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DEAF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF BEING STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Education.

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Johannesburg 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that the information presented in this dissertation is my own unaided work. The dissertation or information thereof has not been submitted before for any other course or degree. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Name…….Date……Signature…….....
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ABSTRACT

Due to the specialist nature of their use of a visual language, Deaf and hard of hearing students have unique experiences at institutions of higher education. This research explored the experiences of Deaf teachers as students at Wits University. I employed a qualitative research design in the study. In -depth interviews and documentary information were used to collect data from twelve current and past Deaf and hard of hearing students. Current theory, practice and legislation designed to guide the creation of an inclusive education society were examined in order to explore the implications they have for Deaf students in terms of inclusion and access to education. The findings showed high level of academic competitiveness among the Deaf and hard of hearing students but low social participation. Their academic success was driven by factors such as commitment to Deaf education, the availability of interpreting services, having Deaf peers and their pre-university experiences.

KEY TERMS

Deaf
Hard of hearing
South African Sign Language
Higher education institution
Teacher education
Inclusion
Support services
Integrative experiences
Interpreters
Profound deafness

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family, friends and colleagues for their encouragement, love and patience before and during the research process.

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This study was possible because of the voluntary participation of twelve Deaf and hard of hearing teachers who were students at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My appreciation also goes to the coordinator of the Disability Unit at Wits who provided valuable information on the functions of her office in terms of support services available to Deaf and hard of hearing students. I appreciate all the participants' willingness to sacrifice their time and share with me their experiences. My special appreciation goes to both my supervisors, Dr Storbeck and Professor Castle, for their guidance, support and their patience when I chose to do things on my own and at my own pace. Their critical comments on my research approach helped me to think critically before I presented my thoughts in writing. I also thank my personal South African Sign Language interpreter, Augustine Letlalo, who made my interactions with my supervisors and advisors run smoothly. To the Centre for Deaf Studies and the Disability Unit, my sincere thanks for the digital video camera and the tape recorder you lent me for use during the study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE – Advanced Certificate in Education

DeafSA – Deaf Federation of South Africa

DU – Disability Unit

FDE – Further Diploma in Education

HEI – Higher Education Institutions

INDS- Integrated National Disability Strategy

NCESS – National Commission on Education Support Services

NCSNET – National Commission on Special Needs Education and Training

NEC – National Executive Committee

NQF – National Qualification Framework

NTID - National Technical Institute for the Deaf

LSEN – Learners with Special Educational Needs

RAG – Remember And Give

RIT – Rochester Institute of Technology

RSA – Republic of South Africa

SAFCD – South African Federal Council on Disability

SAIDE - South African Institute for Distance Education

SASL – South African Sign Language

SAQA – South African Qualification Authority

SET – Senior Executive Team

SMS – Short Message System

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNISA – University of South Africa

WFD – World Federation of the Deaf

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The number of Deaf[1] and hard of hearing students entering higher education institutions in South Africa has increased. This increase is in response to demands made by the government and the constitutional obligation to increase access to the education system. In order to accommodate a diversity of learning needs through addressing barriers to learning, education institutions are required by the government to provide education support services to learners (Department of Education, 1997). Higher education institutions like the University of the Witwatersrand, also known as Wits, now offer support services such as South African Sign Language (SASL) interpreters and academic support services to Deaf and hard of hearing students. Despite these services, Deaf and hard of hearing students still encounter many difficulties and challenges at the university level (Liversidge, 2003).

The Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA) noted that in 1998 there were thirty-one Deaf university graduates in South Africa (DeafSA, 1998). Six of those Deaf graduates were from Wits (DeafSA, 1998, p. 7). However, the number of Deaf and hard of hearing graduates may be an undercount. Firstly, it is possible some Deaf and hard of hearing students at tertiary institutions could not be identified or did not wish to participate in DeafSA's study. Secondly, questionnaires were sent to "13 institutions, but only 5 replied" (DeafSA, 1998, p.10). So it is possible that there were Deaf graduates at the institutions who did not reply. Wits was among the five institutions that responded to the questionnaire. In its response, the University appears to be a leading institution of higher education in South Africa which implements inclusive education.

[1] Deaf people identify themselves differently; there are those who use the uppercase 'Deaf' and see themselves as members of the Deaf community. They have a degree of audiological deafness and exhibit attitudinal cohesion linguistically, politically and socially with other Deaf people (Baker and Cokely, 1980). The other group is the oral deaf who use speech and hearing aids.

Problem statement

Inclusive education is being implemented in many countries, notably, England, United States of America, Australia and South Africa. According to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), many policymakers strongly support full inclusion in education. For these policymakers, inclusion means "full- scale mainstreaming of all disabled students with all students in regular schools near their homes" (World Federation of the Deaf, 2007, p.3). Deaf students in particular are provided with support services like sign language interpreters, tape recorders and academic support. However, the social and academic experiences of the consumers of support services, Deaf and hard of hearing students, are not explored in order to determine the effectiveness of these services in terms of equal epistemological access to education. Institutions of higher education in South Africa, in particular the University of the Witwatersrand, have transformation and equality policies that are aimed at opening education access to all people. However, there is no documentary evidence of any monitoring or evaluation of these policies, particularly from the Deaf and hard of hearing students' perspective.

The assumption that the adoption of these policies, based on inclusive education provides equal rights, opportunities and access to education shows ignorance of Deaf and hard of hearing students' experiences in an inclusive educational setting. Prospective Deaf higher education institution students encounter problems when they want to enrol at the universities (DeafSA, 2006). Firstly, South African Sign Language (SASL) is not recognized as a language equal in standard to all other languages, despite the unanimous support for SASL by protective legislation, namely the South African Constitution of 1996, the South African School Act of 1997 and policies like the Integrated National Disability Strategy, Education White Paper 6 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement. Deaf and hard of hearing students are disadvantaged in education by the lack of access to SASL. Secondly, higher education candidates, particularly in the faculties of humanities, are required to have passed two of the eleven official languages used in South Africa (Department of Education, 2005). One must be their home or first language and the other must be their first additional language. This is a barrier to Deaf students'

entry into mainstream higher education institutions because SASL is their first language yet it is neither one of the eleven official languages nor among the Department of Education (2005)'s recognized additional languages. Instead of being included, Deaf and hard of hearing students are excluded from the education system. In cases where they managed to enter higher education, they experience academic and social difficulties.

Aims of the study

The aim of this dissertation was to provide an in-depth exploration of the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers of being students at the University of the Witwatersrand by finding answers to three critical questions, namely:

1. What are the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits?
2. Why do Deaf and hard of hearing students have these experiences?
3. How do Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits deal with these experiences?

A secondary aim was to find out what access policies and support services are in place at Wits in an effort to make its programmes more accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing students. The provision of the support service has a significant impact on Deaf and hard of hearing students in terms of equitable access and success in learning institutions. The experiences of Deaf students with regard to support services in higher education is a complex phenomenon and little research has been conducted in this regard (Brown & Foster, 1991; Liversidge, 2003). Furthermore, most of the research studies were not done by Deaf and hard of hearing researchers (Thompson, 2004). The exploration of the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at the university, in this study, is therefore significant, as it fills the gap in the research.

The significance of the study

The findings from this study are significant to inclusive education policy implementation, for example, the national and provincial departments of education, in redesigning policies

which promote equal access and success in education with particular reference to Deaf and hard of hearing students. The identification and description of personal factors like communication options and other aspects that lead Deaf and hard of hearing students to have a positive university experience have significant implications for the University of the Witwatersrand's management, academic and administrative staff in understanding better how access to higher education might be improved for Deaf and hard of hearing students. The knowledge gained from the findings on how and why deaf personal attributes contribute to a good higher education experience and success is useful to academics, tutors, South Africa Sign Language interpreters, hearing students and administrative staff for the accommodation of Deaf and hard of hearing students. In addition to being useful to higher education personnel, the findings will enhance the value of deaf education literature, back up existing theory and contribute to the creation of new theory crucial to future research initiatives. The results of the study will also be useful to Deaf and hard of hearing students who plan to access higher education in a mainstream university.

