidisciplinary university cohort.

During an observation of a Sesotho literature lesson, the lecturer (LC1) taught a historical poem to a class of students from various departments, which included many preservice teachers. The lesson focused on identifying and interpreting figures of speech such as metaphor, personification, and hyperbole within the historical and cultural context of the poem. The lecturer began with a brief contextual introduction before moving into guided textual analysis, reading selected stanzas aloud, and posing analytical questions to prompt critical engagement. Students were grouped to discuss and present interpretations of different literary devices, and occasional code-switching into English was used to accommodate those with varying levels of Sesotho proficiency. These strategies supported literary analysis effectively and kept students engaged throughout the session.

However, a key concern during the lesson was the lack of attention given to the preservice teachers in the class, as it consisted of students from different courses. Despite their role as future educators, there were no reflections on the

use of any Department of Basic Education documents, such as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), or discussions on teaching strategies or modelling of how to deliver such content in a school classroom. Preservice teachers were treated like general literature students, missing the opportunity to connect content knowledge with pedagogical application. The lecturer did not encourage them to consider how they might teach figures of speech to high school learners, nor were they asked to reflect on classroom resources or learner engagement strategies. As a result, the session missed a valuable opportunity to prepare preservice teachers for real-world teaching, highlighting the need for more inclusive and purpose-driven lesson planning in such contexts.

#### **Theme 4: Sesotho Language Skills**

This section presents observations of how lecturers taught Sesotho language skills, focusing on the methods used to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The researcher expected to identify culturally rooted teaching approaches and their effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency.

The LC2 lecturer lesson reflection focuses on the teaching of Sesotho language skills observed during a university lecture on the topic “*Analysing the characters and discussions on the seven components of the Sesotho drama book, Lejwe la Kgopiso.*” The lecture integrated both traditional and progressive teaching approaches. Traditionally, the lecturer emphasised oral storytelling techniques, character interpretation through narration, and cultural references rooted in Sesotho heritage. These methods helped preserve linguistic authenticity and deepened students’ cultural understanding. On the progressive side, the lecturer encouraged active class participation, group discussions, and critical analysis of the characters and dramatic components, promoting higher-order thinking and student engagement. The researcher observed a balanced strategy in which structured cultural methods and interactive, learner-centred techniques nurtured listening, speaking, reading, and analytical skills. This blended approach contributed to a comprehensive learning experience, reinforcing language competence and connecting literary analysis to real-life contexts and cultural identity.

Lecturer LD4 effectively combined traditional and progressive teaching strategies to achieve the objectives. From a conventional perspective, the lesson incorporated oral recitation of the poem, emphasising rhythm, tone, and cultural expressions embedded in the Sesotho poetic form. This approach enabled students to connect emotionally and culturally with the poem, thereby reinforcing listening and speaking skills grounded in indigenous knowledge systems. On the progressive side, the LD4 facilitated learner-centred activities, such as group discussions, guided questioning, and independent interpretation of poetic devices, including metaphors, similes, and personification. Students were encouraged to critically analyse the poem’s meaning and relate it to contemporary issues, thus enhancing their interpretive and critical thinking abilities. The researcher observed that this integrated approach strengthened students’ understanding of poetic language and developed their ability to think analytically and express themselves clearly in Sesotho. The lesson effectively blended tradition and modern pedagogy in developing key language skills.

As for the lecturer LD3, the lesson blended traditional and progressive teaching methods to achieve these goals. From a conventional perspective, the lesson drew on culturally grounded oral practices such as proverbs, storytelling, and structured dialogues, which are central to the Sesotho-speaking community. These methods supported students in using authentic language forms, reinforcing fluency and the cultural context of expression.

Progressively, Lecturer LD3 created an interactive classroom environment by incorporating group work, individual presentations, and peer-to-peer feedback. Learners were encouraged to express their thoughts freely in Sesotho, which helped build their confidence and improve their spontaneous verbal communication. The lecturer also focused on targeted vocabulary enrichment and guided sentence construction exercises, allowing students to expand their language use in formal and informal contexts.

