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The role and place of sign language in the Lesotho education context : some sociolinguistic implications.

Matlosa, Litsepiso

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Context of the study

Literature on language policy development in Africa indicates that after emerging from colonial subordination, African countries engaged in creating language policies different from those developed by their colonial masters (Weinstein, 1990: Moyo, 2002). Subsequently, according to Weinstein (1990), some African languages which were originally marginalized were elevated to the status of official languages, becoming the language in which most government business such as administration and education are conducted (Musau, 2004). Weinstein (1990) cites the example of Wolof, which was promoted as a national and official language in Senegal. The most recent example is that of South Africa where, in addition to the previously official languages, Afrikaans and English, the new South African constitution (1996) raised nine African languages to official status. These are: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu (The Constitution, 1996). Thus, as a policy device, officiality (Shohamy, 2006) was used to grant equity and power to these languages. Weinstein (1990:17) explains that proponents of officialization of African languages claimed they wished to break a cultural and economic dependence on the former colonial powers and world capitalism.

In Weinstein's (1990) view, one of the goals of some of the new policies was to develop all official languages into mediums of all official communication like government, administration and education. However, as Ndhlovu (2004) argues, many of these new language policies continuously neglect issues of minority languages. One of the purposes of this study to investigate both the Lesotho language

policy and its language-in-education policy and practice in order to determine the position of Lesotho Sign Language (hereafter referred to as LSL).

1.1 Background to the study

Since the attainment of independence (1966), Lesotho has accorded only Sesotho and English the status of official languages of the country (Constitution, 1993). The relationship that holds between these two languages is that of diglossia. In a diglossic situation, one variety of a language is used in certain situations and for certain functions, the other variety in different circumstances and for different functions (Ferguson, 1959). According to Fishman (1967), diglossia could be extended to situations whereby forms of two genetically unrelated languages are valued high (H) and low (L), such that, the former is used in prestigious domains like education, while the latter is mostly used for informal domains. In Lesotho, Sesotho, on the one hand, is mostly used at home for communication in the community and correspondence with relations and friends. It is also used to a certain extent in primary education (Matšela, 1990). English, on the other hand, is mostly used in official domains such as government, administration, law and education (Matsoso, 2002). Based on Fishman's (1967) description of diglossia, the current language practices give the impression that in Lesotho, English is valued as high while Sesotho is valued as low. The use of English in important domains creates problems for most of Basotho, the majority of whom are not conversant with English (Akindele, 2002). For instance, the study by Kimane *et al.,* (2006) on the use of Sesotho in court proceedings, laments the fact that after forty years of attaining political independence, Lesotho still subjects its people to a foreign language that deprives them of the opportunity to communicate on the same

level with all parties involved and denies everyone concerned a chance to become part of the proceedings.

The silence of the Lesotho Constitution (1993) about the minority languages in this country ignores the presence of these languages. However, the presence of Batlokoa, Basia, Bataung, Matebele, Bathepu and Baphuthi among the Basotho, who represent about 10% of the citizens (Gordon, 2005) indicates the existence of minority languages such as Setlokoa, Setebele, Sethepu and Sephuthi in the country[1]. These languages are the first languages to these groups. Although they are Bantu languages like Sesotho, they are distinct and separate from this language (Matšela, 1990; Matlosa, 1998). This, therefore, means that the above mentioned languages are also mutually unintelligible to Sesotho. Seqhotsa and Sephuthi are spoken in the Quthing district. Setebele (an Nguni variety) is spoken in Botha-Bothe, while Setaung is spoken in Mohale's Hoek. Setlokoa is spoken to a lesser extent in Mokhotlong.

Despite the differences that exist among the Basotho in terms of language and ethnic backgrounds, Lesotho is generally described as a highly monolingual and homogeneous nation (Bamgbose, 1991, Matsoso, 2002, Kamwangamalu, 2003). This could be attributed to the fact that more than 90% of Basotho are native speakers of Sesotho (Gordon, 2005)**.** This relative homogeneity has resulted in the continual neglect of the minority languages in the country and deprivation of the linguistic rights of their speakers (Matsoso, 2002). The present situation has confined the use of these minority languages only to the home. In his comment on marginalized African languages, Adegbiya (1994:22) states that the continued neglect of these languages in

[1] At the time the study was being conducted, there was no language map available to provide statistics and demographics of the languages spoken in the country.

things that mattered built negative attitudes around them. This view is shared by Campbell-Makini (2000) who argues that the marginalization of African languages suggests that these languages are not capable of serving as vehicles for advanced knowledge. The present study will investigate whether this is true of LSL. Along with the minority languages mentioned in the above paragraph, the fact that Deaf [2] people exist in Lesotho has also not been given enough attention. For instance, there is no statistical record on how many deaf children there are in Lesotho, nor is there a database on deaf adults.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Lesotho Constitution of 1993 prohibits any form of discrimination against members of the society. Section 18 (3) stipulates that citizens shall not be discriminated against on the basis of

> race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disability or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description. (p33)

In terms of this section, the state might be expected to strive for the adoption and implementation of policies which will enable children of different linguistic minority groups, including the Deaf, to receive education in their first languages and use them in other official domains of the country. This provision is intended to inform, among other things, the country's language legislation, language policy, language-in-education policy and language practice.

[2] Following Deumert (2000: 425), the term 'deaf' with a small letter is used throughout the study as an adjective referring to the speakers' audiological status or physical deafness. The study also recognizes the use of capitalized 'Deaf' which emphasizes the speaker's cultural and linguistic identity.

Informed by the above section of the Constitution, Section (2) of the 1984 Lesotho language-in-education policy (Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education, 1995) stipulates that children will be taught in their mother tongue (Sesotho in this case) from Standard 1 up to Standard 4. Thereafter, English will take over as a medium of instruction across the entire education system. According to the language-in-education policy, both the mother tongue and English should be taught as subjects throughout the primary and secondary education. The policy is silent about the medium of instruction at pre-schools.

Of particular interest to this study is the definition of mother tongue. This is so because, as Henrard (2003:11) observes, literature on education policy emphasizes the importance of mother tongue and its use as the medium of instruction. Skutnabb-Kangas (1994:140) classifies definitions of mother tongue according to four criteria: origin, identification (either internal or external), competence and function. The criterion of origin refers to the mother tongue as the language one learns first from family members and the society. The criterion of identification refers to the language one identifies with. It is also the language that one is identified by others as its native speaker. According to the criterion of competence, mother tongue is the language one knows best, and according to the criterion of function, mother tongue is the language one uses most. In this study, the definition of mother tongue will be based on the criteria combining identification, competence and function. The criterion of origin is not relevant for this study because the majority of deaf children are born in hearing families and are not exposed to language during the first years of their existence (Morgans, 2004; Glaser and Lorenzo, 2006). As is the case everywhere else (Deumert, 2000; Aarons and Akach, 2002), LSL is the language that deaf people in

Lesotho use and deaf children acquire naturally. They regard it as their first language and the language they are most proficient in.

Although deaf children acquire LSL naturally, many of them develop competence in this language outside the parent-child relationship. They acquire proficiency in LSL through their attendance at schools for the Deaf and by making contact with members of the Deaf association. The National Association of the Deaf, Lesotho (NADL) offers LSL classes every Saturday to both deaf and hearing persons. For the former, these classes are meant to develop their language, LSL, and for the latter, they are intended to teach them LSL. Deaf children in Lesotho mostly use LSL for communication. Although the criterion of origin is also very useful for the understanding of mother tongue, the study could not rely on it since some of the deaf children started using LSL at a later stage in their lives due to the fact that they were born into hearing families.

Due to historical links with South Africa and the educational training that some teachers received from Zambia, there may be a possibility of influence from South African Sign Language and Zambian Sign Language, including American Sign Language (see Chapter 5). The historical existence of the Deaf community in Lesotho and thus, the origin of LSL, has to date not been researched. This would be a topic of another study.

According to Matsoso (2002), it seems logical from the provision mentioned above that the language-in-education policy (1984) should accommodate the varied needs of its minority language speakers and thus, ensure their political, socio-economic,

cultural, and most importantly, their education empowerment. In the policy implementation context, however, only two spoken languages (Sesotho and English) are given priority. This brings about discrepancies between the language-in-education policy and its implementation. The policy guideline mentioned above also creates problems for deaf children whose first exposure to formal education is through the two non-native languages at both subject and medium of instruction levels (Matlosa, 2000; 2001).

Like oral languages, LSL can also have the status of a medium of instruction in order to cater for the linguistic and educational needs of those deaf learners in Lesotho who choose it (Aarons and Akach, 2002; Storbeck, 2005). According to Mckee and Biederman (2003:194), Sign Language gives deaf learners the ability to express their experiences and to engage in aspects of social interaction which are central to human processes of thinking and learning. Furthermore, without Sign Language, some learners cannot build up a vocabulary in the second language that they are trying to learn (Van Vuuren, 2003). Excluding LSL from education practice, therefore, puts Deaf children "at the risk of underachievement in all areas of development" (Bibby and Foster, 2001:15). More importantly, lack of LSL in the education of deaf learners deprives them of the chance of developing their bilingualism and making proper choices for their individual educational needs (Storbeck, 1998; Knight and Swanwick, 2002). The study proposes a bilingual framework for deaf education in Lesotho as it is inclusive of the needs of all deaf children, regardless of their preferred language or hearing loss. Following Storbeck (1998), the study proposes education for bilingualism for deaf learners in Lesotho. This is the type of bilingualism whose goal

is to produce learners that are bilingually competent in both LSL and in accessible (written) forms of Sesotho or English. This point is discussed further in Chapter Two.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Firstly, this study seeks to investigate the Lesotho language and language-in-education policies in order to determine the role and place of LSL as it is used in the educational context in the country. It seeks to determine how the present language-in-education policy and language practices at home and in the schools of the Deaf impact on the education of deaf learners. Secondly, the study seeks to investigate the involvement of parents of deaf learners in Lesotho in the education and life experiences of their children. Page (1999) argues that when parents are involved in the education of their children, children perform better. Thirdly, it seeks to investigate the attitudes of Lesotho language policy makers[3] towards inclusion of LSL in Lesotho language-in-education policy reform and implementation. The study also establishes how deaf children regard LSL. Matlosa (2000; 2001) shows that many people in Lesotho are not aware of the existence of the Deaf community and the language they use. Fourthly, it is the aim of this study to give a description of the Lesotho education system with a specific focus on deaf education. The investigation will address the question of whether or not parents of deaf children are provided with adequate information, allowing them to make informed decisions on their children's education. This includes the medium of instruction suitable for their children. Such information is crucial in planning and addressing deaf children's educational needs. The study also seeks to find out how much support deaf children receive from their families and the

[3] In this study 'policy makers' refer to members of the society whose views need to be sought before the government formulates a language-in-education policy.

society. In summary, the study seeks to unfold the current situation of deaf education in Lesotho by addressing the following research questions:

1. How do the classroom linguistic practices in schools of the Deaf reflect the current language-in-education policy and how do they impact on the education of deaf learners?
2. What are attitudes of language policy makers and educators towards the inclusion of LSL in the current language-in-education policy?
3. How prepared are the teachers to satisfy both the linguistic and educational needs of deaf learners?
4. What are the attitudes of deaf children towards LSL?
5. How do parents of deaf children in Lesotho support the development of their children's language skills and to what extent are they involved in the education of their children?

1.4 Motivation and Rationale

As explained above, the study has been motivated by the language-in-education policy adopted by the Lesotho Ministry of Education (in 1984) which stipulates that children should be taught in their mother tongue (by which they mean Sesotho) in the first four years of primary education while English should take over as a medium of instruction for the rest of the education system – Standard 5 to tertiary level (Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Education, 1995). It would be necessary, therefore, to establish whether or not the current exclusion of LSL as part of the language practice at the schools for the Deaf denies deaf children their linguistic rights and access to education.

Additionally, the study has also been influenced by the fact that research on Lesotho language policy and minority languages has, to date, excluded signed languages. For instance, in her studies conducted in 1999 and 2001, Matsoso, focusing on Sephuthi, Sethepu and Setebele, pointed out that these groups form the main minority citizenry of Lesotho. Makoae (2000) adds that development activities in Lesotho have been guided by, among other things, the wrong assumption that the Basotho are a linguistically and culturally homogeneous society. Despite their strengths, however, these studies focus on spoken languages. This could be attributed to the fact that in Lesotho, many people are not aware of deaf people and of the existence of Sign Language (Matlosa, 2001). Consequently, none of the studies on minority language issues conducted in Lesotho addresses the question of how the exclusion of LSL in education policy and practice impacts on the education of deaf learners. The continual avoidance of Sign Language in both academic and policy circles is, therefore, the main focus of this study.

Due to this lack of research, there is very little literature on deaf people in Lesotho and the language(s) that they use, nor is it clear how deaf people in Lesotho regard LSL. According to the then general secretary of the NADL, Likopo Lesoetsa (2001 – personal communication), an attempt by Phachaka (a hearing person interested in issues of the Deaf) in 1997, to compile a LSL dictionary, sparked a lot of controversy within the deaf community. Deaf people disassociated themselves from the dictionary, claiming they were not involved in the process. Along with other disability groups, deaf people in Lesotho have adopted the international slogan; “nothing about us, without us” (Moustgaard, 1994). As explained earlier, there is no documentation that describes the current status of deaf education in Lesotho, nor discusses the

experiences of deaf children in the hearing families and communities. Without recorded information, it is difficult to establish what kind of support deaf children need from the government and society at large. The present study, therefore, attempts to respond to this gap by producing a language policy document which will provide baseline information which could be useful in addressing the linguistic and educational needs of deaf children.

My interest in the study also stems from the observation that Lesotho recognizes the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 (1) of this declaration asserts that everyone has a right to education. Lesotho is also a signatory of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 28 (1) states that primary education should be compulsory and free to all. However, the study carried out by Matlosa and Matobo (2007) indicates that although significant strides have been made to make education accessible to all, especially at primary level, the needs of deaf learners are not yet catered for. Deaf learners are exposed to teachers who, among other qualities, lack skills in LSL. The result of this is a classroom environment that does not prepare deaf students sufficiently for successful school experience, since teaching and learning depend heavily on accessible language (Mesthrie and Leap, 2000). According to Matlosa (2000), this contributes to the high level of illiteracy among deaf learners in Lesotho. For instance, to this day, there are only two deaf people (both have been hard of hearing) in the entire country who have obtained professional certificates. One holds a Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) while the other holds a Diploma Certificate in Agriculture.

The rationale for the study also stems from the need to help promote the respect and dignity of Deaf people as members of the community of human beings. The study proposes the inclusion of LSL in the Lesotho language-in-education policy. This is because education in and through the first language has the potential to contribute to the restoration of the dignity and self-confidence of learners (Kembo-Sure, 2002; Morgans, 2004). According to Muthwii and Kioko (2004), learning through the second language deprives the learners of their fundamental right to feel secure and confident in education and in the public domain. The situation may be worse for deaf learners who are exposed to oral languages, to which most of them have no access (Morgans, 2004).

The ultimate motivation for this research grew out of personal and professional experiences. As a student, I was inspired by language courses and I was privileged to have teachers who were able to nurture this interest. I subsequently became a lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Literature, at the National University of Lesotho, in the Linguistic section. My curiosity about Sign Language came as a result of a meeting that was held between my department and members of the Association of the Deaf in Lesotho. Even though I had read that there are signed languages, I had never thought a language without sound was possible. I was fascinated by the silent medium of communication used by these Deaf people. As I sat watching deaf people signing, a number of questions went through my mind. Like Okombo (Moustgaard, 1994), the urge to find out about these people and Sign Language formed the basis of this research.

In this study I took the position of post-modernity. From a language-policy point of view, post-modernity "is principally concerned with the state of languages in the new millennium, with implications for the survival of many of the world's languages under current economic and political relations" (Pennycook, 2006: 61). This notion is about mapping language policy against changing economic and political conditions. Post-modernity acknowledges the role the government plays in terms of making decisions about languages and language forms to regulate the language use of different people and groups. As a linguist and researcher outside the deaf community, my interest was to understand the effects that the promotion of only Sesotho and English by the government have on deaf people in Lesotho.

1.5 Organization of the study

This section will describe how the dissertation is organized. Chapter One introduces the study. It deals with the statement of the problem and it outlines and explains the aims and underlying motivation of this study. The primary aim of this research is to investigate Lesotho language policy in order to determine the place of LSL in the Lesotho education system. It seeks to determine how the present language policy practices affect the education of Deaf learners.

Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to the major issues that make the core of this study. These are: language policy and language-in-education policy implementation, language policy and language attitudes, the impact of language policy on minority languages, language-in-education and bilingualism in deaf education in the Lesotho context. The chapter also discusses the theoretical frameworks which inform the study. The study is grounded on the Rational Choice

Model and Cummins's Theoretical Framework for Minority Student Intervention and Empowerment.

Chapter Three provides the immediate context of the study, that is, the country in which the study was conducted. In this chapter, an in-depth discussion of both the Lesotho language and language-in-education policies is given. Further, the chapter provides an overview of the Special Education Unit whose mandate is to ensure that children with disabilities and special educational needs (including the deaf) are catered for. The implications of the current language practices on the education of deaf learners are also discussed.

Chapter Four is concerned with the research methodology employed in this study. The study relies heavily on qualitative methodology. The use of this approach is motivated in relation to the nature of the questions raised in the study. The chapter gives details of the research tools that have been employed to collect data. In the chapter, the advantages of each research method used and how relevant they are to the study have been discussed. The processes of data collection are outlined. The chapter gives the description of the research site and the characteristics of the research participants. It also describes how the data was analyzed. The issues of validity and reliability of the research are also addressed. Further, in this chapter, the problems experienced in data collection and resulting limitations of study are discussed. Finally, the chapter discusses the ethical issues that have to be observed during any type of research which involves human subjects.

Chapters Five and Six present the research findings and analysis of data. The analysis relates the data to the literature review. In these chapters, the data is categorized into the themes and sub-themes that emerged from interview responses. More specifically, Chapter Five focuses on the views of the hearing respondents, that is, language policy makers, educators and parents of deaf children. On the other hand, Chapter Six foregrounds the responses from the deaf children. Charts and tables are used in the study to expand upon the discussions. These are accompanied by comments that are meant to help the researcher make sense of the collected information.

Chapter Seven is concerned with an in-depth discussion and summary of the major issues raised by the data. Specifically, the chapter discusses the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf learners as depicted by the language practices in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho, and the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents towards this language. The chapter further discusses the implication of these findings for deaf education in Lesotho. Based on Cummins' Empowerment Theory, the chapter suggests the bilingual learning environment for deaf learners for them to make language choices that best meet their communicative needs.

Chapter Eight concludes the study by summing up the findings in relation to the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf children in Lesotho. As a result of the findings, it makes some recommendations on ways that the situation of deaf education in Lesotho could be improved.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section discusses the major issues that make the core of the study. These are: language policy and language-in-education policy implementation, the impact of language policies on minority languages, language policy and language attitudes, the impact of language policy on minority languages, language-in-education and bilingualism in deaf education. The chapter further provides the theoretical framework upon which the study is premised on. The study is grounded in the Rational Choice Model and Cummins's Theoretical Framework for Minority Student Intervention and Empowerment. It is through the review of the theories that the findings will be discussed.

2.1 Language policy and implementation

'Language policy' and 'language planning' are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. This is because the boundaries between the two terms are far from clear (Shohamy, 2006). However, for Deumert (2000:384), on the one hand, "language policy refers to the more general linguistic, political and social goals underlying the actual language planning process." It denotes "the authoritative allocation of resources to language in general and to the written/printed language in particular" (Fishman, 2006:311). It involves: (a) a set of processes leading to policy formulation and (b) a set of steps taken to implement the policy (Lora-Kayambazinthu (1999: 9). Clarifying further, Shohamy (2006:45) explains language policy as "the primary mechanism for organising, managing and manipulating language behaviours as it consists of decisions made about languages and their uses in society". This means

that, it is through the language policy that "decisions are made with regard to the preferred languages that should be legitimised, used, learned and taught in terms of where, when and in which contexts" (Shohamy, 2006: 45). To these, Spolsky adds three components of the language policy of a speech community as:

> its language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management. (2004: 5)

In her discussion of the above components of language policy, Shohamy (2006:56) explains that the component of language practice focuses on the kind of language practices that actually take place within a society, such as, when a certain language is used in certain places and contexts. An example is when English is widely used in many countries. The component of beliefs refers to ideologies about language that lie behind language policies. This happens in instances where nations believe that a language can be a unifying factor. Finally, the component of management refers to specific steps that are taken to manage and manipulate language behaviour in a given society.

Despite different descriptions, as Shohamy (2006: 47) points out, what becomes clear is that language policy is an important instrument that attempts to make order in terms of language use and it can be instrumental in addressing issues such as the languages that should get status and priority in societies. It can also assist in legitimising the revival of marginalised languages as well as languages considered important for its economic and social status.

For Appel and Muysken (1987), on the other hand, language planning is part of or the actual realization of language policy. Unlike language policy, which is generally a manifestation of intensions, language planning is supposed to pay more attention to the implementation of policy and practice (Shohamy, 2006). It is considered as "deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, and functional allocations of their language codes" (Cooper 1989:45). As a result, planning a language involves the decision of the public about that language, its use and development. In Reagan's (2002:419) view, these decisions have "significance socially, economically, educationally and politically for both society and the individual".

Several other different definitions of language planning have also been suggested (Fishman, 1982; Rubin and Jernudd, 1971). Among them, the most relevant for the purpose of this study is that offered by Neustupny (1974), who views language planning as a result of the identification of a language problem or problems. The present study argues that the current language practices in Lesotho create problems for LSL minority speakers and this study suggests modifications to these practices through effective language planning. Related to this issue, Reagan (2002:420) argues that in order to address language problems, the parties involved should take into consideration the facts that:

(a) language planning is a conscious and deliberate activity;

(b) language planning is future oriented; and

(c) language planning involves choices, and the decision-making process involved in making these choices.

These features have been used to understand what factors that the language planners in Lesotho take into consideration during the process of language planning.

A distinction is usually made between the two types of language planning, namely, corpus planning and status planning (Reagan, 2002). Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:38) define corpus planning efforts as

> [T]hose aspects of language planning which are primarily linguistic and hence, internal to language. Some of these aspects related to language are: (a) orthographic innovation, including design, harmonization, change of script, and spelling reform; (b) pronunciation;(c) changes in language structure; (d) vocabulary expansion; (e) simplification of registers; (f) style; and (g) the preparation of language material. (1997: 38)

An example of policy corpus planning is the revision of the Sesotho orthography around 1947 (Demuth, 1988). Status planning involves the functional allocation of language(s) in a speech community (Deumert, 2000). It "encompasses governmental policy decisions concerning which language should be assigned or recognized for which purposes within a country or region …" (Fishman, 1977:36). Related to this issue, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) argue that status planning is external to the language(s) being planned for. For them, language planning involves language selection and language implementation. Following this approach, an example of policy status planning is the officialization of both Sesotho and English in 1966 by the Lesotho government.

In the context of Sign Language, Reagan (2006:334) divides corpus planning efforts into five broad categories namely; lexicography, lexical creation and expansion, textbook production, the creation of manual sign codes, and the development of orthographic systems for representing sign languages. As far as status planning is

concerned, Reagan (2006:332) argues that it generally involves the official recognition of a natural sign language and its use in education, and, to some extent, in legal and medical settings. On the basis of the above information, for the purpose of this study, an example of both corpus and status planning would involve the compilation of a core Sign Language lexicon for use in schools for the Deaf by both National Association of Deaf Lesotho (NADL) and Special Education Unit and including this language in the language-in education policy of Lesotho by policy makers.

Following Cooper (1989), Reagan (2002) points out that the significant question in language planning is not whether a language can be planned, but rather, how can it be planned and by whom. For him, successful language planning requires an active support and participation of the community towards which it is directed. There are two approaches in the implementation of policy, namely, the 'top-down' approach and the 'bottom-up' approach (Reagan, 1995). The former approach assumes that policy implementation begins at the top of the process, with statements from the government defining what is expected of implementers at each level of the implementation. The latter approach assumes that the policy implementation process must start from the people whose lives it affects most. Reagan (2002) argues that for as long as language policy and language policy formulation is seen as a top-down activity, it will continue to be ineffective. This argument stems from the assumption that in cases where people are not consulted or involved in formulation of policies that affect them, they tend to disassociate themselves from such policies. These definitions are important for the study as they will help give insight into how policy implementation is carried out in Lesotho.

2.1.1. Language Policy in African Context

Since attaining independence, African countries have been confronted with the task of trying to make new language policies different from those of their colonial masters. Within the framework of designating official languages, the problem has been which language(s) to choose. In his analysis of post-colonialism, Spolsky argues that in choosing a new language policy, the newly independent colonies had three choices:

> They could …reject the metropolitan language and proclaim a policy to establish their chosen national language as the sole official language; secondly, they could aim to keep the metropolitan language as an official language alongside their own (leading commonly to dyadic or triadic policies); or, thirdly, they could formally recognize the hegemony of the colonial language (2004:137).

For some African countries, the first choice would have been an ideal solution. This is because, the continued use of the language of colonialism brings the sense of continued inferiority (Wright, 2004). However, as Wright (2004) observes, many African states ended up doing exactly this by choosing the third pattern. In as much as they wanted to break with the colonial past, they could not totally reject the languages of their colonial powers. The reason for this is explained by Wright (2004:72) who states that in these countries' " heterogeneity appeared to allow them no other solution than the language of the colonial power that had brought them together and their espousal of nationalist ideology meant that the pressure to find a single national language was strong".

Côte d'Ivoire is an example of the third pattern, as it has kept the colonial language, French, as its only official language for government and education since 1966 (Spolsky, 2004). According to Spolsky, this country has about seventy-five different

languages, many of which are mutually intelligible. The other examples of countries which have maintained the hegemony of the colonial language are Malawi and Namibia. On the one hand, Malawi has retained English as its only official language and as a language on instruction in most levels in the school systems (Kayambazinthu, 2004). The only exception in this country is the first years of primary school (Standard 1 to Standard 4) where indigenous languages, including Chichewa, are used as a bridge to the acquisition of English. On the other hand, although more than twenty languages are spoken in Namibia, the constitution of 1990 recognises only English as the official language (Deumert, 2000). Mozambique has also kept Portuguese as its only official language.

In addition to those African countries which retained the hegemony of the colonial languages, other African colonies have chosen the second pattern. They have confirmed the situation that was prevailing before independence by adopting the language of the colonial power as their official language (Diki-Kidiri, 2001) alongside their own languages. These countries include Botswana and Swaziland which have kept English. In an attempt to promote their indigenous languages, many of these countries have promoted their national languages to official status. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that Lesotho accorded Sesotho official status in 1966, while South Africa elevated nine African languages to the same status in 1996. It should be noted that although African languages have been raised to official status, their colonial language counterparts still have more economic effects in African countries (Sigcau, 2004). They dominate in official transactions, in the education domain and the general running of the government.

As observed by Wright (2004), even without the issue of European languages, Africa presents the most complex linguistic picture in the world. The complexity is the result of, among other factors, different functions assigned to the various languages spoken in the same country. Wright (2004:70) explains that after independence, many African leaders and governments "saw a pressing need to unite their populations and mould a more homogenous citizenry". They became obsessed with the idea of 'one people, one language, one nation'. In Wright's (2004) view, multilingualism was unfeasible to these leaders for a number of reasons. Firstly, the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity was regarded as a pandering to tribalism. In contrast, the embedding of different linguistic groups into one nation was seen as progressive. Secondly, multilingualism was considered a disadvantage to development and economic growth. This was supported by research produced which indicated that states that were highly heterogeneous in terms of language were characterised by low or very low per capita GNP (Banks and Textor, 1963).

Commenting on this obsession, Bamgbose says:

> It seems that we are obsessed with the number 'one'. Not only must we have one national language, we must have a one party system. The mistaken belief is that in such oneness of language or party we would achieve socio-cultural cohesion and political unity in our multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural societies. (Bamgbose 1994: 36)

In line with the above comment, Wright (2004) points out that finding the one language that would promote unity within a nation is not an easy task. In her view, in countries where there are linguistically diverse ethnic groups, the choice of any indigenous language as a national or official language of education could be politically divisive. For instance, in South Africa, the attempted imposition of

Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Black schools sparked the riots of 1976 (Thorpe, 2002). A closely related situation occurred in Ethiopia in 1999 when violence erupted in the southern region of this country (Smith, 2002). Smith explains that the cause of the violence was the decision to combine the four previously distinct languages of this region – Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro, into one language called Wagagoda. The move by the government authorities to force teachers and students to use this hybrid language in the classrooms led to the demonstrations.

Bamgbose (1991) gives his view of the description of language policies in Africa when he states that language policies in sub-Saharan African countries are characterized by one or more of the following problems: avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation, and declaration without implementation. To Bamgbose, the avoidance aspect of language policy is seen in countries that have no clear-cut statement on language policy and that this, therefore, frees the government from the unfavourable consequences of any pronouncement, which some sections of the nation might view as unpleasant.

The second problem facing African language policies is vagueness. A vague policy is perceived as one that is given in general terms that allow it to be interpreted in a flexible manner and therefore, implementation is not a concern. For instance, in some African countries, including Lesotho, English and selected African language(s) have been accorded the status of official languages. However, in practice, it is English which is used in important domains. This is because the policy does not state in precise terms in which domain each language should be used.

The third problem mentioned by Bamgbose is that African language policies are arbitrary. An arbitrary policy is described as one that is made without prior scrutiny of its feasibility or without consulting experts (Mutwarasibo, 2003:20). For instance, in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland where a national (African) language is official in addition to English, in practice, the African language is evidently subordinate to English (Miti, 2008). In each of these countries, it is English that is used as a medium of instruction beyond the fourth Grade.

The fourth problem characterizing African language policies is that of fluctuation or change. Fluctuation in policy is described in relation to changes in government or party policies, the growth of new ideas or practices recommended by commissions of inquiry or adopted on the advice of foreign organizations (Bamgbose 1991). The language policy of Malawi changed on March 1996 after Dr Bakili Muluzi came into power, when primary schools were ordered to teach learners from Standard 1 to Standard 4 in their own mother tongue or vernacular language (Kayambazinthu, 2004). Prior to this directive, Chichewa was used as both a medium of instruction and subject in these levels. As mentioned in the previous chapter, under the apartheid regime, South Africa had only two official languages, namely English and Afrikaans, but today the number has risen to eleven. Being able to increase the number of official languages is a positive step towards the implementation of multilingualism. Therefore, although constant fluctuation or change may create problem for language planning, it may also be a crucial feature in developing countries.

The final kind of problem that Bamgbose refers to is declaration of policy without implementation. There are at least three ways in which this can happen. First, a policy

may be declared in circumstances where it cannot be implemented. Secondly, a policy may be declared, but with unrealistic clauses that give it ground for non-implementation. Thirdly, a policy may be declared but without specification of implementation procedures (Onyango, 2003). Lesotho's national language policy follows the third kind of non-implementation. In Lesotho, Sesotho has been accorded the status of official language together with English, but in official domains, the latter dominates.

The nature of language policies discussed above has raised concern among African scholars and governments, including international organizations such as OAU and UN (Ferguson, 2000; UNDP, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). This is evident in the number of conferences that are held with the aim of encouraging the development of proactive language policies which will promote the status and use of African languages. One such conference was the 'Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa' held in Harare in 1997. The conference was organized by UNESCO with the cooperation of the OAU and the Francophone Agency (ACCT) through the support of the Republic of Zimbabwe. During the deliberations, members of the delegation admitted being aware "that the language policies introduced since independence have generally favoured the colonial languages by setting up language structures that confer a monopoly of status to languages of former colonial powers" (Bisharat Net Website: 2007). They were "convinced of the necessity and urgency for the African States to adopt clear policies for the use and development of mother tongues as well as community languages, national, inter-African and international languages" (Bisharat Net Website: 2007). This was based on the continental vision of having, among other things,

> a democratic Africa that seeks to promote peaceful coexistence of a people in a society where pluralism does not entail replacement of one language or identity by another, but instead promotes complementary of functions as well as cooperation and a sense of common destiny (Bisharat Net Website: 2007:1).

Another historic conference which was also aimed at celebrating the vitality of African languages and affirming their potential was "The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures" which was held in Asmara, Eritrea, in 2000 (Outreach Offerings: 2007). At this conference, participants were writers and scholars from all over the world. At the end of this important gathering, it was declared that:

1. African languages must take on the duty, the responsibility, and the challenge of speaking for the continent;
2. The vitality and equality of African languages must be recognized as a basis for the future empowerment of African peoples;
3. The diversity of African languages reflects the rich cultural heritage of Africa and must be used as an instrument of African unity;
4. Dialogue among African languages is essential: African languages must use the instrument of translation to advance communication among all people, including the disabled;
5. All African children have the unalienable right to attend school and learn in their mother tongues. Every effort should be made to develop African languages at all levels of education; and
6. The effective and rapid development of science and technology in Africa depends on the use of African languages and modern

> technology must be used for the development of African languages.

It is clear from the deliberations of these conferences that most African countries now see the indigenous knowledge contained in African languages as a vital ingredient in development (Sillitoe, 2000). Currently, many of them are engaged in developing policies that promote selected indigenous languages to the status of national and official languages. For instance, according to Roy-Campbell (2003), since 1990 when the National Constitution was revised, Mozambique has increasingly shown interest in the development of its indigenous languages. There are even plans to introduce two of these languages as media of instruction in the first years of primary schools. As Roy-Campbell points out, South Africa has gone beyond any other African country by enshrining linguistic rights in its new 1994 Constitution. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, prior to the emergence of democracy in 1994, the linguistic situation in this country was characterized by the dominance of English and Afrikaans. According to Reagan (2002), in order to reverse this situation, the new democratically elected government elevated an additional nine South African indigenous languages to the same official status as English and Afrikaans, thus totaling 11 official languages. Mutasa (2002) describes the new language policy of 1994 as one of the most progressive language policies in the world.

Against this background, in terms of the 1994 Constitution, the Department of Education is tasked to, among other things, to promote multilingualism. According to the 1995 Language-in-Education Policy, the main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education include:

(a) to promote and develop all official languages;

(b) to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including …South African Sign Language;

(c) to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mistakes between home languages and languages of learning and teaching; and

(d) to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages. (Department of Education, 1997)

According to Lishivha (1995:5), the underlying intentions of these provisions are that "national policies which establish norms and standards for language use and language teaching in educational institutions will be required to aim positively at the promotion and development of all official languages …equal respect for official languages, and multilingualism". Such policies are intended to mitigate the inequalities which were aggravated by the use of official languages over which a large part of the population had little or no control (Ferguson, 2000).

Despite having a progressive language policy, the study conducted by Phaswana in 1999 indicates that some Members of Parliament in South Africa agree that "the eleven-languages policy is an ideal policy which practically cannot work" (Phaswana 2003:123). South Africa is blamed for lacking political will to make the new multilingual policy work well (Du Plessis, 2000; Phaswana, 2003; Matsinhe, 2004). For instance, Sigcau (2004) blames the failure to implement the mother tongue education policy on, among other factors, the lack of finances on the side of schools and the Ministry of Education not taking into account the importance of this policy.

Another contribution to this implementation of the current language policy in South Africa is made by Maartens (1998:16), who observes that "whereas language policy expressly professes to promote multilingualism in South Africa, language practitioners in languages other than English are complaining more and more that their languages are being marginalized to an even greater extent than in the past". One such practitioner is Mutasa (2000:218) who states that although the recognition of the indigenous languages as official may be a declared goal of the South African language policy, most linguistic communication in domains of national significance remains English and to a lesser extent, Afrikaans. For instance, Moyo (2002:151) points out that in the new South Africa, indigenous African languages, which based on number of speakers are in the majority, are hardly used on the national television and radio. Mutasa (2000) presents a similar view explaining that, out of about 200 programmes broadcast every day on television, only one or two programmes are in an African language. All the above criticisms notwithstanding, it should be noted that African languages are now frequently used on radio and television in South Africa.

When dealing with the language issue, most language policies in Africa and elsewhere in the world are silent about minority languages (Mkunde, 2002; Ndhlovu 2004). They provide for the development of national and official languages without any mention of minority languages. The next section discusses the impact of the current language policies in Africa on minority languages.

2.1.1.1 The impact of language policy on minority languages

According to Caviedes (2003:257), minority languages are languages "existing as mother tongues among a sizeable population within member states, but which are not

the official languages of those particular member states". As a result, the majority of these languages are on the verge of extinction (Traill, 2002; Crawford; 2005). According to Traill, in South Africa, the Khoesan languages, which are spoken by about 0.01% of the population (Crawhall, 1999), are among such languages. The above definition notwithstanding, research on language indicates that "minority" is a very difficult concept to define (Adegbija, 1994; Henrard, 2003). However, Henrard argues that there are essential elements, which any definition of minority language should include. These are grouped into objective and subjective characteristics. He explains that

> The objective characteristics associated with minorities are the ethnic, religious and /or linguistic features that differ from those of the rest of the population (with the focus on linguistic features); a numerical minority position; non-dominance; the nationality of state concerned; and the related requirement of close durable ties with that state. Subjective characteristics relate to the wish of a minority group to hold on to their own distinctive characteristics or identities. (Henrard 2003:9-10)

Henrard points out that the numerical factor is formulated with reference to the rest of the population. He further explains that when the number of speakers considered in a particular context is large, it tends to confer power on a language.