The rationale for the research

The rationale for this study is threefold. Firstly, it is based on my experiences as a Deaf teacher in two schools for the Deaf in the North West province of South Africa. I have been to both schools for the Deaf and the hearing as a student and as a teacher for a period of thirty years. Prior to my position as lecturer and coordinator of the Deaf education programme at Wits, I managed a high school for the Deaf, North West Secondary School. My participation and experiences at different levels of the education system in South Africa puts me in a strong position to do this study. A second rationale for the study is the lack of research that has been conducted on the impact of inclusion and support services in higher education in South Africa and specifically from a [2]Deaf perspective. As a former full- time Deaf student, who sat in lecture halls without official

[2] There exist two main paradigms on deafness; the cultural and lingual perspective and the pathological perspective. The cultural and lingual paradigm refers to Deaf people as members of a cultural group. The pathological or clinical paradigm refers to Deaf people as a disability group. The use of the uppercase Deaf and lowercase deaf are aligned to the paradigms respectively.

support services, I am interested to explore what experiences current Deaf students have in terms of academic and social integration at Wits. The result of this study will help Wits to identify challenges that need to be overcome in the quest to keep in line with its mission and goals. Finally, the result will contribute to the body of literature on deaf educational issues, particularly on the academic and social experiences of Deaf students in mainstream higher education.

Literature on Deaf education in South Africa shows that DeafSA conducted a pilot study on the current situation of Deaf students in tertiary institution in 1998. Although a good study, it is insufficient in that it does not include descriptive experiences of Deaf students, nor does it present a Deaf point of view. Other studies like 'Disabled students and higher education in South Africa' by Howell (2004) that were done, did not focus specifically on Deaf students but on disability in general. Deaf people were seen historically as people with disabilities. However, Deaf people do not see themselves as disabled but members of a cultural and lingual group. A Deaf participant in Komesaroff's study put it succinctly when she said:

> I don't consider myself disabled, but I understand the meaning of the word 'disability'. I understand that … and I understand the community's perception of that word and I accept that I have a disability in hearing but I am not physically disabled (Komesaroff, 2000, p.1).

I acknowledge that traditionally Deaf people have been classified as a disability group. There are, however, some Deaf people, who for political reasons view themselves as a disabled because of the difficulties with verbal communication. Moore (2001) confirmed that many of Deaf people's societal and education problems are related to communication. It is therefore appropriate to examine their communication needs alongside other minority language groups, rather than people with disabilities. Deaf people identify themselves as "being part of a linguistic and cultural minority group, the Deaf community" (Storbeck & Magongwa, 2006, p.114). This research documents the academic and social experiences of Deaf students as members of a linguistic group in a mainstream university which has the ambition of becoming "an intellectual powerhouse

in the world" (Nongxa, 2005). The University of the Witwatersrand is known for its stand against policies that perpetuated education inequalities in the 1970s. It was among the first universities to become accessible to Deaf students and to provide academic support services for them.

Lastly, the reason for undertaking this research is that the educational transformation that is currently sweeping the country is making it possible to do this research on the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students. Deaf people's opportunities for entry into higher education increased after the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1996. These opportunities are made possible by the provision of education support services like SASL interpreters for Deaf students in order to meet the unique barriers to learning. Education support services are the "key to equal participation in the learning process" (Department of Education, 1997, p. 12). Hence their availability to Deaf students in the context of equal participation in learning process is worth exploring.

According to the Department of Education (1997), the history of special needs education and educational support services provision is characterized by general inequalities within the South African community, with the majority of learners receiving inadequate or no provision at all. The Department of Education (1997) further asserts that specialized education and support has predominantly been provided unequally among learners with disabilities. With the advent of the new South African constitutional dispensation in 1994, institutions of higher learning, notably the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of the Witwatersrand, have become increasingly accessible to students with disabilities as well as Deaf students. However, the number (31) of Deaf individuals who have graduated from the South African universities over the years is still insignificant (DeafSA, 1998) compared to other countries.

Internationally, research has shown that the majority of Deaf university graduates are hard of hearing or post- lingual deaf (Brelje, 1999). This may be attributed to the lack of sign language interpreting service at universities. The service is however improving. Brelje (1999) points out that, higher education opportunities for hard of hearing students

in many countries are far greater than for Deaf students because the communication needs of the latter are not always met. Komesaroff (2000) firmly states that Deaf students are "grossly under-represented in higher education" worldwide (Komesaroff, 2000, p.1). At the time of publication, there were no Deaf students, or very few, enrolled at universities and colleges in countries like Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, India, Lebanon, Nepal, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia and Thailand. The major barriers, as Brelje (1999) shows, are the "continuing attitude among the citizenry of some countries that deaf individuals are not capable of successfully completing a college or university education" (Brelje, 1999, p. 418).

However, the international drive to accommodate diverse learners in the classroom, including learners with disabilities in the classroom, has an impact on Deaf students. Firstly, the doors of higher education institutions have opened for Deaf students in many countries. Secondly, there is a growing body of literature regarding the inclusion of Deaf students and accommodating their educational needs. While South Africa lags behind in accommodating Deaf students at higher education institutions, there is a notable progress in the enrolment of Deaf and hard of hearing students at colleges and universities. At the University of the Witwatersrand, there were two Deaf students and one hard of hearing student in 1994 and fifteen in 2004.

In summary, this dissertation aims to explore the experiences of Deaf students from a Deaf perspective. The results of the research will be used to inform various stakeholders (Deaf students, institutions of higher learning and the state) about the academic and social experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students. The University of the Witwatersrand has been chosen as the site of the research for two reasons. Firstly, it is where the participants and I are based. Secondly, it has a structured student support service, the DU. Although Deaf people do not regard themselves as people with disability, they benefit from support service provided by the Disability Unit at the University, the site of this research.

The research context

The research was conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand. The University of the Witwatersrand is situated in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to information in the Central Records Office (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005b), the University of the Witwatersrand was founded as an open university which meant that all students, regardless of race, gender and disability, were welcomed. It had a policy of non-discrimination on racial or any other grounds. It is noted that reference to non-discrimination on 'any other grounds' rules out discrimination for access purposes based on disability and Deafness. The university's commitment to non-discrimination was temporarily disturbed when the apartheid government passed the Extension of the University Education Act in 1959. This Act effectively enforced apartheid at the university. The university community protested strongly and continued to maintain a firm, consistent and vigorous stand against apartheid because the institution wanted to maintain its fundamental role, namely to promote freedom of enquiry and the search of knowledge and truth (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005b). This remains so to this day.

The University of the Witwatersrand campus is situated in the City of Johannesburg in the Gauteng province, South Africa. Wits is a comprehensive urban institution of higher learning (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005b). Through research and the production of adaptable and critical graduates, the university contributes to the reconstruction and development of South Africa. The university is headed by a Council. The daily management of the university is run by the Senior Executive Team (SET). In April 2008 the composition of the SET, to whom the Council delegates day-to-day management of the University, was as follows:

Vice-Chancellor and Principal	Professor Loyiso Nongxa
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic	Professor Yunus Ballim
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research	Professor Belinda Bozzoli
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Finance	Professor Patrick Fitzgerald
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Advancement	Dr Rob Moore
Registrar	Dr Derek Swemmer
Executive Director: Human Resources	Reverend Lulamile Mbete
Director: Strategic Planning	Dr Rob Moore
Dean of the Faculty of Science	Prof Rhamesh Bharuthram
Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management	Prof Kathy Munro
Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences	Prof Helen Laburn
Dean of the Faculty of Humanities	Prof Tawana Kupe
Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment	Prof Beatrice Lacquet
Dean of Students Affairs	Prem Coopoo

The Senior Executive Team ensures that the University policies approved by the Council are implemented. Admission (access) and disability policies are some of those being implemented in order to ensure that student diversity is maintained and developed further. The implementation of the policies has implications for the Deaf students and the Disability Unit, the office mandated by the SET to provide a support service to students with disabilities as well as the Deaf. The provision of support service is to enhance equal access to learning.