The researcher noted that this integrated approach enhanced students’ oral proficiency and fostered a deeper understanding of grammatical structures and language function. The balance between tradition and modern methods ensured that students engaged with the language in meaningful, culturally respectful, and communicatively effective ways.

On that note, LC1 skilfully combined traditional and progressive teaching methods to meet these objectives. Traditional strategies included oral reading and performance of the poem, which emphasised tone, rhythm, and cultural expressions. This approach honoured the oral roots of Sesotho literature and helped students internalise the language, appreciating the poem’s cultural depth.

Lecturer LC1 guided students through analytical discussions, encouraging them to identify literary devices such as symbolism, repetition, and imagery. Learners engaged in group tasks where they interpreted the meaning of these devices in relation to the poem’s historical background. This approach promoted critical thinking and contextual understanding, allowing students to connect literary features with real historical events and cultural values. The researcher observed that the lesson effectively developed students’ interpretive skills while fostering a strong appreciation for Sesotho literary heritage through a balanced, learner-centred approach.

#### **Theme 5: Teaching-Learning Resources**

This section presents observations on the lecturer’s use of Sesotho learning media during class, focusing on how various tools supported language instruction. The researcher expects to identify traditional and modern media that enhance understanding, engagement, and effective content delivery.

Initially, lecturer LC2 effectively utilised traditional and modern learning media to enhance content delivery and student engagement. The chalkboard maps character traits, plot developments, and thematic elements. The lecturer also

incorporated visual aids such as character charts and scene summaries to support comprehension. In a progressive approach, digital slides presented discussion prompts and key components of drama structure, encouraging analytical thinking and classroom interaction. The researcher observed that integrating varied media supported learners' understanding of complex literary elements while maintaining a strong connection to Sesotho cultural and literary traditions.

The lecturer, LC1, effectively used traditional and modern media to support the lesson. Traditional media included printed copies of the poem and oral recitation, which helped students engage with the text in its authentic form and appreciate its rhythm and tone. Additionally, the lecturer utilised visual aids, such as a chalkboard, to highlight key literary devices and explain their meanings. Modern media, including a digital projector, was used to display historical images and background information relevant to the poem, which enriched students' understanding of the historical context. The researcher observed that this combination of media enhanced student engagement, supported diverse learning styles, and deepened comprehension of the poem's literary and historical elements.

Furthermore, the LD4 employed various learning media to support these objectives effectively. Traditional media, such as printed copies of the poem and oral recitation, engaged students with the poetic structure, rhythm, and cultural nuances. The chalkboard highlighted and explained key figures of speech, such as metaphors and personification, helping learners visually connect language features to their meanings. In addition, modern media such as a projector and slides were used to display annotated versions of the poem and discussion questions, encouraging deeper analysis and critical engagement. The researcher noted that this balanced use of media catered to various learning styles and played a significant role in helping students understand, interpret, and apply poetic devices in a meaningful way.

Lastly, LD3 effectively employed traditional and modern media to support his objectives, introducing and reinforcing key vocabulary and grammar structures through flashcards, word lists, and sentence construction charts. At the same time, role-play scenarios and dialogue scripts enabled students to practise speaking in realistic classroom contexts. The chalkboard was used to model sentence formation and correct common language errors, creating a visual and interactive learning environment. Additionally, audio recordings of native speakers were used to expose students to fluent Sesotho speech patterns. The researcher observed that this strategic use of varied media helped preservice teachers build the practical language skills and confidence needed to teach effectively in Sesotho, particularly in promoting oral communication in the classroom.

## **Theme 6: Opportunities and Challenges**

This section outlines the opportunities and challenges observed in teaching the Sesotho language during lectures in higher education, as identified by the researcher. Although lecturers often face everyday experiences, these may differ based on factors such as the subject matter, students' language proficiency levels, and the extent of institutional support available. The following are the differences encountered among lecturers according to their different topics.