According to Henrard (2003), the size of the population plays a crucial role in determining the specific demands that a minority can make on the state. Having a large number of speakers boosts political and economic power. In most sub-Saharan African countries, large languages are allocated functions in major domains that affect a nation, such as education (Adegbija, 1994). For the purpose of this study, however, "linguistic minority" will refer to those (irrespective of race, number, colour or creed) who are disadvantaged by differences of language because they do not posses the background, attributes and skills of the dominant groups and are distanced from the

sources of power and status in the country they inhabit (Ndukwe, 1990). The term will refer to those groups whose languages are not used as medium of instruction in schools, universities and colleges, or as official languages. The study does not suggest that minority languages in Lesotho, including Sign Language, should be made official, but following Caviedes (2003), it suggests that steps must be taken to preserve and strengthen these cultural and linguistic traditions, particularly through the education of its speakers.

As far as Africa is concerned, Ndhlovu (2004) is of the opinion that both the colonial and post-colonial governments continue to unfairly treat minority languages. For him, "the undermining of the value of minority languages and cultures has largely been propagated, sustained and legitimized through the formulation of non-pluralistic and unpopular language policies that over-promoted 'official' and 'national' languages" (2204:1). A similar argument is raised by May (2006), who states that the instrumental value of minority languages is often constrained by social and political processes which privilege other language varieties in public realm. According to May, this puts pressure on minority language speakers to speak the majority language. In the process, this leads to the decrease in the functions performed in minority languages. In Ndhlovu's (2004) view, minority languages suffer because the term "minority" has some derogatory connotations, which imply that languages falling within this category are structurally and functionally inferior when compared to the major languages.

The situation of minority languages is more complex among signed languages. Not only are they omitted in most constitutions in Africa, but they are also hardly

considered in the context of language policy and planning. Even in conferences, where writers and scholars meet to discuss issues of African languages, signed languages hardly feature. For instance, at the conference held in Asmara (discussed in the previous section), there was no clear reference to the development of signed languages. Furthermore, according to Reagan (2006:332), even in countries where legislations granting legal status to these languages have been passed, "such legislation…does *not* entail the recognition of a sign language as an "official" language; rather, it is simply concerned with placing "on record", as it were, the fact that the sign language is indeed a "real" language…". For instance, although the post-apartheid constitution recognizes the importance of South African Sign Language (SASL), it only recognises it as an official language for education purposes. Thus, the South African School Act of 1996 states that South African Sign Language is to be the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf. There are, however, a few African countries which recognise Sign Language as an official language in their constitutions. An example is Uganda whereby, in October 1995, the country's national Sign Language was recognised as an official language in the new constitution, making Uganda's Sign Language one of the few constitutionally recognised Sign Languages in the world (Mutabazi, 2000).

2.2. Language Policy and Language Attitudes

In discussing language policy and planning, it is important to include the issue of attitudes as it is believed that the barrier between language policy and its implementation stems from the diverging attitudes between language planners and language implementers and the interests served by each party (Deumert, 2000, Mutwarasibo, 2003). This places attitude among the most important factors in the

discussion of language and language- in-education policies (Thombeni, 1998; Matee, 2003). Baker (1992:12) makes a distinction between "the cognitive, affective and readiness for action parts of attitude". Following Baker, Dyers (2004:205) explains that

> [T]he cognitive component relates to the thoughts and beliefs people have about the languages they know, while affective component relates to how people feel about such languages. The "readiness for action parts" is a plan of action with regards to a language – what people intend to do about such languages, e.g. whether they would be happy to learn them.

The above definition is very important for the present study as it will help me understand how language policy makers and planners in Lesotho regard LSL and their intentions about this language. This is because, the attitude that people have towards a language or languages influences the manner in which they act and subsequently, this impacts on a country's language policy (Adegbija, 1994).

Language attitudes may be triggered by several factors, such as the status of a language and the power that the particular language is assumed to have over others, including the status of the particular community. Due to the assumption that minority languages are of subordinate status, very little effort is made to develop and standardize them. Given the fact that these languages are not standardized, adopting them for official domains, such as education, could entail a lot of investment and sacrifice in terms of manpower and financial resources. Due to governments' reluctance to invest in minority languages, speakers of these languages are forced to assimilate into the communities of the majority languages, a step which leaves their own languages threatened. The usage of these languages declines as parents see no reason to encourage their children to develop languages that do not put bread on the

table (Crawford, 2005). Given the powerful social force that attitudes have on determining the choices that language planners make when planning a language (Kioko and Muthwii, 2004), there is a need for this study to establish the attitudes of Lesotho language and language-in-education policy makers towards the use of LSL in the education of deaf learners. Following Dyers (2004), it is crucial for the processes of language policy making and implementation to take into consideration the general community's existing language attitudes, particularly those of the decision makers.

2.3 Language-in-education

The discussion of language policy and its implementation brings in the issue of education policy. Owing to the crucial function of education in a society, the educational domain enjoys most attention in language planning (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). Thus, with the change of language policies after independence, language-in-education policies in Africa could not escape these changes. This is because language-in-education policies serve as mechanisms for carrying out national language policy agendas. While language policies are concerned with decisions that governments make about languages and their uses in societies, language-in-education policies are concerned with putting into practice these decisions in specific contexts of education, such as schools and universities (Shohamy, 2006). Although in the early days of independence (as discussed in the earlier sections), multilingualism was seen to be promoting division among nations and as such, no provision was made to have education in all language varieties found in the countries. However, there has been a change of attitude especially in the area of language. According to Kamwangamalu (2003), contemporarily, language-in-education policies in most African states are attempting to follow a multilingual approach to education. In particular, attention is given to the variant of multilingualism called bilingual education (Herdina and

Jessner, 2002). This approach to education recognizes the linguistic diversity of learners and advocates the use of more than one language as a medium of instruction. In a bilingual classroom, deaf children are able to acquire both the first and second language. This may afford them an opportunity to choose the medium of instruction which is more suitable for their learning needs. Bilingualism is important to this study because it is considered the best approach in the education of linguistic minorities (Cummins, 1986, 1989; Versfeld, 1995). The study argues that deaf children in Lesotho can benefit from this approach.

2.3.1 Bilingualism and bilingual education

There are two main types of bilingualism, namely additive and subtractive bilingualism (Henrard, 2003; Kamwangamalu, 2003). An additive bilingual model adds language(s) to a child's repertoire, without loss of access to or skills in the first language (Leap and Mesthrie, 2000). That is, learners "come to school speaking their mother tongue, and a second language is added" (García, 1997:408). In this model, therefore, children's home languages are fully acknowledged, respected and utilized throughout their education (Diteme tsa Thuto Project, 1997:34). The result of this is that students will not be discriminated against on the basis of their language background. In contrast, subtractive bilingualism is a model in which the second language, which in most cases is the language of the majority, becomes the sole medium of instruction. Henrard (2003:12) explains that the transition to the second language usually takes place too early in the life of learners when "the natural cognitive development in the mother tongue is brought to an end and the child's cognitive development is abruptly broken off". The same view is held by Leap and

Mesthrie (2000:372) who state that "the learning of a societally dominant language leads to a loss of skills (or even complete loss) of the home language".

There are numerous reasons that are usually advanced in support of bilingual education. For García (1997:409), these can be classified into cognitive, social and psychological reasons. According to her, cognitive reasons relate to the fact that students who are bilingual and biliterate have "more divergent and creative thinking, greater metalinguistic awareness and cognitive control of linguistic processes, and increased communicative sensitivity". The social reasons relate to the fact that bilingualism and biliteracy can bring about "*greater understanding among groups* and *increased knowledge of each other*" (italics in the original). García views bilingualism and biliteracy as a means of combating racism and inequality among different language groups. García claims that speakers of minority languages lack self-esteem. As such, drawing on the work of Cummins (1986), García (1997: 409) believes that bilingual education is the empowerment pedagogy that enables "the incorporation of the home language and culture in school, the participation of the community, the use of the home language in assessment, and the development of a reciprocal interactive curriculum".

Related to bilingual education is the issue of mother tongue medium of instruction (see De Wet *et al.,* 2001; Moyo 2002). Arguments for mother tongue medium of education stress the cognitive, cultural, psychological and educational desirability of initial education in the mother tongue. Ferguson (2000) argues that the cognitive development and subject learning is best achieved through teaching in a language that the child knows well. Like many scholars (Miti, 2000; Henrard, 2003; Sigcau, 2004),

Ferguson believes that the use of a foreign language medium of instruction can lead to poor scholastic achievement and a retardation of cognitive maturation and may be dysfunctional as regards subsequent language learning[4]. Ferguson further points out that the use of mother tongue medium eases the transfer from home to school and assists the maintenance of a sense of cultural identity and continuity. Following Cummins (1986, 1989), Kamwangamalu (2003) adds that effective literacy acquisition and second language proficiency depend on well-developed first language proficiency. As far as marginalized children are concerned, the deaf included, Henrard (2003) argues that mother tongue education can lead to equal access to education.

Bilingualism is approached differently by different nations. Although language-in-education policies in most African states acknowledge the importance of bilingualism in education and linguistic diversity, they still perpetuate the logic of colonial policies. This is evidenced by the selection of languages taught at schools, the roles assigned to them, and the level at which they are introduced. For instance, in most African countries, bilingual education means only a few years of using indigenous mother tongue languages as media of instruction rather than using them throughout the entire education system (Roy-Campbell, 2003). An example is Setswana, which in Botswana is the language of instruction only in the first four years of primary education (Smieja, 2002). It is important to note that it is usually languages of the majority that are afforded this opportunity. The current linguistic situation in Africa decreases the chances of having indigenous languages such as Setswana being fully employed in all societal domains.

[4] It is not always the case that the use of second languages can lead to poor scholarly results. A study conducted by Matlosa and Rapeane (2003) shows that most hearing children in English medium schools in Lesotho perform very well. The same can be said in other countries such as South Africa where the results of Model C schools are generally very good..

Bilingual education in Africa largely neglects minority languages. This is due to how language planners view these languages. According to Nyati-Ramahobo (2004) and Crawford (2005), how language planners view language determines the manner in which they act. They assert that in situations where language diversity is considered a problem, minority language speakers are assimilated into the community of the speakers of national languages. For instance, Crawford (2005) observes that over the past three decades, the United States Department of Education has spent huge sums of money on transitional bilingual education (a type of subtractive bilingualism). According to Crawford, the objective of this move was to replace the languages of minority children with the majority language, English. On the other hand, in cases where language diversity is embraced, minority languages are recognized and their speakers are allowed to learn in their mother tongue. Both Nyati-Ramahobo and Crawford agree that if linguistic diversity is viewed as an asset, then positive bilingual/multilingual policies will be adopted and implemented, thus encouraging linguistic minorities to develop their languages while learning other languages at the same time. It was, therefore, important for this study to determine whether or not language planners in Lesotho value additive or subtractive bilingualism and how this impacts on LSL.

2.3.1.1 Approaches in the education of the deaf

This section looks at the role of language in the education of deaf learners who are the focus of this study. It explores different communicative approaches used in teaching deaf learners throughout the world. Those discussed in the study are, the auditory-oral approach, the total communication (TC) approach and bilingualism. The choice of each approach is usually influenced by one's paradigm belief in terms of disability,

namely the clinical-pathological and the socio-cultural paradigms. A paradigm refers to the way people view, perceive and understand the world around them (Covey, 1992).

In relation to deafness, Peel (2004:9) argues that "the paradigms to which people ascribe regarding deafness will influence the way they view, treat and educate deaf learners". On the one hand, for people who hold the clinical-pathological (also known as the Medical Model or the Deficiency model) view on deafness, the focus is on deaf people's impairments and biological differences (Lynas, 1994; Aarons and Akach, 2002). For them, 'deafness' means "an individual limitation that prevented a person with 'impairment' from performing everyday tasks in the normal way, often resulting in a social 'handicap' (Priestley, 2006:21). The most appropriate response from the society then would be "either to correct the impairment or to help the person 'come to terms' with their assumed disadvantage, by negotiating different (less valued) social roles" (Priestley, 2006:21). It is clear that from the pathological paradigm, a deaf person's inability to hear is viewed in a negative light and seen as a deficit (Lynas, 1994; Peel, 2004). It is also believed that due to their hearing loss and communication difficulties, deaf people experience learning and psychological problems (Bouvet, 1990; Svartholm, 1994). Therefore, the tendency is that deaf learners are "excluded from regular education schools and such exclusion immediately results in the perception of such people as inadequate human beings who are unfit to be included in mainstream economic and social life" (Engelbrecht, *et al.,* 1999:13). In situations where they are integrated into the schools for the hearing, teachers' expectations of the deaf learners are low compared to their expectations of hearing children (Morgans, 2004). In this regard, Peel (2004) points out that when deaf learners are

regarded as 'disabled', reliant on hearing people, and not being able to achieve the same outcomes as their hearing counterparts, the result is the creation of barriers to learning. Instead of being motivated to learn and acquire literacy, deaf children tend to be passive and end up dropping out of school.

On the other hand, people who perceive deafness from the socio-cultural paradigm (also known as the Social model of disability – Peel, 2004) "are not interested here in degree of hearing loss, the remediation of hearing, audiological measures, speech therapy or any other medical views of deafness" (Aarons and Akach, 2002:127). In these people's opinions, deafness is no longer a medical deficiency that needs to be 'fixed', but a social and cultural phenomenon (Deumert, 2000). Deaf people are recognized as members of a linguistic minority who form "a culturally and linguistically discrete group, defined by a common culture, beliefs, experiences, rules of behaviour, and most centrally, the use of sign language as its natural vernacular" (Deumert, 2000:425). The socio-cultural model shifts the idea of disability from the individual to society. In this sense, disability is defined as "…the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers" (Priestly, 2006:21). In Peel's (2004) view, if educators of deaf learners regard deaf learners as being part of a linguistic and cultural minority group who are able to achieve the same outcomes as the hearing learners, and not as disabled, they may prevent the barrier caused by negative attitudes and stereotyping of differences from happening.

In the following sections, I discuss different approaches employed in the education of deaf learners. The differences between these approaches are also highlighted.

2.3.1.1.1 The auditory-oral approach to communication

The auditory-oral method of communication (sometimes referred to as the oral method) was ruled to be the best method in the education of deaf people by the Milan Congress of 1880 (Bergmann, 1994). Proponents of this method emphasise the need for speech in communication and education of deaf children (DEAFSA, 2005). For the oralists, speech gives deaf children freedom, independence and ability to participate in the wider society (Lynas, 1994). They argue that without speech, deaf people communicate with the hearing world through Sign Language interpreters and this involves loss of autonomy and independence. According to Lynas (1994:3) "the popularity of oralism was reinforced by the emergence of the new 'science' of audiology and technological developments in measurement and aiding of hearing". For the oralists then, the goal of speech for deaf children would be achieved through the use of amplification (such as hearing aids or cochlear implants). With the use of these technological devices, they want to teach deaf children to talk and to develop literacy aurally, so that their achievements could equal those of their hearing counterparts. In other words, oralists view deafness as something that could be fixed with medical intervention and technological devices.

However, during the 1960s, the auditory-oral approach came under a lot of attack (Lynas, 1994). There was a growing concern about the low educational standards achieved by deaf children. The method was also criticised for its failure to make every deaf child achieve acceptable levels of communicative competence. Furthermore, it was blamed for trying to make deaf children speak like the hearing children. Opponents of this approach viewed this stance as a way of suppressing deaf identity.

According to Lynas (1994), during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the oralist position became so vulnerable that the Total Communication method was introduced. Despite all the criticisms, the proponents of the audio-oral approach are adamant that with correct amplification, this approach can bring the desired results in the education of deaf children. It is on the basis of this belief that this approach is still used worldwide as one of the educational options for deaf learners.

2.3.1.1.2 The total communication approach to communication

Total communication (TC) is the title given to a philosophy of communication which includes all methods of communication (hence the word total) including speech, sign gesture, listening, etc. It was "introduced with the belief that this would improve communication and accelerate verbal language development" (Lymas, 1994:5). Like the oralists, TC advocates held the view that speech was important in the process of deaf children's language acquisition. However, they did not share the oralists' belief that with amplification alone, deaf children could achieve sufficient auditory information to develop verbal language (Lynas, 1994). TC supporters argued that most deaf children are too deaf to perceive spoken language through the auditory channel only. They, therefore, advocated the use of TC, an approach where every possible means of communication is used with deaf children. Proponents of TC viewed this approach as a child-centred approach which is capable of ensuring that the communicative needs of each child are met (Knight and Swanwick, 2002). In particular, it was assumed that the "use of manual sign codes, whose grammatical and syntactic structure represented the oral language, would ease the acquisition of literacy among deaf children" (Deumert, 2000: 430-1). This approach involves

simultaneous use of different sign systems including finger-spelling and spoken languages (Nova, 1995; Deumert, 2000).

However, as Deumert (2000) points out, this seemingly logical assumption, proved to be problematic. According to Lynas (1994) and Nova (1995), like its predecessor, TC failed to raise the educational standards of deaf learners. As a result, this approach came under heavy criticism and was accused of among other things, of having similar aims as oralism. Despite its ability to facilitate communication and learning to a certain extent, this approach did not lead to the full development of Sign Language (DEAFSA, 2005). Instead, it used artificially contrived signs which could not stand in their own right as 'proper' language. DEAFSA points out that it is this limitation that led to the development of the bilingual education approach to communication in the 1980s.

2.3.1.1.3 Bilingualism

Due to the limitations of both the oral and the total communication approaches discussed above, the study proposes bilingualism as an appropriate communicative approach to be used in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. As it has already been mentioned, bilingualism is a reaction against both the oral-auditory and TC approaches. According to Gregory (1998:68-9), the following are the goals of bilingual education:

- To enable Deaf children to become linguistically competent.
- To provide access to a wide curriculum.
- To facilitate good literacy skills.
- To provide Deaf pupils with a positive sense of their own identity.

The bilingual model to the education of deaf learners considers Sign Language as the first language of deaf children (Lynas, 1994). In this approach, it is believed that Sign Language is a 'real' language that can meet the linguistic needs of deaf children (Lynas, 1994). Sign Language is "capable of expressing the entire human experience that spoken languages are able to express; they have as many registers, and as much complexity as any other human language" (Aarons and Akach, 2002).

Bilingualism was developed as a means of promoting literacy in deaf learners through Sign Language and a spoken language. In this approach, deaf children are taught in Sign Language as their primary language (DEAFSA, 2005). Later on, they learn their second language (the spoken language in their homes), and it is taught by using principles similar to teaching a foreign language (Bergmann, 1994). In the bilingual approach, Sign Language and the spoken/written languages are kept separate in use and the curriculum (DEAFSA, 2005). A spoken language, such as English, is taught only when Sign Language has become fully developed in the deaf child's mind (Lynas, 1994).

Bilingualism in the context of the education of deaf learners requires a solid foundation in Sign Language. As Deumert (2000) maintains, the delay in Sign Language acquisition often results in limited proficiency in this language. Thus, if a deaf learner does not have a good base in Sign Language, then learning a second language, which in this case would be a spoken language (though the child can learn the spoken or the written form), may result in neither language being mastered fully. As it is the case with hearing children, good command in the first language makes

learning the second language easier (Cummins, 1986). Learners use their first language as their point of reference in the acquisition of their second language. Skills in both Sign Language and spoken/written languages provide an accessible education system to all deaf children and lead to attainment levels equal to that of hearing children (Aarons and Akach, 2002; Sadiki, 2004).

Not only does bilingualism acknowledge Sign Language as the first language of deaf people, but it also recognizes the importance of the Deaf community and Deaf Culture (Peel, 2004). Bilingualists respect deaf people as "members of a cultural minority, not as flawed versions of hearing people" (Lynas: 1994:61). Deaf people who hold this view argue that "they have a separate language, and a different way of doing things and living their lives, and therefore, their culture is different from that of the mainstream hearing culture, although it is lodged within the mainstream culture of the country" (Aarons and Akach, 2002:144).

The success of the bilingual approach to the teaching of deaf learners also depends upon the proficiency of teachers in Sign Language. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing bilingualism in deaf education. They are responsible for providing the type of education that will enable deaf learners to reach their full potential. Ideally, teachers need to be competent in both Sign Language and the spoken language. However, research indicates that the majority of teachers of deaf learners are hearing (Andrews and Jordan, 1993; Knight and Swanwick, 2002). While these teachers cannot be expected to have native-like fluency in Sign Language, they rarely have any abilities in this language (Speights, 1996). Not only do teachers lack skills in Sign Language, but they are also not aware of Deaf culture. Speights (1996) points out that

hearing teachers rarely ever think about the values and traditions that are part of deaf learners' culture. In order to effectively implement bilingual education, it is, therefore, the responsibility of educators of deaf learners to be fluent in Sign Language and gain an understanding of Deaf culture (Peel, 2004).

Together with teachers, education programmes that follow the bilingual philosophy acknowledge the important role that parents play in the education of deaf children. These programmes believe that parents should have a say in the education of their children. However, the majority of deaf children have hearing parents, who do not know enough about deafness and Sign Language (Bouvet, 1990). It is, therefore, the responsibility of these parents to learn basic signing. If parents acquire basic Sign Language, this will not only enhance the parent-child relationship, but it will also create a conducive learning environment. Bilingualists believe that parents' positive attitude towards their Deaf children and Sign Language is essential for the education to succeed (DEAFSA, 2005). It is for this reason that the study will investigate the involvement of parents of deaf learners in Lesotho in the education of their children.

To conclude, today bilingualism remains one of the most supported approaches in the education of deaf learners (Deumert, 2000; Knight and Swanwick, 2002; McCaffery *et al.,* 2003). Experience from some countries around the world, also gives grounds for asserting that bilingual education is effective for many deaf learners. For instance, bilingualism has been widely used in countries such as Sweden and Russia. After recognizing Swedish Sign Language as the first language of the Deaf in Sweden, this country has had bilingual schools for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. According to Pribanić (2006: 247), after more than 20 years of deaf bilingual education in Sweden,

the evaluation of this approach demonstrated beyond any doubt that bilingual/bicultural education is the right way to instruct deaf children. In Russia, the situation of deaf education changed in 1992 when the country adopted the Russian model of sign bilingual education (Zaitseva *et al.,* 1999). This approach was chosen because "it ensures conditions whereby the school takes the child as the main focus of the educational process in as much as it takes into account the child's special educational needs, including the role of sign language in the life of the Deaf community" (Zaitseva *et al.,* 1999:13).

In this section, I have given a theoretical background regarding approaches in the teaching of deaf learners. Where possible, I have attempted to give both the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Focusing specifically on bilingualism, I have suggested reasons why this approach is the most suitable for deaf learners in Lesotho. In the next section, I provide the theoretical frameworks which ground the study, namely, the rational choice model and Cummins' theoretical framework for minority student intervention and empowerment. The former framework is intended to help me understand what influences the policy makers' decision when planning languages. The latter framework will allow me to assess the status of LSL in the educational system in Lesotho against the backdrop of what is considered to be the best learning environment for linguistic minorities.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

There are different models developed for describing language policy and the process of language planning. Among them are accommodation theory, the classical language planning model and rational choice theory. Onyango (2003) explains that, as a

sociolinguistic theory, accommodation theory was intended to deal with face-to-face interaction. He further points out that this theory is considered versatile in research on language use in a context where power is misappropriated. He states that according to accommodation theory, "language groups have greater ethno-linguistic vitality if their languages have higher status, favorable demographic variables and significant institutional support" (2003:16-7). However, according to Tollefson (1991), this model is criticized for not indicating explicitly the fact that the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups necessarily involves the question of power and inequality.

Another common theory in the field of language planning is Haugen's (1987) Classical Language Planning model. This aim of this model is to describe what language planners do when they plan languages. Although this model has been widely applied for its systematic approach in language planning, it is criticized for paying little attention to the question of how language planners arrive at their decisions during planning process (Deumert, 2000). To address this question, according to Deumert, the rational choice model was developed. In this study, the rational choice model will be used to analyze how Lesotho language planners arrive at their decisions on which languages to include in the policy. Since the study focuses on minority languages, Cummins' theoretical framework for minority student intervention and empowerment (1986) will also be employed. The framework will be useful in the investigation of how the current classroom linguistic practices affect the education of the Deaf in Lesotho. The framework provides key elements that language planners need to consider ensuring effective bilingual education for minority language learners. Data collected for this study will be analyzed using the thematic content analysis

approach. This approach is appropriate for qualitative research (Donovan-Hall, 2004), like the present study.

2.4.1. The Rational Choice Model

The rational choice model has its roots in social science. According to Scott (2000), it was established in the 1920s by Max Weber and was pioneered by social scientists such as George Homans, who used it in sociology in 1961. Later, the model was extended to other fields, including sociolinguistics. In sociolinguistics, the rational choice model has been used in Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971). Jernudd and Da Gupta are of the view that similar to economic planning, goals are identified, the means to achieve these goals are determined and outcomes are predicted and monitored in language planning. The rational choice model recognizes language as a societal resource. Within this planning model, language planning is characterized as a model of decision-making, in which a rational choice between alternative solutions is made. The model explains how individuals or a group arrive at their decisions. It is a way of deciding the best course of action to take. It is on the basis of these points that this model is considered appropriate for the present study, which aims to investigate the decisions of policy makers in Lesotho. According to Rubin and Jernudd (1971) cited in Deumert (2000), the decision-making procedure is guided by the following steps:

1. Identification of the problem and fact-finding;
2. Specification of goals (development of a language policy);
3. Production of possible solutions, cost benefit analysis of the alternative solutions and rational choice of solution (decision-making stage);
4. Implementation of the solution and,

5. Evaluation of the solutions, that is, comparing predicted and actual outcomes (p220).

Given the fact that language planning is an attempt to solve a language problem, the rational choice model considers the identification of the problem as the first important step towards achieving this goal. Fact-finding is considered a prerequisite for this model (Deumert, 2000) and it includes, among other things, the carrying out of sociolinguistic surveys to investigate the number of mother-tongue speakers, the degree of bilingualism, and also language attitudes in a given society. Although it would be ideal to have language planning taking place against the background of an in-depth sociolinguistic profile of a country, this is not often possible since planners operate under financial constraints. The present study investigates the attitude of policy makers in towards LSL used in Lesotho deaf community following the rational choice model.

In the rational choice model, it is assumed that language planning is conducted by a central authority that controls and coordinates the steps required for reaching an informed and rational decision. The model attempts to describe events by explaining the choices that led to them. These choices are explained by the preferences of the persons making them (Scott, 2000). In rational choice theories, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their preferences. They are viewed as rational beings who are consistent in their attitudes and beliefs.

One of the criticisms usually leveled against the rational choice model is its assumption that all individuals are rational. Such an assumption makes the theory

questionable for its application to the real world (Azoulay, 2005). The same view is expressed by Koppl and Whitman (2003:3) who state that "rational-choice theory misses the social processes that generate and constitute the realities in which actual people find themselves". The criticism notwithstanding, the rational choice theory has been extensively used in research on language planning in a context of languages with disproportionate power, for example, English and Kiswahili (Onyango, 2003). In this study, I employ the rational choice theory to analyze languages that have different status, majority languages and minority languages, focusing specifically on SL used in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. Through the use of interviews, this model is used to investigate the attitudes of language planners and educators towards this language. Additionally, Cummins' theoretical framework (1986) is also relevant to this study as it concerns the education of language minority students. This framework is discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 Cummins' Theoretical Framework for Minority Student Intervention and Empowerment

Cummins' empowerment theory (1986) has been applied in a number of studies on bilingual education, especially on minority students. In their research conducted in New Zealand on Samoan speakers' bilingual education, McCaffery *et al.,* (2003), concluded that the educational success of learners in Samoa is attributed to the application of empowerment factors. In their discussion of Cummins' theory, McCaffery *et al.,* (2003) explain that minority students are empowered or disempowered depending on the way the school operates. These involve the extent to which:

- minority language students' home language and culture are incorporated into the school curriculum;

- minority communities are encouraged to participate in their children's education;
- education promotes their inner desire for students to become active seekers of knowledge, and not passive receptacles;
- assessment of minority language students avoids locating problems in the students and seeks, whenever possible, to find root of the problem in the social and educational systems, including curriculum and assessments (McCaffery, 2003:81-2).

This study employs Cummins' framework to analyze the education of Deaf linguistic minority learners in Lesotho. Further, the framework is used to determine the participation of parents who play an important role in a proper bilingual education. Although this model is based on research with hearing children from bilingual backgrounds, the study carried out by McKee and Biederman (2003) indicates that it can be used to analyze performance in the education of deaf learners in New Zealand. The present study focuses on deaf learners in Lesotho as they are the group whose needs receive less attention when issues of linguistic minorities are addressed.

2.5 Conclusion

Despite the expressed desire to have language policies that will promote African languages, this chapter has indicated that in most African countries, the colonial languages, particularly English, have been and remain dominant in the higher domains of the societies. As far as education is concerned, many parents are torn between two choices: on the one hand, English must be used as a medium of instruction for its high prestigious and economic value; on the other hand, African

languages must be used as languages of learning for cultural identification and preservation. Another problem linked with language planning in Africa is the continual neglect of minority languages. Among the minority languages, signed languages experience the worst marginalization and exclusion. This has paved way for high illiteracy rates among deaf people (Storbeck, 1998; Deumert, 2000).

Throughout the chapter, the claim is made that bilingualism is the most suitable educational paradigm that can bring change in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. The adoption of this approach in deaf education in countries such as Sweden, Russia and New Zealand, has shown positive results regarding the cognitive and social development of deaf children (Deumert, 2000). Emphasis is placed on the education for bilingualism, which aims to produce learners that are competent in both Sign Language and any oral language (in written form) that is accessible to them. It is believed that this will afford learners an opportunity to choose the mode of communication that best suits their linguistic and educational needs. In order for bilingualism to achieve its goal, a number of factors need to be met. Firstly, Sign Language which is the first language to many deaf learners should also be used as a medium of instruction like spoken languages. This is because bilingualism encompasses the use of two languages and aims to achieve competence in both languages (Storbeck, 1998). It encourages teaching deaf learners both about the deaf culture and the hearing culture (culture of their hearing family members). Secondly, Deaf culture should be incorporated in the education of deaf learners. Deaf culture empowers deaf learners in the sense that they feel free to use their language without fear of being judged according to the norms of hearing culture (Aarons, 1996). Thirdly, teachers should be sufficiently prepared for their role as teachers of deaf

learners. That is, they should not only be skilled in Sign Language, but they should also receive special education and training which focuses on issues related to deafness and its impact on deaf education (Storbeck, 1998). Last, but not least, both the parents and adult deaf community should be actively involved in the education of deaf learners. Both the parents' and the community's positive attitude towards deaf education is essential to the deaf learners' academic success.

CHAPTER THREE

LESOTHO LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICIES

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the immediate context of the study, that is, the country in which the study was conducted. The chapter gives an in-depth discussion of language policy and language-in-education policies in Lesotho which form the focus of this study. It illustrates how history, which includes the missionaries and colonialism, has influenced the current language policies. The chapter also gives an overview of the country's education system with specific focus on the Special Education Unit, whose mandate is to ensure that children with disabilities and special educational needs, the Deaf included, access quality education. Since language plays an integral part in education, the chapter also examines the Lesotho's language-in-education policy. Finally, the implications of the current language practises on the education of Deaf learners in Lesotho are discussed.

3.1 Historical background

Lesotho, a country with an area of 30 355 square kilometres, is completely landlocked by South Africa and it has a population of 1.88 million (UNDP, 2006). It is a small country (as shown in Figure 1 below), with Maseru as its capital city. It is a very mountainous country with the majority of the population concentrated in low-lying areas (Mohapi, 2000; Nyaba-nyaba, 2002:15).

Figure 1: Map of Lesotho



Source: Kingdom of Lesotho, 2005

Historically, as a nation, the Basotho were founded by King Moshoeshoe I (Ellenberger, 1992), who brought together different groups of people with distinct cultures and languages, who were fleeing from a series of conflict and turbulence that were prevalent in the region during Lifaqane (Mfecane).[5] These fleeing groups included the Basotho, Batlokoa, Basia, Bataung, some Matebele, Bathepu and Baphuthi. Since the majority of the people in the mentioned groups spoke Sesotho, this language became the national language of the Basotho. There is a possibility that at this particular point in time, the Basotho needed to choose one language as a

[5] This is the period from the 1820s during the rise of Shaka to power. In the process of consolidating his Zulu nation, Shaka conflicted with other chieftains and there was turmoil in the region. Many people fled from these upheavals.

national language, to show that they were unified. But it may also be argued that declaring Sesotho a national language granted higher status to the speakers of this language over the others as they became what Shohamy (2006:65) refers to as "the public representation of the nation-state".

Around 1836, the Boers began to invade Moshoeshoe's territory, occupying a large area belonging to Basotho. This caused strife between the Boers and Basotho which continued until Moshoeshoe appealed to Britain for help in 1865. Subsequently, in 1868, Lesotho became a British Protectorate (Thompson, 1978). It gained its independence nearly 100 years later, in October 1966.

3.2 Lesotho language policy

As in the United States (Fleischer, 2005), Lesotho has no explicitly stated overall language policy document. This situation is not abnormal because, as Harold (2006) correctly points out, language policy should not be viewed only as,

> the explicit, written, overt, *de jure*, official and "top-down" decision-making about language, but also the implicit, unwritten, covert, "*de facto*", grass-roots, and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which can influence the *outcomes* of policy-making just as emphatically and definitely as the more explicit decisions (p112).

Lesotho's language policy, therefore, is understood, inferred and referred to in documents such as the Constitution (1993). Lesotho's official language policy is expressed in Article 1 of the Constitution in the following way:

> That both Sesotho and English shall be official languages.

The co-existence of Sesotho and English as official languages in Lesotho can be traced back to the era of missionaries and colonialism. Both these languages were

used by the missionaries in the early 18th century to spread Christianity. Literacy in these languages was perceived as a key to the study of the Bible, the spiritual teachings of the church and participation in the Christian community (Matšela, 1990). The advent of the Europeans in Lesotho also played an important role in the formulation and shaping of the language policy in Lesotho. During the colonial period, in addition to Sesotho, knowledge of English was a requirement for employment opportunity (Matšela, 1990). Although the British did not discourage the use of Sesotho in private domains and functional literacy, English was promoted as the language of important domains such as education. According to Nyika (2007), the ultimate goal of the colonial experience was to give pride of place to colonial languages and in the process, indigenous languages were marginalized.

3.2.1 Minority languages in Lesotho

Although the Lesotho Constitution is silent about the minority languages in this country, as mentioned in Chapter One, the presence of Batlokoa, Basia, Bataung, Matebele, Bathepu and Baphuthi among the Basotho implies the existence of minority languages such as Setlokoa, Setebele, Sethepu and Sephuthi in the country. These languages are the first languages to these groups. They are distinct languages separate from Sesotho (Matšela, 1990; Matlosa, 1998). According to Matšela, Seqhotsa and Sephuthi are spoken in the Quthing district. Setebele (an Nguni variety) is spoken in Botha-Bothe, Setaung is spoken in Mohale's Hoek, while Setlokoa is spoken to a lesser extent in Mokhotlong. Despite the differences that exist among the Basotho in terms of language and ethnic backgrounds, this nation is generally described as a highly monolingual and homogeneous nation (Bamgbose, 1991; Molomo, 1999; Kamwangamalu, 2003). This misconception, held by both many Basotho and the

international community, has resulted in the continual neglect of the minority languages in the country and deprivation of the linguistic rights of their speakers (Akindele, 2002). Along with the silence on the above mentioned languages, the Constitution does not say anything about LSL. The present situation has confined the use of these minority languages only to the home. In his comment on marginalized African languages, Adegbiya (1994:22) states that the continued neglect of these languages in things that mattered built negative attitudes around them. The misconception that Lesotho is a monolingual country has also resulted in the country's lack of interest in issues of language. As Mochaba (1998) correctly points out, even the only one academic language body in the country, namely the Sesotho Academy, has no support whatsoever from the government, including financial. As a result, none of the language planning statuses suggested by this body, be it corpus or status, are implemented by the government.

3.3 The Lesotho education system

In this section, I discuss the education system in Lesotho. It is important to give the historical development of this system and trace the trends from the pre-colonial era in order to show the extent to which the past systems have influenced the current education system.

3.3.1 Pre-colonial era education (1833 – 67)

During the pre-colonial period, Lesotho had an informal and less organized indigenous education system. According to Matšela (1990), long before the Basotho nation was exposed to the influence from Europe, the learning of children was geared towards an education system that inculcated moral and cultural issues. The teaching

was done by local leaders, doctors of medicine and wise leaders. Boys and girls separately learnt cultural values and philosophy, personal and family responsibilities (Matšela, 1990) and emphasis was placed on activities at home and in the fields. As Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana (2002) point out, the traditional informal education contributed significantly towards the cultural and personal development of individuals.

Along with the informal indigenous education system, the Basotho also had a well-established formal type of education system which exists even to this day. This type of education is offered through initiation schools. Nyaba-nyaba (2002:21) explains that:

> Boys and girls attend these initiation schools separately where they formalize their knowledge of cultural values, personal responsibilities as well as duties to one's clan. By this time girls are already skilled at many duties, such as house cleaning, plastering, drawing water and collecting wild vegetables, having learnt them from their respective homes. Similarly, boys are familiar with their manual duties, such as looking after animals, taking care of fields and even metalwork. Initiation schools are not only about learning duties but also, for both boys and girls, through the counsel of wise elders, about knowledge of starting and maintaining a family, and taking care of cultural values. (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002:21).

According to Nyaba-nyaba (2002), those from the initiation schools regard themselves as 'real men and women'. This, in a way, used to compel the uninitiated to enroll in initiation schools. Nyaba-nyaba (2002) adds that with the advent of the missionaries in the early part of the 19th century (1833), the initiates are generally treated with contempt by those who have converted to the Western beliefs. Due to the missionaries' conviction that Basotho culture was incompatible with Christianity, the missionaries discouraged the Basotho from continuing with cultural practices such as initiation schools and even refused entry to those who did not adopt the new religion

(Motaba, 1998). Unlike in the former type of education, the new dispensation education was designed to propagate Christian values and develop Christian characters capable of reading the bible (Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana, 2002). Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana argue that, while the Christian missionaries pioneered the formal education system in Lesotho,

> the primary focus of the finest schools was the acquisition of literacy and the study of the bible, the spiritual values and teachings of the church, including religious observances and participation in the Christian community. European cultural values were emphasized, the adoption of a biblical name, the use of European clothing, eating and living habits. (Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana, 2002: 2).