In order to ensure equitable access to Wits and the diversification of students, the University Council, through the SET, developed, adopted and implemented a policy on disability. The statement of principle guiding the policy is that the University "is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities for all persons" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2000, p.2). This means that the University also welcomes students with disabilities and those who are different. The admission criteria are, however, the same for all students. The access criteria are stated in the policy as academic ability and suitability for the course for which the student is applying.

Despite SET's commitment to the promotion of equality and the prevention of unfair discrimination in respect of epistemological access, the University is cautious about implementation. The policy asserts that the provision of appropriate support services to students with special needs "is limited by the affordability of those support systems" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2000, p.3). The caution is due to budgetary constraints (University of the Witwatersrand, 2000). However, the University commits itself, within current and future financial constraints, to enabling as many students with disabilities as possible to study at the institution. An example of the practical implication of the policy can be seen in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme for which a significant number of Deaf and hard of hearing students are registered. In 2006 the ACE programme had fifteen Deaf and hard of hearing students. The University supplied two SASL interpreters for the Deaf students to facilitate communication and learning in the lecture halls. The provision of the SASL interpreters is one of the factors that enhances access to knowledge for Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits.

(i) Equitable access for students with disabilities and those who are Deaf at Wits

The University of the Witwatersrand's human resources department established the Transformation and Equity office to address access and employment equity matters in general and in relation to people with disabilities as well as the Deaf. The office has since taken over the responsibility to develop, implement and monitor the University's policy on disability on campus. The Transformation and Equity office, in short, is focused on policy implementation while the Disability Unit deals with service delivery to students with disabilities, including the Deaf.

The University's policy on disability serves as a guideline for the accommodation of students and staff with disabilities in the university community. The policy is based on the South African Constitution of 1996 and national legislation, namely the Bill of Rights, the Employment Equity Act of 1998, the White Paper on Higher Education, the Promotion of Equity and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, and the Integrated National Disability Strategy of 1997. Accordingly, Wits identified the need to

ensure the diversification of staff and students as a strategic imperative (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005b). In its strategic plan, the university's senior executive team states that the university community will reflect and respect diversity. The management acknowledges that staff and students with disabilities bring unique qualities, competencies and skills to the institution, which enrich and add value to Wits' endeavours (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005b).

The endeavours of the University to accommodate people with disability are strongly guided by the principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and state policy documents. New legislation based on the constitution states clearly that discrimination on the basis of disability violates the right to equality. Legislation compels educational institutions and employers to take active steps to address the disadvantages faced in the past by people with disabilities. For instance, the Bill of Rights states that; "No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa." The subsection lists the grounds as race, gender, birth and disability, to mention a few. The Bill of Rights stipulates clearly that: "Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair" (Constitution of RSA, 1996, S9, 5).

To meet the demands of the Bill of Rights, the University, through its admission policy, provides guidelines for access to the institution and its natural environment for individuals with disabilities. The policy states that students with disabilities will be admitted using the same criteria as those which apply for other students, such as academic ability and suitability for the course or degree. The policy states that no student with a disability will be refused admission to the university on the grounds that he or she has a disability of any kind, including Deafness. However, the policy points out that the provision of appropriate support will be limited by the affordability of support systems. The University, as stated in the admission policy, commits itself, "within current and future financial constraints, to enabling as many students with disabilities as possible to study at the institution" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2000, p. 3). To ensure that

students with disabilities have appropriate support throughout their years of study, the university established the Disability Unit on campus in 1986.

(ii). The Disability Unit

The establishment of the Disabled Students Programme, now known as the Disability Unit, was the University of the Witwatersrand's recognition of its obligation towards the promotion of people with disabilities' quality of life through education. The Programme is seen as a model for an organised student support service for which the University took responsibility to accommodate students with disabilities, including the Deaf. The White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the President, 1997) states that the concept of a caring society is strengthened and deepened when people recognize that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights as they do and that society has an obligation towards the promotion of people with disabilities' quality of life. The core purpose of the Disability Unit is to "address the academic needs of people with special requirements" (Vermont, 2001, p. 15).

The Disability Unit provides academic support, guidance and support to students with disabilities, including the Deaf, for adjustment to university life. The service includes provision of South Africa Sign Language interpreters, note-takers, mathematics tutors, adaptive devices, invigilators, application for extra time for tests and examinations, computer training, Braille, intervention related to physical access to buildings and assistance with bursary and loan applications. The establishment of the Disability Unit enabled Wits to lead the way in making university degrees accessible to students with disabilities and the Deaf, thus aligning itself with the principles of the South African and international policy on inclusive education. The Disability Unit has a strong link with the Advanced Certificated in Education (ACE) programme. The programme has the largest number of Deaf and hard of hearing students on campus. Deaf students in the ACE programme use support services provided by the Disability Unit. Below, I describe the role of the head of the Disability Unit.

The coordinator is the Disability Unit manager at Wits. Her duties, among others, include fundraising and managing the services which are provided to students with disabilities. She has an important role in the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at the university. Her ability to recruit SASL interpreters to provide access to university discourses ultimately determine the quantity and quality of support that deaf students receive. She considers the primary concern to be the shortage of skilled SASL interpreters. Her other concerns include insufficient funding, short notice of the need of interpreters and lecturer expectation to have interpreters whenever required. She reported that the quality of services offered to Deaf and hard of hearing students as sufficient, considering that the Disability office had to support over 120 students registered with DU. The findings from this study confirms existing literature that the person involved in the coordination of services for Deaf and hard of hearing students needs to have a thorough knowledge of Deaf people and their needs in an hearing environment. An ability to use SASL is an advantage, as she would not need a third party for communication with the students. This quotation presents a Deaf student's feeling about the disability office manager succinctly.

> I'd like the university to be more aware of our needs. We're not like other students with disabilities, our needs are ongoing. The coordinators don't know enough – they need to learn how to sign. I think they need to be aware that they can't just provide things at the start, they need to give ongoing support, and check regularly that the support is adequate, that we're all right (a participant in Sameshima, 1999, p.5).

The Disability Unit has been providing South African Sign Language interpreting services to Deaf and hard of hearing students in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme since the programme was introduced. The ACE programme is explained below.

(iii). The Wits Advanced Certificate in Education Programme

It is important to give a brief introduction to the ACE programme, as it is from where the Deaf and hard of hearing participants in this study are drawn. In 2003, the Wits School

of Education, formerly known as the Faculty of Education, introduced a number of Advanced Certificates in Education teacher upgrading courses. An Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) is a professional development course and a qualification upgrade. It is: "designed to upgrade teachers holding a three-year professional qualification to the equivalent of a four-year qualification" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2007, p. 63).

The ACE upgrading courses followed on from the phased- out Further Diploma in Education (FDE) that the University of the Witwatersrand offered since 1996. According to Steinberg et al. (2004), the FDE started with specializations in mathematics, science and English with the aim of upgrading the qualifications of teachers who were under-qualified. In 2000, a specialization in Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) was introduced. The ACE specialization in Deaf education was introduced in 2001. The factor that necessitated the upgrading of teacher qualification is the transformation that was introduced in the South African education system in 1994.