For lecturer LD3, one key opportunity identified was the lecturer's effective use of interactive activities, such as role-plays and peer teaching simulations, which allowed students to practise honest classroom communication and build confidence in speaking Sesotho. These strategies supported language development and classroom readiness. However, the researcher also noted challenges, particularly varying levels of language proficiency among the preservice teachers, which sometimes limited full participation and fluency. Additionally, a lack of access to structured teaching materials in Sesotho created difficulties in standardising sentence structure and vocabulary development. Despite these challenges, the lesson demonstrated strong potential for improving language and teaching skills when supported by active engagement and targeted instructional strategies.

One clear opportunity identified was the rich cultural and historical relevance of the poem selected for analysis, which provided students with a platform to connect language learning to their heritage and socio-political history. Lecturer LC1 encouraged analytical thinking by guiding students to identify devices such as symbolism, repetition, and metaphor, while linking these to the historical events reflected in the poem. This created a meaningful space for learners to develop critical literary skills alongside a deeper appreciation for Sesotho oral and written traditions.

However, several challenges emerged during the observation. Firstly, time constraints limited the depth of engagement with both the poem and its historical background. The lesson structure did not always allow for thorough student participation, especially during discussions, which restricted opportunities for learners to express their interpretations or ask clarifying questions. Secondly, varying levels of student motivation impacted the overall effectiveness of the lesson. In contrast, some students were highly engaged, while others appeared passive, possibly due to limited interest in historical content or a lack of confidence in their language abilities. Lastly, the unavailability of adequate resources, such as digital tools, annotated texts, visual aids, audio recordings of Sesotho poems and praise songs, further hindered students' ability to access and understand complex literary concepts. The lecturer relied heavily on verbal explanation and chalkboard summaries, which, although useful, did not fully cater to diverse learning needs.

Crucially, the Faculty of Humanities failed to contextualise the lesson for preservice teachers by referencing the CAPS document, which outlines how such content should be taught in South African schools. This oversight meant that future educators lacked the tools or frameworks to connect university-level material with school-based teaching practices from their first and second years of training. Despite these challenges, the lesson highlighted the potential of using historical poetry to develop critical language and analytical skills, provided that future lessons address time management, student engagement strategies, and access to more enriching learning materials.

During the class observation of LC2, the researcher noticed a significant opportunity: the learners' prior familiarity with the text, as many had studied the same book in their Grade 12 class. This initial exposure allowed for deeper and more confident engagement with the content, enabling the lecturer to focus on higher-order thinking tasks such as character evaluation, thematic exploration, and structural analysis without introducing the storyline in detail. The students demonstrated strong participation, drawing from their previous knowledge to contribute meaningfully to discussions and engage in critical dialogue about character roles, motivations, and the play's dramatic structure.

Interestingly, unlike other observed lessons, this session presented no significant instructional challenges related to student motivation, time constraints, or resource availability. The students appeared motivated and interested, likely due to their familiarity with the text, which enhanced their confidence and willingness to participate. The lack of a prescribed alternative drama text at the higher education level meant there were no competing interpretations or unfamiliar content to navigate, allowing the lecturer to maximise the limited time available. However, while this familiarity was an advantage, it highlighted a potential gap in curriculum variety and exposure to broader Sesotho literary works. The researcher noted that although the lesson was effective and smooth, reliance on a single well-known text may limit learners' literary horizons and reduce opportunities for critical comparison or exposure to diverse narrative voices within Sesotho drama. Therefore, while this lesson reflected a well-executed teaching moment, it also revealed an underlying need for curriculum expansion and the inclusion of a broader range of texts to enrich literary study in Sesotho.

Lecturer LD4 encouraged learners to identify literary devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, and repetition, and explored how these devices contribute to the poem's more profound meaning. This opened up space for critical discussion, enabling students to reflect on the language and cultural, as well as social, issues embedded in the poem.