3.3.2 Colonial era education (1868 – 1965)

When Lesotho became a British protectorate in 1868, the colonial government continued to support the missionary education. Churches even received grants to run the schools:

> In order to streamline education in 1909, a central board of advice was established, consisting of a director of education and representatives of government. This was followed up by the appointment of the education secretariat to the function as a link between the schools and the government (the Clark Commission, 1946). It further brought up two important developments. First, it was the formulation of the comprehensive Education Act defining the role and responsibility of government and the churches in the management policy and the schools. The second was the establishment of the central and district advisory committees to provide for education policy for chiefs, churches and government. The revised framework of operations perpetuated the need for uniform syllabuses and a system of school inspection. It should be borne in mind that the new system of education, which used uniform syllabuses, brought about a new standard examination for primary and post primary schooling (Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana, 2002: 3).

As in the case of primary schools, the need for the staff with higher qualifications, especially in the civil service, prompted the colonial government to establish secondary schools. Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana (2002) point out that, in most cases,

the curricula and subject content which were taught in Lesotho schools in those days, was modelled along the lines of the Cape Town Province of South Africa Department of Education. This model was supposed to advance white supremacy and to serve the interests of the white minority. On the side of the Basotho, the model proved less relevant to their educational needs. The situation changed after 1953, when South Africa was introducing the Apartheid-inspired Bantu Education Act. Since that time, Lesotho, together with the sister countries, Botswana and Swaziland, have been able to develop their own syllabuses for their junior classes (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002).

3.3.3 Post-colonial era education (1966 – now)

Since independence in 1966, the education system of Lesotho has been a joint responsibility of three partners: the government, the churches (which own most of the schools) and the community. This is why it is described as a "three-legged pot" system (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 1982). Most of the government schools were originally developed by the community and were later inherited by the government (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002). Table 1 below gives a picture of the ownership trends of schools in Lesotho.

Table 1: Lesotho schools 'ownership' trends

Name of Proprietor	No. of Primary Schools	No. of Secondary Schools
Roman Catholic Church (RCC)	505	73
Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC)	476	61
Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL)	173	32
Other churches	56	13
Government and Community Schools	30	16
Total 1435	**1240**	**195**

Source: Ministry of Education and Training, 1995.

The above table indicates that even after the colonial era, churches still play a major role in the Lesotho education system. They own appropriately 90 percent of the schools while the government owns less than three percent. Since independence, different successive governments have tried without success to centralize Lesotho education out of the power of the churches (Khalanyane, 1995). But to date, management of the schools remains largely in their hands, while the development of curriculum and syllabi is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). The churches have ownership of land and the school buildings, while the government continues to subsidize the schools and pay teachers. Even more significant is the fact that with their control over schools, churches exercise control over how much fees should be paid. They can hire teachers, renew their contracts or terminate them (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002). According to Motaba (1998), this has been a bone of contention for a long time and will remain so until one unified education system is introduced in Lesotho. It should be noted that at the time the study was being carried out, the government had not yet supported the schools for the Deaf with buildings. In addition, the majority of

the teachers were also not paid by the government because they did not have necessary qualifications. Their salaries were determined and paid by the schools in which they taught. Deaf education has mainly been in the hands of churches.

As Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana (2002) point out, the post independence government has made little change to both the missionary and the colonial education systems. In this regard, the 1970 first national Five-Year Development Plan observed that:

> In 1966, the first independence government of Lesotho inherited a school system, which was not only missionary inspired, but also unrelated to the development of the skills and aptitudes required to achieve rapid economic development and to improve the standard of living of the majority of the people (Government of Lesotho, 1970:162).

The same view is raised by Tjabane (1992) who criticizes the Lesotho education system for preparing learners for the next level of education, and not for employment. In her view, the system creates white-collar job expectations which cannot be filled by the country's economic structure.

In an attempt to make education more relevant to the needs of the Basotho, the first national Five-Year Plan was drawn with the purpose of achieving the following aims:

- To gear the development of the education system to the requirements of the manpower for the economic development by lessening the academic bias of the system;
- To improve the efficiency of the educational system in terms of numbers and the quality of its output and in relation to the money spend on it;

- To use scholarships as a means of channelling individuals into those fields of training needed for economic development; and
- Through appropriate educational planning, to strengthen government control and supervision over all educational activities. (Government of Lesotho, 1970:123)

In order to redress the irrelevance and inefficiency of Lesotho's education, the above-mentioned plan envisaged the inclusion of agriculture and home economics in the secondary schools curriculum (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002). Some vocational schools were also introduced to accommodate those children who could not get into the schools. Five years down the line, there was little success of the Ministry of Education and Training in achieving its objectives in the First Five-Year Plan (Nyaba-nyaba, 2002). This is evidenced by the fact that the national Second Five-Year Plan retained most of the aims that were contained in the First Plan as follows:

- To improve the quality and efficiency of primary education;
- To continue to develop secondary education with special emphasis on improving mathematics and science teaching and expanding practical subjects;
- To develop technical and vocational and higher education to meet national manpower needs;
- To initiate coordinated programme for non-formal education; and
- Further, to strengthen government control and supervision of educational activities. (Ministry of Education: 1972:78)

When comparing the aims of the two plans above, what becomes obvious is that the only aim that does not appear in the first plan is the emphasis on improving mathematics and science teaching at secondary level. This may mean that, although aims are put in the national plans, the means of achieving those aims are not clear. As a result, the education system finds itself faced with the same challenges every time it has to make plans.

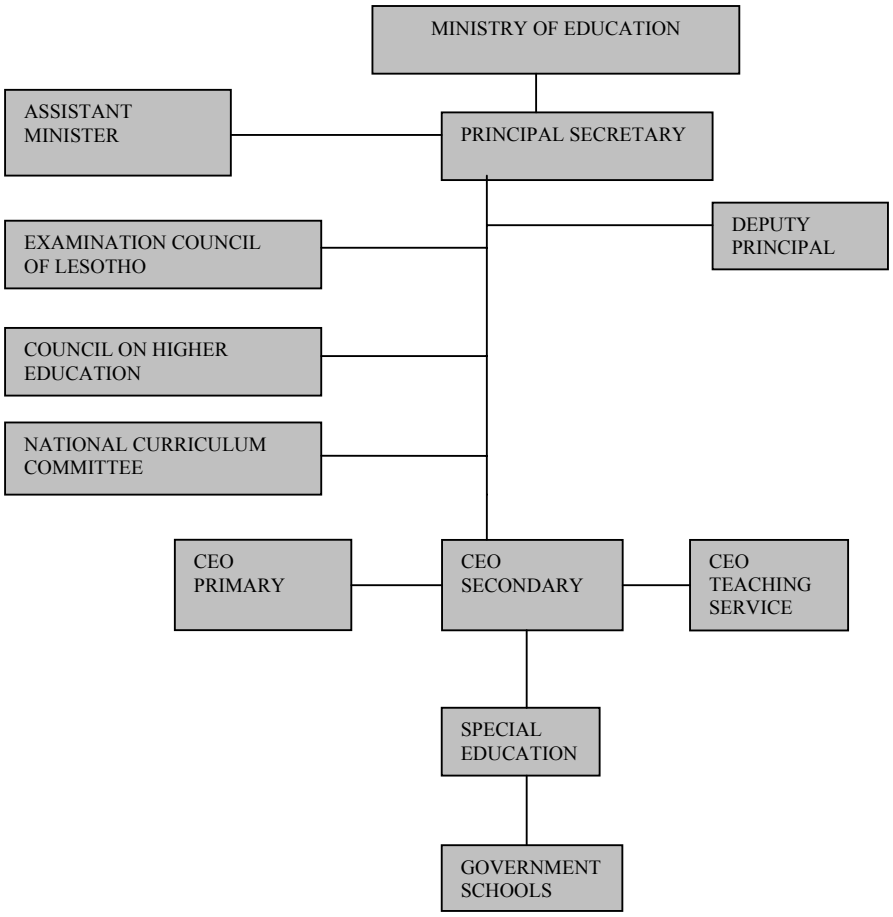
The question of relevance in the education system of Lesotho cuts across all the plans of the country that follow the ones discussed above. For instance, the Fourth Five-Year Plan outlined Lesotho's education problems as follows:

> Lesotho's educational system suffers from critical problems including the declining standard of education; lack of relevance to occupational and social realities; high drop-out and repetition rates; very poor facilities and staffing in primary schools; the high costs to Government and parents; weak management and professional supervision; and lack of effective quality control owing to the nature of examinations ad the absence of other means of determining pupil's achievements (Ministry of Planning, Economic and Development, 1986:87).

3.4 The current structure of the education system in Lesotho

As it is the norm all over the world, Lesotho education planning is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Training. Figure 2 below gives the organization structure of this Ministry.

Figure 2: Organization structure of the Ministry of Education and Training



Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Training 2002

Like in Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999:56), it indicates the planning process "in terms of who does what, of the planned activities and how their duties affect the duties and performances of officers in the preceding and succeeding levels". Education policy in Lesotho is formulated at the highest level in the hierarchy before it comes down to the implementation level.

According to the Ministry of Education and Training's report of 2004, which was presented in Geneva, this Ministry is responsible for the management, provision and regulation of education and training in Lesotho. It is headed by a minister and an assistant minister of education. Directly below these offices is the Principal Secretary, who is the administrative head and chief accounting officer of the ministry, assisted at the executive level by the Deputy Principal Secretary; five Chief Education Officers responsible for Primary, Secondary, Teaching Service, Curriculum Services and Tertiary Education; two Directors, one of Technical and Vocational and Technical Education and the other for Training and Planning. These Senior Managers head departments composed of programmes which form operational units of the education and training sector in Lesotho.

Together with the planning unit, the office of the principal secretary is responsible for performing the day to day planning duties of the ministry. It offers professional advice and assists departments in determining the feasibility and viability for projects. As its main task, the office is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that all plans for the Ministry of Education and Training are in agreement with the overall national plans and strategies.

The Ministry of Education and Training's report (2004:4) argues that since independence in 1966, Lesotho has always placed education and training at the top of her agenda as a tool for economic development and mechanism for empowerment of her citizenry. As its main policy, therefore, the Ministry of Education and Training aims to reform the education system of the country. This reform involves, among other things, improvement of the management of education in general, improvement

of quality and efficacy, increased provision of basic facilities and upgrading of the teaching force (Ministry of Education and Training, 1997). With these aims in mind, the Ministry gives priority to the improvement of the quality and efficiency of primary education which is meant to provide basic life skills to the majority of the citizens.

The aspiration to provide basic primary education to every Mosotho child led to the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2000. Not only did the government of Lesotho view FPE as a step towards achieving Education for All (EFA), but it also considered it as part of scaling up poverty reduction. Under the FPE policy, the learners' school fees, textbooks and feeding are the responsibility of the government. The removal of these fees from parents ensures access to education, which in turn helps to break the cycle of poverty (Avenstrup *et al.,* 2004). The country's commitment to the provision of an equitable basic education to all Basotho as a key development goal is acknowledged in the 2020 National Vision for Lesotho which was developed in 2001 (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2002). However, the report emphasizes the need for the country to strengthen access to education and develop curriculum that fully responds to the national development priorities, thus, promoting entrepreneurial, life, technical and vocational skills.

There are three main cycles within the education system in Lesotho, according to the level and type of education. The first level consists of primary education which covers seven years of basic education. The second level is the general secondary education, a three-year course leading to the Junior Certificate (JC). This is followed by a two-year course leading to the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC). The final level

is tertiary education. This includes the National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and Lerotholi Polytechnic. Recently, the Ministry of Education has introduced another level; the Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development (IECCD). This level is still at its infancy stages and has not yet spread throughout the entire country.

3.3.4.1 Education for children with disabilities and special educational needs – the Special Education Unit

Initially, in Lesotho, provision for children with disabilities and special needs had been the responsibility of NGOs, churches and individuals. These bodies believed that children with special needs are better off in separated and special schools. This perception, which was based on the medical paradigm, resulted in the establishment of the only schools for the Deaf in the country, namely St. Paul School for the Deaf and Kananelo Centre for the Disabled.[6] Both schools were set up and privately owned by members of the Roman Catholic churches. As a result, the government's policy of FPE does not apply in these schools.

However, since the 1980s, the Ministry of Education and Training has shown some interest to reach children with special educational needs (Mariga and Phachaka, 2001). This is evidenced by the establishment of the Special Education Unit in 1991 and its inclusion in Lesotho's educational policies (Matlosa, 2001). This Unit is answerable to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of secondary education (see the above structure). In its Preamble in Integrated Education (1998), the Ministry of Education and Training admitted that:

[6] The name Kananelo Centre for the Disabled is being changed to Kananelo Centre for the Deaf since the school intends to accommodate only Deaf learners.

> with the global call for "Education for All" by the year 2000, it becomes imperative that access to education should be made available to every child in Lesotho. In this respect, Special Education for children with special educational needs, which has for a long time been largely in the hands of religious organizations and voluntary bodies, should be given the attention it deserves from the government and community (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998: i).

The Special Education Unit was mandated to provide education and care for children with special educational needs/disabilities. This meant focusing mainly on four fields of impairments and disabilities, namely; visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment and physical disability. In particular, in its 1989/90 Operational Plan, the Ministry of Education and Training included the following general policy statement regarding Special Education:

> The Ministry of Education will promote the integration of children with special educational needs/disabilities into regular school system at all levels to enable them to acquire appropriate life skills and education (Ministry of Education and Training, 1989:5).

With this policy statement, the Ministry of Education and Training aimed to ensure that every child with special needs;

> Completes a 7 – year primary course, trains for occupation and/or participates in technical vocational education according to his/her needs and interests, so that such a child becomes a self-supporting and independent individual (Ministry of Education and Training, 1989:8).

The introduction of inclusive education was the government's attempt to move away from specialized schools. These schools are usually criticized for depriving children with disabilities and special learning needs of an inclusive society. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Need Education's "Review of UNESCO Activities of 1999", quoted in Stubbs, (2002:19) warns that;

> notwithstanding the best intentions, it is conceded that all too often the result (of special programmes, specialized institutions, special educators) has been exclusion; differentiation becoming a form of discrimination, leaving children with special needs outside the mainstream of school life and later, as adults, outside community and cultural life in general.

Unlike segregated education, inclusive education is regarded as a strategy for achieving universal education because it encourages schools that are responsive to diverse needs of children and communities (Stubbs, 2002). There are a number of factors that can contribute to the success of inclusive education. These include, among others, resources, enabling and welcoming environment, change of attitudes and collaboration among all involved (McKee, 2005).

In an attempt to ensure that children with disabilities and special educational needs are included into mainstream schools, the Ministry of Education and Training, through the Special Education Unit, introduced a course on "Integrated Education" for teachers at the Lesotho College of Education (LCE), then called the National Teacher Training College (NTTC). This is because teachers were regarded as the means to achieving this goal. To develop this course, the Unit collaborated with representatives from LCE and other organizations and ministries including the National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD), Early Childhood Development (ECD), Ministry of Health – Physiotherapy Department and Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Welfare – Rehabilitation Department. While there were general objectives for the course, there were also those objectives that were designed for specific areas of disability. The objectives that student teachers will have achieved at the end of the course and the curriculum they will have covered in relation to children with hearing impairment, who are the focus of this study, are given in Appendix K.

Storbeck (1998) emphasizes the fact that teachers of the deaf need specialized teacher training in order to sufficiently prepare them to teach deaf learners. She further points out that this specialized education and training programme should include specific elements such as knowledge of deaf pupils and their language. Drawing from this point, after examining the above objectives and the curriculum, my attention was particularly drawn to number (e) under the curriculum. Mahshie (1995:157-158) suggests that the training for teachers of deaf learners should include a curriculum that must "prepare them to have skills to impart knowledge and history and science and math and other subjects through Sign Language during the early years…" Storbeck (1998:30) adds that a curriculum for teachers of deaf learners should be saturated with culture. In their article on "*Teaching about Deaf Culture*", Storbeck and Magongwa (2006) explain that in order to develop a deaf culture curriculum that is fully empowering, there is need to consider and understand how the deaf community interacts with other communities. In her view, such a curriculum, which also takes into consideration the deaf learner's cognitive and mode of communication would be both coherent and relevant to the deaf learner's reality. In the light of this information, it was very important for me to investigate what the course suggests as the best approach in the teaching of children with hearing impairment. It was also equally important to find out whether the training programme for student teachers included LSL and deaf culture. These questions were explored in the research and the answers are presented in the findings in Chapter Five.

In addition to the course mentioned above, still in pursuance of the aim of making education accessible to children with disabilities and special educational needs, the

Special Education Unit, in 2005, outlined four important objectives (Ministry of Education and Training, 2005) which were to be achieved during the period 2005 and 2015. All these objectives are centred on providing and increasing access to education for children with disability and special educational needs. Along with the objectives, the programme outlined a number of activities which were to be carried out, guided by specified targets which it was intended to meet.

Among the targets, the Special Education Unit had hoped to have a Special Education Policy in place by 2006. This policy was supposed to be developed after a needs assessment study had been conducted. It should be noted that by the time the study was being carried out, there was no indication that the process of developing the policy had begun. There are a number of reasons that could have led to the delay in having the policy in place. One such reason could be that due to the fact that the proposed needs assessment study had not been carried out. In this regard, it may be assumed that without an evidence-based report, the Unit cannot influence government to develop policies that would positively affect deaf education in Lesotho.

3.4 Lesotho language-in-education policy

Apart from the Constitution, Lesotho language policy is also referred to when addressing issues relating to language and education. Although the Constitution does not state any clear policy regarding the medium of instruction in schools, it is evident from the 1984 language-in education policy, that there is a general understanding based on the attitudes of the language planners and educators, that only Sesotho and English should serve this purpose. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the policy

stipulates that Sesotho be used as a medium of instruction from Standards I to IV and that English be used as the medium of instruction from Standard V onwards.

From the above description, it may be argued that Lesotho primary education system is following the transitional model of bilingualism for Sesotho speaking children and the transitional submersion model for the non-Sesotho speakers. Transitional models are usually geared towards cultural assimilation and social incorporation and "schools have always been the most powerful mechanisms in assimilating minority children into mainstream cultures" (Stubbs, 1994:207). In the former model, the mother-tongue is "used only as an interim means to master the second language and as soon as students are considered proficient enough to comprehend and work academically in the second language, then the second language becomes the medium of instruction in all subjects" (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999:34-35).

According to the policy, both Sesotho and English, which are the first and second languages of most Basotho learners, respectively, should also be taught as subjects from the primary school throughout the entire high school level. Both subjects are core in primary and secondary schools. To elevate the status of these languages further, along with Mathematics, they determine the class in which a learner passes. For instance, at primary level, if a pupil obtains a C in either of the three subjects, but gets an A in all other subjects that are written for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) certificate, that pupil will be awarded a third class pass (Matlosa and Lechesa, 2006). At high school, although Sesotho is taught as a subject, it is not a requirement that a student passes it. In some schools where French is offered as a second language, students can choose to do it instead of Sesotho.

At tertiary level, English remains the only medium of instruction. At the National University of Lesotho (NUL), even in the Department of African Languages and Literature, English is still used mostly to teach the language and research methodology courses. Although there is a general understanding among members of the Department that these courses need to be taught in Sesotho, they do acknowledge the fact that there are complications when it comes to the implementation stages. One of the greatest obstacles to the achievement of this task is the fact that almost all the prescribed books and reference materials for these courses are written in English, by non-Basotho authors. According to the Department, as long as there are no Sesotho textbooks for these courses, the effort to promote Sesotho as the medium of instruction even at Departmental level, cannot be successful. Commenting on this issue, Miti (2000) argues that if only Africans can change their attitudes towards their mother tongue, the needed textbooks would be produced. In his view, if the would-be writers could regard African languages as important as English and have courage to write in them, then the problem of lack of African textbooks could be overcome with time. He, therefore, urges African writers to have the will, pride and commitment to the development of their own languages.

Owing to the fact that English is the language of teaching at tertiary level, in Lesotho, a credit in this language continues to be an admission requirement in tertiary institutions including NUL and LCE, while a credit in Sesotho only adds to the required entry points. The NUL calendar, on the one hand, stipulates that admission requirements to degree courses are the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) with a credit in English language and in Mathematics, if a student wishes to

follow the Bachelor of Science programme. The LCE calendar of 2000/2007, on the other hand, stipulates that, for the entry into the Pre-service programme, the requirements are as follows:

A. Direct Entry
   (i) Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) with 4 Credits and a pass, English Language must be one of the Subjects passed.
   (ii) COSC with 3 credits, a pass in English Language and a Credit in a Certificate or Diploma from a relevant institution
   (iii) Recognized equivalent certificates shall be considered.

The admission criteria of the tertiary institutions in Lesotho discussed above are an indication that education system in Lesotho is perpetuating the colonial standards of education.

3.4.1 Lesotho language-in-education policy and linguistic minorities

As stated earlier in the previous chapter, the Lesotho language-in-education policy of 1983 is silent about the education of children from linguistic minority communities. Again, this is can be attributed to the misconception that Lesotho is a monolingual country (Matsoso, 2002; Akindele, 2002). Since the development of this policy, the education of these children has never received any attention from the government. This was observed by the Seminar organized by the National University of Lesotho in conjunction with the Ministry of Education in 1990. The sole purpose of the Seminar was to discuss language problems in Lesotho Education (Matšela, 1990). During the deliberation, the Seminar noted that minority languages have not yet been officially declared as languages of education at any stage. The Seminar resolved that the government should carry out research to study the possibility of and manner in which Lesotho's minority languages could be used, at least in the early stages of primary

education. This decision was based on the belief that language policy is the business of government and as such, it is its role to safeguard the prosperity of minority languages. It is the government that has power to grant legal status to a language, to secure its place within public administration and services, and within the state education system (Kornoussova, 2001). However, to-date, no such research has been conducted in the country. Related to LSL, the policy makers (chapter 5) reported that the government had made it clear that it would not be easy to address the linguistic needs of deaf children due to financial constraints.

The continued silence of the government about the education of minority language groups was also discussed during the Basic Education National Goals Clarification Conference that was held in Maseru in 1992. The Conference noted that:

> In cognizance of the absence of language profile in the education policy that there is no provision for minority languages, the conference recommended that pupils belonging to the minority groups and whose mother tongue is not Sesotho should be given opportunities to be taught in their own languages as part of the Primary School Curriculum. (Kingdom of Lesotho, 1992:23)

The above extract is a positive indicator of the policy-makers and curriculum developers towards the language practice in the Lesotho education system. By recommending an integration of minority languages as media of instruction, the Conference supports the widespread belief that mother tongue is very important in the initial years of education (UNESCO, 1951; Ferguson, 2000; Henrard, 2003). The mother tongue as the medium of instruction enhances and sustains concept formation. This argument is consistent with, among others, Hountondji's (1997:25) point that mother tongue education "becomes one of the indispensable preconditions for achieving the widest spread of education in the shortest possible time".

However, even after the above recommendation, minority languages in Lesotho are still neither used as medium of instructions nor taught as subjects during the learners' primary education. Regardless of all the positive arguments mentioned above (also discussed in detail in the previous chapter) in support of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, minority languages in Lesotho continue to be excluded in the country's education system. To date, the country still preaches a subtractive bilingualism policy. Under this policy, minority language learners are assimilated into the language of the majority. All children must learn Sesotho and use it as medium of instruction. Assimilation stresses the need for minority groups to accommodate the mainstream cultural norms and values and labels minority groups as non-native speakers even though they were born and raised in the same country (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004; May, 2006). However, the fact that Lesotho is a small country with limited financial resources could be the reason why minority languages are still not used in the education system of this country.

Like the oral minority languages, LSL is excluded in the education of Deaf children. This language is not sufficiently used in the mainstream school where Deaf children have been integrated through the inclusion policy. It is also insufficiently used in the two schools for the Deaf in the country (Matlosa, 2001). This point is further revealed by the findings of this study as discussed in Chapters 5 to 8. The situation persists even after the establishment of the Special Education Unit (1991) by the Ministry of Education and Training. As mentioned earlier, through the Special Education Unit, the ministry aimed to promote the integration and inclusion of children with special needs/disabilities into the regular school system at all levels, to enable them to acquire

appropriate life skills and education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2005). The assumption was that proper facilities and supportive services, including LSL would be provided to ensure that this aim is achieved.

Another major challenge that the Lesotho education system faces is the absence of teachers who are skilled in LSL. The current policy is that only persons with teacher certificates can be employed as teachers and be paid by the government through the Teaching Service Department (TSD). The role of this Department is to ensure that all teachers have the necessary qualifications before they can be included in the government's payroll. This policy obviously creates a barrier for Deaf people wanting to be teachers, majority of whom cannot meet this criterion. It was mentioned earlier that in Lesotho, Deaf children hardly go beyond Standard 7.

3.5 Conclusion

In Lesotho, the issue of language policy and languages for education can be traced back to the days of colonization and Christianization when Sesotho and English were accorded the status of both official languages and medium of instructions. The focus on only Sesotho and English has persisted into post-independence period, even after a great deal of debate on the matter (Matsoso, 2002; Akindele, 2002). This is the context in which the minority languages, including LSL, have largely been ignored. Both the country's Constitution and the language-in-education policies are silent about LSL. Despite the establishment of the Special Education Unit, I am arguing throughout the rest of the study, that the linguistic needs of deaf learners in Lesotho remain unsatisfied. Insufficient use of LSL in the schools of the deaf is echoed throughout the whole data collection process. Unlike hearing learners, deaf learners in

Lesotho are subjected to teachers who do not only lack skills in LSL, but are also not prepared to teach deaf learners and are thus, not educated in an accessible language.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the study starting with the background, outlining why a qualitative methodology was chosen, and ending with data analysis. It also discusses in detail the research tools and methods used in the study for data collection. The chapter gives an account of triangulation procedures and of data processing and analysis. Finally, the chapter provides an account of the limitations of the study and examines the issues related to the research ethics.

4.1 Research methodology and design

According to Leedy (1994:139), the choice of methodology depends on the "nature of the data and the problem for research". In order to investigate and determine the role and place of LSL in Lesotho, the study relied heavily on qualitative research methodology. Creswell (1994:1) defines qualitative research as "an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of participants, and conducted in a natural setting". The present study takes the position that the understanding of the role of LSL is situated in natural settings. For this reason, the study was conducted mainly in the schools for the deaf. Additionally, in Lesotho, the education of deaf children remains a complex issue which requires qualitative interpretation.

The fact that qualitative methodology involves studying a phenomenon that occurs in the natural setting and examines it in all its complexity is also captured by authors such as Leedy and Ormrod (2001); Merriam (1998) and Babbie (2005). One of the advantages of this methodology is that it aims for depth of understanding. This is

depicted in Henning *et al's* (2004:5) argument that qualitative research "denotes the type of inquiry in which qualities, the characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation". Henning *et al* (2004) further explain that qualitative research recognizes the importance of context and has the capacity to constitute how things work in particular contexts. Investigating the role and place of LSL entails, in part, understanding the contexts in which this language is used. For the purpose of this study, the choice of qualitative research was also given support by the fact that this methodology is suited to explaining or describing the meaning that is constructed by participants in social settings including life outside and inside the classroom (Norman, 1993; Merriam, 1998). This point was particularly pertinent to this study as it focused on the linguistic experiences of deaf children, both in the classroom and outside.

The merit of qualitative research lies in the way it positions the researcher and those that are being studied. As far as the researcher is concerned, qualitative research regards him/her as the key instrument in gaining insight into the phenomena of interest (Leedy, 1994; Merriam, 1998). As Creswell (2003:181) points out, qualitative research "enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants". Furthermore, qualitative research gives the researcher an opportunity to probe, enabling him/her to reach beyond initial responses and rationales. According to Fawole, *et al* (2006:7), qualitative research helps the researcher to "understand the feelings, values, and perceptions that underlie and influence behaviour". Similarly, Flick (1998: 6) argues that

> subjectivities of the researcher and those being studied are part of the research process. Researchers' reflections on their actions and observations in the field,

> their impressions, irritations, feelings and so on, become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation…

Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000) view on the position of the researcher and those being studied as being central to research on the struggles of linguistic minorities to attain linguistic human rights is more relevant to the present study as it also deals with Deaf minorities in Lesotho. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), qualitative research focusing on marginalized linguistic minorities, does not allow for the researcher to assume a detached, on-looker position. Skutnabb-Kangas substantiates this argument by citing Gramsci (1971) who asserts that

> The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated, i.e. knowledge. (Gramsci 1971:418, cited in Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: xxiv)

Both Skutnabb-Kangas and Gramsci's arguments are important because they explain the way I felt in the process of conducting my research. For instance, I found myself sharing the frustration of deaf learners in School C during the days when the deaf teacher was absent.

Despite the above mentioned positive qualities, qualitative research has its share of weaknesses. For instance, it has been criticized by quantitative researchers for being unscientific and lacking validity (Silverman, 2000). More importantly, according to Sarantakos (2005:45-6), criticisms levelled against this type of research relate to some of the following issues:

- *Efficacy*. Qualitative research is unable to study relationships between variables with the degree of accuracy that is required to establish social trends or to inform social policies.
- *Objectivity*. The methodological approach does not ensure objectivity, and hence the quality of the findings is questionable.

The above criticisms notwithstanding, qualitative research remains one of the mostly used approaches in the field of research within the social sciences and humanities. The benefit of this research methodology outweighs the disadvantages for this study. For instance, qualitative research never pretends to be objective, its strength lies in its nature where the researcher becomes a participant. Additionally, in his response, Sarantakos (2005) argues that the above criticisms should be seen in their context as strengths and not weaknesses. According to him, aspects such as representativeness, validity and reliability are observed in other types of research such as quantitative. What is different is the fact that these aspects are employed differently depending on the type of research. For Dey (1993), it would make more sense if people considered how these approaches could complement each other instead of counter- posing them.

4.1.1 The case study

Within the qualitative design discussed above, this study used a case study design approach. Robson (1989:146) defines case study as "a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence". Case studies are preferred when "how and why questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994:1). In a case study, the focus is on one unit

which is studied in depth. Its purpose is to discover and understand how it functions in its setting (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). A case study is suitable for learning about a little known or poorly understood situation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). This study sought to explore the implementation of language and language-in-education policies in Lesotho. It sought to investigate how these policies function in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho, an area which has received little attention from scholars.

Many case studies have been developed within qualitative research. Sarantakos (2005: 211) makes a distinction between three types of case study, namely; the intrinsic, the instrumental and the collective case study. Sarantakos describes an intrinsic case study as one conducted to learn about a particular case only with no intention to use the results to explain similar cases. An instrumental case study is used to inquire into a social issue and the results from this study are meant for application beyond the study itself. As the name indicates, collective case study involves a number of single studies conducted jointly to investigate a common phenomenon. Of the three types of case study discussed, this study employed an instrumental case study. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide a deep insight into deaf education in Lesotho and also influence change in the lives of deaf children in other spheres of life other than education.

4.1.2 Research Site

The study was conducted in Lesotho. Participants involved in this study were government officials who are stakeholders in language policy-making. These included officials from the Ministry of Education in Maseru, as the study deals with language in education policy. In this Ministry, officials in the National Curriculum

Development Centre (NCDC) and Primary School Inspectorate were interviewed. The former office is responsible for the development of curriculum that is taught in all government schools in the country. The latter office is supposed to ensure that teachers put into practice all that is prescribed by the NCDC and that primary schools observe the policies put forward by the Ministry of Education to ensure high levels of education. The Special Education Unit was also investigated as one of the main agents in the education of learners with disabilities, including the deaf. The Unit is also situated in Maseru.

In addition to the above mentioned offices, both the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) were included in the studies. These institutions were not only chosen because they are institutions of higher learning in the country which train teachers who are responsible for the education of all Basotho children, including the deaf, but they were chosen for other specific reasons. Firstly, NUL was included in the study because, from the beginning of the 2006/7 academic year, the Faculty of Education was to mount a programme on Special Education. The researcher hoped to find out how the faculty intended to deal with issues relating to deaf education, particularly the use of Sign Language in the education of Deaf children. Secondly, the Department of African Languages and Literature at NUL has had a long working relationship with NADL and has committed itself to assist in all endeavours aimed at the promotion of the use and development of Lesotho Sign Language. Thirdly, LCE was included in the study because it also has a Special Education department. The researcher also wanted to find out whether or not the College acknowledges the importance of Sign Language skills in addressing the educational needs of deaf children. Fourthly, it was also

necessary to include the College in the study because it trains primary school teachers who are supposed to implement the policy of mother tongue medium of instruction in the early years of a child's education, including the deaf. Finally, both NUL and LEC were chosen as important research sites because, as institutions where research is mandatory, it was hoped that the exposure to the field of research on deaf people and their language may open their minds in this area.

Research data was also collected from the two schools for the Deaf in the Leribe and Maseru districts, coded as School A and School B respectively in order to maintain confidentiality. In addition to these schools, the other school, referred to as School C in Leribe district was also included in the study due to its direct link as a feeder school for School A. The arrangement made by the Special Education Unit, in agreement with both School A and School C, is such that the former teaches deaf children from Standard 1 to Standard 4. Thereafter, they are integrated into the latter which is a mainstream school. This arrangement was an attempt by the Special Education Unit to implement the integration policy which the government of Lesotho adopted in 1996. It is in these three schools where the researcher wanted to find out how Lesotho Sign Language is being used in the school and how this impacts on the education of deaf children. Furthermore, it was also important to find out the attitude of both the learners and the teachers towards Lesotho Sign Language as a language of teaching and learning for deaf learners.

4.1.3 Research participants

As indicated earlier, the population of the study consisted of language policy makers and planners; teachers in schools of the deaf; deaf learners; and the parents of deaf

learners because these are the key participants in the education of deaf children. Policy makers were key participants as they play a major role in the process of educational change (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). Teachers were included in the study because they are the ones who are supposed to effect the changes made by policy makers. Deaf learners were also key participants because, whatever the language practices in the school are, they have an impact on their education. Parents' participation was also considered important because their involvement in the education of deaf learners (their children) is crucial. In order to investigate the current status of deaf children in Lesotho, even those deaf children who were not at school when the study was being carried out were included in the study. It was hoped that their reasons for not going to school or dropping out would shed more light on the situation of deaf education in Lesotho. Five different sets of interview guides were constructed for these five target groups mentioned above. Examples are attached as appendices.

Interviews for policy makers and planners together with teachers were based on their attitude towards the inclusion of LSL in Lesotho language-in-education policy. For parents, interviews were meant to find out how they viewed their children's education and what role they played to ensure that children accessed learning in the current education system. Interviews for the learners were primarily meant to determine whether or not they encountered language difficulties during their learning and their attitudes towards LSL. Tollefson (1995) and Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) mention that language policy and practices depend first on power and ideology, and then on attitudes and experience. On the basis on this information, in my selection of

participants, I did not consider variables such as gender and age group as relevant in matters of language policy and planning.

Selection of sample of language policy makers and planners, teachers in schools for the Deaf and parents, including deaf children who did not go to school, was conducted using the method which Mutwarasibo (2003: 36) refers to as "opportunity sample". Mutwarasibo explains that this type of sample is based on availability and willingness to participate in the study. In view of this, in the case of policy makers and planners, five participants in the Ministry of Education were interviewed. These included two Special Education Unit officials, two National Curriculum Development Centre officials and one Primary Schools Inspectorate official. Participants also included two lecturers from NUL and one lecturer from LCE. It is worth pointing out that I knew most of the policy makers fairly well. Most of them were teachers before their current positions. I had trained with some of them, either at the LCE (former Nation Teacher Training College - NTTC) or the National University of Lesotho (NUL). A few of them were once my lecturers. Requesting them to participate in this study was, therefore, not a problem. Appointments for interviews were set well in advance and interview sessions were conducted at the policy makers' preferred times and locations.

In addition, 18 parents of deaf learners were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in two days. These were deliberately chosen to coincide with the days on which they were expected to come to the schools. At School B, parents were interviewed on the day the schools were re-opening, that is, after the winter holidays when they were bringing back their children to school. At School A, interviews were

held on the day that the school was breaking for winter holidays. Normally, on this day, parents come to pick up their children who are boarders. Parents interviewed on this day included parents of learners who attended at School C. Initially, I had intended to interview 20 parents, but only a total of 18 parents turned up from both schools. To get hold of two more meant travelling to their homes in the remote areas. Due to financial constraints, this was not possible.

The population also included 20 deaf children who were not at school at the time the study was conducted. The choice of the number of participants had been decided on the basis of the time-consuming nature of transcription in terms of transcription and analysis. All the children were identified through the assistance of the members of National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL). The interviews with these participants were conducted at the offices of NADL during the three days as agreed upon by the participants and the research assistants.

As far as deaf learners were concerned, I had proposed a random sample of sixty learners, thirty from each of the two schools for the Deaf which were to be used for the study. Learners were to be chosen from Standard 4 to Standard 7, based on their age. It was hoped that at higher primary, learners who were older would explain their language experiences in the school better. However, due to small numbers in the schools for the Deaf, particularly in higher primary, it was not possible to have sixty participants. For instance, School B had a population of twenty-seven learners. I interviewed only six learners; three in class 3, two in class 4 and one in class 6. The learners in Reception classes to class 2 were too young to answer the questions. All of

them were below 10 years of age. I had to interview learners from class 3 because the school did not have learners doing class 7 that year.