Aldridge et al. (2004) point out that after the new South African government came into power in 1994, Professor Bengu, the then Minister of Education, embarked on education transformation. The Minister decided that from 1998 the old education system under which Black, Coloured, Indians and White learners followed different curricula would "be phased out and gradually replaced by Curriculum 2005" (Aldridge et al., 2004, p. 245). The basis of Curriculum 2005 is the ideal of lifelong learning for all South Africans, regardless of colour, disability, race or gender (Department of Education, 2001). Curriculum 2005 is aimed at encouraging teaching and learning that includes "a culture of human rights, multilingualism, multiculturalism and sensitivity to the values of reconciliation and nation- building" (Aldridge et al., 2004, p. 245). Teaching practices in Curriculum 2005 require learners to participate in the teaching and learning process rather than being passive observers, a characteristic of the old education system in South Africa. To implement these changes, teachers, as facilitators of the learning process, required support in the form of in-service training in an effort to improve the quality of education. In-service training, as well as the upgrading of qualifications, is an integral part of the national qualification framework.

The National Qualification Framework (NQF) is a new structure that aims to improve the quality of education in South Africa. An ACE is a qualification on the NQF. The ACE is allocated 120 credits and gives students a qualification at level 6 on the NQF. An ACE from Wits is recognized by the South African Department of Education and by the South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as a professional development programme for teachers with a 3-year qualification. SAQA is a coordinating body of all qualifications in South Africa. The ACE upgrade course was introduced to give access to students who, due to their limited qualifications, could not access university education. The ACE positions students to enter a Bachelor of Education with honours (B.Ed hons) programme at any university in the country. In other words, the ACE is intended to widen access for educators to further studies at institutions of higher learning. Bertram (2003), however, notes that equal access is not the same as equal opportunities for success in the teaching and learning process.

According to Steinberg et al. (2004), in her research on the degree of bachelor of education with honours (B.Ed Hons) at the University of KwaZulu/Natal, Bertram (2003) reveals a core problem that is also experienced at the University of the Witwatersrand. The issue in question is that in reality "open access does not necessarily mean equal opportunity for success" (Bertram, 2003, p. 80) if an effective support service is not available to students. As one of the key values of South Africa's new democratic constitution is equity and redress, it is important for institutions of higher learning to open up physical and epistemological access for students who were formerly not eligible for entry (Steinberg et al., 2004). In order to address equity in access, educational changes must focus on removing past inequalities in educational provision. The equity and redress policy is to ensure that all learners have equal opportunity to benefit from the educational system and, as the National Committee on Special Need in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) teams point out, society as a whole. The barriers which previously isolated particular learners from education should be removed and a process developed to facilitate the integration of all learners into education.

The barriers which faced ACE candidates are similar to those referred to in the White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) as intrinsic, societal and systemic factors (Department of Education, 2001). Systemic barriers include policy issues that govern access to institution of higher learning. The University's admission requirements into ACE are a three-year teaching qualification (Diploma in Education or equivalent), a matriculation exemption and a minimum of two year's formal teaching experience (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005a). ACE applicants usually have a senior certificate, either a three or two-year teaching qualification and at least two years of teaching experience. Societal barriers include communication and poverty. Communication barriers face all students who do not use English as a first language, but especially Deaf and hard of hearing students because they use mainly a visual language, Sign Language, rather than a spoken language. Lastly, intrinsic barriers are difficulties that emerge from disabilities or Deafness that are located in the candidate, such as the use of a visual language. The ACE programme at Wits has attempted to remove these barriers. Particular attention is be paid to improving access to lifelong learning for learners with disabilities, in particular those excluded from education in the past and present (Steinberg et al., 2004).

The majority of teachers in schools for the Deaf in South Africa have not received any training in Deaf pedagogy prior to their assumption of teaching in schools. In other words, the teachers entered the teaching profession unprepared for teaching deaf learners. Historically, the government and broader society lacked awareness, commitment and resources to locate to learners with disabilities as well as Deaf people (Department of Education, 1997). Teachers started teaching Deaf learners ignorant of the issues of Deaf pedagogy, Sign Language and the cognitive, linguistic and social development of Deaf and hard of hearing learners. Teachers were not required to have specialised teacher training and fluency in sign language in order to teach Deaf and hard of hearing learners. As a result, teachers encountered communication barriers in the teaching and learning process. This led to the poor state of Deaf education evident today. The ACE programme with specialization in Deaf education offers an opportunity for under-qualified teachers to

access higher education and prepare themselves to teach Deaf and hard of hearing learners.

When the students have accessed higher education institutions, the ACE course facilitators take the responsibility to ensure success. The facilitators develop opportunities to promote three aspects namely successful learning, improved classroom practices and a more confident sense of professional identity. The three aspects show that the ACE programme does not only focus on ensuring the attainment of a pass mark but on "the development of professional competencies" (Steinberg et al., 2004, p. 67).

The goals of the ACE program are firstly to broaden and deepen teachers' learning area knowledge, pedagogic learning area knowledge and educational knowledge. The second goal is to extend teachers' reflective abilities. The third goal is to facilitate teachers' professional growth. The fourth goal is to enable students to access further education. The ACE course is aimed at ensuring both academic and professional growth of the students who are mostly teachers. The activities in the ACE course are tailored to challenge students to reflect and research classroom issues (Steinberg et al., 2004) in their chosen specialization.

In constructing the ACE, the coordinators learned from the tradition of the Further Diploma in Education (FDE). They, however, took the opportunity to adjust the course structure, as well as rework and update the course materials of each ACE specialisation. The aim in the reconstruction of ACE material was firstly to provide improved support structures within the materials and secondly to ensure that the various courses were in line with current educational policies and suggested practices in a democratic South Africa.

The University of the Witwatersrand currently offers ACE options with specialisations in Deaf Education, Learners with Special Educational Needs, Science, Mathematics, English and Arts & Culture. In 2004, the University introduced two additional ACE specialisations in Mathematics and Human Rights. In 2008, additional ACE

specialisations such as School Leadership and Management, Natural Science and Physical Science in the General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) bands, to name a few, were introduced. Students are required to complete ten modules over a two-year period. The ten modules are divided as follows: four modules in education and six in the specialisation of students' choice. In each module, students write at least two assignments and an examination or examination equivalent project.

The delivery of the ACE is in a mixed mode, or block release, in which teacher-students are obliged to engage with interactive course materials as well as attend residential sessions. The programme also places great emphasis on students working together in study groups. The course materials contain content knowledge and activities, enabling students to work through them systematically on their own. For three of the education modules, the teaching staff uses learning guides and readers from the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) teacher education series, while the subject modules use materials written by Wits staff learning area specialists or consultants.

The residential sessions for the ACE programme involve a weekend early in February, and a week each during the South African school holidays in April, July and September. During these contact periods, teacher-students attend lectures and tutorial sessions. The lectures and tutorial sessions are designed to support learning through the introduction of new topics and areas of study. In addition, the sessions are used to highlight important aspects, current global issues in education and the development of ideas by providing opportunities for guided discussion and analysis of course content. These sessions, which are conducted on campus, also provide students with opportunities for practice in academic reading and writing skills because writing workshops are arranged during the sessions. It must be pointed out that the sessions are not a substitute for students learning on their own or in study groups. The lecturers involved do not provide summaries of the course materials as staff believe students as teachers themselves can study on their own or in groups. Studying in groups is one of the education support services that ACE teaching staff encourages. There is a lot of literature on the importance of education

support services to meet the specific needs of students. Prior to exploring the specific experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students within the ACE programme at Wits, I reviewed DeafSA's pilot study, as it is closely related to this research.

Relevance of the DeafSA's pilot study (1998)

One of the major forces that inspired me to conduct this study was a pilot study conducted by the Deaf Federation of South Africa in September 1998, as I was one of the participants. The study was entitled "A Pilot Study into the current situation of the Deaf in Tertiary Institutions in South Africa". DeafSA interviewed thirty- five Deaf students who were either recently or at that time enrolled at thirteen institutions of higher learning in South Africa. DeafSA's study and this research have the same area of focus, namely, Deaf students at institutions of higher learning.