However, despite these pedagogical strengths, the researcher observed several challenges that impacted the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Time constraints were evident, as the complexity of analysing poetic language required more time than the session allowed, limiting opportunities for all students to participate in-depth. Additionally, there was a noticeable variation in student motivation. At the same time, some were highly engaged, others showed limited interest or confidence in interpreting figurative language, possibly due to gaps in their foundational knowledge or lack of prior exposure to poetry analysis. The unavailability of adequate learning resources further complicated the teaching process. The lecturer had no access to digital tools, annotated texts, or visual aids that could have supported learners with different learning styles. These gaps pose significant challenges to lecturers' preparation and the effective teaching of indigenous languages. Instead, the lessons relied heavily on oral explanations and chalkboard notes, which, although traditional and familiar, were insufficient for supporting deeper analytical engagement for all students. In conclusion, while the lesson provided valuable opportunities for language development and critical thinking, addressing the issues of time, student motivation, and resource access would be essential for maximising learning outcomes in future sessions.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section presents the key findings on how the Sesotho Home Language curriculum content and pedagogy are implemented in higher education classrooms. The discussion establishes a connection between the research findings and existing literature. The purpose is to demonstrate how the current study's findings align with or diverge from existing research on teaching Sesotho as a Home Language in university settings.

### **Effects of Lesson Preparation on Lesson Delivery**

All four lecturers (LC1, LC2, LD3, and LD4) demonstrated strong preparedness, with well-defined and clear lesson objectives. The lessons flow reflected pedagogical skills that promoted student learning. Flake (2023) notes that when lecturers prepare practical lessons, students are more likely to learn and enjoy the material. Thorough planning, anchored in clear objectives, cultural relevance, and curriculum alignment, equips educators to deliver more coherent, engaging, and contextually appropriate lessons (Meng, 2023). According to curriculum alignment theory, practical teaching occurs when these elements are cohesive. However, Gobodwana (2023) substantiates that there is often an overemphasis on literary studies in Sesotho language education, with insufficient integration of linguistic theory, sociolinguistic perspectives, or modern language use. This creates a disconnect between the national curriculum goals and classroom experiences, as students are not adequately prepared to engage with the language in contemporary contexts. Studies by Cevikbas et al. (2023) and Manzoor et al. (2020) confirm that structured, aligned lesson planning leads to greater instructional clarity and improved classroom engagement, essential for a culturally rooted subject like Sesotho.

However, the relationship between preparation and lesson delivery is not automatic. In Eswatini, agricultural student-teachers acknowledged that planning fosters order but faced difficulties applying those plans through engaging methodologies (Mavuso & Mthiyane, 2021). In the Sesotho context, this suggests that alignment alone may not be sufficient without the teacher's ability to flexibly implement the curriculum, respond to learners' linguistic diversity, and maintain fidelity to the lesson goals. Conversely, when lecturers do not conduct adequate lesson preparations, their lectures will likely be boring and demotivating to students (Mahlaba & Mentz, 2020; Sefotho, 2022).

### **Pedagogical Approaches and Misalignment**

The current study found that lecturers primarily use traditional methods to teach the Sesotho Home Language curriculum. A key issue identified in the literature is the misalignment between pedagogy, curriculum goals, and assessment, which

weakens the quality of teaching in indigenous languages like Sesotho (Du Plessis, 2021; Makelani et al., 2023; Seleke et al., 2025). In South African universities, this problem is exacerbated by the way content and pedagogy are delivered, either within a single faculty or across two faculties. This structural split leads to a pedagogical misalignment, where future educators may become proficient in the language but lack the skills to teach it effectively, or vice versa.

According to Curriculum Alignment Theory (Biggs, 1996), optimal learning occurs when learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessments are aligned. However, such alignment is often lacking in indigenous language instruction. Studies confirm this disconnection, for instance, Lumadi (2021) notes that indigenous languages continue to be taught through methods that do not reflect the lived realities of African learners, while Diko and Celliers (2024) highlight the lack of integration between content and pedagogy as a persistent challenge in higher education. Similarly, Xulu-Gama and Hadebe (2022) argue that language instruction frameworks in universities still fail to ensure epistemological access for indigenous-language speakers, further entrenching pedagogical misalignment. Thus, integrating Sesotho language content and pedagogy requires structural efficiency, curricular justice, cultural relevance, and adequate teacher preparation. Without such alignment, teaching indigenous languages like Sesotho risks becoming fragmented and less practical, thereby undermining efforts to preserve and promote these languages in higher education in a meaningful way.