At School A, eleven learners from class 4 were interviewed. These were selected on the basis of their age which ranged from 14 to 22. At School C, a total of 14 learners participated in the study. Five of these learners were drawn from class 4. These learners had been promoted to class 5 by School A, but teachers at School C felt that they were not ready for this class and decided to take them back to class 4. As a result of this decision, there were no deaf learners in class 5. In class 6, I interviewed three learners, while in class 7, I interviewed five. All in all, this made a total of 31 deaf learners who participated in the study.

Data for the study was also collected from seven teachers. Two teachers were interviewed from School A and B respectively. The other three teachers were interviewed from School C. Two of these teachers were also principals in their schools and, therefore, served the dual purpose of being teachers and administrators. Teachers were interviewed on the days and at the time which was suitable for them. Table 2 gives a summary of participants for the study.

Table 2: Summary of participants

Participants	**Number**
Policy makers	8
Teachers	7
Parents	18
Deaf learners	31
Deaf children (who were out of school when study was carried out)	20
Total	**84**

In the next section, the details of tools that were used to collect data will be discussed.

4.2 Data collection

Data were collected through interviews with policy makers, teachers in the schools for the deaf, parents, deaf learners and deaf children who were out of school when the study was being carried out. Data were also collected through observations of deaf learners within their classes. The use of two methods "maps out and explains more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Mphela, 1998:40). The same view is held by Brown and Dowling (1998:8) who point out that there is no single method "which will give you an indisputably clear view of empirical field … which you want to investigate and about which you want to make statements".

4.2.1 Interviews

According to Nyati-Ramahobo (1999), the role of interviews in qualitative research has become unquestionable. This is because interviews are necessary to gain access to participants' first-hand impressions, beliefs, assumptions, and justifications of observed events (Zevenbergen, 1998). Interviews help the researcher to, among others, discover how the participants categorize knowledge around them (Spradley, 1979) and are crucial to understanding 'life' as interpreted by the participants (Sambo, 2003). For Gaskell (2000:39), qualitative interviews provide "the basic data for the development of an understanding of the relations between social actors and their situation". Further, they involve direct personal contact with the participant who is asked questions in order to explore and understand questions relating to the research question (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004). Ogundipe *et al* (2004: 99) argue that interviews may be used to eliminate some of the problems created by the use of questionnaires such as "ambiguous wording, ill-defined categories and inadequate measuring instruments". This is because interviews are in-depth and interactive and allow for any ambiguity to be clarified immediately.

Based on the information above, interviews were central to the present study, as they enabled me to investigate the place of Sign Language used in Lesotho in Deaf education. The intention was to conduct interviews either in English or Sesotho depending on the preference of the interviewees. It was believed that this would make the sessions as informal and as comfortable as possible. English and Sesotho are the languages that the interviewer is fluent in and so are the majority of the language policy makers and planners, teachers in schools of the Deaf and parents. However, all the above-mentioned participants chose to be interviewed in Sesotho. Deaf learners

preferred to be interviewed in Sign Language and this was accepted because it was their human right to be interviewed in the language of their choice. The fact that I employed deaf research assistants to help me conduct interviews with deaf children meant that I had to train them. The training was aimed at eliminating the error-producing factors and familiarizing the interviewers with "the essence of research, encouraging accuracy, clarity and inter-interviewer consistency" (Sarantakos, 2005:274). In line with Sarantako, we practiced by taking turns to interview each other in order to equip the research assistants with the necessary interviewing skills. This was followed by an evaluation which was intended to find out, among other features, whether the trainee has acquired the skills related to obtaining relevant information.

All interviews (including interpreted ones) were either video-taped or tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The use of both the video and tape recordings assisted the research assistants and myself to play back the interviews several times so that we could capture everything that was said. Through the use of both semi-structured and unstructured interviews (see Appendix F to J), I was able to explore the participants' views and attitude towards the use of LSL in the education of deaf learners. Following Sambo (2003: 128), I used semi-structured interviews to achieve the following goals:

- To have the freedom to follow up responses and interactions given by the participants during interviews;
- To be able to ask informal questions at any time without waiting for formal situations.

The use of semi-structured interviews is supported by Rubin and Rubin (1995), who point out that as far as the researcher is concerned, on the one hand, semi-structured interviews allow him/her to use probes in order get more information, seek clarification and to be able to continuously evaluate the progress of the interview. For the participants, on the other hand, the advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow subjects an opportunity to provide information that help clarify their responses (Muanje, 2001). With these types of interviews, participants are free to expand on the topic as they see it fit (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004). Inasmuch as semi-structured interviews allow interviewees freedom to relate their own experiences, it is essential for the interviewer to direct and channel the respondents towards the question.

As far as unstructured interviews are concerned, participants are given maximum freedom to express their views and choose how they respond. These types of interviews enable full exploration of one issue as the interviewer is free to formulate questions as judged appropriate for a given situation (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004:105). Bless and Higson-Smith argue that interviews may be influenced by many factors. Among these factors, they mention that "the quality of personal contact can induce a respondent to speak with more or less confidence" (p105). With this argument in mind, deaf children were interviewed by deaf interviewers in this study. The decision was taken to enable deaf children to feel more comfortable in expressing their feelings and opinions. It was believed that this type of interviewing would ensure that they spoke about issues pertinent to their home and school experiences. Interviews were conducted on an individual face-to-face basis. This is because interviews conducted in a group setting amongst colleagues might make the

discussion less frank. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) explain that these types of interviews have potential of yielding cooperation and the highest response rates. Sharing the same sentiments, Fawole *et al* (2006), point out that one-to-one interviews allow time to explore issues at length an in-depth. Having attempted to justify the use of interviews as suitable gathering tools for this study, I proceed to discuss the use of observation in this research.

4.2.2 Observation

The second method that the study employed to collect data was observation. The purpose of using observation was to learn from the participants, in their natural context, the implementation of the current language-in-education in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho. Another purpose of the observations was to acquire an understanding of how the language practices in the classrooms impacted in the processes of teaching and learning of Deaf learners. Observation is regarded as a basic technique of data collection in qualitative research (Muanje, 2001). However, Bless and Higson-Smith (2004:103-4) warn that in as much as observation is a seemingly straightforward technique, it must be pursued in a systematic way, following specific scientific rules in order for it to be useful. According to these authors, a researcher should take into consideration a certain number of rules. Firstly, the researcher should specify the observation systematically, specifying what and how to observe. Secondly, he or she should bear in mind that observations are subjected to control in order to maintain high level of objectivity. Thus, when different observers observe the same phenomena, they should come up with the same results.

With the above rules in mind, one of the advantages of the observation method is that it allows the researcher the ability to record what is actually happening at a given situation. For Leedy and Ormrod (2001), observation as a method of data collection has the ability to allow the researcher flexibility to shift focus as new data emerges. Patton (1990:203) adds that the firsthand experience allows the researcher to be open, discovery-oriented, and inductive in approach.

According to Muanje (2001), observation can either be active or passive. In active observation, a researcher becomes "part of" or an "actor" in the events that he/she is observing. In some literature, this is referred to as participant observation (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004). In passive observation, a researcher remains outside of the events being studied. This is referred to as a simple observation or non-participant observation.

In order to observe the implementation of Lesotho language policy in the schools of the Deaf, that is, the use of mother-tongue language (LSL) from Standard 1 to Standard 4, the researcher assumed the role of a passive observer. Being a passive observer gave the researcher firsthand experience of the events in the classrooms. It gave her opportunity to record facts without interaction with the observed. Notwithstanding the argument that non-participant observation is prone to indirect interference as people become aware of being observed, with frequent observations, both the teachers and the pupils got used to the observer and became more relaxed. This made it possible to observe how the language practices of both the teachers and students reflected the provisions of the language policy. I was particularly interested in how teachers used LSL in facilitating the teaching and learning process. To this

end, I used observation to gather data on the interaction between teachers and learners. This involved investigating how the language was used in the classroom and how it facilitated teaching and learning.

The observation in the three schools took four months and eight hours were spent in each of the classes that were observed. These involved observing Standard 1 up to Standard 4 at School A, Standard 4, 6 and 7 at School C and Standards 1 up to Standard 6 at School C. At School B, it was difficult not to observe Standard 6 because it was taught tog ether with Standard 4 learners by one teacher under the same roof. The period spent in the field provided me with the opportunity to collect the necessary data.

During the observations, I made written accounts of observations made at the sites. I made notes of the events of the school in general and the classroom in particular. I recorded events as I saw them. Where possible, I wrote down the words directly from the participants' utterances. In this regard, my field notes were divided into three categories as suggested by Merriam (1998:106), namely; verbal descriptions; direct quotations; and observer's comments. It was necessary for me to have field notes because Sambo (2003:128) observes that, "written accounts of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data supplement all the data found from using other sources".

The following section provides an insight on how data were analyzed. In this section Connolly's (2003) model for processing qualitative data will be discussed.

4.3 Data analysis

In his discussion of qualitative data analysis, Blank (2004) points out that to achieve a reliable and valid analysis requires a systematic, well-documented, careful procedure. He explains 'systematic', on the one hand, as simply meaning "being deliberate, orderly, and structured" (p188), and on the other hand, he refers to 'well-documented' as an indication that "the researcher writes extensively about decisions made, interpretation of events…how conclusions are explicitly linked to data, and how the events described in the field notes or interview transcripts are translated into larger theory" (188). Bearing this in mind, in analyzing the data for the present research, the study followed the three phases proposed by Connolly (2003); the generative phase, the interpretive phase, and the theorizing phase.

4.3.1 The generative phase

The generative phase is described as a phase during which "the data is broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:62). Following Connolly (2003), the initial process of data analysis involved the careful examination of the raw data word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence and paragraph-by-paragraph by both the researcher and the research assistants. The purpose of this was to help sort out the data in a way that it would allow processing. This was followed by the identification and categorizing of salient themes in individual transcripts and a search for repetition within and across narratives and field notes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). In order to ease the organization of themes, notes were written on the margins of each page of the text. These themes were cross-

checked by comparing notes made by the researcher and the research assistants to ensure data validity. Segments were then coded.

4.3.2 The interpretive phase

In the interpretive phase, the themes are translated into conceptual categories. This is a reductive process whereby the findings from the study are reported in manageable components (Connolly, 2003). Storbeck (1998:85) warns that this process of categorization should be developed chronologically in order to reduce the possibility of isolated items being coded out of context and thus interfering with pragmatic meaning. In the study, patterns and relationships between themes were systematically connected by bringing them together conceptually. This was done to provide freedom to consider the categories in different ways, exploring different meanings and new understanding (Connolly, 2003).

4.3.3 The theorizing phase

Theorizing is defined as "the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories" (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984:167, in Storbeck, 1998:91). The theory enables the analysis of the implications of the findings of the study. Once the conceptual categories have been created and displayed, they have the potential of unfolding into theoretical explanations (Connolly, 2003). The purpose of the analysis of data is to bring about the amalgamation of the new found knowledge (Storbeck, 1998). More importantly, it leads to the drawing of conclusions and making of recommendations. In the study, Connolly's (2003) phases of qualitative analysis process are illustrated by the examples that follow from the observations and interviews.

Examples of coding process

Observation:

Deaf learners seated in the front row. Deaf teacher stands at the front towards the deaf learners, moving one step to write on the board.

Code:	stands in front of the class
	Teacher movement
Category:	classroom environment
Theme:	the learning environment

Interview:

Research assistant:	If LSL was to be included in the language-in-education policy, what challenges do you think the government would face in the implementation of this policy?
Participant:	The government would have to train teachers and equip them with skills in LSL.

Code:	government would train and equip teachers with LSL
Category:	need for trained teachers
	Skills in LSL
Theme:	LSL skills

Having identified key themes within all the data collected, I then combined all the data together in order to further group my findings.

4.4 Reliability and validity

Many researchers have acknowledged the issue of reliability and validity as crucial in legitimizing the qualitative data. These include Kirk and Miller (1986), Le Compte and Preissle (1993) and Silverman (1993). Silverman (1993:145) considers reliability and validity as the central concepts in any discussion of rigor in scientific research. In Gibbs's (2002) view, since qualitative data is distinguished by its meaningfulness, interpretation is a key aspect of such data. She, therefore, considers the reliability and validity of such interpretation as a major concern for analysis.

4.4.1 Reliability

Literature within qualitative research (Silverman, 1993; Maxwell, 1996; Vithal and Jansen, 1997) reveals that reliability and validity are understood, explained and treated differently by different researchers. Some researchers divide reliability into external and internal reliability (Le Compte and Preissle, 1993; Silverman, 1993). According to these researchers, external reliability focuses on "whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomenon or generate the same constructs in the same or similar setting" (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982:32). Internal reliability addresses the question of "the degree to which other researchers, given a set of previously generated constructs, would match them with data in the same way as did the original researcher" (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982: 32). It is clear from these descriptions that according to the authors referred to in this paragraph, the key to reliability is the 'replicability' of the study. Whether internal or external, a reliable result is the one "that is consistent across repeated investigations in different circumstances with different investigators…" (Gibbs, 2002:13).

As qualitative researcher, I have followed all the requirements for qualitative research, motivated records of every step I have taken in terms of data collection and data analysis in an attempt to strengthen the reliability of the study. Sambo (2003) mentions another important issue regarding reliability, which is 'resonance with or relatability of the research to other research works'. My study was conducted when other research work which had similar foci was taking place. This is the Interpretation Project of the Ministry of Education and Training (discussed in Chapter 5). It can be

argued that my research is in line with developments in Deaf education in Lesotho. Therefore, it resonates with and can be related to current developments.

4.4.2 Validity

Validity is viewed as the concern that the theories or explanations derived from the research data are true and that they correctly capture what is really happening (Gibbs, 2002:13). In the same way that reliability is broken into two components, some authors differentiate between external validity and internal validity.

There are various criteria suggested for assessing the validity of qualitative research (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Caelli *et al.*, 2003). There are different forms of validation that have been suggested as particularly appropriate for this type of research. For the purpose of this research, I followed the two forms of validation suggested by Silverman (1993), namely triangulation and respondent validation. Triangulation usually refers to the use of more than two methods of data collection. However, in the study, I have conducted interviews with five different categories of participants to obtain separate sources of data as well as doing observations of teachers and deaf learners in the schools for the deaf in Lesotho during the teaching and learning processes. Since these are acceptable methods of data collection, the use of all of them in this study was done for the purpose of triangulation. I believe that data obtained through the use of more than one method would overcome the deficiencies of single-methods studies and achieve a better degree of validity (Sarantakos, 2005). Moreover, I also used observation notes to supplement and validate my data as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982). As suggested by Silverman (1993), respondent validation was done by taking the findings to some of

the subjects. These include policy makers, teachers of the Deaf and some parents who could be reached. Due to time constraint, it was not possible to go back to the learners and other Deaf children. Instead, the findings were taken to the research assistants who were involved in interviewing the Deaf children and transcribing the data. This was not only done to verify the findings. The fact that the process of transcribing was done by two researchers who were involved in interviewing also contributed to verifying data validity. Further more, in order to check that the information given by the research assistants had been recorded accurately, I had some debriefing sessions with my colleagues in the Department of African Languages and Literature of the National University of Lesotho.

4.5 Ethical considerations

According to Obono *et al* (2006:284), research ethics deal with "the application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to collection, collation, analysis, reporting, and dissemination of information about research subjects … especially as regards active acceptance of subjects' right to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent". Since this research involves human participants, it was important, therefore, to consider the ethical implications of what I proposed to do. This was in line with Olayinka and Owumi's (2006:65-6) argument that

> Projects that involve research on human subjects, the collection of private or personal information, or the participation of individuals in experiments must be designed in ways that protect the privacy, dignity and integrity of those who are the subjects of research.

As a first step, I applied for clearance from the Committee for Research on Human Subjects at the University of the Witwatersrand. In terms of this clearance, research participants were well informed about the nature of the study to be conducted by

means of subject information sheet (see Appendix I) and were given a choice of whether or not to participate. Furthermore, participants were made aware that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at anytime. Finally, participants were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and anonymously. As a sign of acceptance to participate in the research, the participants signed consent forms (see Appendix II, III and IV). Due to the fact that throughout the research process, I explained the nature of the study to the participants, sought their permission to involve them in the study, assured their anonymity, there has been, as far as possible, compliance with the ethical requirements of research involving human participants.

4.6 Limitations

The study faced the following limitations. The fact that as a researcher I was not fluent in LSL and the fact that most interviews were conducted by deaf people denied me the firsthand experience with the deaf respondents. It is possible that there is information which the research assistants got from the participants, which they discarded thinking it was not relevant to the study. This, therefore, means that I might have missed out on the important information which could have led to crucial conclusions. Another challenge was the fact that I had to depend on the availability of my research assistants. On the days when they could not make it to the field, it meant my work had to stop. This resulted in my data collection period taking longer than anticipated.

In one of the schools, there was no electricity. As a result, when the battery for the video camera died down, the interviews had to be stopped. This resulted in a number

of trips to the same school, making the whole exercise more time consuming with additional expenses which were not budgeted for.

Like all case studies, and qualitative research in general, this study is limited in the extent to which its findings can be generalized (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005). The data base is small and restrictive in the sense that data was drawn mainly from three schools, with few deaf learners. Though limited to the three schools, it is hoped that future studies can expand on this research.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the research was conducted, giving explanation on the choice of the procedures and methods of data collection used. The research used the qualitative research methods of interviews and observations to investigate the role and place of LSL in deaf education. Throughout the research, an attempt was made to adhere to a valid and reliable research process. The validity is argued from the view that the views of the participants, namely, the policy makers, teachers, parents and deaf children, were interrogated comprehensively. Finally, an attempt was also made to adhere to the ethical requirements of research involving human participants.

CHAPTER FIVE
DATA PRESENTATION

5.0 Introduction

In the next 2 chapters, the results of the findings are discussed by giving examples from the raw data. Where necessary, data is displayed in various forms of tables. For this study, data was collected mainly through observations and interviews. The aim of the data collection was to determine the role and place of LSL, particularly in deaf education in Lesotho.

The presentation of findings in this chapter will begin with the results of the observations in the schools of the deaf. Thereafter, the results from the interviews will also be presented. It should be noted that in this chapter, only the results of the hearing categories, that is, the policy makers, teachers and parents of the deaf learners will be discussed. Throughout the presentation and discussion of data, I use letters for the schools and pseudonyms for research participants. This is done to maintain confidentiality, as was promised to the participants before the interviews. However, it is important to mention that due to the number of school involved in the study, it may not be easy to maintain complete confidentiality.

5.1 Observations

Since one of the areas of focus of the study was to investigate the implementation of the current language-in-education policy and the status of LSL in the education of deaf learners, unstructured observations were conducted in the two schools of the Deaf in Lesotho and one mainstream school which accommodates deaf learners. The aim of these observations was to observe and understand the language practices

during the teaching and learning processes in these schools. Though my concern was only on language practices, the whole lesson and classroom set-up were observed in order to provide a clear sense of the learning environment in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho. These included factors such as staff situation and infrastructure. The choice of the things to observe drew support from Merriam's (1998:90) guidelines which include: the setting, the participants, the activities and interactions, as well as certain subtle factors. After an intensive analysis, three predominant themes were arrived at, namely, staff and infrastructure, the learning environment and language practices. The observations highlighted a number of issues that were worth taking into consideration when discussing the role of LSL in the education of deaf learners in this country. Issues to be described in this section were common to all schools, unless otherwise stated. It should be noted that during the observations, notes were compiled in a notebook and concentrated on the incidents that were relevant to the study. Table 2 below gives the observation schedule that was followed. No observations were conducted during the months of June and July because the schools had closed for winter holidays.

Table 3: Observation schedule

Period	**Place**	**Time spent**
May	School B	3 Weeks
August	School A	2 Weeks
September	School C	2 Weeks
October	School A and C	2 Weeks (one in each school)

In all the schools in which I conducted the observations, I was first introduced to both the teaching staff and the learners during the assembly. Thereafter, I had to briefly discuss my research with the teachers and explain how the data would be used. As a researcher, I shared my observation schedule with the teachers and in return, they would then let me know in advance what they were planning to do during their lessons. For instance, they would inform me on the days they would be giving tests so that I could visit other classes or maybe come to school on other days. At School C I was informed about the day the school would be holding a memorial service for the priest in their mission who had passed away.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the observations took approximately two months with 8 hours spent in each of the classes that were observed. Whenever possible, observations were done on a daily basis and during the lesson, I was able to make notes on what was happening in the classroom. The observations were not video-taped to avoid the distraction of the smooth running of the teaching and learning processes. One class was observed for a maximum of two hours per day.

5.1.1 Staff and infrastructure

Bearing in mind that the learning experience of the deaf learner is affected by other factors outside the school's curricular (Glaser and Lorenzo, 2006), I observed the state of staff and infrastructure in the schools that accommodate deaf learners in Lesotho. During my observations at School B, I discovered that in the year I was conducting my research, the staff consisted of four teachers including the principal. The school had a total of 27 students. Reception class (the class after pre-school and before Standard 1), Standards 3, 4 and 6 were all taught in one big classroom by two

different teachers. This classroom had two chalkboards, one on the wall at the front and the other on the wall at the back. The arrangement was such that the Reception class teacher, who was Deaf, had his class in one corner at the back of the class facing the chalkboard on the back wall.

The other three classes faced the front and were all taught by Thato (the hearing teacher). These classes were made up of three learners doing Standard 3, two learners doing Standard 4 and one learner doing Standard 6. This was not a normal situation. It was interesting for me to find out what led to this unfamiliar arrangement. When asked why she had to teach three different classes at the same time, Thato became very emotional. She mentioned the fact that the school was under-staffed and had insufficient infrastructure as the main reasons for the current status quo. These factors led to her frustration as her response illustrates:

> *I am forced to teach more than one class at the same time because we are under-staffed. There are no qualified teachers in the country who either possess skills in Sign Language or have training in Deaf education. There are hearing people who are interested in working in this school, but the problem is that they do not hold any teacher training certificate. The government's policy is that any teacher who is employed through Teaching Service Unit (TSU) should have proper qualifications. I am teaching Standard 3, 4 and 6 because they are the most senior classes in the school and I cannot leave them in the hands of inexperienced teachers. Another problem that we face is that of infrastructure. As you can see we have only four classrooms. These are not enough. But it is very difficult to convince donors to build more classrooms if the enrolment is so low. However, the Roman Catholic Church is currently organizing funds for the school. The gentleman you saw yesterday had come to establish whether or not we have enough land for more classrooms. (Lines 38 – 46)*[7]

Although Thato admitted that it was not easy to teach different classes at the same time, it was obvious that she had devised a working strategy. She usually introduced a

[7] All excerpts are given in English translation rather than the Sesotho original followed by translations to avoid bulky document.

topic to all the students and tried as much as possible to make them understand. Then she would give three different exercises with different levels of complexity. This meant that for the learners who were doing Standard 3, she would prepare exercises which were easier than for the ones doing Standard 4 and 6. Sometimes, after introducing a topic she could decide to give an exercise to the learners doing Standard 3 while she continued explaining further to the ones in Standard 4 and 6.

The observations further revealed that Standards 1 and 2 were taught by one teacher, each in different classrooms. These classes were active. It should be noted that in the year that the study was being conducted, there were no learners doing Standards 5 and 7.

It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that at School A, the learners are taught from Standard 1 to Standard 4. Thereafter, they are integrated into School C which offers them learning from Standard 5 to Standard 7. Each class had its class teacher who taught all subjects. Unlike in the former, there were enough classrooms in the latter school. Other classrooms were even unused.

At School C, deaf learners (who constitute approximately 10% of the learners) had been integrated into Standards 4, 6 and 7. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the learners who were in Standard 4 were the ones who had been promoted into Standard 5 by School A. But according to teachers of School C, academic performance did not match the standard of this class. As a result, they decided to make them repeat Standard 4. A similar situation obtained even with the ones who were in Standard 6 and Standard 7. The school was still not happy with their competence when they came

to School C. These learners had also been encouraged to start at Standard 4, but due to their age, they could not accept. Like School C, School B had an adequate number of classrooms. All classes were taught by hearing teachers with the exception of the Reception class which was taught by a deaf teacher.

5.1.2 Learning environment

There are a number of factors that can influence the quality of input data that the learner receives during a lesson. For deaf learners, one of these factors is accessibility of the language of instruction. There are also a number of factors that can affect the possibility to access language during the lesson. These include physical positioning. Because deaf learners rely on visual input, the classroom must be arranged to facilitate all their visual requirements (Glaser and Lorenzo, 2006). In the schools for the deaf, classrooms were arranged in series of rows with the teachers standing at the front in the centre of the classroom. This arrangement created problems for the learners who were sitting in the front rows, who had to turn whenever the learner from a back row was communicating (either answering the teacher's question or asking one). In the same manner, the learners in the back rows also had trouble seeing what the learner in the front row was communicating because they would be facing the teacher most of the time. However, an attempt was made to ensure that deaf learners took turn when making conversations in class. Coordinating conversation efforts was necessary for the smooth flow of communication and that learners could benefit from each other. The mechanism that teachers used to get attention from the learners was usually arm waving, while deaf learners used tapping of shoulders.

In the mainstream school, classrooms were also arranged in a series of rows, with deaf learners seated together in the front row. In the class when there was a hearing teacher and a deaf teacher, or a hearing teacher and the interpreter, both of them stood at the front with either the deaf teacher or the interpreter towards the side of the deaf learners. During the observations in this school, it became evident that the way hearing learners conducted themselves affected deaf learners' concentration in class. For example, there were instances in class when some learners (mostly hearing) would fool around and talk a lot. In such instances, some deaf learners would move their attention from the deaf teacher or interpreter to the learner who was moving up and down in class. In a way, the hearing learners' movements during the lesson divided deaf learners' visual attention.

5.1.3 Language practices

Many educators support the use of Sign Language (which is the first language to many deaf children) in deaf education (Storbeck, 1998; Knight and Swanwick, 2002; Aarons and Akach, 2002). As a result, it was important to observe the use of LSL in the schools that accommodate deaf learners in Lesotho. In all the observed classes, lessons were generally conducted in oral Sesotho or English. At both School A and School B, teachers were making an effort to use signs to communicate with the learners. In most instances, they would complement spoken Sesotho or English with signs. An attempt was also made to use LSL, but there were practical problems that stood in their way. Their inability to express themselves in this language forced them to resort to use language. Due to limited skills in LSL, their instructions were not clear. More often than not, they were having difficulties trying to make learners understand what they were trying to teach. This was evidenced by the fact that the

lessons were characterized by lots of repetition of instructions and explanation of concepts. This meant that a lot of time was spent on one topic.

Additionally, due to lack of an existing common language between the learners and the teachers, effective communication was limited in the class. Most communication was done by teachers while learners communicated very little. They seemed rather reticent and unforthcoming. This happened particularly at School A in the classes where the teachers were new to the school. It was obvious that the learners had not yet created a rapport between themselves and the teachers. In most cases, the learners would be giggling, signing among themselves knowing very well that the teacher would not follow what they were saying. In all the classes that I observed, there was more writing on the board than any other means of communication. Teachers wrote notes for learners. Whenever they were aware that learners could not understand what they were asking through signing, they would write the question on the board. Teachers also introduced new concepts by writing the word on the board and where possible, show the picture for that particular concept or the real object. It became clear that deaf learners understood the written communication better than the signed communication. They would show by nodding their heads.

It is worth pointing out that because teachers were making efforts to use LSL, learners seemed to have good relations with them. In some classrooms, learners seemed relatively active and responsive. In most cases, the teachers gave learners class work. Here again, I observed that learners understood better if teachers also wrote the work on the board. In many instances, if they found the class work very complex and required extensive insight or information, which they had failed to grasp, they hardly

ever approached the teacher. They were more comfortable approaching fellow learners for supplementary help.

There was observable evidence that skills in LSL had a positive impact on the teaching and learning of deaf learners. For instance, at School B, the Reception class which was taught by a deaf teacher was very lively. Since teaching was conducted in LSL, learners were relaxed in the presence of their teacher. In one lesson, they were taught the alphabet, while in another they were taught numbers, from 1 to 20. The teacher directed questions to individual learners and had a one-on-one interaction. There was extensive eye-contact between the teacher and the learners. It was clear that learners appreciated the attention the teacher was giving them. They also seemed to comprehend whatever they were taught. They raised hands when they were asked questions and got the answers right. I also observed that learners communicated a good deal among them in LSL, asked each other questions and contributed to discussions.

In the mainstream school, teaching was conducted in oral languages. Deaf learners would be taught through LSL, only when the hard of hearing teacher (the only qualified deaf teacher in the whole country) or the interpreter was available. In their presence, deaf children seemed relaxed, happy and showed interest in whatever was being taught. However, in their absence, deaf learners were completely lost because hearing teachers made little effort to communicate with deaf learners in their class. There were some who tried to sign and even asked fellow learners to assist, but in most cases, this was a futile exercise. This situation confirms the point raised by Storbeck (1998:18) when she says:

> In order to effectively facilitate the learning process teachers of the deaf cannot just be 'diverted' from mainstream teacher education into an application in deaf schools, as it takes time for hearing teachers to become enculturated into the psychology, sociology and anthropology of theory on deaf learners.

This resulted in deaf learners hardly participating in class while their hearing counterparts became actively involved in the learning process.

I also observed that during the times when the hard of hearing teacher was in class, she would not necessarily be interpreting for deaf learners. She and the hearing teacher would be teaching the same topic. I observed a number of problems resulting from this teaching arrangement. These included the rapid rate at which the hearing teacher explained topics to the hearing learners and even gave written class work. Even before the hard of hearing teacher could finish explaining the same concept to the deaf learners, there was some class work already on the board. Then, deaf learners would be tempted to see what was being written on the board and in the process, miss out on the information that the hard of hearing teaching was trying to convey to them. Again, having two teachers in the same class was a distraction in itself. Learners, both hearing and deaf, found themselves concentrating at what the other teacher was doing. In the days that I observed in this school, the learning environment was the one whereby the deaf teacher was the one giving information. There was no group work done. However, there were times when learners would discuss with the learners sitting next to them and share information, but not because they had been formally asked to do so.

There were times when the hard of hearing teacher would go to Standard 6. This would happen when learners had been given writing exercises. She would first

explain the instructions to the deaf learners, and then leave them to write on their own. In Standard 4, in addition to the hearing teacher, there was an LSL interpreter. This interpreter was one of the few Basotho who attended LSL classes which were offered by members of NADL every Saturday. In the absence of professional interpreters, she (and the other gentleman) was engaged to offer interpreting service in this school through the Interpretation Project of the Ministry of Education and Training[8]. In addition to the fact that this interpreter did not have professional interpreting qualifications, she was also not a qualified teacher.

As mentioned earlier, the interpreter stood in front of the class towards the side where deaf learners were seated. During the observations in this class, I observed that the interpreter could not match the pace at which the hearing teacher introduced and discussed topics. This was evidenced by the fact that even before she could complete interpreting what the hearing teacher had said earlier, the hearing teacher had already moved to the next point. The interpreter's pace was slowed down further by the fact that whenever she did not have signs for the concept that was being discussed, she would try to convey her understanding of this concept by linking it to the corresponding English or Sesotho word through finger-spelling. This was an attempt to make the content of the lesson accessible and comprehensible to the learners. I also observed that some of the words she was trying to finger-spell were too long. Sometimes, right in the middle of finger-spelling a word, she would forget what she had signed so far, sign "sorry"[9], then start all over again. This negatively affected the learning process as it created a breakdown in the smooth flow of information. The

[8] Interpretation Project of the Ministry of Education and training was started in 2006. The project was an attempt to make inclusive education accessible to deaf learners by providing LSL interpreters in mainstream school.
[9] Although I am not fluent in LSL, I do know some basic signs including the sign for 'sorry'.

problems associated with interpreting in the schools for the deaf in Lesotho are discussed in details in the Interpretation Project of the Ministry of Education and Training mentioned above.

In the section above I have presented data obtained through observation. Table 4 below gives an example of the different categories that emerged from the observation and how they were clustered together to develop themes.

Table 4 Explanation of categories and themes developed from observations

Raw data	**Code**	**Categorization**	**Theme**
More than one class is taught in one classroom	-different classes taught in one building - one teacher teaches different classes at the same time	-insufficient infrastructure -insufficient number of teachers	- staff and infrastructure
In specialized school learners sit in rows In mainstream setting learners are seated in the front	-learners are sitting in rows - learners sitting in the front row - teachers stands towards learners	-sitting arrangement -teacher position	-learning environment
Classes generally conducted though oral languages There is one-to-one communication between teachers and learners There is extensive eye-contact between teacher and learner	-general use of oral languages -teacher communicates directly with learners	-insufficient use of LSL -communication techniques	-language practices

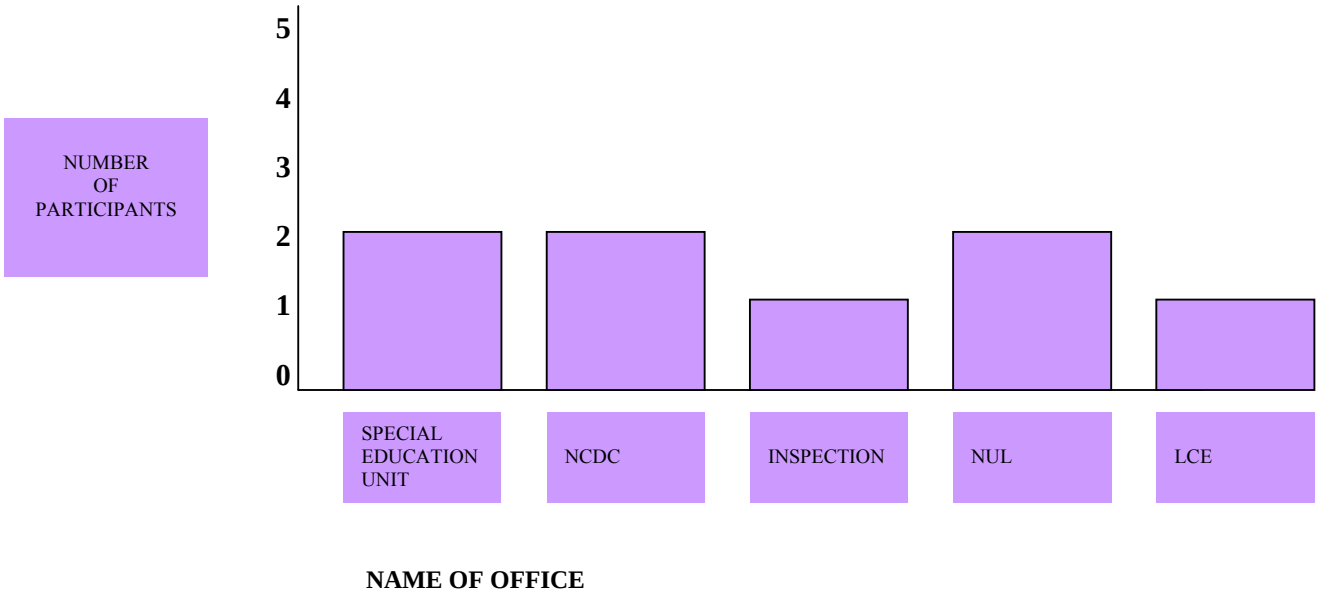
5.2 Interviews

In this section, I present results of the data obtained through interviews. The major part of data for this study was collected mainly through interviews with policy makers, teachers in schools for the deaf, parents of deaf learners, deaf learners and deaf children who were out of school when the study was conducted. Throughout the presentation, I use headings to indicate from which category of participants the data I am analyzing have been collected from and use the themes developed during the analysis of interviews as subheadings. For example, from the data obtained through interviews with policy makers, three themes were developed, namely, language policy and planning, language-in-education policy and attitudes towards the inclusion of LSL.

5.2.1 Data from interviews with policy makers

Interviews with policy makers basically provided data on the formulation of language policy in general and the implementation of the current language-in-education policy in primary schools in Lesotho, including the schools for the Deaf. Eight policy makers participated in this study. Figure 3 below indicates the number of the participants and the offices from which they were drawn. All interviews were held in Sesotho and later transcribed into English.

Figure 3: Policy makers and their offices



In all interviews, the questions were structured around and in accordance with the main aim of the study; to investigate the Lesotho language and language-in-education policies in order to determine the role and place of LSL in Lesotho education system. Nyati-Ramahobo (1999:79) argues that education is regarded as the means to the implementation of the language policy. It was for this reason that in this study, in addition to question concerned with language-in-education policy, the interviews with policy makers included questions relating to the language policy in general. The issue of language policies in Africa in general and the influence that the colonial era has had on these policies has been discussed in details in Chapter 2.

5.2.1.1 Language policy and planning

Since the setting of this study is Lesotho, the study aimed to investigate the views of the policy makers in Lesotho about the language policy planning and practices in the country. Questions such as these ones were asked:

1. How has the relationship between the British and the Basotho during the colonial period influenced the language practices in Lesotho?

2. Currently, there is no overall language policy. Does the country plan to have one in the near future?

All participants agreed that the relationship between the British and the Basotho during the colonial period had influenced the language practices in Lesotho in a big way. They referred to the country's choice of medium of instruction and the continued use of English in many social domains as a clear indication of this influence. Their views are summarized in the responses below:

Khabo: *The fact that English is a medium of instruction and the fact that Lesotho continues to make it a failing subject despite the fact that learners fail it so much, is an indication that we are still holding on to the policy of our former colonizers. (Lines 55 – 58)*

Tumi: *The fact that English is still regarded as the official language in this country although it has no native speakers shows British influence. (Lines 14 – 16)*

Ts'eli: *There is too much of English especially in schools. The fact that is a failing subject shows that we follow the British. (Lines 74 – 75)*

Lerato: *We still use the policy that was developed during the colonial era including the orthography. It has never changed since then. (Lines 93 – 94)*

As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, Lesotho currently has no explicitly written language policy. In answer to the second question, none of the interviewed policy makers seemed to be aware of the country's plan to have one in the near future.