There are four main differences: firstly, DeafSA interviewed thirty-five Deaf students from thirteen institutions of higher education while this dissertation focuses on twelve Deaf students in one educational programme and in one university. Secondly, in this study, the research participants were Deaf students and the coordinator of the students' support services, while DeafSA collected data from a wide spectrum of role players in education. The role players included Deaf students, South African Sign Language interpreters and principals of schools for the Deaf and the managements of institutions of higher education. Thirdly, DeafSA's study investigated the situation of Deaf students in tertiary institutions. This study explores the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in one university.

The DeafSA's study was commissioned as a result of the expressed dissatisfaction by Deaf people about their access to tertiary education. The very few Deaf people already in tertiary institutions at that time felt that "they were not getting full access to tertiary education" (DeafSA, 1998, p.6). This study is interested in exploring the experiences of Deaf students as their numbers increase at the University of the Witwatersrand. Lastly, this study is done by a Deaf person directly with participants while DeafSA's study was

conducted by a committee of hearing individuals who used a South African Sign Language interpreter to interview Deaf participants.

The study which was conducted by the Deaf Federation of South Africa on the situation of the Deaf in tertiary institutions in South Africa in 1998 revealed that Deaf people who were in tertiary institutions at that time felt that they were not getting full access to institutions of higher education due to several factors such as the lack of preparedness at secondary school level, inadequate support services including SASL interpreters, tutors, note-takers and Deaf role models. This study deals with the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students specifically as shown by research questions. The next section presents the research questions that guided this study.

Research questions

The study considered some research questions for the purpose of exploring the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers of being students at the University of the Witwatersrand. These questions are extensions of the three critical questions mentioned under the aims of the study on page 12 of this dissertation. The questions are:

1. How were Deaf and hard of hearing people motivated to study at Wits?
2. What were the students' perceptions of institutional factors?
3. What were the academic and social experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits?
4. What were the challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students?
5. How did Deaf and hard of hearing students overcome academic and social obstacles?
6. How did Deaf and hard of hearing students experience the university climate?
7. How did pre-university experience impact on Deaf and hard of hearing students at higher education institutions?
8. How were support services provided and maintained?

The questions were formulated to explore how Deaf and hard of hearing students experience university life by examining their perceptions on academic and social

integration within the University of the Witwatersrand. There exist several assumptions about their integration in a mainstream educational environment.

Assumptions

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers of being students at an institution of higher education. The study is based on the assumption, firstly, that Deaf and hard of hearing students as a minority group and users of South African Sign Language have unique experiences in an inclusive education setting. Secondly, that in-depth interviews with Deaf students and information from the support service manager would give a picture of the academic and social experiences of Deaf students in a university that strives to be accessible to all. These experiences would be useful to the university in terms of improving its policy and practices as they relate to the acceptance and support of Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Limitations

The limitations of this research consisted of; firstly, the national strike of civil servants that occurred in the time frame set for data collection, that is, May and June 2007. The impact of the strike was such that I could not access the participants because they were either participating in the strike action or for security reasons had to go far away from their usual workplace. Secondly, the strike took place just before school winter holidays and the participants headed to their holiday destinations. Thirdly, the perspectives of hearing students and lecturers were not examined. For example, there was no direct investigation of peer attitudes and lecturers' collaboration and support. However, Deaf and hard of hearing students discussed briefly these issues in their interviews.

The study did not include all Deaf and hard of hearing students in South African institutions of higher learning but focused on twelve Deaf and hard of hearing students in an academic programme (ACE) and in one university. The research therefore cannot be generalized to apply to all the Deaf and hard of hearing student population at Wits and

other institutions of higher education in South Africa. Lastly, financial constraints meant that four of the identified participants could not be reached for interview purposes and data verification.

Key terms used in the study

The terms Deaf and hard of hearing students are used in this study. For the sake of clarity and mutual understanding, the two terms and other deafness- related concepts are described as follows:

D*eaf*: an adjective referring to a person (or cultural and linguistic minority group) who needs SASL as a means of communication and accessing learning on an equal basis with hearing counterparts. Deaf students are the majority of learners who are mildly to mildly/severely hard of hearing. That is, they have hearing loss of about 45dB. Deaf students also include all who are severely (hearing loss of about 66 dB – 85 dB) or profoundly deaf (hearing loss of about 86 dB+) and who accept Sign Language as their first and natural language. All over the world, Deaf people view themselves as a cultural and linguistic minority. The term Deaf has thus become the descriptive term for a distinct group with its own cultural identity and language. In this study I use 'Deaf' when I refer to the participants because they describe themselves as people who participate and accept themselves as members of the Deaf community, regardless of their degree of hearing loss. Cultural Deafness is not about hearing loss.

d*eaf*: an adjective merely referring to audiological status usually from the pathological perspective of deafness. The word 'deaf' with a'd' in lower case is used generally. In this study I use the clinical term "deaf" to refer to an individual with a condition of not hearing.

hard of hearing: an adjective referring to a person who is audiologically deaf and who usually uses a spoken language as a means of communication and learning. A hard of

hearing person is usually someone with a slight hearing loss. A person in this category has a hearing loss of less than 40 dB.

Hearing impaired: an adjective referring to an individual with hearing loss. This term is employed by the proponents of a pathological view of deafness to describe a range of conditions from mild hearing loss to profound deafness. It is: "a blanket term popularized in the 1970s to include all people with any degree of hearing loss - from slight to profound (Preston, 1994, p. 245). The term is generally used by hearing people. The Deaf community objects strongly to this deficiency model because they do not consider themselves 'impaired'. Unless included in a quotation, the term is not used in this study.

South African Sign Language (SASL) means the natural language used by members of the South African Deaf community. It is a language that developed naturally over time among a community of users. The language exhibits all features of a language. SASL is a manual-visual language that is communicated primarily through the hands, face and body in which signs evolve through natural processes. In this study the term "sign language" was used as a generic term to refer to all forms of signing, including SASL, signed languages and contact signing.

dB refers to an abbreviation for decibel. dB is a measurement used to determine hearing loss levels; the higher the decibels, the greater the hearing level. For instance, a dB level of 30-70 indicates moderate hearing level. A dB level of 90-110 indicates a severe to profound hearing loss (Liversidge, 2003, p.26).

Mainstream (or regular) university is a term used by researchers to distinguish universities that do not primarily cater to students with special educational needs.

Summary

This chapter has described the purpose of the context of the research. The study aims to gain perspective and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, namely, inclusive education and the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits. The institution in which the research occurred started providing structured support services to students with disability including the Deaf and hard of hearing students in 1986 when a Disability Unit was established. The Unit provides support services, mainly South African Sign Language interpreters, to Deaf and hard of hearing students in lecture halls. Inclusion policy was the force behind the institution opening their doors to Deaf and hard of hearing students. Prior to exploring the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students, it is important to investigate inclusive education in other countries. An understanding of the structure, policies, philosophy and practical implications of inclusion are explored in the literature review in chapter two. The chapter follows after a brief detail of the organisation of the study.

Organisation of the dissertation

Chapter two discusses the notion of inclusive education with regard to its history, political and ideological. The theoretical framework employed in the investigation is explained.

Chapter three outlines the methodological position chosen for this research. It includes the description of the methods used, ethical consideration, the criteria used for the selection of Deaf and hard of hearing participants and strands that emerged from the interviews.

Chapter four presents and analyses the findings. Detailed biographical information of the participants is given in this section. The issues which were raised by the participants and the support service management are discussed. Lastly, chapter five discusses the findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature about Deaf and hard of hearing students at institutions of higher learning reveals two aspects. Firstly, there is a significant body of knowledge about the barriers Deaf students face in accessing information in the teaching and learning context (Lang, 2002). Secondly, many studies in this field were conducted from a medical paradigm of deafness, particularly in South Africa. There is a serious shortage of studies conducted by Deaf people about Deaf students in higher education institutions. In addition there is a dearth of research on the experiences of Deaf students in an inclusive tertiary education setting.

