

By: 'Malehloenya Nkhasi

My name is Puleng `Malehloenya Nkhasi, a mother of two children, son and daughter. I live in Leribe, in a village called Ha-Molibeli. I work in the Ministry of Education and Training, in the department of Special Education. My main duty is to advocate for the educational needs of children with disabilities at all levels of the education system, to ensure that they too have access to quality education as every child has the right to education. I started working in this department since 2004 after being a classroom teacher for 12 years.

What prompted me to follow this career of being a disability specialist?

During my years as a young teacher, I was known to be the best teacher at my school, who would always go an extra mile in making sure that all learners have can achieve academically. I loved my job and the children that I taught very much. However, I was very much troubled by the learners who were struggling in reading and writing (those with intellectual disabilities). These are who had difficulty in understanding the educational concepts even after several attempts have been made. It took me two years to do my research in finding a course that would make me understand why some children have learning difficulties and how teachers can help them. In 2001, I knew about the special education course which I did in the years 2000-2002 at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town. This is where I fell in love with the course which teaches about the needs of children with special educational needs/ disabilities. It was in this university where I met a lady called Lillian Lomofsky, a psychologist who taught me that every child can learn regardless of the disabilities they have. A passion for serving the unlikable, the neglected, and the disabled grew stronger, and at the end of the course I got distinction or cum Laude because I did what I liked.

After completing the course, I got a job at the Ministry of Education and Training in the special education unit which I accepted in both hands, and I thanked God for the opportunity that I got. Since then I never looked back, I started to look for children with disabilities from everywhere in the district. I held public gatherings, sensitized teachers, parents and business communities through community-based programs in Leribe. I also liaised with other stakeholders and made collaborations with various specialists from the Ministry of Health and Social development. Since that time, I have made relationships with many parents who have children with disabilities, children themselves and other stakeholders such as LNFOD.

In 2011, the determination grew so big that I decided to go for further training in the same course and in 2012 I got a scholarship to do Masters in Special Education in Australia where I got six distinctions as well. My work is my life, it gives me fulfillment because it makes me touch people's lives in different ways, especially the lives of children with disabilities.

I have written articles about children with disabilities and their success stories.