Furthermore, the current study also found that while students express genuine interest in the Sesotho Home Language curriculum, their engagement is frequently constrained by traditional, teacher-centred approaches that limit interactive learning opportunities. Research consistently shows that learner-centred pedagogies, such as group discussions, collaborative activities, and culturally relevant contextualisation, enhance student participation and deepen understanding in indigenous language classrooms (Mokgokong & Molepo, 2021; Molepo et al., 2022). Conversely, lecture-dominated environments suppress student involvement and critical thinking, resulting in superficial learning experiences (Phiri & Mahlangu, 2020). These findings align with broader educational research that emphasises the significant influence of pedagogy on learning outcomes and engagement (Lumadi, 2021). Therefore, adopting more interactive and inclusive teaching strategies is essential to promote meaningful learning and epistemological access in Sesotho language education and other indigenous language programs.

### **Constraints in Teaching Sesotho Home Language in Universities**

In the context of higher education in South Africa, teaching indigenous languages such as Sesotho faces significant constraints that undermine effective curriculum alignment. According to the Curriculum Alignment Theory (Biggs, 1996), the coherence of learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment tasks is crucial for achieving meaningful learning. Yet, literature indicates that indigenous language programmes are often hindered by a lack of institutional support, scarce teaching resources, the dominance of English-medium instruction, and underdeveloped academic registers in the target languages (Diko & Celliers, 2024; Theledi & Masote, 2024). For example, despite the official multilingualism policy, institutions struggle to implement indigenous language instruction, resulting in systemic misalignment where instructional practices, content, and assessment fail to cohere (Rakgogo, 2024). These constraints moot the potential for effective alignment between what is intended in curricula and what is enacted in the classroom, thereby limiting students' access, engagement, and successful learning outcomes.

### **CONCLUSION/ SUMMARY**

This section presents a summary of the study and a presentation of the findings, recommendations, discussion, and implications. This study examined the implementation of the Sesotho Home Language curriculum content and pedagogy in university classrooms. It focused on three crucial areas: lesson preparation, teaching methods (pedagogical approaches), and the challenges (constraints) that lecturers face. The findings showed that lesson preparation has a significant impact on the effectiveness of lecturers in delivering their lessons. When lecturers plan carefully, ensuring their teaching goals, activities, and assessments match, students participate more and understand the lessons better. But when planning is poor or rushed, lessons tend to be disorganised and boring, which affects student motivation and learning. This means lesson preparation is not just a task for planning's sake, it is key to improving teaching and learning, especially in indigenous languages like Sesotho.

The study also found a mismatch between teaching methods and curriculum goals. Many lecturers still employ traditional, lecture-based styles that do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to interact or think critically. Although some educators attempt to use modern, learner-centred approaches such as discussions and group work, these methods are not widely adopted; they often weaken student engagement. Some institutions have adopted translanguaging pedagogies, enabling students to draw on multiple languages to create meaning and deepen their understanding of the subject matter. Investment in Open Educational Resources (OERs) in Sesotho and digitising learning materials can broaden access and enhance engagement.

A significant limitation of this study is that it collected data from only one university. This may be a limitation because the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other public universities in South Africa that offer Sesotho as a home language. Therefore, future research may consider larger empirical studies involving two or more universities and diversifying the methodology. The current study was a qualitative case study of a single university; future studies may consider employing mixed methods.

In conclusion, this study recommends that lecturer development programs focusing on African language pedagogy be institutionalised to build capacity and confidence among educators. In addition, there are significant challenges in teaching Sesotho at universities, including limited teaching materials, a lack of institutional support, and, in some cases, a separation between language content and its pedagogical approach. Collaborative curriculum design, involving academic staff and community stakeholders, ensures cultural relevance and local ownership, which are key factors in improving the implementation of the Sesotho home language curriculum. To improve Sesotho education at the university level, institutions must invest in better training for lecturers, provide more resources, and support teaching approaches that involve students actively in their learning.

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#### DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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