This section reviews the existing research and literature on support service provision for students with disabilities, particularly Deaf people, in the higher educational context. In order to establish principles underlying the notion of equal access to quality education for students with disabilities, crucial documents like the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, inclusive education and language rights of Deaf learners will be discussed. The international theoretical literature on the support services for Deaf students at institution of higher learning will be reviewed. As the literature touches on concepts of diversity, equality and social justice, the key values of the South African Constitution, it is appropriate to commence the discussion with a brief description of the constitution as it legalizes inclusive education policy in some way.

The Constitution of South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is one of the most progressive in the world. The constitution affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom through a Bill of Rights. The principles of supporting education and training are also framed in the constitution under the Bill of Rights. The constitution has a strong focus on human rights and social justice for all learners in the country. One of the aims

of the South African constitution, with particular reference to education, is to redress past inequalities by providing equal access for all learners to a single inclusive education system and creating optimal participation and social integration for all learners.

The South African Schools Act of 1997 is based on the constitutional principle which says that everyone has the right to learn. The Act anticipates equal access to the school curriculum by diverse learners. This implies that all learners must have an opportunity to engage meaningfully with the teaching and learning process without any discrimination based on disability, colour, ethnic group and status in society (Department of Education, 2001).

In terms of access to education, the South African Constitution of 1996 states that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or language of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions "taking into account (a) equity, (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices" (SA Constitution, Section 29, Bill of Rights, 1996). One of the education alternatives introduced in South Africa as a result of the constitutional demands to address past inequalities in education, is inclusive education.

Inclusive education in South Africa

South Africa went through major political changes in the early 1990s, particularly after 1994 when the first democratic elections took place and a new constitution was drafted. Under the new political dispensation, all South African citizens have equal rights (SA Constitution, 1996). Peel (2004) points out that the changes that accompanied the democratic transformation had a ripple effect on the education system. The country moved from one of segregation and discrimination on the basis of race, gender and disability, to mention a few, to a centralized, unified and national system of education.

The new unified education system through its policy of inclusive education is aimed at meeting the needs of all learners in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001, Introduction).

The term inclusive education is defined by Naicker as "a system of education that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners" (Naicker, 1999, p.19). The significance of inclusive education is clearly explained in the Salamanca Statement (United Nations, 1994), as a strategy that contributes towards the ultimate goal of promoting an inclusive society. This society enables all children and adults whatever their ability, gender, age, ethnicity, impairment or HIV/AIDS status to fully participate and contribute to the society. In the apartheid era, education systems were characterized by segregation, inequalities and discrimination in the allocation of resources. In the new South African context, inclusive education is viewed through the lens of equality and equity. Inclusive education is one of the policies introduced to address these issues. Other government-initiated commissions, such as the National Committee for Special Needs Education and Training (NCSNET), view inclusive education as far more than merely addressing past inequalities but as a way of developing a person holistically.

An inclusive learning environment that develops a person holistically is defined in the NCSNET and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) report (1997) as a learning environment that is set to promote the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning style and language. It is one which is free from discrimination, segregation and harassment. Such an environment intends to facilitate an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect. In addition, it is an environment which respects learners as partners in the teaching and learning process. The environment is set with the intention to show respect for the rights of all learners in order to participate fully in a democratic society.

In the South African context, the departure from an unequal education system to an inclusive education system is implemented to embrace the principle of equity and long-

life learning for all. For instance, inclusive education is aimed at equipping all learners with knowledge, competencies and orientations needed for success in education.

In other words, the support services within inclusive education in South Africa are envisaged to provide coordinated professional service within an educational institution. Through an established office like the Disability Unit at Wits, support is provided to help the university to accommodate a range of diverse learning needs. Supporting students can also come indirectly by supportive lecturers and tutors. The University, through its Disability Unit, gives lecturers guidance on meeting the needs of Deaf students, thus encouraging them to adopt greater flexibility in their teaching and learning methodologies in order to accommodate all students. Lecturers, in particular ACE staff at the University of the Witwatersrand, see it as their responsibility to ensure successful implementation of support services to students in their programmes. The support service provision is a critical feature of the inclusive education philosophy (Department of Education, 1997).

Due to the debate about inclusive education, a great deal of studies in the area of Deaf education has focused on the practical implications of the policy with regard to Deaf and the hard of hearing. The studies included the impact of inclusive education on the educational, emotional and social development of Deaf learners, evaluation of hearing students, educators and parents' perspectives on inclusive education and situations of Deaf and hard of hearing students at mainstream education institutions. The next section examines the theoretical foundations of inclusive education.

Theoretical foundations of inclusive education

One of the key factors of an inclusive learning environment is the provision of support services or "access services" (Lang, 2002, p. 270). The academic and social integration of Deaf and hard of hearing students in an ordinary classroom necessitates the offering of specialized support and an access service in order to overcome communication barriers. Since Deaf and hard of hearing students participate in the teaching and learning process

through a visual language, namely Sign Language, a speaking and hearing environment is inaccessible to them without support or access services[3]. Other common types of educational support services needed by Deaf students generally are academic advice, interpretation, tutoring, note- taking and real-time captioning. The latter is an information technology where the speaker's message is translated into an electronic text as she/he speaks.

Donald et al. (1997) found that educational support services such as academic support existed for people with disabilities in the old apartheid South Africa, however, with minimal effect. Since schools for learners with disabilities as well as the Deaf were separate due to the racial policies of the past education system, there were inequalities in the provision of support services. Support services, such as speech therapy, provided to some schools were ineffective. The reason for ineffectiveness according to Donald et al. (1997) was, firstly, the South African education system had a long history of gross inequalities and inconsistency between the various racially-segregated social departments and between rural and urban contexts. Secondly, professional coherence between components of educational support services was lacking because, as Donald et al. (1997) pointed out, a sense of national clarity on the composition and goals of the services was nonexistent. Under the white minority government, undemocratic and prejudicial decision-making processes were evident from every angle (Donald et al. 1997). The third issue that characterized the old South African education system was that educational support services wholly neglected the social hardships of most Black South Africans. Due to this neglect and the need to address the ineffective support system, South Africa officially started implementing a new support service in the late 1990s.

Implementation of support services in the South African education system started in the late 1990's. Naicker (1999) reports that in 1997 the then minister of education appointed, among others, two committees, the National Committee for Education Support Service (NCESS) and the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training

[3] This does not apply to oral deaf and hard of hearing students who, despite not depending on Sign Language, may still need support services, e.g. hearing assistive devices and oral interpreters.

(NCSNET). The mandate of the committees was to investigate and present recommendations on, among others, the support services needed in education and training learners with disabilities in South Africa. According to the chairperson of the NCSNET committee in Department of Education (1997), the NCSNET and the NCESS committees had a close working relationship, hence they undertook a joint investigation.

This joint investigation of the NCSNET and the NCESS had a two-pronged focus: the first focus was on the challenge to the entire education system to address the diverse needs of the learner population. The second focus was on "the challenge to minimize, remove and prevent barriers to learning and development in order to promote effective learning and development of all learners" (Lazarus in Department of Education, 1997, p. I). The chairperson of the NCSET further pointed out that the scope of the NCSNET and NCESS investigation covered all parts of the education system, namely early childhood development, adult education, general education and training, further education and training and higher education. The aim of the overall investigation was thus to find ways of promoting effective learning of all learners at all levels. These ways of promoting effective learning at all levels were presented in the form of recommendations by the NCNET and NCESS to the Department of Education.