Language problems are solved through language planning. On this point, Reagan (2002) shows that certain factors should be taken into considerations when this

process is being carried out. Those factors relate to, among others, the fact that language planning is future-oriented and based on people's choices. This means that if a language policy is to be effective, well-informed decisions should be made on the choices of the languages to be used for different purposes and that policy should still be relevant even in the future. In order to investigate the issue of language policy and planning in Lesotho even further, participants were asked the following question:

3. What, in your view, are the most important points which should be taken into consideration when developing a language policy?

The participants seemed unsure and their answers were accompanied by a lot of hesitation. However, the following points were noted:

Tello: *The number of languages spoken in the country. (Line 111)*

Karabo: *Language policy should cater for the linguistic needs of every citizen. (Lines 115 – 116)*

Pule: *The policy should be implementable, that is, it should consider important factors that are crucial in the implementation of a policy, such as finances. (Lines 132 – 134)*

Lerato: *How many people speak a particular language? (Line 98 - 100)*

Tumi: *What the country will gain or lose if the language policy is implemented or not implemented. (Lines 17 – 18)*

Khabo: *It should be future oriented. (Line 59)*

'Muso: *In which domains should a language be used? (Line 151)*

Language policy and planning are aimed at achieving certain aims and objectives (Weinstein, 1990; Du Plessis, 2003). Weinstein (1990:9 - 14) suggests three goals which a state should aim to achieve. These goals have been summarized in Du Plessis (2003:101), namely; *to maintain the status quo,* that is, the decision by the state to protect itself and its institutions; *to reform,* that is, to strengthen itself by broadening its political participation and access to education; or *to transform,* that is, to alter patterns of access to reflect the replacement of a dominant class or ethnic group, or to completely change the identity of the society. On the basis of this information, it was important to find out from the participants what aims and objectives the language policy and planning in Lesotho aimed to achieve. This question was therefore posed:

4. If Lesotho was to develop an explicitly written language policy, what would be the aims and objectives of such a policy?

It was clear that the participants were in agreement that such policy should reform the nation. This was captured in the response below:

> Tello: *The objective would be to cater for speakers of different languages. We have people who speak Xhosa and Sephuthi who find themselves forced to use Sesotho. (Lines 112 – 115)*

One policy maker (Lerato) elaborated further that if all languages were respected and used in all social domains, then every citizen would develop the sense of belonging to the country, regardless of the languages they spoke. For another policy maker (Pule), if a language policy was to be developed, one of its objectives would be to revise the Sesotho orthography.

5.2.1.2 Language-in-education policy

As shown in the previous chapters, mother tongue was supposed to be the medium of instruction during the first four years of primary education in many post-colonial

African countries. However, Matsinhe (2004) points out that the mother tongue education policies in some of these countries contain numerous loopholes that make them difficult to implement. It was important, therefore, for the purposes of this study, to investigate the implementation of the mother tongue education policy in Lesotho primary schools, particularly in the schools for the Deaf. The study was interested in finding out how the participants felt about the implementation of the current language-in-education policy in Lesotho primary schools. In this regard, the policy makers were asked:

5. How serious do the schools take this policy, in other words, are minority languages such as Sign Language (language used by most Deaf learners) used as medium of instruction in Lesotho primary schools?

The participants admitted that it was not being followed. They reiterated the fact that the schools focus on Sesotho and English at the expense of minority languages, which are mother tongue to other learners. It also became clear that some teachers preferred to start using English as the medium of instruction earlier that stipulated by the policy. All these are revealed in the following responses:

'Muso: *I do not think many schools (if any) follow this policy to the letter. There are learners whose mother tongue is Sephuthi, I do no think they are taught in this language. (Lines 154 – 157)*

Karabo: *No, the policy does not work. Recently, there was a teachers' meeting where it was agreed that at primary level, teachers should code-switch from English to Sesotho. There was no mention of other languages. (Lines 117 – 121)*

Lerato: *The policy is not being fully implemented because teachers feel they cannot wait until Standard 5 to use English as a medium of instruction. They believe that three years is too short to introduce English as a medium of instruction because at the end of Standard 7 learners write Primary School Leaving*

Examination (PSLE) in which English has to be passed. (Lines 101 – 106)

There are numerous factors that are generally considered as responsible for the failure of language policies in Africa. One of the most commonly mentioned is the failure of governments to follow up on the implementation of these policies. The results of this study revealed that since the current language-in-education policy was developed in 1983, the government of Lesotho had never made any follow-up on its implementation plan. None of the interviewed policy makers were aware of any report that evaluated the implementation of this policy. There was clear evidence from the responses of the policy makers that the mother tongue policy in Lesotho remains only on paper. One would have thought that the responsibility of the Primary Schools Inspectorate was to ensure that government policies were fully implemented in schools. On the contrary, the Inspectorate who was interviewed indicated that:

Lerato: *The Inspectorate focuses mainly on whether or not teachers come to school. We are also interested in investigating whether or not teachers are following the prescribed syllabus. (Lines 110 113)*

I have provided a list of all the questions that policy makers were asked in Appendix F.

5.2.1.3 Attitudes towards the inclusion of LSL

The question of attitude towards LSL constitutes one of the major issues addressed by the current study. The importance of attitude in the implementation of a language policy has been discussed in Chapter 2. It has already been mentioned that a great wealth of literature on deaf education supports a bilingual approach of teaching deaf learners. This is because bilingual education exposes deaf learners to different

communication strategies and enables them to make informed choices on which language(s) they prefer in their education. Sign Language as a language of minority speakers remains key in Cummins' Theoretical Framework for Minority Student Intervention and Empowerment, which is being used in this study. There is evidence that the educational success of learners of minority languages depends on the application of empowerment factors (McCaffery *et al.,* 2003). One of the questions that this study investigated was the attitude of both the policy makers and teachers towards the inclusion of LSL in Lesotho primary schools, particularly where there are Deaf learners. Following Kioko and Muthwii (2004:4), it is believed that language policies should not be dependent on assumptions, but should be built on existing attitudes and practices in the communities.

When policy makers were asked whether they would have any problem if LSL, which is the first language to many deaf children, was included in the current language-in-education policy, they expressed positive feelings towards this language. Attitudes towards LSL were conveyed in their responses in which they made it clear that there was need to have LSL included in the current language-in-education policy. When they were asked whether or not they thought the lack of LSL in schools had any impact on the education of deaf learners, all of them agreed that it impacted negatively. They acknowledged the fact that children learn better if they are taught in the language they had better access, in this case LSL. This is supported by the fact that first language assists children in their knowledge creation (Livingston, 1997). The negative effect the lack of skills in LSL has on the education of deaf learners is summarized by one policy maker (Lerato) when he said:

Lerato: *Learners do not benefit anything from what is being taught in class. They cannot communicate with their teachers. They can't even ask questions. (Lines 122 – 124)*

Another policy maker (Tumi) said:

Tumi: *Due to lack of LSL, deaf learners do not learn as fast as their hearing counterparts. As a result, they are generally described as stupid. This has led to many deaf drop-outs. Learners do not enjoy going to school. (Lines 21 – 23)*

It was obvious from the findings that the policy makers were not happy with the current language practices in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. Contrary to the belief that deaf people are stupid and unable to be educated (Sadiki, 2004; Rashleigh, 2007), policy makers were of the view that with sufficient skills in LSL, deaf children could achieve great success in their education. However, they were also very clear as to what challenges the inclusion of LSL in the current national language-in-education would bring. They identified training of teachers to equip them with LSL as the major challenge. To the policy makers, the language skills that the teachers possessed impacted directly on the learners' performance. They indicated that teachers with sufficient skills in LSL had the potential of improving learning achievements of deaf learners. In their view, it was therefore, crucial that government concentrated on teacher preparation. They echoed Thumann-Prezioso's (2005) observation that generally, in schools for the Deaf, there was little training for working with deaf learners. As indicated in the previous sections, this was because in the majority of training courses, there were no courses that prepared teachers for educating deaf children. They further argued that the government would have to be ready to invest in improving the performance of the current teachers in the schools for the Deaf and other service providers such as interpreters. In their views, the availability of skills in LSL would enable the government to achieve the following:

(a) Introduce LSL not only as a medium of instruction, but also as a subject particularly in schools where there are deaf learners;

(b) Introduce LSL as early as pre-school: and

(c) Have LSL dictionary.

It is interesting to add that one policy maker (Ts'eli) expressed her skepticism on the commitment of the government to improve the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. In her view, the government was not ready to invest on behalf of a small number of people. She reported that in one of the meetings she attended with other officials from the government, it was made clear that it was not easy to meet the needs of deaf people when government could not satisfy the needs of the majority of the citizens.

In summary, data from the interviews with the policy makers by means of categories is presented in Table 5 below. The data from the transcriptions revealed that the majority of the policy makers believed that both the Lesotho language and language-in-education policies are greatly influenced by the policies of their colonial master with focus mainly on only Sesotho and English. This in a way shed light on the status on LSL as a minority language in Lesotho. The desire for the country to develop a language policy that would unite the whole Basotho nation through the use and respect of all languages that exist in the country also became evident. The importance of LSL in the education of deaf learners was emphasised by all participants.

Table 5 Example of categories and themes developed from interview with policy makers

Raw data	Code	Categorization	Theme
Lesotho language policy shows influence of colonialism Language policy is silent about minority languages	-English still used in crucial domains -minority languages not used in different domains such as education - desire to have a uniting language policy	-dominance of colonial language -exclusion of minority languages e.g. LSL -uniting language policy	-language policy and planning
Policy is not effectively implemented No implantation plan has been put in place Minority language speakers do not benefit from policy	-policy not fully implemented - implementation not followed up - minority language speakers excluded	-policy implementation -exclusion of minority languages speakers	-language-in-education policy
Policy makers support the inclusion of LSL as medium of instruction and subject	-support inclusion of LSL	-positive attitude	-attitude towards the inclusion of LSL

5.2.2 Data from interview with teachers

This section will present data collected from seven teachers from the schools which accommodate deaf learners. All the interviewed teachers were the same teachers whose classes were observed.

5.2.2.1 Linguistic status and professional training

Research indicates that not only are deaf children born in hearing families, but they are also exposed to teachers who are neither qualified teachers nor competent Sign Language users (Mahshie *et al.,* 2006). On the basis of this consideration, the interview sought the information on the teachers' linguistic status and professional training to understand their level of preparation for their roles as teachers of deaf learners. In order to achieve this, I decided to let the teachers reveal a little bit about themselves. The results are revealed in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Teachers' profiles

Teacher	School	Linguistic and educational background
Tema	A	Hearing, PTC, 10+ years teaching experience, HOS, Spec. Ed, ASL
Thato	B	Hearing, PTC, 6+ years teaching experience, HOS, Spec. Ed, ASL
Maki	B	Hearing, COSC, 2+ years teaching experience
Phano	A	Hearing, COSC, 6 months teaching experience
Nthati	C	Hearing, PTC, 10+ years teaching experience, DHOS
Kutlo	C	Hearing, PTC, 10+ years teaching experience
Cheli	C	Hearing, PTC, 15+ years teaching experience

Note: PTC = Primary Teacher Certificate; HOS = Head of School (Principal); Spec. Ed. = Special Education; COSC = Cambridge Overseas School Certificate; LSL = Lesotho Sign Language; DHOS = Deputy Head of School; ASL = American Sign Language.

The findings revealed that out of the seven interviewed teachers, five were qualified primary school teachers. From these five, only two were also qualified professionals in Deaf education. The responses further indicated that these two teachers were also the principals at School A and School B, respectively. Both of them were trained in Zambia and their training included Sign Language (both American and Zambian Language). Neither of the teachers claimed to be fluent in LSL. During our informal conversations, these teachers admitted that at first they thought that the signs they learnt in Zambia would be the same as the ones used by deaf people in Lesotho. They only realized when the deaf children did not understand when they were communicating with them that Signed Languages are not universal. Lack of common Sign Language impacted negatively on their teaching. It also put pressure on them to learn the LSL which was understood by the learners.

The remaining two teachers who were also teaching in School A and School B, respectively, neither held any professional certificate nor were they fluent in Sign Language. Though it was not part of my research, it was important for me to investigate why then did they end up in the schools for the Deaf. Phano (the teacher from School B) was honest enough to point out that she had been looking for a job for quite some time without success. So, when the principal of this school approached him, she never thought about the difficult dilemma she would be confronted with as a hearing person teaching deaf learners. All she could think of was that she was being employed. A different side of story was given by Maki (the teacher from School A). In her statement, she noted that:

> Maki: *My interest of teaching Deaf children came as a result of an incident which I saw when I was at the hospital. There was a Deaf girl who had been raped and she had a problem of explaining what had happened. I felt pity for her and there and*

then I decided if I had a chance I would like to be involved with deaf children, learn their language so that I can be a bridge between them and people who are not Deaf. So, when I heard about a vacancy in this school, I did not hesitate to try my luck. One other thing is that the school is closer to my home. So I did not have to leave my family and go far away. (Lines 173 – 179)

In addition, the interviews revealed how long each teacher had been teaching deaf learners. The time they had been teaching in their respective schools ranged from three months to more than ten years. All of them had never taught in the school for the Deaf before coming to the current schools. It was important to find out from these teachers whether or not they had attended any training related to deaf education and Sign Language. The findings revealed that on the one hand, teachers who had been teaching in these schools for less than a year had never attended any training. On the other hand, teachers who had been working in these schools for more than a year had been to short training which was offered by Special Education Unit.

5.2.2.2 The implementation of the current language-in-education policy

Teachers were also asked about the implementation of the current language-in-education policy in the schools in which they were teaching. The study sought to find out which languages were used in those schools and the role each language played. When teachers were asked whether their schools were following the current language-in-education policy, those from School A and School B, on the one hand, believed that their schools were making an effort to follow it. However, due to lack of sufficient skills in LSL teachers admitted to sometimes resorting to spoken languages. The following answers display this:

Phano: *The school is taking the policy seriously in the sense that most of the time we try to use Sign Language which is the mother tongue of deaf learners where we can. (Lines 194 – 197)*

Maki: *Since this is the school for the Deaf, we try to use Sign Language, but most of the time we use spoken Sesotho or English because we are hearing teachers. (Lines 180 – 183)*

Teachers from School C, on the other hand, confirmed the policy makers' responses that in practice, it was only Sesotho and English which were used as mediums of instruction.

Nthati: *This policy is good only for those who speak Sesotho because there are clans such as Sephuthi who are forced to learn through the medium of Sesotho. There are also deaf children who are not taught in their language. (Lines 206 – 210)*

Cheli: *It is not working well because in the lower primary, we use only Sesotho as a medium of instruction regardless of whether there are other children whose mother tongue is not Sesotho. (Lines 235 – 238)*

It was not only the minority languages which were excluded in the teaching and learning of their speakers, but even Sesotho, which is the mother tongue to the majority of Basotho children was not used as medium of instruction at all times. This observation is captured in the response below:

Kutlo: *I do not think this policy is being followed well because for subjects such as Science we use English. (Lines 261 – 262)*

In her opinion, the continued use of English was attributed to the fact that

Kutlo: *The textbooks are written in English and there are some words which we cannot explain using Sesotho. (Lines 263 – 264)*

In my view, the above reasoning falls under what Miti (2000:24) refers to as a mere pretext. In his opinion, the problem is not that books are written in English and that there are no African words that can explain the scientific concepts, the problem lies with the attitude that speakers of African languages have towards their own

languages. Other researchers registered a similar cry. In her discussion of the language of instruction in Tanzania, Qorro (2004) argues that African languages are capable of borrowing words from other languages just like English does.

In School C, Sesotho and English were used as both the medium of instruction and as subjects (L1 and L2, respectively). In Schools A and B, both Sesotho and English were taught mainly as subjects while LSL was used (to a certain extent) as a medium of instruction and never as a subject.

In as much as the responses indicated that the current language-in-education policy was not followed fully in the primary schools in which the study was carried out, the use of mother tongue gained full support from all the interviewed teachers. Teachers from School C shared the same views with their colleagues from the other two schools about the importance of mother tongue in a child's education. They acknowledged that the use of mother tongue in classrooms may enhance interaction and creativity (Luckett, 1992; Haworth, 2003). As in Cummins' (1986, 1989) view, teachers took the position that proficiency in first language enables literacy and second language acquisition. These ideas are manifested in the list of roles of mother tongue as perceived by these teachers, as given below:

(a) Helps students understand subjects better.

(a) Makes children feel relaxed and are able to participate in class.

(b) Makes it easy for children to learn other languages.

The statements above are an acknowledgement of the predicament that the insufficient use of LSL brings in the education of deaf learners. As one teacher from School C (Cheli) maintained, if Sign Language, which is a mother tongue for many deaf children, is not used in classes where there are deaf learners, they miss out on whatever is being taught.

5.2.2.3 The 'mother tongue' of deaf learners

It was indicated in the previous chapters that 'mother tongue' is not an easy concept to define. It is interpreted differently by different people. It is more complicated when it relates to deaf people. Against this background, it was important for this study to establish what teachers regarded as mother tongue for deaf children. When they were asked about the mother tongue of their deaf children, different responses were noted. Five out of seven teachers, on the one hand, believed that LSL was the mother tongue for this group of children. Following Skutnabb-Kangas (1994), their explanation was that LSL was the language that these children were associated with and was also the only one that they have access to. The other two teachers, on the other hand, were of the opinion that Sesotho was the mother tongue of deaf learners in their schools. Their argument was that most of these children were not born deaf; they lost their hearing as they grew up.

5.2.2.4 Teachers' attitude towards the inclusion of LSL

In addition to the implementation of the language-in-education policy, the focus of interviews with teachers was to establish their attitudes towards the inclusion of LSL in this policy. Like policy makers, when teachers were asked whether they would have any problem if the government included LSL in the current language-in-

education policy, both as a medium of instruction and as a subject, they also gave positive responses. They took the same stance as the policy makers and reiterated the importance of LSL in the education of deaf learners. They unanimously agreed that the inclusion of LSL as a medium of instruction would greatly benefit these learners. However, they were aware of some of the challenges that schools would encounter in the implementation of a policy that explicitly stipulated the inclusion of LSL in Lesotho primary schools, including those of the deaf. There were similarities in the teachers' responses with those of the policy makers. All the teachers that were interviewed considered lack of teachers with skills in LSL as the major setback in the implementation of such a policy. Their views are summarized by one teacher (Nthati) when she said:

> Nthati: *The problem would be where to find teachers who are fluent in LSL. At the moment there is only one qualified deaf teacher and she can't teach in all schools, in all classes at the same time. (Lines 211 – 215)*

Another one (Tema) said:

> Tema: *It would be difficult to find more deaf teachers. Even if the schools would employ Sign Language interpreters, I do not think we have qualified ones to effectively do the job. (Lines 284 – 287)*

However, there were mixed feelings as far as the introduction of LSL as a subject was concerned. In as much as many of them appreciated that LSL as a subject would help develop this language, there was a concern related to the schools' curriculum. There was fear that introducing LSL as a subject would temper with the current curriculum and time-tables. This is how they expressed this fear:

> Thato: *We would have to revise our time-tables and curriculum. Introduction of LSL as a subject would require a slot on the current time-tables. This would mean reducing time for some*

subjects or actually doing away with some of these subjects. The question is which ones? (Lines 295 – 299)

Phano: *It would mean creating a slot for this new subject. What this means is that time for other lessons would be lost. The problem is that we hardly complete the syllabus even in the absence of LSL. What more if some time is used for this new subject? (Lines 198 – 2004)*

5.2.2.5 Improving deaf education

The fact that education is important in the lives of deaf children cannot be over-emphasized. Quality education leads to liberation and full development of deaf children. Against this background, it was necessary to investigate how, in the views of the participants, the schools could improve the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. Throughout the interview, the teachers were willing to share their views and opinions in this regard. When they were asked how, in their views, the schools in which they were teaching could improve the education of deaf learners, there were recurrent patterns in their responses. In all the three schools which offered education to deaf learners, three views dominated the teachers' responses. These are; equipping teachers with skills in LSL, engaging deaf adults and interpreters and implementing the policy of Free Primary Education. Table 7 below elaborates on these views.

Table 7: Teachers' views on how education in schools for the Deaf in Lesotho could be improved.

Equip teachers with skills in LSL	Engage Deaf adults and LSL interpreters	Implement the policy of Free Primary Education
-The government should organize training courses for teachers to learn LSL during the school vacations. Schools should ensure that teachers attend these trainings. - At the end of the training course teachers should receive certificates. - The certificates should be recognized, that is, they should help them move to the next level of the payroll as an incentive.	-Schools should involve other deaf people even if they are not qualified teachers. -LSL interpreters should also be engaged, but they should be qualified to do the job.	-The schools should persuade the government to implement the Free Primary Education policy even in schools for the Deaf.

One teacher, (Maki), also mentioned the modification of the current curriculum. In her view, the government should design a curriculum that would suit the learning capabilities of deaf learners which would take into consideration factors such as the speed in which deaf learners learnt. For instance, she explained that it was more difficult to teach deaf learners proverbs than to teach them Maths.

As a summary, table 7 below gives an example of the main categories that were identified from the interviews with teachers.

Table 7: Interviews with teachers of the deaf learners in Lesotho: an example of development of categories and analysis

Name of category	Analysis
1. Linguistic and education profile	- All hearing - No sufficient skills in LSL - 75% of teachers did not have professional training in deaf education
2. Implementation of the national language-in-education	- Not implemented efficiently
3. Mother tongue	- It is LSL for those born deaf - Sesotho for those who became deaf later in life
4. Attitude towards the inclusion of LSL	- As a mother tongue to deaf learners, LSL can enhance their learning - Challenges – no teachers with LSL skills - It will affect the curriculum and time table
5. Improving deaf education in Lesotho	- Teacher training is needed - Free Primary Education policy to be extended to schools of the deaf - Engage deaf adults and LSL interpreters

5.2.3 Data from interview with parents

With parents of deaf children, the interviews were meant to investigate their involvement in the education of their deaf children. Of the 18 parents interviewed for this study, 10 parents had children in School A, while five parents had children who attended in School B, and the last three parents had children in School C.

5.2.3.1 Emotional experiences

Literature (Lynas, 1994) indicates that parents usually experience severe trauma and grief when they learn that their children are impaired (Kethusegile *et al.,* 2000; Morgans, 2004; Simmons, 2004). This is because for a very long time all over the world, disability has been associated with evil spirits, witchcraft and bad luck. During the interview, parents were requested to talk about their emotional experience of having a deaf child. The findings of the study reveal that this misconception persists even today in Lesotho. The strong belief in witchcraft is revealed in the following example:

> 'Malefa: *I was angry. I was convinced my mother-in-law bewitched me. In the first few months of my pregnancy, I quarrelled with her so badly that I decided to return to my own family. So when the doctors confirmed that my child was deaf, I believed it was her doing. (Lines 305 – 309)*

The responses revealed that there was a lot of emotional impact on a family whey they discovered that they had a deaf child. In their grief, they put the blame on each other's behaviour. For instance, one mother-in-law blamed her daughter-in-law's behaviour during her pregnancy.

> 'Manapo: *We were sad and angry. We blamed the mother because she used to drink beer and also took "pitsa" (traditional medicine that is meant to make pregnancy bearable and promote safe labour) from a traditional healer. She refused to go for monthly check-ups at the clinic. (Lines 345 – 350)*

For some parents, the fact that they had never seen a deaf person before led to their belief that their children were a result of bad luck, as the following responses illustrate:

> Tlala: *I was greatly hurt. I even thought misfortune befell me. I had never seen a deaf person before. (Lines 360 – 362)*

‘Matsebo: *Since I did not know anything about this disability, I thought we were the only family who had a deaf child. (Lines 376 – 378)*

For those parents who were already aware that deaf people existed and lived a normal life, they took solace in the idea that their deaf children were a gift from God, although they admitted being confused and hurt at first when they discovered that their children were deaf.. This is captured in the following example:

‘Malika: *I had been married for many years without a baby. I then prayed God to give me any type of a baby, even if it was one with ‘albinism’. So, when I discovered that my child was deaf, I just told myself to accept that that was the way God has answered my prayer. (Lines 395 – 399)*

Despite the fact that parents suffered trauma and grief when their children were first identified as deaf, it appears they have accepted their deaf children as normal human beings and not as a curse.

5.2.3.2 Support, counselling and training

Literature on deaf children points to the need for the governments to provide parents and families of these children with special support. Knight and Swanwick (2002) suggest five different types of support. First, they argue that families need time to assimilate and accommodate the fact that they have a deaf member in the family. Second, they state that families need an opportunity for discussion and sharing of feelings and ideas with other families who have common experiences. Third, they are of the opinion that families need to acquire information on all aspects of deafness. Fourth, in their view, families should be aware of styles of communication with their deaf child. Fifth, they argue families need information on educational provision. They point out that the school to which a deaf child would go should be an issue of central

and immediate concern to all parents. With all this information in mind, it became important to find out in general the type of support the government of Lesotho provides to families of deaf children. The responses indicated that none of the participants had received any form of support from the government. Once the parents had answered the general question, the interview became more specific, asking parents for information on the counselling facilities available in Lesotho to parents of deaf children. The findings revealed that in Lesotho, there were no counselling centres available for helping parents to adjust to the new dynamics in the families. All the interviewed parents indicated that since they discovered that they had deaf children, they had never undergone any counselling.

In addition, parents were asked whether they had ever attended any training related to raising a deaf child, including teaching them Sign Language. With the exception of two, these parents reported that they had not attended any training. They expressed the sense of being neglected by the government. Their feeling of helplessness was apparent when one parent said:

> Leruo: *I was expecting that the government will teach us how to handle our deaf children. They are different from other children because they do not speak like other children. We do not know Sign Language. We need to be taught how to sign. (Lines 411 – 115)*

Even the two parents, who mentioned that they once attended Sign Language training, raised serious concern regarding these trainings. Both these parents attended only one training each, which was organized by NADL. The training was meant to equip them with basic signs that they could use to communicate with their deaf children. They expressed their ambitions to learn and be fluent in Sign Language, a language which they considered as a bridge for communication between them and their deaf children.

However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the training was held only once. They argued that one week was not enough for them to learn Sign Language. Their feeling of unhappiness at the insufficient training was captured in this response:

> 'Manko: *I was hoping that we will receive more training. One cannot learn a new language in one week. (Lines 430 – 431)*

Their concerns are shared by Knight and Swanwick (2002) who emphasize that parents need more time and opportunity to develop their communications skills. What also became clear was that, despite numerous communicative options available for deaf children, the interviewed parents were convinced that Sign Language was the only communicative strategy suitable for their children.

The other aspect that the findings revealed is the lack of knowledge among parents about the available schools for the Deaf in the country. All the interviewed parents indicated that they knew only about the school they sent their children to. When asked what language/languages were used to teach their children, some parents reported that they did not know.

Lack of skills in LSL and information on issues of deafness and schools in the country available for deaf learners appears to be central in the parents' concerns. They believe that in the absence of skills in LSL, they are not able to communicate efficiently with their deaf children. Additionally, without information on deafness and the schools for the deaf available in the country, they could not make proper choices for the education of their children.

5.2.3.3 Linguistic status and communication experiences in the family

This section will present data on the communication experiences of parents with their deaf children. Interviews from these parents confirmed what other studies have noted about the fact that majority of them are born to hearing parents. The results of this study indicated that all interviewed parents and their spouses were hearing. The eighth question asked the parents what language they were using at home to communicate with their deaf child. From the findings of this study, most parents of the deaf children were clear that they were not using any particular language to communicate with their children. They explained that they just pointed at things, acted instructions and hoped they had been able to pass the intended message to their children. They emphasized that they could not be using Sign Language because they had never been taught this language and they had never been exposed to it before they had a deaf member in their families.

During the interview, parents were required to share their communication experiences with their deaf children. Lack of information on the communication strategies available for them became apparent throughout the interview. As parents, they were not aware that they needed to establish a mode of communication that was appropriate to them and their children's linguistic needs (Knight and Swanwick, 2002). All the interviewed parents admitted that in the absence of this information, the communication between them and their deaf children was, more often than not, marred by a lot of misunderstanding and frustration. When asked to rate the level of communication between them and their deaf children, most parents admitted that it was not satisfactory. The frustration and pain that they experienced during the communication is expressed in responses such as the one below:

Lenka: *It is not very good. Sometimes I am not able to share with her interesting news that I have heard somewhere, I can't because I*

am not able to sign everything. As a family we enjoy talking about just anything and like jumping from one subject to another. It is so painful when other members of the family are laughing and she is just looking this way and that way feeling excluded. (Lines 448 – 454)

In addition to feeling excluded, parents went further to point out that because their children were not always able to share in the family's conversation, they ended up being withdrawn and difficult to deal with.

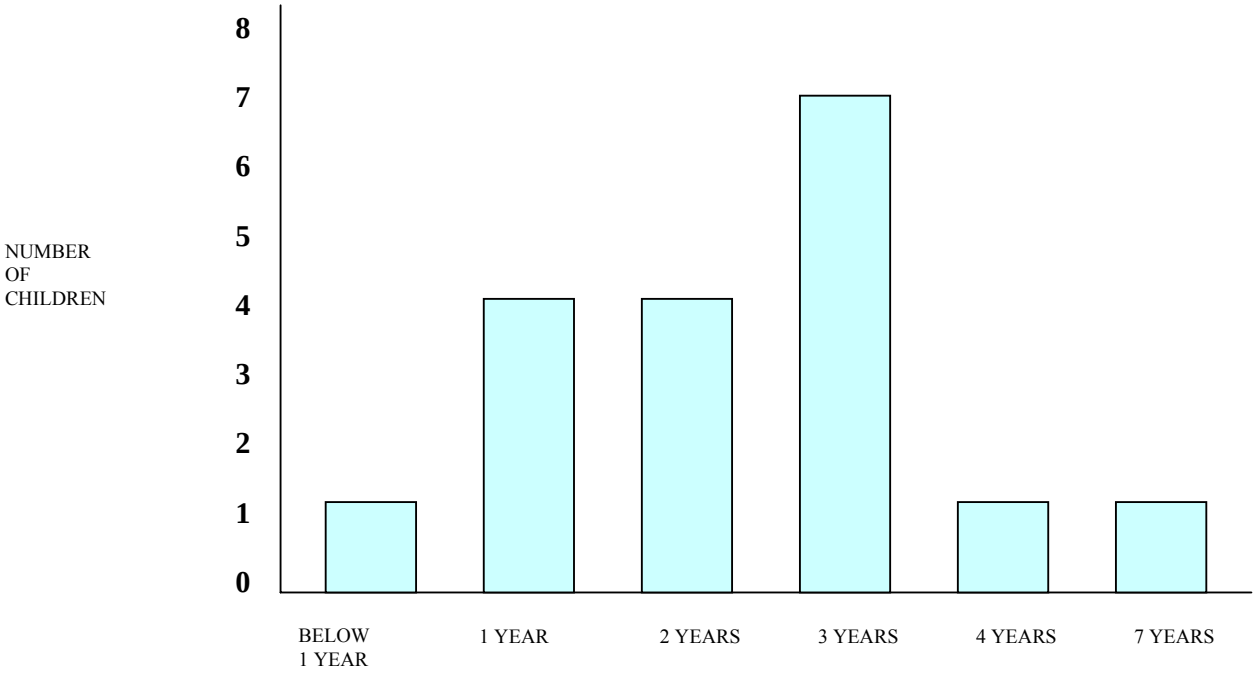
'Malineo: *It is not good at all. We are really trying our best to communicate with him, but if we fail to understand what he is trying to say to us or if he cannot follow what we are trying to communicate to him, he gets really mad at us. (Lines 468 – 472)*

Throughout the interview, there was a general understanding by the parents that skills in LSL were likely to develop relationships between them and their deaf children.

5.2.3.4 The mother tongue of their deaf children

The question of mother tongue which was posed to teachers of deaf children was extended further to parents. When they were asked about the mother tongue of their deaf children, different responses were noted. These were based on the age at which the deafness of a child was identified. In figure 4 below, these ages are given:

Figure 4: Responses regarding children's mother tongue



Two out of the five parents who discovered that their children were deaf, when they were about a year old or younger, were of the opinion that the mother tongue of these children was Sign Language. They argued that this was the language that their children were born with and were using at that age they were discovered as deaf. These parents recalled how their children used signs and gestures to communicate. In the parents' view, these gestures signalled the Sign Language that their children had been using since they started communicating, as this response illustrates:

> 'Matsebo: *He was born with this language because he was able to use without being taught. (Lines 379 – 380)*

The remaining parent was convinced that the mother tongue of her child was Sesotho. According to her, Sesotho was the only language that her child was exposed to from birth. She added that Sign Language came at a later stage in her child's life. She

further argued that Sign Language could only be acquired naturally as first language by children of deaf parents. The same argument has been raised by professionals such as Deumert (2000); Knight and Swanwick (2002) and Mahshie, *et al.,* (2006).

> Neo: *His mother tongue is Sesotho. He came across Sign Language at school. (Lines 445 – 446)*

This parent's view was similar to that obtained by parents who discovered that their children were deaf at the age of two years and above. Figure 5 indicates that the majority of deaf children lost their hearing and subsequently their speech deteriorated after suffering from meningitis. What also became evident from this study was that many hospitals and clinics in Lesotho did not have well-developed hearing-screening facilities. Some parents expressed the hope that they had in the hospitals to bring cure to their ailing children. In the following response, one parent related that as parents, when they discovered that their child was not responding to sounds, they took him to the nearest hospitals, expecting the doctors to diagnose what was wrong with their child's ears and perhaps prescribe some medication:

> Moleko: *We realized ourselves that she was not responding to sounds like the children her age. Even when other children were calling her, if she was not looking at them she would not respond. So we decided to take her to the hospital for diagnosis. We were hoping the doctors would explain what was wrong with our child's ears and maybe prescribe some medication that would help our child to hear like other children. (Lines 464 – 471)*

To their dismay, they were told there was nothing wrong with their child's ears. He shared his disappointment with the response that the doctor gave in the following words:

> Moleko: *Unfortunately, the doctor who was examining her said all her speech and hearing organs were normal. According to him there was nothing wrong with the child. Since the child was eleven months old at that time, he said we should give her time*

as other children develop slower than others, giving us hope that our child will still hear. (Lines 472 - 477)

5.2.3.5 Parents' involvement in their children's education

As indicated in the earlier sections, one of the objectives of the study was to investigate the involvement of parents of deaf learners in Lesotho in the education of their children. Many educational researchers believe that parent's involvement is one of the most important ingredients in a child's education. In their view, it is important that parents know what their children are learning, what school activities they are involved in and how they can help their children at home. Parents' involvement is also listed among Cummins' empowerment factors given in Chapter 2. Because of the vital role that parents play in a child's education, many schools seek to engage parents as partners in the education of learners. In this section of the study, therefore, the focus will be on the results of the involvement of parents of deaf learners of Lesotho in the education of their children.

Although all the interviewed parents acknowledged the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education, they expressed the sense of being unprepared for this role. The issue of lack of information on how they should be involved was echoed throughout the interview. In as much as they believed that the schools saw them as important partners in the education of their children, they were not sure of the kind of assistance they were expected to offer them. All of them were of the impression that a parent showed involvement if he or she paid the fees and provided for the financial needs of the child. When asked how the schools their children went to involved them in the education of their children, the parents' responses were almost the same.

Tieho: *The school involves me by asking me to pay fees for my child. I also have to buy books and uniform. (Lines 483 – 484)*

In addition, parents appeared content that the schools communicated to them about their children's progress.

Lefu: *Usually, there are parents' meetings where we are given our children's academic reports. This way we get to know how our children are performing at school. (Lines 498 – 501)*

From the interviews, it was clear that parents were not satisfied with their level of participation in their children's learning. The findings showed that these parents were eager to increase their involvement in their children's education. In addition, they displayed their desire to learn Sign Language to enable them break the language barrier between them and their children and assist with homework. One parent, admitting how little she was involved in the education of her child, said:

'Malineo: *I did not go far with my education. As a result I do not know how I can assist my child, particularly with the homework. Language is also another problem. I wish as parents we could be taught this language so that we could communicate efficiently with our children. (Lines 474 – 479)*

5.2.3.6 Parents' views on how deaf education could be improved

Like teachers, parents were asked to cite some of the things which they thought the schools should do in order to improve the education of their children. Four out of the 18 parents that were interviewed expressed contentment with the performance of the schools to which their children went:

Khabo: *I am happy with the way the school is doing things. (Line 516)*

'Manapo: *I think the school is doing good work because my child is now able to write her name and the names of other members of the family. I am satisfied with the school and the teachers in this regard. (Lines 352 – 355)*

For seven other parents, it was either too early to tell or they did not know. For the parents who did not know, this was attributed to the fact that their children had been in those schools for less than a year.

Leruo: *I do not know whether there are gaps. Maybe it is because my child has been here for less than a year. (Lines 495 – 496)*

The remaining seven parents raised important issued relating to quality of teachers, financial support, modification of their children's curriculum and infrastructure. More than half of these parents were quite vocal when they talked about the skills of some teachers in the schools where their children attended. Like the teachers, they emphasized that qualified professionals with appropriate communicative skills were lacking in the schools. Parents expressed their dissatisfaction at the fact that the schools employed hearing teachers who lacked Sign Language and an understanding of deaf education. They argued that without Sign Language, the level of motivation of their children was normally very low.