One of the recommendations made by the NCSNET and NCESS led to higher education institutions like the University of the Witwatersrand opening their doors to more diverse students, notably the Deaf. Concerning "opening its doors", Prof Mthembu, former vice-principal and deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, told the *Alumni News* of 7th April 2005 that things at Wits had changed in line with the transformation process but "Wits will never change her academic excellence" (Mthembu, 2005, p. 10). Wits was previously an institution of higher education which served mainly the middle class White sector of the society. The University now embraces diversity and equality as core values in student enrollment. Another of its principles and values is that any student who is granted physical access to the University has the right to expect a teaching and learning environment that promotes epistemological access.

This statement means that if a student is admitted in the full knowledge that he or she will require educational support or development "it must be adequately provided" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003) to the extent that the students have access to how knowledge is acquired and utilized within the university. In Section 5 of the undergraduate application for admission form (2005), the University states firmly that every reasonable attempt will be made by the University of the Witwatersrand to provide students with the assistance they may need as the result of their disability or special needs. The onus is on the applicants to provide the university with the necessary information about their disability status and special needs at the time of the application. If the applicant does not declare the information, the University can not undertake to provide such assistance (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005a, p. 2).

As a result of the university's admission policy, support services for Deaf and hard of hearing students at the University of the Witwatersrand have improved significantly since the early 1980s. Deaf students, unlike hearing students, need the services in order to overcome the communication barriers to knowledge and truth. The Director of Human Resources at the University of the Witwatersrand had this to say about access to Wits;

> Given that our fundamental role is to promote freedom of enquiry and the search of knowledge and truth, Wits has been transformed in recent years, with many initiatives aimed at ensuring access for students and staff (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003, p. 20).

If the current twelve Deaf and hard of hearing students in the ACE programme are taken into account, the University of the Witwatersrand is more accessible by Deaf and hard of hearing students than in the late 1980s when I was the sole Deaf student in this institution.

International situation on inclusive education

Internationally, the United States of America and Australia have been exemplary in implementing inclusive learning and teaching practices in their educational institutions.

In this study, the research will not dwell on the controversy as to whether inclusive practices are a way forward or not to equal access to education for all. The history of inclusive education for all learners is based on efforts to ensure that exclusions based on difference are stopped because they are discriminatory. Findings from international positions on inclusion practices led to countries around the world attempting to develop inclusive educational systems. For instance, Australia developed inclusive systems from international legislation on equitable education. This legislation is based on ensuring the rights of all children to receive equitable education (Blenk & Fine, 1995).

According to Wedell (1993) the degree of inclusion in a country is determined by "a large number of ideological, policy, financial and conceptual factors and its scope is limited by the amount of support available within individual *educational institutions"* (italics added) (Wedell, 1993, p. 101). The financial resources, needs, policies, politics of the country and values are principles that determine the possibility of inclusive practices.

According to Avramidis et al. (2002), inclusion has become a crucial issue of consideration within the international education arena in recent years. Equality and equal opportunities have been an important focus for debate in education since the 1950s. At first, the effects of social class on educational achievement and the need to move towards a meritocracy where children from all kinds of backgrounds could achieve success was the central concern. In the early 1960s a number of developed countries like the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Scandinavia began to recognise the rights of learners categorized as learners with special educational needs.

This recognition came in the form of a variety of legislation. The developed countries envisioned the provision of education for learners with special educational needs as a shift from separate schooling to integration, in other words, the placement of learners into regular schools (Gordon, 2000). According to Vislie (1995), integration in education was driven by the surge of liberalization in society that took place in the 1960s. This liberalization grew from the economic prosperity and social optimism after World War 2 in western countries. The term "inclusion" emerged because the notion of integration

was increasingly seen as a limited trial to accommodate and support all learners in regular schools. The shift to inclusion meant that there was a move to take into cognizance two main concerns, a wider range of learner needs and a greater commitment to create regular schools that would be capable of accommodating their needs (Reynolds, 2001).

Reynolds (2001) asserts that in the 1990s, the issues of disability, gender, race and class combined well within an international move towards inclusion. This meant the achievement of a society that shows not only an absence of discrimination but also the availability of opportunities for all individuals to participate in every facet of society.

The drive for the availability of opportunities for all members of society is reflected in the United Nations (UN)'s Salamanca Statement (1994). This global policy focused on providing quality education for all learners in a single system (Prinsloo, 2001).

In particular, an inclusive education system provides learners with disabilities[4] opportunities to participate in the educational system of a country. Learners are given an equal right to education and an opportunity to learn. Lastly, the ideal of inclusive education is to remove the stigma and stereotype from which learners with barriers to learning are viewed (Department of Education, 1997). Equal access to education as guided by government policies on inclusive education means that in every teaching and learning process, equal participation of all learners should be promoted, irrespective of the learning barriers some learners experience (United Nations, 1994).

The Statement laid down the framework of inclusive education at a world conference on special needs education in Spain in 1994. The Salamanca Statement reaffirms among other things:

[4] The term; 'learners with disabilities' is a more acceptable and positive language than 'disabled learners' which is an attitudinal barrier to disability. The term" disabled "is a negative and unpleasant term which is used to describe people with disabilities.

1. The right of every individual to education.
2. That educational institutions should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic and other conditions.
3. That provision of support services is of paramount importance for access and success in the education for all (United Nations, 1994).

The assertion in the Salamanca Statement is that inclusive education is aimed at two things, as pointed out by Gordon (2000). Firstly, to reconstruct the provision of education for learners with disabilities and, secondly, to expand educational opportunities to marginalized groups who historically have had little or no access to formal schooling. In addition, the Salamanca Statement shows the social benefits that could be derived from inclusive education. The social benefits include the increased acceptance and appreciation of diversity, improved life skills like communication, increased moral and ethical development and increased self-esteem (Stafford and Green, 1996).

The promotion of equal access to education is enshrined in international policy documents, for instance the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Children. The Salamanca Statement drawn up by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) also had a significant influence on educational reform in inclusive education.

The discussion of inclusive education and the international policies like the Salamanca Statement indicates that much attention has been devoted to the concept of inclusive education in the past years. The notion of inclusion is debated in journals such as the South African Journal of Education, the Journal of the International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities and the European Journal of Special Needs Education. One of the topics that dominated the debate on inclusion is the issue of educational support services.

For educational support services to be accessible to all who need them, core service providers like schools and universities are expected to provide specialist personnel for the

unique needs of learners, for example, South African Sign Language interpreters for Deaf students, if the main teaching medium is an oral language. For instance, English and Deaf students chose South African Sign Language as a medium of teaching. Generally the personnel are envisioned to include psychologists, learning support specialists, therapists and welfare professionals.

To sum up, many international changes in education have occurred over the past decades. These changes have had a significant impact on the reform of education in South Africa. It is now evident that the South African education system is gradually being restructured to create a system that can meet the educational needs of all learners. The system is intended to provide an opportunity for all students to learn in an integrated context. In the higher education context however the successful implementation of an inclusive education system is both driven and hampered by the availability of resources. These resources are seen as the keys for educational access by students who have faced barriers in an educational setting. It is crucial therefore that those students who need support services are provided with them. The government, policy makers and educational institutions should be aware of the need for resources to make access a practical reality rather than a rhetorical one (Lekota in *Sowetan*, 20 Jan 2006).

Inclusive education and the Deaf learner

Research suggests that inclusive education has positive and negative aspects with regard to Deaf learners. In this section, I discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education in the Deaf education context.

Marschark et al. (2006) noted that the basis for placing Deaf learners in inclusive schools lies in the belief that Deaf children, like their hearing peers, can be educated in that environment. This belief, according to Marschark et al. (2006), assumes that information communicated by hearing educators for hearing learners is accessible to Deaf students.