'Matsebo: *My child complains that they are taught in spoken languages and because of this he does not follow what the teacher is saying. (Lines 381 – 382)*

'Manko: *My child is usually not anxious to go to school because she has accepted that she cannot pass as she cannot hear what the teacher is teaching. (Lines 437 – 439)*

One parent registered his distrust of the school to which their children went when he pointed out frankly that he was not convinced that deaf children were being helped to perform like their hearing counterparts:

Tlala: *It is very sad. My child told me that when a particular madam is not at school other teachers continue using oral language in their presence as if they do not exist. He told me that on those days they feel so left out that they even question why they bother going to school in the first place. (Lines 365 – 370)*

Another one went on to say:

> Ntsoaki: *Our children, like the hearing children, have a right to be taught by teachers who are competent and knowledgeable. But in the schools they go to, hearing teachers cannot do anything for our children. (Lines 534 – 535)*

They stated that the only reason they continued taking their children to these schools was that they could be in the company of children with whom they could communicate freely and share their experiences.

In addition to the quality of teachers, parents referred to lack of financial support as a major obstacle in the education of deaf children. All of them expressed their wish to be relieved from paying the high fees that they were paying for their children at the schools for the Deaf. Both schools do not benefit from the government's policy of Free Primary Education since they are privately owned. It should be noted that the deaf learners who had been integrated into the mainstream school children were benefiting from this policy. The criticism of the Lesotho government for not extending this policy to the schools for the Deaf is echoed strongly in the following response:

> 'Malika: *It is not fair that the government does not treat the schools for the Deaf like other primary schools in the country. Our children also are Basotho and they should benefit from the Free Primary Education policy. (Lines 400 – 403)*

Echoing what the teachers had already said, the parents further showed their disappointment at the fact that there were many deaf children out there who were out of school because their parents could not afford to pay for their education.

On the academic side, parents also expressed their desire to have the curriculum reviewed. Most of them felt that the schools should introduce practical subjects like sewing and knitting. They argued that since it was not very easy for people with disabilities to secure formal employment, practical subjects would provide them with survival skills. The parents' sense of admission that their children were not likely to secure jobs was revealed in this statement:

> Khabo: *Children who are disabled do not get employment because they do not get opportunity to be educated well. They need to do practical subjects which can help them use their hands and earn money. (Lines 520 – 523)*

It was for the same reason that they felt that their children should be involved in different sports activities. This became clear in the following comment:

> 'Mathabo: *I wish the school could introduce sports. Our children need to be involved in sports so that they could play for their country and earn some money. (Lines 549 – 552)*

The government, through its education system, was further criticised for undermining the potential of deaf children and pre-determining the highest certificate a deaf child could obtain. To show his dissatisfaction, one parent argued that the fact that there was no high school in the country that accommodated deaf learners was a clear indication that these learners were not viewed as capable of performing beyond primary school. He expressed his wish for the current situation to change when he said:

> Lefa: *I wish our children could go beyond Standard 7. As you know, after Standard 7 children with hearing impairments have to look for jobs because there are no secondary or high schools that take them. (Lines 569 – 572)*

The issue of infrastructure also emerged from the parents' responses. Parents whose children went to School A were generally happy with the school's infrastructure. But

the parents of children who attended School C expressed their concern about lack of boarding facilities at his school. They felt that having to travel to and from this school on foot every day exposed their children to all sorts of danger. They made a strong suggestion that this school should provide accommodation to ensure the safety of their children. While these parents were concerned about accommodation, parents whose children went to School B raised a different type of infrastructure. This school did not have enough classrooms. The parents were very unhappy with this situation since they had expected that some of the fees they paid should be used to build more classrooms. They maintained that:

> Khauta: *Since the number of learners is increasing, I think the school can now afford to build more classrooms. We are paying a lot of money. (Lines 587 – 589)*

It is evident from the findings that emerged from the data, that parents are not happy with the education of their deaf children. Ranking high on the list of their concerns is the fact that their children are taught by teachers who lack skills in LSL. Experiences of deaf children in the schools they went to and how these experiences impacted on their education were highlighted. Parents expressed the need for introduction of practical subjects in the schools' curriculum. Additionally, they made it clear that their children had the right to benefit from the government's free education policy.

5.3 Conclusion

Throughout the chapter, mention has been made of the major issue at the heart of this research, which is the status and role of LSL. As with other minority languages that exist in Lesotho, the country' national language policy is silent about LSL. Although the country's language-in-education policy supports mother tongue education, the

implementation of this policy favours only Sesotho and English. No effort is being made to train teachers and prepare them for their roles as teachers of deaf children, including equipping them with LSL skills. As a result deaf children are exposed to education through the languages to which they do not have full access. Due to lack of common language between them and their deaf children, parents' involvement in the education of their children is very limited. Participants in this chapter attached great importance to LSL in the education of deaf learners.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA PRESENTATION – DEAF LEARNERS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of data presentation which began in Chapter 5. As mentioned in the previous chapter, here I present data collected from deaf participants. The information for this chapter was obtained from 31 deaf learners in the schools for the Deaf and 20 deaf children who were out of school when the research was being carried out. This makes a total of 51 deaf children. Their ages ranged from 13 to 17 years. For the purpose of this chapter, two different interviews were conducted for these two categories of participants. It should be noted that because I am not yet fluent in Sign Language, the assistance of two hard of hearing adults was sought.[10] Although they are not fully deaf, the fact that these adults are members of NADL made me believe that they shared the beliefs and culture of deaf people. This decision was not intended to perpetuate the belief that auditory skills were more valued than LSL.

Initially, I had intended to engage experienced Sign Language interpreters, but due to the quality of interpreters in Lesotho as per the 2006 Interpretation Report of the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training mentioned in Chapter 5, the hard of hearing adults became the most appropriate candidates for the job. Not only were they suitable in their virtue of being deaf, but it was believed that deaf children would be more relaxed and open if they were interviewed by people with whom they shared the

[10] 'Hard of hearing' refers to a person whose speech and language skills were developed through an auditory base but his/her ability to hear has deteriorated to the extent that it causes problems in social interaction (Ross, 1977; Moustgaard, 1994).

same cultural identity. All interviews were video-recorded and transcribed. Based on the similar argument, this task was performed by a deaf photographer.

Learners from the schools of the Deaf, on the one hand, were interviewed at their respective schools over the weekend. This was the most convenient arrangement since all learners were boarding in these schools. The interviews were conducted in the classrooms. One learner was called in at a time. An effort was made to ensure that those learners who had been interviewed did not mix with those who had not yet been interviewed. This was done to regulate the possibility of learners giving the same responses. On the other hand, deaf children who were out of school were interviewed from the office of NADL. With the assistance of the research assistants described in the previous paragraph, these children were invited to participate in these interviews which took two days. Visits were made to the homes of these children and permission for their participation was sought from the parents. Transport arrangements were also made to ensure that these children come to the place of interview on the agreed date. As was the case with the learners, each of these children was interviewed away from the rest. For example, from data obtained through interviews with policy makers, three themes were developed, namely, language policy and planning, language-in-education policy and attitudes towards the inclusion of LSL.

6.1 Data from interviews

As in the previous chapter, throughout the presentation, I use the themes developed during the analysis of interviews as headings. With regard to deaf children, the study mainly sought to determine how the present language practices at home and in the schools of the Deaf impacted on their education. It was also equally important to

gather information on their experiences at home. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, all of them were the only deaf children in their respective families. According to McQuillan and Atherton (2007:72-3), in situations such as this, "relationships between hearing and deaf members are subject to a number of additional pressures and stresses, above and beyond those faced by all families". It was important for this study, therefore, to develop an understanding of the informants' experiences as the only deaf children in the hearing families. Each deaf child was asked a general question requesting him or her to relate their experiences as children in hearing families.

6.1.1 Experiences as deaf children in a hearing family- relations with relatives

Dunn and McGuire (1994) believe that deaf/hearing children are often treated differently by their families and relatives. McQuillan and Atherton (2007) explain that even though there might be a logical reason for such differences in treatment, these reasons might not be obvious to the children themselves. As a result, children make their own conclusions. Supporting this view, the findings revealed that all the interviewed children felt that they were being treated differently from their hearing siblings. For instance, more than half of the interviewed children complained that while their hearing family members were free to move around, they were deliberately kept within the family compound by their parents. They seemed to experience this isolation more frequently when they were still young. They gave possible reasons why they were not allowed to go beyond their family compounds. Firstly, they believed that they were being kept at home because their parents were ashamed of them and they did not want people to know that they had deaf children. Their hurt is echoed strongly in the following examples:

Pinki: *I think my parents did not enjoy the stares that people were giving us when I sign in public. I think they were also embarrassed by the noise I make when I try to speak. That is why they decided to leave me behind when they go out. (Lines 600 – 604)*

Jase: *When I was still young I did not know why I was not allowed to leave my family compound when other children were going out to play. I learnt later that my parents thought it was abnormal to have a deaf child, so they decided to hide me as much as possible so that people could not know about me. Now that I understand that a deaf child lives a normal life and deserves to be treated like a hearing child, I am angry with my parents. (Lines 618 – 625)*

Lebesa: *My mother used to go to church with other children and leave me behind. I am not sure whether it was because she knew I was not going to follow what was going on in the church or whether it was because she did not want people to see that she had a deaf child. But it used to hurt me. (Lines 635 – 640)*

Secondly, the interviewed deaf children suspected that their parents were over protective of them and in the process, they imposed "on the independence of their hearing brothers and sisters by always having to be 'looked after' by them" (McQuillan and Atherton, 2007):

Nthabi: *When I was young my parents used to worry if they did not see me. My brother would be blamed for my disappearance. He would be told to make sure that I did not get out of his sight. What surprised me was that even when we had disappeared with the hearing children the focus would always be on me. (Lines 650 – 655)*

Khosi: *I think my parents were afraid that other children would tease me when they realize I couldn't talk like them. As a result they used to tell my hearing siblings, young and old, to always look after me. As a small child I did not mind, but as I grew older I used to resent this protection. It was like I was made to feel like I could not fight my battles. (Lines 668 – 674)*

In this regard, it should be noted that in McQuillan and Atherton's (2007) view, this resentment becomes reciprocal. Deaf children find their independence compromised by not only their parents but also by brothers and sisters who are being delegated pseudo-parental responsibilities, whilst hearing children resent being expected to look after their deaf siblings.

Another group of the interviewed deaf children expressed their disappointment at the fact that their families and relatives did not have the same expectations for them like they had for the hearing siblings. They believed that their family members were not doing enough to encourage them to pursue their dreams; instead they were imposing limits on their ambitions. One boy displayed his anger at the hearing community's belief that deaf people could not live a normal life with this story:

> Thabiso: *My uncle once said about me, "You Thabiso, we cannot allocate a field to you because fields are taken care of by women. There is no way that you can marry because you are deaf. No man can allow his child to be married by somebody who is deaf. (Lines 682 – 686)*

To sum up, all the interviewed children pointed out that they found it lonely being the only deaf children in their families. They confirmed what Ahmad *et al* (1998) argue that being in an environment where there was no common language and where they did not have full access to what was happening or what was discussed around them was difficult. The importance of communication with deaf children is highlighted by Gregory (1976:24) who states that "at first sight, not being able to talk about the past and the future may not seem an overwhelming problem, but it is these sort of conversations that enable a child to see life as continuous and structured".

Some of them admitted that now that they were older, they had come to terms with the fact that members of their families failed to treat them like their hearing siblings because they were ignorant of issues on deafness.

Lisebo: *I used to get hurt when people did not treat me like a normal human being. But now I know it is because they do not know anything about deaf people.*

6.1.2 Communication experiences in a hearing family

When the deaf children were asked what they felt their greatest communication problems were with their hearing family members, all of them mentioned language barrier between them and the hearing members as the main problem. Their inability to talk and members of the family inability to sign was by far the greatest obstacle they identified. This is what some of them had to say:

Tšehla: *Most of the time, my family points at things when they want me to bring them. For instance, my mother will point at the shoes if she wants me to bring her shoes. (Lines 718 – 721)*

These children went further to explain that due to language barrier, they could not convey their needs to members of their families, especially their parents. Memories of their frustration when they could not get through to them surfaces in interviews such as this one:

'Mantoa: *It used to be very frustrating to me when I tried to tell my parents what I wanted and they did not understand. I could see that they also were very frustrated because I am their child and they wanted to understand what I wanted. (Lines 732 – 736)*

Botle: *It gets extremely painful when you can't communicate the urgency to your parents of whatever it is you want. Even when they are able to understand what it is you want, there is a*

problem of having to explain why you need it so badly. Without such explanation it is difficult to persuade them to give me what I need at the time I need it. (Lines 744 – 749)

Some deaf children confessed that they used to think their parents took advantage of the language barrier and made it an excuse for not providing for their needs.

Tumelo: *Sometimes I would ask for something from my father and he would keep on asking 'what?' and if I did not make him understand what I was saying, he would just leave me there standing. Sometimes I suspected that he actually understood what I was requesting but decided hide under the pretext that he did not understand. It used to hurt so much. (Lines 763 – 769)*

Like the hearing, deaf children would like to share with members of their families the day's events and their experiences. But due to the language barrier, this chance had proven too hard to take advantage of. For many of them, their attempts to communicate did not work. Some went further to point out that sometimes, hearing people would deliberately provoke them and they would want to report to their families in order to seek protection. These emotive communication problems are further revealed in this story:

Seseli: *One day a hearing boy threw his hand in my food without asking. I tried to move the food away from him but he pulled the dish to him. There were other boys who were watching and I had the feeling that he had told them about his plan. These other boys were laughing. I had no alternative but to hit him hard on the head to chase him away. His parents came to my house to complain to my parents. On that day I appeared as the bad one because I could not tell my own version of the story. (Lines 783 – 791)*

Being unable to talk usually made deaf children feel cut from the family. This experience was worse for those children who stayed at school when they had to go home after school or for holidays. In this regard, Craddock (1991) explains that these

children are usually bored and frustrated by the fact that at home, there is going to be less communication. One child expressed her wish that schools could continue being opened forever.

> Khopolo: *I like my family. But sometimes I feel like I could be at school forever. Here at least I communicate with people who understand what I am saying. (Lines 797 – 802)*

In Craddock's view, normally after being away from school, these children's longing for conversation grows and when they do not have access to it, they feel left out. This is because at school, deaf children are able to socialize and relax in the company of other deaf children.

What emerges from these responses is that deaf children were hurt by the fact that they could not communicate with members of their families. They confirmed what Ahmad *et al* (1998) argue that being in an environment where there was no common language and where they did not have full access to what was happening or what was discussed around them was difficult. Their situation was in no way unique. The feeling of being unable to communicate is also expressed by Gregory (1976:19) who states:

> Life is impoverished without the joy that various sounds can bring, and there are situations which can be dangerous for someone who cannot hear; but there are greater problems than these. It is learning to understand other people, and to talk to them. That is the real problem.

This issue of communication within families is discussed further by Ahmad *et al* (1998) when they point that excluding deaf children from conversations and activities going on within the home denies them access to one of the primary means of

socialization. To support their argument, they cite the findings of a Bengali bilingual worker who was working with mothers of deaf children who found out that:

> …the kids feel isolated at home because they can't communicate with the rest of the family and you know when you are talking about something, they don't know what they are talking about and no one bothers to translate for them. That's how most kids feel. (Ahmad *et al.,* 1998: 74 -75)

6.1.3 Counselling and support from Deaf Association

Given the psychological pressure that deafness brings on children (Ahmad *et al.,* 1998), psychologists recommend counselling**,** not only for parents of deaf children as shown in Chapter 5, but also for deaf children themselves. It is believed that counselling has an important role to play in helping deaf children work through the issues of their deafness. These include language and communication, as well as culturally appropriate behaviour. As was the case with parents, the findings revealed that in Lesotho, access to counselling facilities was a serious deficiency.

In the absence of counselling, deaf people find solace in Deaf organizations. According to Ahmed *et al* (1998), these organizations are normally the result of the realization of isolation, confusion and powerlessness among the Deaf minority. The aim of such organizations is to bring deaf people together to discuss and share their experiences. The study has revealed that in Lesotho, Deaf people have one organization, National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL). For many deaf people, this association plays an integral part in their lives. It is regarded as a forum for learning Deaf culture including LSL. It appeared from the responses that many of these deaf children never or hardly had contact with either deaf peers or adults before joining the association. This was a setback on their side as deaf peers and adults are valuable "language models and communication partners, social role models and

transmitters of essential world knowledge for deaf children" (McKee, 2005:6). So, the association filled the void created by lack of contact with crucial people. Deaf children went further to explain that the association provided them with an opportunity to develop their own agenda and advocate for their needs. It was not surprising, therefore, that out of the 51 deaf children who participated in the study, 40 were members of NADL. They recalled how informed and supported they felt by being members of this association. All these were captured in the utterances such as these ones:

> Mohapi: *Yes, I am a member of NADL. It is like a home to me. At the association we meet people with whom we could communicate freely and understand each other. We also develop new friendships with people with whom we share the same problems. (Lines 816 – 820)*

> Botle: *It is nice when we have come to the meeting. We can communicate without interpreters. We ca also talk about hearing people like they like talking about us. (Lines 753 – 756)*

Other deaf children mentioned the role of NADL in mobilizing and advocating for the rights of deaf people.

> Lebesa: *Our teacher told us about the association. She said the association can help deaf people with their problems. She also said that we will be taught about our rights as deaf children. (Lines 641 – 644)*

> Mofo: *Many deaf people are members of this association. It has made the government know about deaf people. Because of the association deaf people participate in sports. (Lines 830 – 833)*

Out of the 11 deaf children who were not members of NADL, seven reported that they were not aware of the existence of this association. This could be attributed to their age. All of them were among the youngest of the interviewed children. The remaining four indicated that they knew about the association, but nobody recruited them. They

further explained that they lacked enough information in order for them to decide whether or not to be members of the association. For instance, they even mentioned that they were under the impression that membership required high fees which they could not afford.

6.1.4 Mother tongue

In Chapter 5, the views of policy makers, teachers of deaf children in Lesotho and parents regarding mother tongue for deaf children were discussed. It was also important for this study to establish which language deaf children themselves regarded as their mother tongue and their attitude towards LSL. The findings of the study also confirmed Skutnabb-Kangas's (1994) observation that the concept of mother tongue is understood differently by different people. The results of the interview revealed that, on the one hand, all those children who were born Deaf and those who lost their hearing at an early age were convinced that their mother tongue was LSL. Like the parents, they argued that this was the language that they were born with and had been using since they were babies. This is what some of them said:

> Chaka: *I have never spoken in my life. I have always signed. Sign Language is the only language that I know. (Lines 848 – 850)*

> Faene: *My mother told me I was born deaf. I have never spoken. (Line 867)*

From the above responses, it may be argued that these children understood the meaning of mother tongue from the criterion of origin. On the other hand, the majority of those children who became deaf at a later stage in their lives argued that originally their mother tongue was Sesotho, but after being deaf, they use LSL:

> Bokako: *I was born speaking Sesotho. But after becoming deaf, my language is LSL. (Lines 884 – 885)*

Interestingly, few of these who lost their hearing at a later stage in their lives maintained that despite the fact that they were now deaf, their mother tongue was Sesotho, not LSL. They reported that although they were no longer able to utter intelligible Sesotho words, it was this language that they learnt first. They maintained that they could still hear a little bit of it and understand it. The findings revealed that these children had moderate hearing loss. One of them clarified:

> Atang: *Members of my family communicate to me in Sesotho because they know that I know and understand it. The problem is that I can no longer answer them in clear Sesotho. That is why I sign to them. But Sign Language is not my mother tongue. (Lines 904 – 908)*

In this regard, it may be argued that these children's understanding of mother tongue was based on Skutnubb-Kangas's (1994) criterion of origin. It is possible that their understanding was based on the traditional belief of mother tongue being the language one learns from birth, in the family.

As already mentioned, it was important for this study to establish the attitude of deaf children towards Sign Language. The finding indicated that despite the fact that the interviewed children had different views on the question of mother tongue, it was clear that they accepted LSL as their language as deaf people. When asked whether they ever wished they were using another language to communicate, instead of LSL, all of them reported that they were not. Their responses reflected a positive attitude towards LSL as the language that defines them as a linguistic minority group.

Scholars in deaf education and Sign Language are of the view that most deaf children develop fluency in this language from peers at school or later in life when they make

contacts with other deaf people (Aarons and Akach, 2002; McKee and Biederman, 2003; McKee, 2005). Based on this view it was also necessary to establish how deaf children learnt Sign Language since all of them were born into hearing families. All those children who were at school at the time the interviews were being conducted and those who had been to school before confidently reported that they learnt LSL only when they came to school.

For the learners who had never been to school, LSL was developed only after they had met other deaf people and become members of the association of the Deaf. When these children were asked further what language they were using before they either went to school or met deaf peers, different responses were noted. 40 of them stated that they only used a visual-gestural system to communicate with the community including members of their families. Six of the remaining children argued that they were using LSL although it was not perfect. They reiterated the fact that LSL was the first language they acquired naturally and as such, it was the language they had always been using. Interestingly, the other five children said they did not know which language they used before they went to school.

6.1.4.1 Family support

Research on Sign Language (Morgans, 2004; Simmons, 2004) indicates that when parents discover that their child is deaf, their initial reaction is to discourage him/her from using this language. There are numerous reasons why this is so. One of them could be because some of the parents still did not consider Sign Language as a language like other languages and believed that if their children continued to use it, they would not develop speech (Morgans, 2004; Simmons, 2004). When deaf children

were asked how their families supported the development of their language, LSL, it became clear that even in Lesotho, many parents still believed that Sign Language was an inferior language. One deaf child said:

> Lipuo: *My family especially, my parents, insist that I use oral language because they have negative beliefs about Sign language. Mainly, they believe that Sign language is inferior. In fact, they do not consider it as a language at all. (Lines 925 – 929)*

The interviews revealed that there were even those parents who were hopeful that their children would still be able to speak and leave the traces of deafness behind. These parents feared that being unable to communicate orally would limit their children to communication with other deaf people only or people associated with Deaf people. They felt that their children needed to "learn the strategies for coping in the wider community, which is a hearing community…where it's not a closed deaf community" (Komesroff, 2007:370). The interviewed children indicated that:

> Hape: *My father always says I should try to speak because the more I practice to speak there is a chance that I can be able to speak. (Lines 960 – 962)*

> Nthabi: *At home I used to be told to learn to speak because if I did not speak it will not be easy for me to mix with hearing people. One aunt even suggested that if I did not speak there was no way I could work and get married. (Lines 988 – 992)*

The type of parents described in this section fits the category of those people who believe in deafness as a pathological condition as described in Chapter 2. With statements like the ones given above, it appears that many parents in Lesotho wished their children could learn to speak. In their view, the ability to speak would make it easy for them to integrate into the hearing society when they grew up. According to

Akamatsu and Cole (2000), this view further delays language development and postpones the parents' understanding and acceptance of deaf children and their needs.

The findings also revealed that, there were however, other parents who acknowledged LSL as the natural language of their deaf children. This position was taken mostly by those parents who had had an exposure to deaf people before. With these parents, an attempt was made to communicate with the deaf child using signs. For this effort, deaf children reported their appreciation:

> Khasu: *In my family everybody tries to communicate with me in Sign Language. My mother even allowed me to stay with a deaf adult. She wanted me to learn Sign Language from her. (Lines 1,110 – 1, 113)*

> Liteboho: *My parents told me they were taking me to Kananelo Centre for the Disabled because in this school I would meet other deaf children who would teach me how to sign properly. (Lines 1,132 – 1, 135)*

It was indicated in Chapter 5 that parents there were eager to learn Sign Language in order to break the language barrier that existed between them and their deaf children. This point also came out in the response below:

> Jase: *My father attended a workshop that was organized by NADL where parents were taught signs to communicate with deaf children. When he came home, he wanted me to teach him more signs. He understands Sign Language better now and we can communicate better. (Lines 628 – 632)*

6.1.5 Schooling history

In order to get a clear perspective on the education of deaf children in Lesotho, the study investigated the schooling history of those deaf children who were out of school when the study was conducted. As a way of introduction, these children were asked whether they had ever been to school or not. The findings indicate that two out the 20

interviewed children had never been to school while 18 had been to school. When the children who had never been to school were requested to provide reasons why this was so, one mentioned being an orphan as the primary reason:

> Mohapi: *I had no parents and there was nobody who was willing to pay for my fees. (Lines 830 – 832)*

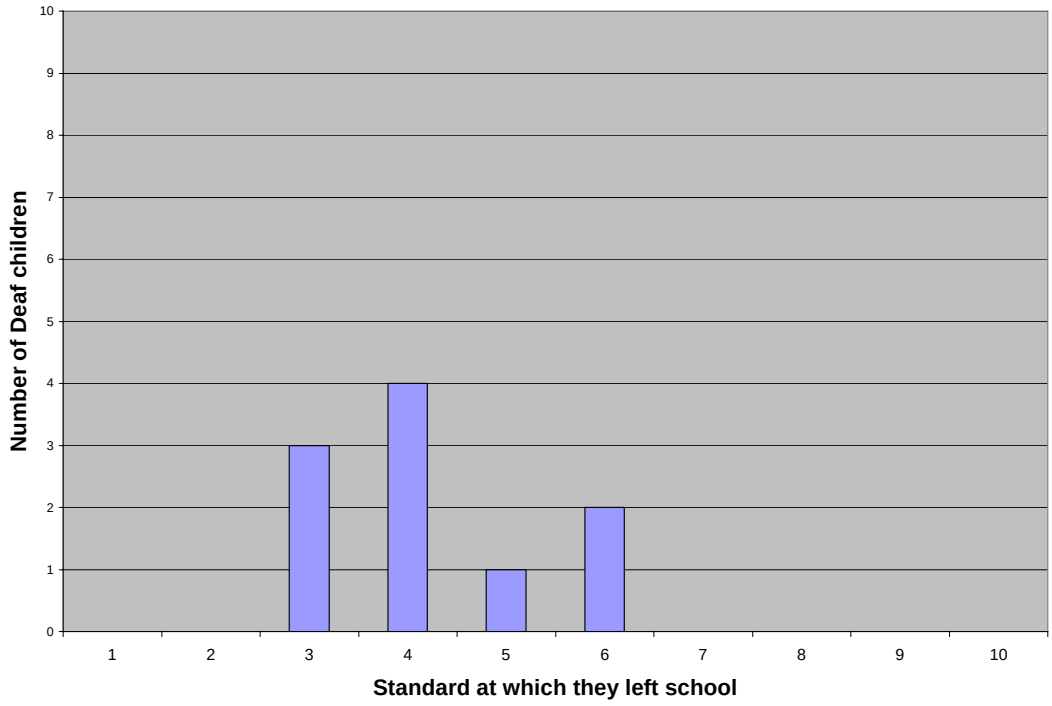
The other one brought in her deafness as the possible reason. She was of the opinion that because she was deaf, her parents felt she did not deserve to be educated like her hearing siblings.

> Tseleng: *All other children in my family, including the younger ones attend school. It is only me who had never gone to school. (Lines 1,157 – 1,159)*

This response demonstrated that sometimes, parents did not reconcile the needs of the family as a whole with the special needs of the deaf child (Gregory, 1976). Often, some parents paid more attention to the needs of the hearing children than those of the deaf one. Yet, the study carried out by Eriks-Brophy *et al* (2007) reveals that maintaining balance in the family with respect to the needs of all siblings was essential to maintaining healthy family relationships.

As indicated in Chapter 5, the interviews with both the teachers of deaf children and the parents revealed that many deaf learners become drop-outs. Out of the 18 deaf children who had been to school, 10 dropped out before they could complete their primary school education. Figure 5 below indicates the levels at which they left school.

Figure 5: The level at which deaf children dropped out of school



More than half (7) of the children who dropped out of school were attending mainstream schools while the remaining attended at one of the schools for the deaf in Lesotho. When children who were attending mainstream schools were asked why they left school, these children put forward a variety of reasons. The majority of them blamed the language that was used around the schools where they attended, including the medium of instruction. They complained that they were taught by teachers who lacked communication skills in LSL.

Lefu: *In class the teacher was using oral language which I did not understand. I could not even ask other children to explain to me because they also did not communicate in signs like I do. (Lines 1,173 – 1,176)*

In addition to lack of skills in LSL, a large percentage of the drop-outs believed they were taught by teachers who lacked knowledge on how to teach deaf children. For instance, they complained that teachers did not pay attention to how deaf children learn. They felt teachers were only interested in the hearing learners.

> Mofo: *The teacher was concentrating only on hearing learners. She did not give a damn whether I was following anything or not. I was left to do things on my own. I felt left out completely. (Lines 837 – 840)*

> Thabiso: *I found that it was useless because teachers used to speak too fast. It was a struggle for me to follow what was being taught. I used to feel embarrassed when I could not get anything right. (Lines 689 – 692)*

These children expressed their concern about the fact that teachers had low expectations of them.

> Seseli: *Because the teacher did not care whether I was learning anything, I did not enjoy going to school. Now I know it is because people believe deaf people are stupid. For some time I was going to school because I had to and not because I was going to learn. (Lines 795 – 799)*

Some of the dropouts recalled how hearing children used to make fun of their deafness. One deaf child went to great pains to point out his experience in a mainstream school:

> Khasu: *It was like all the children in the school had never seen a deaf person before. So, in class, even outside, I would see some of them pointing fingers at me and laughing. Some would try to speak to me and when I used signs to show that I did not understand what they were saying, they also laughed. It was like they thought I was not a human being like them. I felt so humiliated that I felt I did not belong there. It was really unbearable. (Lines 1,116 – 1,123)*

Throughout the interview, deaf children also expressed the sense of being uncomfortable when surrounded by so many hearing people, most of whom were not aware of LSL:

> Thuso: *It was difficult being among so many hearing people. Most of them were confused when they realized that I could not speak like them. I found it difficult to contribute in the conversations and this was sometimes interpreted as unwilling to participate on my part. (Lines 1,190 – 1,194)*

It has already been mentioned that while the majority of the drop-outs were attending mainstream schools, few of these children went to the school for the deaf. When they were asked why they had to drop out of this school before they could complete their primary school education, all of them mentioned the approach that was used in the school to teach deaf children as their major concern. One of these drop-outs reported:

> Thuso: *The teachers used to force us to speak. If we could not produce words, they used to force a spoon in our throats and tell us to speak. It was useless because we were not able to speak like the hearing children. (Lines 1,195 – 1,199)*

Another one recalled that:

> Fumane: *We were not allowed to sign. If we were caught signing, we were punished. (Lines 1,215 – 1,116)*

The investigations revealed that, like many schools for the Deaf in the sub-Saharan Africa and internationally, which were established in the 19th century, the above-mentioned school was once a staunch supporter of oralism. Since the majority of these schools were set up by the European missionaries, the tendency in these schools was to follow the examples of schools for the Deaf in Great Britain and France which did not allow any form of manual communication (Kiyaga and Moores, 2005). As was pointed out in Chapter 2, the main aim of this approach was to integrate deaf children into the normal society, to be able to communicate with hearing people. However,

their effort to teach speech and lip-reading yielded negative results as many learners left school.

6.1.5.1 Language practices in their schools

One of the main aims of this study was to establish how the current language-in-education policy and language practices in the schools of the Deaf impacted on the education of deaf learners. As a result, Deaf learners were questioned about the languages used in the schools in which they attended in order to infer the status of LSL in the education of deaf learners. When asked to mention the languages that are used in their schools, the children gave three languages; namely, Sesotho, English and LSL.

To follow up on this question, the learners were further asked which languages were used as medium of instruction. It was interesting to note that their responses confirmed what the teachers had said in Chapter 5. Learners from School C reported that both Sesotho and English were used as mediums of instruction. On the one hand, those children who were either in Standard 6 or Standard 7 when the study was being carried out explained that the only time they were taught in LSL was when their hard of hearing teacher was present. On the other hand, those children who were in Standard 4, mentioned that the only time they had a chance of being taught in LSL was when there was an interpreter in class.

However, there were different opinions from children from School A and School B regarding the medium of instruction used in their schools. More than half (60%) of

the interviewed children believed that in their schools, the medium of instruction was LSL:

Bokako: *Our teachers always sign when they teach us. (Line 890)*

Contrary to the above view, among the remaining learners, 30% were of the opinion that in as much as the teachers were signing, they were not using LSL.

Lintle: *Hearing teachers do not use LSL when they teach us. They do not know it. They are just using simple signs. That is why most of the time we do not follow them. (Lines 1,241 – 1,244)*

Another learner said:

Khopolo: *Hearing teachers are not using correct LSL. When they sign, they are speaking at the same time. They are signing Sesotho or English. (Lines 807 – 809)*

6.1.5.2 Deaf children's perspectives on how deaf education could be improved

As was the case with the informants in Chapter 5, the study also investigated the views of deaf children about the situation of deaf education in Lesotho. Confirming what other participants had already said, deaf children reported that they were not happy with their education as deaf people in Lesotho. Their responses indicated that to them, the major concern was the fact that they were excluded from the market place. They attributed their inability to secure jobs to the low academic results that they obtain at school in the absence of LSL. This is how one learner put it:

Letlotlo: *Deaf children cannot achieve high education because the schools do not employ teachers who know LSL. LSL is the only language that can help deaf children to pass and be educated. Now that deaf children are not highly educated, they cannot be employed anywhere. (Lines 1,269 – 1,273)*

They expressed their desire to reach the same academic levels as their hearing peers. However, following their parents, the majority of these children criticized the government's failure to provide education for deaf children beyond Standard 7. To them, this was an indication that the government cared less about their wellbeing. At this point, another child mentioned the fact that deaf children did not need *just parents,* but parents with financial muscles in order for them to access education beyond Standard 7. To elaborate on his response this child said:

> Khosi: *Even if a deaf child can pass Standard 7, it is no use because there are no high schools for them. It is only those children whose parents have resources that can go beyond primary school. They take them to schools in South Africa. (Lines 679 – 683)*

Although the fact that deaf education in Lesotho was not satisfactory was a unanimous response, 12 out of 51 children who participated in the study, including those who had never been to school had no idea how deaf education could be improved. They explained that they only knew that the education of deaf children in Lesotho was not good, but they did not know how it could be improved. The remaining 39 had varied suggestions. In their view, deaf education in Lesotho could be improved if:

- LSL could be used as medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf;
- Schools employ teachers who are adequately skilled in LSL;
- Teachers could familiarize themselves with Deaf culture and issues surrounding deaf education;
- Teachers' attitude towards deaf children and LSL could change;
- Free primary education could be provided in schools for the deaf like in the mainstream schools; and

- Deaf children could be accommodated in mainstream secondary and high schools for a start.

Without detailing these points again here, it can be said that deaf children's views were consistent with the ones given by the policy makers, teachers and parents in Chapter 5. In common with these informants, deaf children identified language as the fundamental barrier for them to achieve quality education like their hearing counterparts. They argued that deaf children could learn effectively if LSL was used as the medium of instruction in schools where deaf children are admitted.

Coupled with the issue of language, these children expressed their desire to have deaf children educated in a school environment that respected their language and culture. Deaf learners were critical of the quality of teachers they are exposed to. They were of the view that they were subjected to teachers who were ill-equipped to relate to and teach deaf children. As a result, they suggested that deaf children should be taught by teachers who were skilled signers and who were willing to learn the language more because, mastery would only occur over time. Furthermore, they mentioned that hearing teachers should change their negative attitude towards deaf children and LSL. They should be willing to modify their teaching strategies to suit the communicative needs and abilities of deaf students. Additionally, Sign language should be accepted as a true language like spoken languages. They felt that the perception that Sign Language was inferior to spoken languages should also change as this imposed significant limitation to the education of deaf children and their lives in general.

Finally, like the other participants in Chapter 5, they criticized the government of Lesotho for excluding the schools for the deaf from the policy of free primary education and for not making it possible for deaf learners to learn beyond primary level. They also suggested that more deaf adults should be brought into the education of deaf children.

According to Akamatsu and Cole (2000), the current major trend in the education of children with disabilities, including the deaf, is to place them in regular classrooms. The benefits of inclusive education include higher academic achievements for students with disabilities because of higher expectation in the mainstream and greater opportunity to learn skills necessary to function in the community at large because of exposure to non-handicapped peer models. On the basis of this information, deaf children were also asked how they felt about mainstreaming. Those who had been integrated were strongly against the idea of mainstream schools. They felt that a mainstream environment was not good for their learning. They expressed their preference for being in a classroom with children with similar experiences and academic capabilities. This is echoed in these responses:

Tiisetso: *I used to like it when we were in the specialised school. There all the children were using Sign Language and we could understand what each one of us was saying. In the mainstream, hearing children are using oral language and we hardly ever get what they are saying. They also find it difficult to communicate with us. (Lines 1,290 – 1,295)*

Atang: *Because hearing children are able to follow the language that is being used in the classroom, they perform very well. This makes us look stupid. It is nice when it is only deaf children in the class and we compete amongst ourselves. (Lines 986 – 990)*

Tšehla: *The teachers in the mainstream schools do not know anything about teaching deaf children. They assume that deaf children*

should be taught in exactly the same way hearing children are taught. So they are not making an effort to meet our learning needs. (Lines 727 – 731)

The issue of interpreters resurfaced again here.

Napo: *In the mainstream school we are subjected to interpreters who are not very good in LSL. As a result they confuse us even more. (lines 1,313 – 1,315)*

What became interesting from these interviews was that there were few children (10%) who felt they could benefit from mainstream schools. According to them, this could only happen if deaf children were taught in separate units. This way, deaf children would be able to learn at their own pace in the language that was accessible to them, which is LSL. For these children, it was their opinion that being in a separate unit would make it possible for the deaf children to receive the benefits of mainstreaming while still having the opportunity to be in the company of other deaf children.

6.2 Summary of the findings

In chapters 5 and 6, I have presented findings from the data. From the onset, this study has sought to investigate the role and place of Lesotho Sign Language (LSL) in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the government of Lesotho instituted the current official bilingual national language-in-education policy in 1984, which stipulates that children will be taught in their mother tongue (Sesotho in this case) from Standard 1 up to Standard 4, thereafter, English will take over as a medium of instruction across the entire education system. The findings of the study revealed that despite the good intention of making education accessible through the use of the learner's first language, it has not been clear how the

government of Lesotho intended to achieve this with regards to deaf children. One of the implications has been that LSL, which is the first natural language to most deaf learners, is not sufficiently used in their education. Data from the observations revealed that deaf learners continue to be exposed to oral languages to which most of them have little access, if any.

The lack of access to what was being taught in class was central to the concerns of both the deaf learners and their parents. With the language-in-policy that leans only on Sesotho and English, it has been difficult for the government to invest on equipping teachers with skills in LSL. The exclusion of LSL in the planning of language in the education system is the main reason why there are no teachers who are fluent in this language. Lack of LSL in the education of deaf learners as both a medium of instruction and a subject has contributed to the unsatisfactory academic achievements of these learners.

6.3 Conclusion

The focus of chapter 5 was on the views of deaf children with regards to the role of LSL in their education. It was demonstrated that in the absence of sufficient LSL skills, particularly on the side of teachers, deaf children experienced difficulties in their learning. Their education problems were compounded by teachers who lacked knowledge of deafness, their learning needs and cultural background. The deaf children were unhappy that the teachers and the government held low expectations of them. They called for a change of attitude which would acknowledge that given a chance, they could perform like their hearing counterparts and study beyond Standard

7. The chapter has also attempted to provide a summary of the findings of the study as presented not only in chapter 6, but also in chapter 5.

CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

7.0 Introduction

The preceding chapters (5 and 6) presented the findings of the study. Chapter 7 is intended to discuss the major findings with respect to the place and role of Lesotho Sign Language in the education system of this country. This is done by clustering together the themes that were developed in chapters 5 and 6 and developing new ones. Each theme is discussed in relation to the data provided by different categories of participants. These themes will be used as the empirical evidence about the claim pertaining to the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf children. An attempt will be made during the analysis not to dismiss any utterance as irrelevant without looking into whatever implication it may hold for the participant's position. In addition, the discussion of the themes will concentrate on the rational choice model and Cummins' empowerment theory. The chapter will further discuss the implication of these findings for the education of deaf learners in Lesotho and conclusions will be drawn. In this chapter, the themes are used as headings.

Fundamental to the discussion of the role of LSL in the education of deaf learners is Cummins' empowerment theory (discussed in Chapter 2), which stipulates the elements in the organization of schooling that affect the extent to which minority students are empowered or disabled. In this context, empowerment means "the process of acquiring power, or the process of transition from lack of control to the acquisition of control over one's life and immediate environment" (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991:138). Baker (1996:345) summarizes Cummins' framework in three important statements. First, language minority students, instructed through the

minority language for all or part of school day, perform as well in second language skills as compared to students instructed totally through the second language. Baker gives an example of research by Verhoeven (1994) on minority learners, which indicated the positive transfer of literacy skills from the first to the second language. Second, to the extent that instruction through a minority language is effective in developing academic proficiency in the minority language, transfer of this proficiency in the minority language to the majority language will occur given adequate exposure and motivation to learn the language. Third, the community and school liaison, power and status relationships all need to be considered in a proper bilingual education theory. In the next sections, through the discussion of Cummins' Empowerment theory, I have provided arguments in support for the use of LSL in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho.

7.1 LSL, language and language-in-education policies in Lesotho

Since the present study focuses on the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf learners, LSL constitutes the main category of investigation. As a result, in the majority of the data collected for this study, there is a recurrence of this category.

7.1.1 The policy makers' perspectives

In every nation, there is a relationship between the country's language policy and planning activities and education (Muthwii, 2007). Considered from the perspective of status planning, this relationship refers to the choice of languages as media of instruction and as subjects (Tsui and Tollefson, 2004). As mentioned in the previous chapters, Lesotho language-in-education accords both Sesotho (as the mother tongue for the majority of Basotho speakers) and English as mediums of instruction and as

subjects. Despite the good intention of making education accessible through the use of the learner's first language, the ways to achieve these were not specified. Resulting from this, the use of LSL (which is the first language of deaf learners) in the primary schools, particularly in the schools for the Deaf is very limited.

At least two remarks could be made regarding the provisions of this policy which makes specific reference to only Sesotho and English. First, is the assumption that Basotho are a mono-lingual nation, and therefore, all learners are native Sesotho speakers. And second, that all Basotho only communicate through oral languages. In order for a language to be considered for status planning, it should be clear what the current state of that particular language is regarding, among others, its linguistic capacity; its social meaning for the community and for the persons outside the community (Webb, 2008). The findings of this study revealed that there was a clear and general acceptance among policy makers that, up to today, LSL had not yet been considered as a fully-fledged language capable of functioning effectively as both a language of instruction for its users and a subject in the schools for the deaf. In fact, one of the policy makers was honest enough to admit that she had only heard about Sign Language recently. Another one even asked me whether Sign Language was written or not. Perhaps, it could be remarked that policy makers in Lesotho still equate language with speech. Given the fact that policy makers in Lesotho lack knowledge with regard to LSL, it would perhaps seem unreasonable to expect them to have accorded any status to this language.

What, then, are the implications of the policy that presumes a population of Basotho learners who 1) speak only Sesotho as their first language, 2) require English as a

vehicle for access into the country's economy, and 3) ignore the existence of LSL? Firstly, education is supposed to make room for learners from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, with the education policy like the one described above, the findings revealed that in Lesotho, LSL, which is the first natural language to most deaf learners, is not sufficiently used in their education.

Secondly, with the language-in-education policy that leans only on spoken languages, it is difficult for the government to invest in equipping teachers with skills in LSL. The exclusion of LSL in the planning of language in the education system is the reason why there are no teachers who are fluent in this language. The government's neglect of the conditions of teachers in the school of the Deaf in Lesotho is treated as a serious concern in this study. Thirdly, with the language-in-education policy which supports the use of Sesotho and English as the only languages of teaching and learning, this situation could be interpreted as an indication that deaf learners in Lesotho are being submerged or assimilated into Sesotho and English. With its one-size-fits-all curriculum, the education system in Lesotho does not only force deaf learners to learn through the mediums of Sesotho and English, but they also have to learn these languages as compulsory subjects. Moreover, having only Sesotho and English in the education of Basotho learners, perpetuates a situation whereby oral languages are regarded as more prestigious than signed languages.

When commenting on language policy and planning Bamgbose (1991:109) argues that "the basis for language planning is the perception of language problems requiring a solution". All the interviewed policy makers acknowledged the relationship between language and education and pointed out numerous negative effects that the exclusion

of LSL in the current language-in-education had on the education of deaf learners. For instance, they pointed out that in the absence of LSL, deaf learners did not benefit from what was taught in class. They further observed that due to lack of LSL, deaf learners did not learn in the same pace as their hearing counterparts. It was interesting to note that policy makers were aware that the education policy did not favour deaf learners and had been like that for some time. Additionally, all of them reported that there was no indication of the country developing new policy in the near future. It was also interesting to note that emerging from their responses, there was no indication of the steps they were going to take to change the current situation. On the contrary, there was an observable sense of helplessness on their part as to whether they could influence the government to develop a new language policy which should cater for the needs of deaf learners. This situation brought into perspective the question of power that policy makers had to develop language policies and ensure that these policies were being implemented.

Muthwii (2007) points out that language problems in many African schools can be traced back to the type of language policies that African nations have decided. From the responses of the policy makers, it appears that language problems in schools could also be solved depending on the attitudes and power that language policy makers have to develop and ensure that policies are being effectively implemented. In this regard, it could be argued that, for as long as language policy makers in Lesotho do not take full responsibility for the elevation of the status of LSL, there is little hope that the current situation of deaf education could be changed. Language policy makers have the responsibility of ensuring that LSL attains value; not only academic value, but

also social value. By social value, it is meant that LSL should be promoted to the extent that it is accepted by the society and its usage is widespread.

Also arising from responses of policy makers, there was a need to question whether or not the Office of the Inspectorate should have monitored the implementation of the current language-in-education policy. When asked what role the Office of the Inspectorate plays in ensuring that education policies were being effectively implemented, the member of this office who participated in the study responded that her job was merely to observe whether teachers were in class and were teaching. In my view, the Office of the Inspectorate could be charged with the task of ensuring that the policies of the Ministry of Education are fully implemented, including the language policy. It is essential that the ministry should have such information in order to determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the policies it had developed. Of more concern was the fact that the inspectorate's visits to schools did not include the schools for the deaf. The reason advanced was that the government did not have direct control over them since they were owned by the churches. This response did not make sense since it was indicated in chapter 3 that the majority of schools in Lesotho are owned by churches, yet they were all inspected. What becomes clear is that deaf education in Lesotho remains unevaluated, partly because the schools for the deaf do not belong to the government.

However, there is also an indication that the government has very little interest in the education of deaf children. This assumption draws support from the fact that, while it is generally accepted that the academic performance of deaf learners in Lesotho does not match that of their hearing counterparts, there has not been any study

commissioned by the government, focusing specifically on the education of deaf children. Studies that are concerned with the learners' performance focus on the performance on specific subjects (see Kokome, 1990; Moloi, 1999; Nyaba-nyaba, 2002). A likely reason for lack of empirical research on the education of deaf learners is the noticeable lack of knowledge among policy makers with regard to deaf children who use LSL as a means of communication. If policy makers do not carry out research on issues of deaf education in Lesotho, the implication is that they do not see the frustration faced by deaf learners in the environment where they are surrounded by oral languages because they are distant from them.

The fact that the Lesotho government did not plan to develop a formal language policy did not necessarily mean that policy makers were not aware of the need for one. Notwithstanding, it should also be noted that the results of the interviews indicated that in Lesotho, there was no clear procedure for language planning. This became evident when policy makers were asked to mention factors that should be taken into consideration when planning a language policy. The majority of them seemed unsure and their answers were accompanied by a lot of hesitation. This was captured in the response below.

> Ts'eli: *All stakeholders should be involved, that is, speakers of different languages. (Lines 76 – 77)*

In addition, none of them was able to come up with more than one factor. Nonetheless, when asked, 'If Lesotho was to develop an explicitly written language policy, what the aims and objectives of such a policy would be'; policy makers expressed their desire to have a language policy that would develop all languages that are spoken in the country.

It was interesting to note that policy makers in Lesotho shared Reagan's (1995; 2002) view, that language policy and language planning can only be effective if policy makers take into consideration, among others, the community towards which it is directed. That is why they regarded the involvement of all stakeholders as important for the success of this process. What also becomes apparent from the study is that national language planning in Lesotho is guided by, among other things, the cost-benefit analysis. That is, they take into consideration the costs and benefits that the choice of language planning would involve. This is because cost-benefit analysis within the context of a policy weighs up costs and benefits (material and as well as nonmaterial ones) and then makes decisions about implementation. In this regard, some of the participants were sceptical that the government would be willing to invest on the LSL which is used only a small section of the community. It should be noted, however, that although cost-benefit analysis approach to language policy and planning takes into consideration the issue of cost, it does not necessarily disadvantage minority languages.

Policy makers also mentioned the importance of a language policy that will take into consideration the choices and decisions of speakers. The issue of choice also features among the factors that Reagan considers important for language planning. In my view, Reagan's mention of peoples' choices draws insights from the rationale choice theory. As shown in Chapter 2, within this theory, language planning involves a lot of decision-making in which a rational choice between alternative solutions is made. Factors that inform the decisions that people arrive at include, among others, the cost involved. It was interesting that this factor came up in the policy makers' responses. One policy maker was sceptical that the government would be willing to invest in the

education of small communities. What became clear from this response was that the government of Lesotho viewed number as an important factor when prioritizing the needs of the communities. This view perpetuates the assumption that languages spoken by the majority of the citizens are more important than those spoken by the minority. It is also the same attitude that denies LSL the prescribed status in the language policy practice, for example, as a mother tongue to deaf children and a language which should be used as language of instruction.

Despite the problem of the implementation of the current language-in-education policy, data collected from policy makers supported the inclusion of LSL in this policy. They emphasized the importance of LSL as a foundation for deaf children in learning other subjects. They shared the general view that, using the child's first language for academic learning is the quickest and most efficient way to achieve conceptual and academic knowledge (McCaffery *et al.,* 2003). In relation to deaf learners, the policy makers believed that the problem of oral languages as the only mediums of instruction, especially that of lack of comprehension on the part of the learners, could be solved by the inclusion of LSL.

7.1.2 Teachers' perspectives

In order to determine the possibility of LSL being included in the current language-in-education policy, the policy makers' responses were weighed against those of the teachers. Despite the fact that teachers lacked sufficient skills in LSL, they expressed their support for the inclusion of LSL in the current national language-in-education policy. Some of them mentioned communication in the language understood by the learners as key in their work as educators. Although teachers appeared to be searching

for ways in which the inclusion could be done, the interviews revealed contradictions between the importance that was accorded to LSL in the education of deaf learners and the actual practices related to it. Although both the policy makers and teachers of deaf children saw the need for the inclusion of LSL in the national language-in-education policy, they were quick to warn that adapting LSL as a medium of instruction would be expensive for the government. Their stand was based on the knowledge that to implement such a policy would require teachers who were competent in LSL. In addition, teachers would need special support and instructional materials to ensure effective teaching and learning. This is reflected in the following utterance:

> Cheli: *The government would have to train many teachers in LSL and this could be expensive. (Lines 240 – 241)*

It was evident that like the policy makers, the teachers felt the whole process would be too expensive for the government. In this regard, it may be argued that the exclusion of LSL is rationalized in terms of among other things, 'expenses'. It is such attitudes towards LSL that may be considered as major obstacle in the development and use of this language.

In addition to being the language of teaching and learning, teachers also accepted that it would be ideal to introduce LSL as a subject in schools for the deaf. In their view, this would enable deaf learners to master this language and be more competent in it. However, they mentioned the challenges that introducing LSL as a subject would bring. There was fear among the teachers that introducing LSL as a subject would temper with the current curriculum and time-tables. For instance, time for other subjects would have to be reduced in order to accommodate this new subject. In

addition to curriculum and time-table constraints, lack of signs needed for some curriculum content was considered as another factor that would preclude the opportunity of introducing LSL as a subject.

Emerging from their responses, it was clear that in as much as the teachers saw the need for the introduction of LSL as a subject, the demands of the National Curriculum and the PSLE were the main areas of concern. This was due to the pressure that every learner who sits for this exam should pass Sesotho, English and Mathematics in order for them to pass the examination. Because of the importance of passing the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), teachers specifically teach to meet the demands of this examination. The teachers' responses suggest that the education system in Lesotho perpetuates a system where both Sesotho and English are taught as though they are the only languages used in the country. It is the system that assumes that Basotho children do not need to learn other minority languages that are spoken in the country. More importantly, it assumes that language is only spoken, and as a result, deaf learners are forced to learn and learn through only the oral languages to which they have little access. While the language-in-education policy does not readily acknowledge that both Sesotho and English are considered superior to other languages in the country, it does so implicitly by being silent about their use in the education of their speakers.

7.2 The teachers' linguistic skills and professional training

Teachers are regarded as key role players and possible catalysts to the solution of unsatisfactory deaf education. Research on the education of deaf children emphasizes the fact that deaf learners need skilled teachers to develop language and

communication skills (including speech and Sign Language). This means that teachers should have knowledge of different communication paradigms (discussed in Chapter 2) available to deaf learners. The knowledge of these paradigms will help them make well informed choices, based on the needs of learners. However, the results of the current research revealed lack of knowledge among teachers of deaf learners in Lesotho, of communication paradigms used in teaching deaf learners, including skills in LSL. In addition, it is the teacher who, with appropriate and adequate education and training, will "become effective 'state-of-the-art' educators of the deaf" (Storbeck, 1998:17). Yet, in Lesotho, deaf learners continue to be taught by teachers who lack this training. This view is evident throughout the interviews.

7.2.1 Teachers' perspectives

It is a well-known fact that, owing to the crucial role that they play in children's education, teachers are required to be trained before going into the classroom. Yet, in Lesotho, as in countries such as South Africa (Storbeck, 1998), teachers in the schools for the Deaf, who are required to educate learners of a different culture (Deaf culture), with specific linguistic needs, do not necessarily have to have any specific training and qualification. Throughout the interviews, many teachers expressed their frustration in the fact that they were not sufficiently prepared to teach deaf learners. They identified lack of skills in LSL as the main obstacle in their effort to impart knowledge to these learners. This feeling of frustration was experienced even among teachers who had training in deaf education. Despite being trained, these teachers admitted that they would have been better prepared if their training included LSL. This is echoed in the response below:

Tema: *Although I have been in deaf education, I still wish I was also fluent in LSL because then I could be in a position to impart knowledge to these learners better. (Lines 290 – 293)*

It could be argued that having training in deaf education did not necessarily guarantee that they were the best teachers for deaf learners in LSL.

Not only was the ability to sign the main concern for teachers, but the ability to sign effectively. It was clear that teachers were placing the responsibility on the government for not equipping them with the necessary language skills. The majority of teachers reported that the little LSL that they had, was learnt from the children themselves. Two of the interviewed teachers reported that although they had Sign Language skills, they had been trained in American Sign Language. This meant that they were still not fluent in LSL. Some teachers related the pain they felt when they could not get the message through to the learners and when they could not understand what the learners were saying. Some of them were frank enough in admitting that their decisions to teach in the schools for the deaf learners were not dependent on their academic qualifications, rather, on the failure to acquire the desired jobs as well as for convenience. Such admission was not only an indication that it has become commonly accepted that anybody can teach in the schools for the Deaf, but also that in Lesotho, the education of deaf learners is not yet being taken seriously.

In as much as teachers expressed the desire to know LSL, their lack of effort to learn this language contradicted this pledged desire. For instance, all the interviewed teachers were aware that NADL offered LSL classes for free every Saturday in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho. It did not emerge from the study that any of the teachers ever considered attending those classes. It is possible that this was due to

time or financial constraints. However, at School C, one deaf adult who was involved in the interpretation project that was mentioned in chapter 5, volunteered to offer LSL lessons to teachers in that school for free, during lunch breaks. During my visits to that school, I observed that not all teachers attended the lessons. For those who did, their attendance was not regular. Some teachers that I informally asked why they did not attend the lessons, complained that LSL was difficult to learn and that they were too old to learn a new language.

Although there is a school of thought that second language acquisition is easier in the early years of one's life (Meara, 1998; Moloi, 1999), the teachers' reluctance to learn LSL based on their age is merely an excuse because adults continue learning new languages everyday. What seemed lacking from these teachers was the will and motivation to learn LSL. Surprisingly, the response that LSL was difficult to learn also came from some of the teachers who participated in the investigation, who had initially expressed the desire to know the language. It is possible that the fact that the administration did not require teachers in this school to learn LSL affected their motivation to attend the lessons. Even more significant is the fact that these teachers could not be blamed for the academic performance of the deaf learners in their school. It was clear in their minds that the education of the deaf learners was the responsibility of the deaf teacher. It looked like the presence of deaf learners in their classrooms did not concern or involve them. Whatever their excuses, the insufficient attendance could be viewed as an indication that the need for LSL was not an immediate priority for them. It could also depict the negative attitude by hearing teachers towards this language. While there was a general reluctance to attend LSL classes, few teachers found it very enjoyable and fascinating to learn LSL.

In addition to skills in LSL, the interviews revealed that most of the teachers of deaf learners in Lesotho had not received training specifically tailored for the teaching of such learners. The findings revealed that only two teachers in the schools for the deaf had received specialized training to teach deaf learners. The implication is that the rest of the teachers may not be able to provide appropriate education to these learners. In turn, the current status quo may perpetuate the exclusion of deaf learners from accessing quality education.

Language forms an integral part in ones' culture. Yet, none of the interviewed teachers mentioned the importance of knowing Deaf culture in the teaching of a deaf learner. The silence could be attributed to the fact that these teachers did not know much about deaf learners. It emerged from the findings of the study that this lack of knowledge about deaf learners was, in turn, due to lack of professional training available to them. Not only were teachers unaware of Deaf culture, but they lacked knowledge in the teaching approaches which were suitable for the learning needs of deaf children. While there is a general understanding of the importance of cultural background in the development of individual learning styles (Coelho, 1998), the findings of the study revealed that in the schools for the deaf in Lesotho, teachers employed instructional styles that were not suitable for the learning styles of deaf learners. For instance, in their responses, some learners complained that teachers were not aware of Deaf culture and as such, they employed methods that did not benefit them in terms of academic achievement. The majority of these learners were not able to overcome this mismatch and found it difficult to adapt to the learning environment they were being exposed to. Consequently, the teachers' lack of awareness of Deaf

culture (McKee and Biederman, 2003) contributed to a state where the majority of deaf learners leave school functionally illiterate (Storbeck, 1999).

From the foregoing discussion, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the classroom behaviours in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho do not parallel Cummins' recommendations with regards to language and culture. Cummins' theory (1986) suggests that the extent to which the minorities' languages and cultures are incorporated into the school programme is significantly related to their academic success. To elaborate, Cummins' (1991) argues that a school programme that accepts and respects the language and culture of its students empowers them to feel confident enough to risk getting involved in the learning process. This is because deaf learners learn best in a classroom that supports and promotes their cultural values.

7.2.2 The deaf children' perspectives

LSL appeared to be central in the deaf learners' experience of education; the lack thereof, caused frustration and anger. Throughout the interviews, deaf children spoke openly about their experiences in the hands of teachers who lacked LSL skills. The learners' anger was evident when they talked about how they were denied the opportunity to be educated in the language to which they have full access, namely, LSL. The use of LSL was initially not allowed in School B where some learners attended. Some learners related the different ways that teachers used to try and 'take out deafness in them' such as, forcing a spoon in their mouths in their attempt to make them speak. These experiences were related by the learners, not only to express discomfort with the demeaning beliefs about deaf people and their language, but also

to illustrate their concern about attitudinal obstacles that surround deaf learners among hearing teachers.

The teachers in the above-mentioned school were practising the oral approach to teaching deaf children (discussed in Chapter 2). For these teachers, oralism would prepare deaf children for mainstream life among hearing people. Although the intention might have been good, it is also possible that by not allowing learners to sign in school means that these children were asked to mask their deafness. Even the method that was used to force these children to speak was very inhuman. That is why those learners who could not bear this kind of treatment were left with no choice, but to drop out of school.

Insufficient use of LSL in the classrooms meant that deaf learners could not fully participate in the classroom proceedings. The lack of access to what was being taught in class led to the majority of deaf learners putting the blame on the teachers' lack of LSL skills. For this reason, many of these learners felt frustrated at the end of the year when they were told that they had failed the class. Two important questions could be asked here. Firstly, 'Is it fair for the teacher to refuse a deaf learner who has failed to proceed to the next class when the teacher is aware that the learner has not been learning anything throughout the entire year?' Secondly, 'Does it make sense for the deaf learner to demand that he/she be promoted to the next class, knowing very well that he/she has had little access to what was taught?' From the professional point of view, it is correct for the teacher not to promote a learner who has not met the required standard for the promotion. But what remains crucial is whether or not the teachers in the schools for the deaf in Lesotho are making enough effort to ensure that

deaf learners fully access what is being taught. On the side of the learners, promotion to the next class boosts their self-esteem. For them being in the same class for a long time would confirm the assumption that hearing people have about them; that they are not intelligent enough to cope with the academic rigour. They would rather be pushed until they write the national examination, PSLE. Even if they fail, at least they would have sat for that examination.

The fact that the teachers' inability to use appropriate LSL hampered the deaf learners' learning was also evident during the observations. Due to their inability to express themselves effectively in this language, teachers were forced to repeat the same point over and over again. Even in instances where learners attempted to ask questions, it took a long time before the teacher could understand. Sometimes, it would be the other learners (those who could still speak, although with some difficulty) who would help clarify the question to the teacher. In some instances when learners could not follow what was being taught, they would lose concentration and start communicating (signing) amongst themselves ignoring the presence of the teacher. It is such behaviour that led to some hearing teachers to unwittingly label deaf learners stubborn. This kind of response may indicate that teachers do not take responsibility of their incompetence and ineffective teaching in LSL as the main factor in the learners' seemingly poor behaviour.

Learners were unhappy that teachers lacked skills in LSL. In their view, the teachers' insufficient skill in this language was the main reason they were not performing to the best of their ability. Although they appreciated the fact that some teachers were making an effort to sign, they pointed out that they were just using oral language

which was accompanied by signs. They did not regard this as communicating through LSL. Their disapproval of this type of communication was depicted in the following utterance:

> Lisebo: *When our teacher signs we do not understand what she is saying. She does not use LSL. Although she uses signs, she does this but in actual fact she is using oral language. She is not deaf and as a result she cannot know our language. We need teachers who are also deaf because we can speak the same language. (Lines 710 – 715)*

The type of communication mentioned by the above respondent is the one referred to as 'the sign supported oral language' (Knight and Swanwick, 2002). This is a situation whereby spoken language is supported by signs. Although Knight and Swanwick regard sign supported oral languages as a way of supporting the learner's access to spoken language, they argue that this could create problems to deaf learners who have no access to the spoken form of the language in question. This explains why children in the schools for the Deaf could not easily understand their teachers, even when they were signing.

The deaf learners also mentioned the fact that teachers did not know them as deaf learners, including their culture and learning needs, and this was seen as another obstacle in deaf education. For instance, research on deaf education indicates that deaf children benefit if teachers look directly at the learners as they teach. This is because visual attention is very important in communication with deaf children (Knoors, *et al.,* 2003). However, the findings revealed that teachers in the three schools did not take these factors into considerations. These resulted in the deaf children's low academic achievements.

7.2.3 Parents' perspectives

The importance of LSL in the education of deaf learners was echoed by the parents. Some of them expressed unhappiness at the fact that their children were taught by teachers who were not fluent in this language. The teachers' lack of proper communication suitable for the education needs of the deaf learners led to some parents to blame teachers for their children's lack of interest in school. The fact that the inefficient use of LSL was also responsible for high rate of dropout was supported by this angry parent when she said:

> 'Malefa: *One day my child refused to go to school. When I asked why he did not want to go to school, he replied by also asking me a question. He asked, "What do you want me to go to school and do? Learn? How do you expect me to learn if the teacher is speaking and I do not hear? I am not going. I will never go there again". It hurt me so badly because I understood what he meant. From that day on, whenever he does not feel like going to school, I do not force him. I do not blame him any more. I blame only the school for the teachers who teach our children. (Lines 357 – 365)*

Although they were unhappy with teachers' lack of sills in LSL, there is no clear indication from the results of the study that the parents themselves have made sufficient effort to learn this language. On the contrary, the results revealed that some parents were content that other siblings became 'interpreters'. Several reasons could be attributed to this behaviour. For instance, for those parents who consider oral languages as more superior than LSL, this could be one way of discouraging the deaf child to use LSL. In this regard, McKee (2005) argues that the parents' inability to communicate effectively in Sign Language, may not only impact negatively on the parent child relationship, but it may also result in the deaf child feeling like he or she is not receiving sufficient parental attention.

7.3 Language practices

The language of instruction (LOI) is a major determinant of participation, access and success in education (Leap and Mesthrie, 2000; Galabawa, 2004; Muthwii, 2007). It is a general view that children should learn through the medium of their first language, rather than a second language (Grosjean, 1992; Miti, 2000; Henrard, 2003). With regards to deaf learners, research advocates for the use of Sign Language as the language of learning (Glaser and Lorenzo, 2006). However, in Lesotho, this approach is still not being fully adopted.

7.3.1 Teachers' perspectives

From the interviews, teachers of the deaf children in Lesotho admitted that they were not at all times teaching through the medium of LSL, which is the first language to most deaf learners. The findings of the study indicated vividly that the lack of adequate skills in LSL was the main reason why teachers of the deaf learners in Lesotho preferred teaching through the medium of oral languages. Most of them reported lack of confidence in their abilities in LSL. For this reason, in a number of situations, they found it difficult to adjust their language use to meet the needs of the learners. In the process, they found themselves resorting to oral languages, to which most deaf learners did not have access.

One teacher said:

> Maki: *Every time I use oral language in front of these learners, I feel like I am making fun of them because I know they won't understand what I am saying. (Lines 184 – 187)*

From the emotive perception held by some teachers, they raised concerns that in the absence of appropriate communication skills, they usually felt like they were insensitive to the needs of deaf learners. In the absence of LSL skills, teachers "failed to provide the type of learning environment that could promote the learning outcomes

characterized by responsive, social contexts for learning" (Berryman and Glynn, 2003:59).

The use of LSL in the teaching and learning of deaf children has particular significance in the context of Cummins' empowerment theory. The theory recognizes the importance of mother tongue as the basis for second language learning. Regarding deaf children, Cummins believes they can learn oral language best through Sign Language. Based on his research in North America, Cummins comments that

> there are striking sociological, linguistic and educational similarities between the situation of deaf children and that of other ethnic minority children who experience academic failure …their language and culture have been denigrated and suppressed at school and their school failure blamed on linguistic and intellectual deficits…The reasons for incorporating ASL into the instructional programme offered to hearing-impaired children are essentially the same as is the case in other minority groups experiencing failure…(Cummins, 1984: 214).

It was mentioned in the previous chapters that this study proposes the adoption of the bilingual approach to the teaching of deaf learners in Lesotho. Some educators consider it as the best approach in the education of linguistic minorities (Cummins1986, 1989; Versfeld, 1995). It is more appropriate for deaf learners, who, compared to other linguistic minorities, are bilingual by nature. They are bilingual in the sense that they use both Sign Language and their second language in everyday life (Grosjean, 1992; Anderson, 1994). In support of Cummins' view, Cline and Frederickson (1996:96–7), state that in a bilingual school system, deaf children

> are given opportunity to demonstrate which language or communication system is the most beneficial for them in acquiring cognitive skills…For example, sign dominant students should be provided with sign dominant instruction, system dominant students should be provided with accurate, consistently signed English language models, and cueing or oral dominant students should be provided with an accurate, proficient cued or oral model for instruction.

The insufficient use of LSL in the teaching of deaf learners may imply that they are not only deprived of the opportunity to choose the communication system that best suits their learning needs, but are also denied the foundation of a first language for learning the second languages (Sesotho and English). Both Sesotho and English are the languages that deaf learners have to pass in order to obtain the PSLE certificate. From this practice, it can be argued that the Lesotho education system defines the educational success of learners in terms of learning Sesotho and English regardless of the level of accessibility of these languages to the learners. This assimilation approach creates problems for deaf learners. This point is reiterated by Okombo (1999) who states that hearing minorities on the one hand, can and, with some degree of inconvenience, often learn the majority languages in order to access the opportunities made available in those languages. The majority of deaf minorities, on the other hand, cannot use this strategy as they cannot learn a sound-based language that will put them on the same level as their hearing counterparts. As the results of the study indicate, the effect of this exposure to mainly oral languages is borne out by the low achievements and high drop-out rates for deaf children.

The choice of bilingualism is also based on the fact that it acknowledges the deaf child's need for a spoken language in its written form. The ability to read and write is considered a way of ensuring that a deaf child is afforded equal opportunities in the society where much of the information is contained in written form. This view is supported by DEAFSA (2005:2) which clarifies that "if the child has a normal Sign Language ability and is then taught to read and write a spoken/written language, they master the ability to speak much better". Therefore, bilingual programme supports speech training where possible.

7.3.2 The deaf children's perspectives

It emerged from the interviews that deaf learners felt that the minimal use of LSL in the education of deaf learners made it difficult for them to actively participate and perform to the best of their abilities like their hearing counterparts. This view is supported by Cummins (1991) who points out that the extent to which their language is incorporated into the school programme is significantly related to students' academic achievements. The same view is held by Baker (1996) who states that in situations where school incorporates, encourages and gives status to LSL, the chances of empowerment could be increased. Learners become actively involved in the learning process and are able to perform to the best of their abilities. What emerged from the responses of deaf learners who went to the mainstream school was the fact that in the absence of LSL in the classroom, they felt marginalized and excluded. This feeling, however, did not seem to result entirely from the fact that hearing teachers and hearing children did not use LSL, but rather, from the level of self-esteem of the deaf individuals themselves. One learner revealed that he felt embarrassed to participate in class because he made a weird sound when he tried to communicate. He expressed his frustration that hearing children made fun of him whenever he tried to communicate. This response indicates that deaf children can also be empowered if hearing children have more awareness on deaf people.

The reference to teachers with lack of skills in LSL was louder among learners who had been integrated into the mainstream school. They expressed their sense of being left out in the absence of the deaf teacher. They related how teachers in this school ignored their existence and taught only in oral language. It may be argued that in

order for deaf learners in Lesotho to benefit from the inclusive education and achieve academically, the school should provide an environment that takes into consideration the diverse learning needs of learners. Of these needs, the most important is the linguistic needs and cultural background of deaf learners.

When teachers and learners do not share the same common linguistic background, the potential exists that sometimes teachers assume that learners are following the lesson, when actually they are not. Additionally, the results of the observations indicated that in situations where a teacher used a language that was different from that of the learners, the classroom was usually characterized by passive and reticent learners. The result was that no or minimal learning took place. The fact that minority language speakers learn better in an environment where they are not passive draws support from Berryman and Glynn (2003:59-60) who assert that success in learning "can be achieved through co-operative learning where turns are taken, on an equitable basis both at an initiating and responding in learning interactions, so that there is true sharing of the task". This model of teaching and learning is described as reciprocal interaction (Cummins, 1986). Unlike the transmission model of teaching which views learners as buckets into which knowledge is willingly or unwillingly poured, the reciprocal models allows a dialogue between the teachers and the learners in both oral and written modalities (Baker, 1996:347). The interchange between the teacher and the learner presents an opportunity to practice collaborative and collective learning (Berryman and Glynn, 2003)

In the absence of teachers with adequate skills in LSL, some learners appreciated the effort that the mainstream school made to provide interpreters. However, a number of

concerns were raised in this regard. Firstly, they questioned the quality of interpreters. This stemmed from the fact that sometimes the interpretation from the interpreter contradicted what the teacher said. This may be attributed to lack of pre-teaching planning between the interpreter and the hearing teacher. Secondly, although it came from one learner, there was a feeling that the presence of two people in front of the class brought confusion. The learners' concerns about the quality of interpreters are justified because the use of interpreters was an attempt to reduce a situation where deaf learners missed out on what the hearing teachers communicated, thus depriving them of the opportunity to realize their learning potential. It was evident from the learners' responses that the interpreters did not help them achieve the intended aim of enabling them access to what was being taught as appropriately as possible. The need for having professional interpreters is supported by McKee (2005) who argues that it has the benefit of exchanging information appropriately and also demonstrating that interpreting enables deaf children to have equal access to good education.

Although the two interpreters who were engaged in the mainstream school were not part of the participants in this study, it could be claimed that the interpreters themselves experienced a lot of stress when they carried out their task. This claim holds, taking into consideration the fact that in addition to lack of professional skills, these interpreters who are not trained teachers are often expected to interpret concepts they are not familiar with. Interpreting is not only confusing to deaf learners, but also to hearing learners whose attention is distracted by the interpreter. The study does not doubt the important role that interpreters play in the education of deaf learners. However, experiences of deaf learners in Lesotho emphasize the need for teachers to make an effort to learn LSL so that they do not rely on interpreters. In cases where the

use of interpreters could not be avoided, interpreters should be involved in the preparation of the lesson to avoid giving the learners contradicting information.

7.4 Parents' and deaf adults' involvement

Of more importance in Cummins' theory is the involvement of parents in the education of minority learners such as the deaf. In all areas of their education, emphasis is placed on parents as equal partners in their children's education (Knight and Swanwick, 2002). Without sufficient parents' participation, deaf children stand the chance of missing out on the valuable contribution that parents bring in the education of their children. However, the results of the study have indicated that this was one of the biggest challenges facing deaf education in Lesotho. When parents were asked about their involvement in the education of their children, they unanimously agreed that they were not doing enough. Parents admitted that since they were not fluent in LSL, they could not help build on what their children had learnt from school. They felt that more often than not, they have failed to provide ongoing encouragement and support to their children.

The fact that the schools do not encourage frequent contacts with parents creates a situation whereby parents are unable to express their dissatisfaction regarding certain issues affecting the education of their children. For instance, throughout the interview, they registered their unhappiness at the fact that their children were not taught in the language that they had access to, LSL. It is possible that the parents, whose children attended the mainstream, were aware that when the deaf teacher was not at school, their children were left unattended. However, there was no indication as to whether they ever had the opportunity to air their views. There was also the possibility that

they felt they could not fully open up about sensitive issues that related to the administration and teachers because of the fear that their children would be badly treated.

Lack of interest to get parents involved in their children's education may contribute to the parents' feeling of exclusion from actively participating in their children's education. One factor connected to this lack of interest could be the perception by the school administration and teachers that parents could not bring any positive change to the education of learners. In my view, the teachers who meet the parents have an opportunity to gain insights into the experiences of the child and to learn interactive skills that could help improve the child's academic performance. As McKee (2005) suggests, the effort to establish rapport reaps more than just helping to understand the child better. But it also gains the parents' trust in the administration and the teachers.

In this study, the parents' involvement is emphasized because it stimulates progress in their children's learning (Barton, 1977; Knight and Swanwick, 2002). Put differently, "children succeed academically, socially and emotionally and become more well-rounded and balanced individuals if their parents are involved in their education and school activities" (Hanke, 2007: 1). That is why McNaughton (1995) emphasizes that, for effective learning to take place, the positive social relationship between children and parents and teachers are crucial.

However, it should be noted that the results of the interviews did not necessarily mean that parents were not interested in the education of their children. On the contrary, all of them reported that they wanted to learn more about how to be involved in their

children's learning. They further indicated that as parents, they expected to receive training to make sure that they were able to respond to the needs and concerns of their deaf children. More than half of the interviewed parents felt schools should provide them with opportunities to learn about parent support. From the interviews, there was a general feeling that there was low effort on the side of the schools to organize activities aimed at promoting communication between them and the home. As Cummins (1986) suggests, if parents are given power and status in the determination of their children's schooling, empowerment may result. But when they are kept powerless, lack of school progress may result. Cummins' empowerment theory supports collaborative teachers as opposed to the exclusionary ones. Baker (1996:346) explains that:

> teachers at the collaborative end encourage parents of minority languages to participate in their children's academic progress through home activities or the involvement of parents in the classroom. Teachers at the exclusionary end maintain tight boundaries between themselves and parents.

As equal partners in the education of their children, parents should have full information which would allow them to make informed decisions on their children's education. This information should include schools in the country which offer education to deaf learners. The other aspect that the interviews revealed was lack of knowledge among parents of deaf learners about the available schools for the Deaf in the country. This means that their choice of school was not necessarily based on the good qualities that the school had, but rather, on the limited knowledge that they had on deaf education. More importantly, parents should be informed on which approach each school used in the teaching and learning of these learners.

In addition to parents, Cummins' empowerment theory recognizes the importance of minority communities in the education of children from linguistic minority background. In the context of this study, the Deaf community becomes positive learning models to the deaf learners as they provide the best opportunities for learning Sign Language. In support of this argument, McKee (2005:1) explains that deaf adults are acknowledged as culturally and educationally relevant resources for deaf children. He further points out that their chief focus is fostering the emotional and communicative development, by offering interaction mediated by their Deaf-world language and social experience. The same view is shared by Thumann-Prezioso (2005) who points out that there is a need for deaf education to hear from deaf people who might have an advantage and experience of Deaf culture. The Deaf community is one of the major components that is lacking in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. The observations that were conducted in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho showed that the majority of staff, both academic and non-academic, was hearing. Based on these observations, it is possible that those involved in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho are not aware of the fact that the interactive experiences between deaf children and deaf adults occurring naturally will assist the children in developing their language and understanding their world (Ogilvy *et al.,* 2004). In this regard, there is need for the schools and parents of deaf learners to involve deaf adults in the education of their children. This will not only help parents and teachers to realize the special linguistic, educational and, social needs of the children (Cummins, 1986), but it will also enable them to frequently contact with deaf people, which will make learning LSL easier.

7.5 Deaf education in Lesotho

The findings of the study revealed that the participants were not happy with the current status of deaf education in Lesotho. In the preceding sections, participants raised various factors which in their opinions contributed to the current status quo. The fact that the state of deaf education in Lesotho is not satisfactory is further evidenced by the deaf learners' performance during the PSLE examinations. Table 8 below provides this information.

Table 8: Deaf learners' PSLE results

Year of the examination	Total number of learners who sat for the exam	Number of Pass	Number of Fail
2007	6	3	3
2006	3	1	2
2005	4	1	3
2004	none	-	-
2005	none	-	-
2002	2	0	2
2001	3	1	2
2000	3	1	2

Source: School C[11]

The table indicates that the first time that the deaf learners in Lesotho sat for PSLE examination was in 2000. All the learners who sat for this examination went to School C. By the time the study was being carried out, School B had not yet had a PSLE candidate.

[11] Results could not be verified with the Lesotho Examination Office

What comes out clearly from the table is the fact that each year, only a few learners are able to sit for the examination. Based on the responses of the participants in the study, it may be claimed that, among other factors, financial constraints and the use of oral language to which most of the learners have little access forced many of them to drop out of school. It is worth noting that the results revealed that up to 2007, no deaf learner had obtained a first class pass (70 - 80%). The highest that they had obtained is a second class pass (60% - 69%). In this regard also, it may be argued that the fact that the teacher who was responsible for deaf learners was not always available to give them enough classroom time, denied them of the opportunity to perform to the best of their abilities. The table further indicates that in the years 2003 and 2004, no deaf learner sat for the PSLE examination. The reason advanced by the administration of the school was that during those years, the deaf teacher had left the school and in her absence, nobody could teach the deaf learners. This incidence is a confirmation that in Lesotho, the education of deaf learners has been and continues to be the responsibility of one individual. This situation creates a lot of uncertainty on the side of the learners for whom there is no guarantee that they will achieve their right to sit for PSLE examination.

In the following sections, the views on how the current situation of deaf education in Lesotho could be reversed are being discussed. The findings of the study revealed that for all the participants, the use of LSL in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho was not an option. All of them recognized the importance of this language in the education of these learners, thereby emphasizing the fact that it should form part of the language practices in the schools where they are being taught.

7.5.1 The teachers' perspectives

Throughout the interviews, the teachers acknowledged that deaf children required increased learning opportunities and that they could benefit from specialized assistance as it has been noted by educationists around the world (Storbeck, 1998). Having acknowledged that their lack of sufficient skills in LSL was the major contributing factor to the poor quality of education for deaf learners, most of the interviewed teachers emphasized the need for the government to invest in equipping them with skills in this language. They emphasized the need for the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho to provide qualified teachers who would enable deaf learners to achieve and develop to the best of their capabilities. Teachers specifically referred to the knowledge of LSL as an essential aspect for the teachers of deaf learners in Lesotho. In addition to general reference to skills in LSL, some teachers mentioned some areas for which they felt unprepared, such as appropriate teaching methods and techniques for deaf learners. Their demand for training was in line with Storbeck's (2004: iv) view that as teachers, "we also need to be skilled in our profession and more specifically in our area of specialization as professionals in the field of Deafness".

Throughout the interviews, in-service training was frequently mentioned as an effective means through which teachers could be taught LSL. There was emphasis that teachers who had attended the trainings should be awarded certificates which should help uplift their financial status. Taking into consideration the necessity to promote the use of LSL, it was interesting to note that teachers proposed a strategy that would create a momentum for learning this language, that of the use of incentives. The current poor status of deaf education in Lesotho draws attention to the

need to put in place different mechanisms that could help bring positive change, even if it means bringing in incentives.

The question of teaching LSL as a subject made some teachers realize that maybe, there was a need to adapt the curriculum in accordance with the deaf learners' specific language needs. These teachers felt that the curriculum designed for deaf learners should include LSL as a subject. Reference was also made to cultural topics which teachers claimed were very difficult to teach to deaf learners. Such attitude indicates the teachers' perception that deaf learners lack the cultural background which the hearing Mosotho child has. The point that they seem to ignore is the fact that since most deaf children have difficulty communicating adequately with members of their families, this deprives them the opportunity to build upon their cultural resources. In turn, this makes it difficult for them to participate in the classroom particularly when issues of culture are being taught.

Another question that could be asked is whether the problem lies with the fact that deaf learners do not easily understand issues of culture taught in the classroom or whether it lies with the fact that the topics are usually not related to the culture of the learners, Deaf culture. This kind of attitude ignores the reality that "deaf learners have the same cognitive potential as hearing learners and are thus capable of doing the full workload of the curriculum"(Storbeck, 1998:136). There is, therefore, a need for professionals in deaf education to be involved in all curriculum and contents decisions regarding the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. With their knowledge and skills related to deafness, these professionals would identify curriculum learning goals, methods, learning strategies that are most appropriate for the needs of deaf learners

(Luft, 2008). Adapting the curriculum to the educational and cultural needs of deaf learners may dispel the inherent prejudices towards the academic capabilities of deaf learners.

It was interesting to note, however, that teachers felt that deaf adults should be given the opportunity to get involved in the deaf children's education, particularly to teach them LSL. This suggestion is supported by McKee (2005) who points out that although deaf adults lack formal education, their lifelong experience with the Deaf community equips them with some intuitive strategies for working with such students. Some teachers suggested that in cases where there was no teacher who is fluent in LSL, the service of a professional LSL interpreter should be sought.

Additionally, teachers also highlighted the need for the government of Lesotho to extend the Free Primary Education policy to the schools of the Deaf to encourage more access to education. There could be a number of reasons why teachers felt that deaf learners have to benefit from this policy. The obvious one is that many deaf children could not attend school because parents could not afford the fees at the schools for the Deaf. Although it did not come out from the teachers' responses, there is a possibility that some deaf learners could not meet school requirements, such as books and stationery. The silence of teachers about school requirements could be interpreted as either an indication that parents in their schools were able to provide for their children, or that the issue of books was the least of their worries. Although teachers did not mention it, resources such as books are relevant to the education of learners. As such, it was appropriate that they suggested that the policy should be

extended so that deaf learners could also get free books which are part of the package of the Free Education Policy.

It is noteworthy that teachers did not mention other issues which were relevant to deaf education in Lesotho. For instance, none of them mentioned anything about the administrative support that they received as teachers. Nyaba-nyaba (2002), states that the nature of administration in schools contributes towards the morale and commitment of teachers. In his view, good or bad, results in schools are often attributed to the quality of administration. The research results in the schools of the Deaf in Lesotho give the impression that teachers in these schools were generally happy with their administration. Given the fact that schools for the Deaf in Lesotho are privately owned, one would have expected that teachers would share concerns in the category of training support and salary. The fact that teachers in these schools are taught LSL by the learners and the administrations have not made any effort to engage deaf adults to provide teachers with the skills in this language, is a serious concern. In my view, while it is the responsibility of the government to equip teachers in the country with skills in LSL, schools should provide organized LSL lessons and pay adult members of deaf community to provide these lessons. The reluctance on the side of teachers to criticize the administration in this regard may give the impression that they are content with the current status quo.

It is all too easy to blame the teachers for the poor performance of learners without taking into consideration the environment in which they operate. Bearing this in mind, it was interesting to note that teachers did not take the state of the infrastructure as significant in their teaching. None of the teachers who shared the same building

during their teaching raised this as a concern that impacted negatively on their teaching. This could be interpreted as an indication that, to these teachers, it is normal to teach more than one class in one building. However, looking at the situation from a different perspective, it may be that these teachers are doing their best in a bad difficult situation.

With regards to the teachers who were also principals in their school, I expected that they would mention the fact that they experienced problems of attracting qualified teachers (even if they lacked skills in LSL) to teach in their schools and even retaining the ones that they have. The results of the study indicated that with the exception of teachers in the mainstream school, the majority of teachers in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho are not qualified teachers. The results also indicated that the majority of them had not been teaching in those schools for more than two years. Arising from these results, two comments could be made. Firstly, teachers in the schools for the Deaf are paid by the schools and because they do not have professional status due to their lack of formal training, may be they are paid less. Secondly, since they are paid by the school, there is a possibility that they do not enjoy benefits such as pension. Thirdly, teachers do not experience job satisfaction. It is usually factors such as good salary and attractive benefits that keep teachers in the same schools for a longer period. It is possible that in the schools of the Deaf in Lesotho, lack of these benefits poses a problem of teacher retention. Having different teachers all the time also affect disrupts the teaching and learning processes in these schools.

7.5.2 The deaf learners' perspectives

Throughout the interviews, deaf learners cite the oral language policy that they were exposed to in their schools as a major impediment to their educational success. As it was mentioned in previous sections, a cross-cutting negative effect of the oral language policies is the minimization of the perceived need for trained teachers in LSL. Under the present situation, the responsibility to equip teachers in LSL is left entirely in the hands of the deaf individuals. No doubt, one underlying reason for the inadequacy of teachers' skills in LSL may be the government of Lesotho's lack of awareness with regard to deaf people as members of a linguistic minority. As a result, the oral language policy that deaf children are exposed to has had and continues to have far reaching effects for deaf learners.

The need for the effective use of LSL was echoed by all learners. In this regard, research (Paul and Jackson, 1993; Glaser and Lorenzo, 2006) indicates that it is important for the teacher of deaf learners to know the learner, understand her needs, her language and cognitive processes. Learners were of the view that teachers should be provided with knowledge of a deaf learner, his cultural and learning needs. With this type of knowledge, teachers were more likely to pay attention to the special educational needs of deaf learners. In particular, the advantage of learning the culture of the deaf learner "sensitises the teacher of the deaf to the complexity of the world of deafness, and it is the cornerstone of Bilingual Education for the deaf …" (Storbeck, 1998:125), which the study proposes for the deaf education in Lesotho.

Due to the present state of interpreters for deaf learners, the majority of the interviewed deaf learners emphasized the need for highly skilled professional LSL interpreters. They were of the opinion interpreters with proper skills would help

improve the quality of deaf education in Lesotho. It should be noted, however, that the problem of the quality of interpreters is common throughout the whole world. In this regard, Windson (1994, cited in Yarger, 2001) argues that:

> The skills, knowledge, and experience of interpreters working in educational settings are often much less than required to provide even *minimally* (emphasis in the original) satisfactory interpreting for deaf students. Interpreters in the educational settings should be more skilled than community interpreters, but most often education attracts inexperienced, unskilled interpreters. (p16)

The majority of deaf learners strongly discouraged mainstream schools as places of learning for deaf learners. In line with the findings by McKee (2005:30), they felt that a mainstream environment was less than conducive for academic outcomes as it generally lacked culturally preferred learning and teaching practices. Additionally, in a special classroom, deaf learners do not have to compete with hearing peers. Instead, they have an increased opportunity to interact with peers who have similar experiences and ability levels.

There were, however, a few deaf learners who went further to explain that mainstreaming could also yield positive results only in situations whereby deaf children attend the same school with hearing learners, but they are taught in a separate unit. This view is shared by the participant in McKee's (2005:32-3) research whose preference for separate units is expressed in the quote below:

> My dream for the future is to bring all those children out there isolated in the mainstream together into a Deaf unit, or set up another Deaf school that is part of a hearing school, where the children can interact with each other and learn about two different worlds…It would be a lot cheaper to transport these children to a Deaf unit where there is a teacher of the Deaf who can actually sign fluently…

For the deaf learners who supported this arrangement, they mentioned that being in a mainstream school provided them with opportunities for social interaction with their hearing peers, such as in sports and other extramural activities. This means that they support inclusive education.

Finally, deaf learners suggested a change of attitude towards deaf children. They claimed that teachers did not expect them to perform like their hearing counterparts. They held the view that teachers located the problem of their poor academic achievement on the fact that they were deaf. As deaf children, they are regarded as being difficult to teach and so they take time to teach. This view draws support from statements made by some teachers when they gave their opinions on the introduction of LSL as a subject. This is what one of them said:

> Kutlo: *It would mean creating a slot for LSL and this would mean more work for schools for the Deaf who follow the same syllabus as the mainstream schools. Introduction of a new subject would reduce time for other subjects. (Lines 273 – 277)*

The responses of teachers of the deaf learners in Lesotho are indicative of deeper seated problems than just language. Firstly, the teachers are worried by the fact that the introduction of LSL would create more work for teachers, but are not concerned that deaf learners are taught only oral languages, to which they have little access. Secondly, they are not concerned that deaf learners follow a curriculum that is tailored for hearing learners, which is likely to provide a true reflection of their capabilities. Instead, they continuously highlight the perception that deaf learners are difficult to teach. Cummins' empowerment theory discourages this type of judgment. In his view, this type of testing ideology fails to locate the root of the problem in the social, economic and educational system or curriculum wherever possible.

Deaf learners also mentioned the importance of offering education to deaf children beyond Standard 7. The fact that there is currently no high school in Lesotho that accommodates deaf learners was viewed by deaf children as another indication that they were not expected to reach high academic levels like the hearing children. This was seen as a negative attitude on the side of the government. In the views of deaf learners, this had negative impact on their esteem and their right to education.

It was surprising that deaf learners from the mainstream school did not raise concern about the fact that their education depended on only one deaf teacher. This teacher was expected to teach at least two classes, Standard 6 and Standard 7. The implication is that when she is in one class, the learners in another class are missing out on what was being taught in their class. Additionally, the results of the observations indicated that this teacher was, in most cases, absent from school. The informal explanation that she gave me was that, as a member of the committee of NADL, she had to represent this organization in different forums in a bid to try and bring the needs of deaf people to the attention of the government. While this is a genuine point, it does not justify the fact that deaf learners are deprived of their time for learning. In addition to the fact that their learning environment is not conducive enough for learning, they do not have enough learning time due to the continual absence of the only teacher who is supposed to provide them with all the attention they need. This is another indication of the disadvantage that deaf learners in the mainstream school experience compared to their hearing counterparts. For the same reason mentioned earlier, hearing teachers in this school do not pay attention to deaf learners in their classes and the administration has allowed this situation to go on. It may also be argued that NADL is

also adding to the poor support that deaf learners are getting by allowing the deaf teacher to be absent during the school days.

7.5.3 The parents' perspectives

In addition to the common concern of the inclusion of LSL in the learning of their deaf children, their major concern was the fact that they were paying exorbitant fees for the education of their children. As such there was a special plea to the government that their children should also benefit from Free Primary Education policy which all the Lesotho children benefit from. In their view, this would not only relieve them from paying expensive fees, but it would also help reduce the number of children who drop out of school for financial reasons.

It was interesting to note that although parents requested that their children should be given an opportunity to study beyond Standard 7, they did not mention anything about pre-school education. I had hoped that parents, even teachers, would say something about pre-school education because pre-schools (also known as play-schools) are mushrooming all the time in Lesotho, including in the villages. The purpose of these schools is to help enhance the children's linguistic, social and cognitive development (Bibby and Foster, 2004) before they go to primary school. The parents' silence on this issue may partly be regarded as a reflection of lack of information on the role that play-schools play in the development of children. It may also be an indication that parents have not yet accepted that like the hearing, their deaf children could benefit from the play-school. It may also mean that they are not focusing on the age-appropriate needs of their children. Pre-schools (in which LSL is used) are very important to deaf children, the majority of whom are born to hearing parents.

Exposing deaf children to LSL at a young age is considered critical to further language development (Bibby and Foster, 2004). On the other hand, the resulting delay in exposure may retard the whole process of language acquisition and mental development (Monaghan, 2003).

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed and interpreted the research findings. Where necessary, some implications for the findings were also discussed. These implications will be used to make recommendations on the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf learners and these will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter I summarize the findings focusing on the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf learners. Thereafter, I make recommendations to redress the current situation of deaf education in Lesotho.

8.1 Summary of the findings

The study has discussed the role and place of LSL in the education of deaf learners in Lesotho. Based on the observations and interviews carried out in this study, it is evident that LSL is excluded in both the country's language and language-in-education policies. The implication is that this language is neither used as a medium of instruction, nor taught as a subject even in the schools for the Deaf in Lesotho. This has negative impact on the education of deaf learners who are continuously exposed to oral languages to which they have very minimal access (if any). It puts deaf learners at a disadvantage when they have to be evaluated like the hearing learners who are generally viewed as more competent. The insufficient use of LSL is mainly the result of lack of a clear-cut language-in-education policy. Although the Lesotho language-in-education policy supports mother tongue education, it is silent about the use of this language as a medium of instruction in the education of deaf children.

In the study it has been argued that the exclusion of LSL in the language policies is the reason why teachers have not been equipped with skills in this language and trained in issues of deaf education. Consequently, the state of deaf education in

Lesotho continues to be unsatisfactory. Given the fact that, the government of Lesotho has not yet fully accepted LSL as a full-flashed language, the use and promotion this language remains the responsibility of deaf individuals and NADL. Further more, the fact that LSL has not been accorded any status, has had negative effects in the lives of deaf children. Not only has their education suffered, but their experiences in their families have not always been pleasant. Some parents have doubted the validity of LSL as a language, to the extent that they are embarrassed when their children are seen signing in public. The exclusion of LSL in the language policies of the country has contributed to the negative attitude that many hearing people have towards Deaf people and their language and perpetuation of traditional views of deafness being a curse. Furthermore, the current communicative activities which are not carried out in the students' first language serve to widen the gap between the policy and practice.

If the government's language-in-education policy can change to create conditions that may promote the status and use of LSL, deaf education can be improved. As a starting point, following Musau (2004: 65), I argue that for all speakers to enjoy their linguistic rights and have access to quality education, language policies should "recognize and spell out the role of all languages in the country and their potential in the realization of the aspirations of their users". For deaf children, these aspirations would include the ability to learn and be taught in LSL. Further recommendations are made in the following section.

Given the fact that the government of Lesotho has not been able to satisfactorily meet the educational needs of hearing children, like providing teachers with skills in LSL, some policy makers in Chapter 5 were sceptical about whether the government would

be willing to invest in the education of deaf learners who are small in number. This reaction shows that in whatever decisions they make, policy makers and educators are influenced by what is valued in the society. It is argued, therefore that lack of efforts to train teachers and equip them with skills in LSL, emphasizes the low value attached to LSL as a mother tongue to many deaf children and deaf education.

8.2 Recommendations

If the education of deaf children in Lesotho is to be improved there is need for the country to develop strategic plans that will guarantee that this is achieved. Firstly, the country should make language planning a part of the overall government long term planning and budgeting. This is because the implementation of the decisions of the language planning has financial implications. Most importantly, LSL should form part of the national language planning process. LSL as a language should be taken seriously. If the status and use of LSL in deaf education in Lesotho is to be raised, it must be valued by the government.

Secondly, since the national language-in-education stipulates that children should be taught in their mother tongue in the early years of their education, concrete measures should be put in place to ensure that LSL is used for the benefit of deaf children. Closely related to the issue of mother tongue, the study proposes the adoption of bilingual education whereby deaf learners would be exposed to both LSL and oral language(s). These would include English and any other languages spoken in their families (including the minority languages mentioned in Chapter 1). Since the official languages in Lesotho are English and Sesotho, it would be helpful if deaf children are also exposed to Sesotho even if it is not the language that is used in their families. The

ultimate goal of the choice of this model of education is to help deaf children be fluent in LSL and any spoken language (in written form) accessible to them and enable them to make choices that are suitable for their educational needs. In a bilingual classroom, deaf children are able to acquire both the first and second language and are able to choose the medium of instruction of their choice.

Following Grosjean (2001: 110) I argue that by knowing and using both a LSL and an oral language (in its written form), the child will attain his/her full cognitive, linguistic, and social capabilities. It is also important to bear in mind that deaf children are different, demonstrating that there is no one answers to meeting their linguistic and learning needs. In this regard, research demonstrates that if deaf children are exposed to a combination of different communication approaches, they are happier, freer, and more spontaneous, than when they are exposed to only one approach. Not only should LSL be used as a medium of instruction in the schools for the Deaf, but it should also be taught as a subject with the view of developing this language. There is a need to extend the introduction of LSL in all primary schools in Lesotho. This will raise more awareness and acceptance of this language among hearing children.

Thirdly, the success of the bilingual approach in deaf education depends greatly upon the fluency of teachers in LSL. This is based on the observation that the inefficiency of teacher-child communication in the classroom contributes to the relatively poor academic achievements (Baker, 1996; Bouvet, 1990). Teaching deaf children requires an adequate knowledge of not only LSL, but it also involves an understanding of Deaf culture. Therefore, a linguistically and culturally relevant bilingual education teacher-

development programmes are critically needed to assure that effective teaching and learning is taking place in the schools for the Deaf. Not only should the teachers be sensitized to learners' language and cultural background, but their knowledge of second language acquisition and effective curriculum approaches in teaching deaf learners should be increased. Following Storbeck (1998), it is assumed that proper teacher education and training of teachers of deaf learners can address much of what is deemed inadequate in deaf education in Lesotho. Given the value of LSL as the mother tongue to many deaf children, the government should commit resources to equip teachers with skills in this language and produce teaching materials that are tailor-made for deaf children.

Fourthly, together with teachers, the bilingual approach acknowledges the important role that parents play in their children's education. It calls for a more connected and collaborative involvement with the schools. This could be reached by regular meetings and trainings during which parents could be trained on what was expected of them as parents. The meetings could provide a forum where parents could raise their concerns about the schools and make suggestions on what was best for their children. The sharing of responsibility between the home and the school is seen as one of the elements that could promote academic success of deaf children. This would also help the parents gain the trust of the school and its teachers. It is believed that establishing an effective home-and-school partnership is essential to give parents some control over determining the context and direction of their children's learning.

Parents' positive attitude towards their deaf children and LSL is paramount to the success of deaf education in Lesotho. As is the case with teachers, if parents are to

effectively contribute to their children's learning, they also need to be fluent in LSL. This view is supported by the participants in the study carried out in New Zealand (Berryman & Glynn, 2003). In this study, the parents who had learnt Māori, the language which was used to teach their children at school, reported that they were now able to assist their children academically and that they had grown both in self-confidence and self-efficacy. At the same time, the children's use of Māori helped then to learn more about the language. Like LSL, Māori had been marginalized from mainstream society and, from education in particular. With adequate skills in LSL parents of deaf children in Lesotho could provide better educational support for their children.

Fifthly, bilingual education recognizes the importance of the Deaf community as the positive role models to deaf learners. In this regard, it is crucial that the government, through the Special Education Unit should ensure active involvement of parents and Deaf community. This link would promote the use of LSL and create conducive learning for the deaf children.

Sixthly, in order to address the situation of deaf education in Lesotho, in line with Cummins' empowerment theory, the assessment of deaf learners should avoid locating problems in the learners and seek, whenever possible, to find root of the problem in the social, economic and educational systems, including curriculum. There is need for that deaf community should be involved in the decisions regarding the curriculum for deaf children. The current situation where the curriculum is governed by hearing people's low expectation and a list of beliefs about what deaf people can and cannot do, should be avoided. There should also be coordination between

government and the professionals in the issues of deaf education in order to address the current one-size-fits-all curriculum, which the findings revealed was a huge barrier confronting the improvement of deaf education in Lesotho. More importantly, it makes the opportunities for deaf children to go beyond primary school level extremely difficult.

Final, but not least, the responses from the parents indicated lack effective and accurate devices to detect deafness among children in Lesotho hospitals and clinics. This has had enormous repercussions on the linguistic and cognitive development of these children whose deafness was discovered late in their lives. Research indicates that the 'critical period' for linguistic and cognitive development is early in life, that is between birth and three years of age (Knight & Swanwick, 2002; Bibby & Foster, 2004). Failure to expose children to language, which for most deaf children in Lesotho is LSL, may put them at a great risk of underachievement in all areas of development. Based on this information, the study recommends that the government should put more effort on the early intervention programmes and invest on the appropriate equipment to ensure more accurate diagnosis and quality service in general. In addition, the study recommends pre-school support for children who had been diagnosed deaf. One of the goals of the pre-school would be to help develop good communication skills using the language that is suitable for linguistic needs of individual learners.

8.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have summarised the findings of this research with regards to the role and place of Lesotho Sign Language (LSL) in the education of deaf learners in

Lesotho. The findings revealed two core issues: LSL needs to be included in the current national language-in-education policy as both medium of instruction and a subject in schools for the deaf, and teachers need specific education and training in order to prepare them for their role as teachers of deaf learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Subject Information Sheet

School of Literature and Language Studies

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559
Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

My name is Lits'episo Matlosa, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is Deaf people in Lesotho and Lesotho Sign Language. Lesotho Sign Language, which is the first natural language to many Deaf people in Lesotho is not included in the language-in-education policy of this country. Research on language policy and minority languages conducted in this country also exclude Lesotho Sign Language. We live in an era where everybody should enjoy their basic rights, including education and linguistic rights. The research aims to investigate the Lesotho language policy and its language-in-education policy in order to determine the role and place of Lesotho Sign Language. It aims to find out how involved are parents of Deaf learners are involved in the education of their children. It seeks to investigate the current situation of Deaf education in Lesotho. We would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me or a Sign Language interpreter, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person at any time, and will only be processed by myself. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in the study please fill in your details on the form below and place it in the sealed box provided. I will empty the box at regular intervals, and will contact you within a week in order to discuss your participation. Alternatively I can be contacted telephonically at 22315649 or via e-mail at lmatlosa@yahoo.co.uk

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on Deaf children and Lesotho Sign Language. This can help to provide baseline information that will help in addressing the needs of this group in general and inform development of new policies and procedures.

Kind Regards

Appendix B: Informed Consent Sheet (Schools)



Africa

School of Literature and Language Studies
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559
Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

My name is Lits'episo Matlosa, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is Deaf people in Lesotho and Lesotho Sign Language. Lesotho Sign Language, which is the first natural language to many Deaf people in Lesotho is not included in the language-in-education policy of this country. Research on language policy and minority languages conducted in this country also exclude Lesotho Sign Language. We live in an era where everybody should enjoy their basic rights, including education and linguistic rights. The research aims to investigate the Lesotho language policy and its language-in-education policy in order to determine the role and place of Lesotho Sign Language. It aims to find out how to what extent are parents of Deaf learners involved in the education of their children. The study seeks to investigate the current situation of Deaf children in Lesotho. We would like to invite some of your learners and staff to participate in this study. We also request permission to observe how the language practices in your schools reflect the country's language-in-education policy. The normal school day activities will not be interrupted in any way.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me or a Sign Language interpreter, here at school at a time convenient for your school. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. With the permission of learners and staff the interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All their responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify them would be included in the research report. Participants do not risk job loss or their place in the school. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person at any time, and will only be processed by myself. They may refuse to answer any questions they would prefer not to, and they may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. The observation will also be done by me. On request, a summary of end results will be made available to your school.

If they choose to participate in the study they will be asked to fill in their details on the form below and place it in the sealed box provided. I will empty the box at regular intervals, and will contact them within a week in order to discuss their participation. Alternatively I can be contacted telephonically at 22315649 or via e-mail at lmatlosa@yahoo.co.uk

Their participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on Deaf children and Lesotho Sign Language. This can help to provide baseline information that will help in addressing the needs of this group in general and inform development of new policies and procedures.

Kind Regards

Appendix C: Informed Consent Sheet (Parents of Deaf children out of school)



Africa

School of Literature and Language Studies
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559
Email: 018lucy@muse.wits.ac.za

My name is Lits'episo Matlosa, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is Deaf people in Lesotho and Lesotho Sign Language. Lesotho Sign Language, which is the first natural language to many Deaf people in Lesotho is not included in the language-in-education policy of this country. We live in an era where everybody should enjoy their basic rights, including education and linguistic rights. The research aims to investigate the Lesotho language policy and its language-in-education policy in order to determine the role and place of Lesotho Sign Language. It aims to find out how the situation of Deaf children in Lesotho is like. We would like to invite your child to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me or a Sign Language interpreter, at a place and time convenient for you and your child. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. With his/her permission the interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All their responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify him/her would be included in the research report. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person at any time, and will only be processed by myself. He/she may refuse to answer any questions he/she would prefer not to, and he/she may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. On request, a summary of end results will be made available to you.

If he/she chooses to participate in the study he/she will be asked to fill in his/her details on the form below and place it in the sealed box provided. I will empty the box at regular intervals, and will contact him/her within a week in order to discuss their participation. Alternatively I can be contacted telephonically at 22315649 or via e-mail at lmatlosa@yahoo.co.uk

His/her participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on Deaf children and Lesotho Sign Language. This can help to provide baseline information that will help in addressing the needs of this group in general and inform development of new policies and procedures.

Kind Regards

Appendix D: Consent Form (Interview)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Mrs Litsépiso Matlosa for his/her study on _____. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____

Appendix E: Consent Form (Recording)

I _____ consent to my interview with Mrs Litsépiso Matlosa for his/her study on 'The role and place of Lesotho Sign Language: some sociolinguistic implications' being tape-recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed _____

Appendix F: Interview guide for the policy makers' interview guide

1. It is generally believed that language policies in most African countries resemble those of their colonial masters. How has the relationship between the British and the Basotho during the colonial period influenced the language practices in Lesotho?
2. Currently, there is no overall language policy. Does the country plan to have one in the near future?
6. If Lesotho was to develop an explicitly written language policy, what would be the aims and objectives of such a policy?
7. What in your view are the most important points which should be taken into consideration when developing a language policy?
8. The Ministry of education's policy is that children should be taught in their mother tongue from Standard 1 to Standard 4. What factors influenced such policy?
9. How serious do the schools take this policy, in other words, are minority languages such as Sign Language (language used by most Deaf learners) used as medium of instruction in Lesotho primary schools?
10. Has the implementation of this policy been evaluated before? If so, what are the results?
11. Are there any intentions by the government to promote the use of Sign Language in more domains than it is used now?
12. Research indicates that although the government is making effort to improve the education of children with special needs, Deaf learners still lag behind. How does the government plan to reverse the situation?
13. More often than not, in Lesotho, whenever Special Education teachers are trained, they are equipped with skills on how to deal with children with special needs and are not trained in Sign Language. Why is this so?
14. In your opinion, how does this impact on the Sign Language and the education of the Deaf in Lesotho?
15. If Sign Language was to be included in the language-in-education policy, what challenges do you think the government would face in the implementation of this policy?

Appendix G: Interview guide for Deaf learners

1. What language do you use for communication with your peers at school?
2. Which languages are spoken in your family?
3. Is any member of your family also Deaf? How are you related to them?
4. Which language do members of your family use to communicate with you?
5. Do you experience any language problems between you and your family members?
6. Have you received any counseling or professional help to deal with your deafness?
7. If so, from where did you receive it?
8. Some people regard Sign Language as the L1 of Deaf people. Which language do you regard as your L1?
9. If the answer is Sign Language, how did you learn this language?
10. How do members of your family help you to improve your skills in this language?
11. Which languages are used as medium of instruction at your school?
12. Are you happy with the use of those languages?
13. If Sign Language is not one of these languages, how easy is it for you to access what is being taught?
14. Are you happy with the performance of Deaf learners in this school?
15. How do you feel about the support and access to learning you receive from this school?
16. In your opinion, is there anything that the school can do to improve the current condition of the education of Deaf learners? Explain.
17. What do you think the government should do to improve the education of Deaf children in Lesotho?
18. Are you a member of any Deaf association?

Appendix H: Interview guides for parents of Deaf learners

1. Linguistic status: Are you hearing or Deaf?
2. How many Deaf children are there in your family?
3. Is your spouse/partner hearing or Deaf?
4. What age was your child when you discovered that he/she was Deaf?
5. Were you told at the hospital or you discovered this yourself?
6. What was your first reaction after discovering that your child was Deaf?
7. Which languages are used for communication in your family?
8. What language does your family use to communicate with the Deaf member?
9. Some people regard Sign Language as the L1 of Deaf people. Which language do you regard as your child's L1?
10. If you regard Sign Language as L1 to your child, how did he/she learn this language?
11. Are there any centers in your country that offer Sign Language training to Deaf children and members of their families?
12. If so, what are the names of those centers?
13. Did you receive any counseling or professional help to deal with your child's deafness?
14. If so, where did you get this help?
15. How would you rate the level of communication between your Deaf child and other members of the family?
16. Which school does your child attend?
17. How old was your child when you sent him/her to this school?
18. How did you find out about this school?
19. Why did you choose this school from others?
20. What languages are used to teach Deaf children in this school?
21. If Sign Language is not one of these languages, do you think your child is able to access what is being taught?
22. How does the school involve you in the education of your child?
23. In your opinion, how important is parents' involvement in the education of their children?
24. What do you think the school should do to improve the education of Deaf learners?

Appendix I: Interview guides for teachers in schools for the Deaf

1. Which languages do you speak?
2. How long have you been teaching in this school?
3. The Ministry of education's policy is that children should be taught in their mother tongue from Standard 1 to Standard 4. How serious does the schools take this policy, in other words, is Sign Language (language used by most Deaf learners) used as medium of instruction in this school?
4. If not, which languages are used during the teaching and learning processes?
5. What role does each language play?
6. If Sign Language is not among the languages used in class, how does this affect the teaching and learning?
7. In your opinion, what is the L1 for Deaf children?
8. As an educator, what is the role of mother tongue in education?
6. Have you ever attended any staff development training related to Deaf education?
7. If so, how long was the training?
8. Did the training include skills in Sign Language?
9. Before coming to this school, did you teach in a school for the Deaf?
10. What challenges do teaching Deaf children bring to your work as a teacher?
11. What can the school do to improve the performance of Deaf learners?
12. Would you have any problem if Sign language is included in the language-in-education policy of this school as both a medium of instruction and a subject?
13. What challenges would the school encounter in the implementation of such a policy? Explain.

Appendix J: Interview guides for Deaf children who are out of school

1. Is any member of your family Deaf?
2. If so, is it a parent or other children in the family?
3. What languages are used to communicate in your family?
4. What languages does your family use to communicate with you?
5. If Sign Language is one of them, how did you and your family learn this language?
6. Some people regard Sign Language as the L1 of Deaf people. Which language do you regard as your L1?
7. If the answer is Sign Language, how did you learn this language?
8. What are some of the language challenges you face as a Deaf in a hearing family?
9. Have you received any counseling or professional help to deal with your deafness?
10. If so, from where did you receive it?
11. Have you ever been to school?
12. If so, was this a school for the Deaf?
13. What language(s) was used as a medium of instruction in this school?
14. At what level were you when you left school?
15. Is there anything you did not like about this school? Explain.
16. If you have never been to school, why is this so?
17. Are you and your family aware of Deaf schools in the country?
18. Do you regret being out of school?
19. Are you a member of any Deaf association?
20. What do you think should be done to improve the education of Deaf children in Lesotho?

Appendix K: A Course on 'Integrated Education' in Lesotho

Objectives

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

(a) Define and classify hearing impairment.
(b) Describe the learning characteristics of children with hearing impairment.
(c) Explain how to provide learning opportunities to the children whose hearing is impaired in a regular classroom situation.
(d) List the causes of hearing impairment and how to prevent problems.
(e) Explain the role of parents and community in the education of the learners with hearing impairment.

Curriculum

(a) Anatomy and Physiology of the ear.
(b) Causes of hearing impairments.
(c) Audio-logic assessment and hearing aids.
(d) Communication skills
(e) Curriculum and instructional methods e.g. sign language or total communication.
(f) Social and psychological effects.
(g) Language and reading.
(h) Speech reading and speech sounds.
(i) Social training and integration.
(j) Voice and sound disorders.
(k) Curriculum implications: Regular school curriculum.
(l) Role of parents and community.

Ministry of Education and Training, 1998.