As part of the evaluation of inclusive education policy, researchers requested educators, parents and learners to identify the possible advantages and disadvantages of inclusion (Schimper, 2004). The advantages of inclusion include the emotional and social benefits for both learners who do and do not experience barriers to learning, such as tolerance and understanding of one another and confidence. The social benefits included learners' development of social skills and self-esteem. The human rights advantage of inclusive education is that learners would enjoy freedom of choice. For example, they choose which schools they want to attend, especially those near their homes. In this case, the routine of home and family life are preserved. The other advantage of inclusion is that there is a provision of support services for learners who have barriers to learning in a mainstream educational setting. Deaf learners, in particular, may be provided with Sign Language interpreters, tutors and note-takers.

The drawbacks of inclusive education in respect of Deaf and hard of hearing learners often reflects the absence of advantages enjoyed in schools for the Deaf students. For example, their participation in extracurricular activities is limited (Foster, 1989). When asked why she wanted to give up on an extracurricular activity, a participant in Foster's (1989) study responded:

> Because hearing people weren't interested in me. No one would talk to me, so I just gave up…I just had to sit there and watch… They'd just tell me what to do, and that's all. I know why, because we had a hard time… when we were talking (Foster, 1989, p.73).

In addition to the constraint in extracurricular activities, Deaf and hard of hearing learners experience difficulties in participating in the classroom activities, including a lack of complete information and limited involvement in class discussion and social isolation.

The second disadvantage of inclusive education is that it is not uniform in the degree of accessibility and support available to Deaf and hard of hearing students. For example, an inclusive school in a poor rural area may not have the resources to implement the policy compared a similar type of school in an urban area. In other words, Deaf students in

urban areas may have SASL interpreters, tutors and note-takers while students in rural areas are essentially without support services. It must be noted that there are Deaf and hard of hearing people in any area and one of the principles of inclusive education is for learners to attend schools near their homes. The disadvantage lies in the unpredictability and variance across inclusive settings in which Deaf and hard of hearing students find themselves in a very supportive situations or totally without support (Foster, 1989).

Although the provision of support services is a key feature of inclusive education, having SASL interpreters does not guarantee Deaf and hard of hearing learners' successful inclusion into a mainstream class. For example, a Deaf student may have difficulty adjusting to a SASL interpreter in lecture halls after years of being without this support at school level in a rural area. Taking the above experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing learners in an inclusive education setting, the World Federation of the Deaf[5] expresses a serious difference regarding implementation of inclusive education for Deaf learners. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) holds that "the least restrictive environment for a Deaf learner … is the most enabling environment for that learner" (World Federation of the Deaf, 2007, p. iii). A restrictive environment has factors that lead to learning breakdown and prevent learners from reaching their full potential. These factors are known as barriers to learning and development (Department of Education, 2001).

The Department of Education identified the following as barriers to learning: negative attitudes to, and stereotyping of, differences, inflexible curriculum, inappropriate languages or language of learning and teaching, inappropriate communication, inaccessible and unsafely built environments, inappropriate and inadequate support services, inadequate policies and legislation, non-recognition and non-involvement of parents, inadequately and inappropriately- trained education managers and educators (Department of Education, 2001, p. 7 & 18).

[5] The World Federation of the Deaf is an international organisation of federations of the Deaf. It promotes and safeguards the rights of all Deaf people to quality education. WFD has seats at the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, to name a few.

The least restrictive environment for learners is therefore a barrier-free learning and development context'. For the WFD, full inclusion for a Deaf learner means a totally supportive, signing and learner-centred environment. The least restrictive environment would give the Deaf learner an equal opportunity with her/his hearing peers to develop educationally, emotionally and socially. If a Deaf or hard of hearing learner is placed in an 'inclusive' school without opportunities for meaningful interaction with educators and classmates at all times, he/she is excluded from education and society. In such a restrictive environment, "the Deaf child is physically present but may be mentally and socially absent" (World Federation of the Deaf, 2007, p. iii).

In summary, the goals of inclusive education are generally appropriate for learners with disabilities who can hear and interact with their peers and educators. The practical implications of inclusive education for Deaf learners reveal more disadvantages than advantages. The advantages and drawbacks of inclusive education discussed in this section are similar to those identified around the world. Inclusive education is positive but it is not necessarily the way forward for all learners. Some learners such as Deaf students may prefer a barrier-free learning and development environment rather than placement in a regular school without meaningful interaction with classmates and educators. I may well quote from the Salamanca document:

> Educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of sign language as a medium of communication among the deaf, for example, should be recognized and provision made to ensure that all deaf persons have access to education in their national sign language. Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools (United Nations, 1994, Item 21, p. 18).

As long as the concept of sign language is not fully developed in inclusive schools, such schools will render Deaf learners educationally, emotionally and linguistically disabled. This is contrary to the principles of inclusive education which are equal rights, equal opportunities and equal access to education. In the next section, I discuss the language rights and the human rights of the Deaf.

Language rights and human rights

South Africa is still in a process of transformation. Transformation is necessary due to the fragmented educational policy that was entrenched by the previous Nationalist government. The government was characterized by inequalities in education, income and service provision. In contrast, the new democratic government that came into power in 1994 has freedom, human dignity and equality as its core values. With the acceptance of a new constitutional dispensation in South Africa, which includes a Bill of Human Rights for all citizens of the Republic of South Africa, a new dawn was also heralded for Deaf citizens in terms of non-discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds of language and culture (RSA Constitution, 1996, article 31). Equal rights form part of the fundamental principle of society where each individual is of equal importance and should have equal opportunities and access to participate in society. Deaf people and South African Sign Language (SASL) are now viewed as human right issues. The human rights of Deaf people to use and be accommodated in South African Sign Language, also forms part of the Disability Rights Charter. South African Sign Language is accepted as a language in its own right by a number of national organizations in South Africa, for instance: the South African Broadcasting Corporation; the National Coordinating Committee on Disability; The SA Federal Council on Disability; and the Disabled People of South Africa. In European countries, the United Kingdom and the USA, Sign Language is officially and legislatively recognized as the language of Deaf people with all the accompanying benefits.

Worldwide, however, discrimination against Deaf people takes place on a daily basis. For instance, within an educational setting the use of sign language as the language of learning for Deaf students is not catered for and neither sign language nor Deaf history and culture are taught as school subjects particularly in South Africa. A survey conducted by DeafSA (1998) indicated that only fourteen percent of teachers of Deaf learners can sign. Within many professional fields, for example, social work and psychological services, Deaf people are expected to use spoken and written language without the option of communication in their own natural language. Within the area of

public information, that is, meetings, conferences, debates and political gatherings, very rarely is provision made for the use of South African Sign Language through professional interpreter services.

South African Sign Language as a human right is one of the key principles in the socio-cultural ideology of deafness. Deaf people are appropriately classified as a language minority group because their educational challenges are more related to communication than hearing deficiency. Protagonists of the socio-cultural perspective including Deaf community, experts in linguistics, sociology and cultural anthropology concentrate on what a Deaf person has, not what he does not have. The perspective emphasizes the reality of the Deaf community, sign language, the experiences Deaf people have, and the ways of overcoming challenges. The basis for this approach is to emphasize the resources the Deaf community have, and not their weaknesses. There is a strong movement that argues for the social and cultural approach and that Deaf people be recognized as a discrete cultural group. The movement's view is that deafness does not require remediation because it is not handicapping but rather reflects a language difference and a human right issue.

Language rights of Deaf students

Traditionally, Deaf people have been viewed by society within a pathological or clinical paradigm (Thompson, 2004). From this medical or pathological perspective, Deaf students are labeled in a derogative and discriminatory way, for example 'deaf-mute', 'deaf-dumb' and 'hearing-impaired' to name but a few. Deaf students, from a pathological view, are seen as objects of treatment. For instance, attempts are made to remediate deafness and promote hearing and speech to the total exclusion of South African Sign Language in education. This medical view of deafness has formed the basis of oral and total communication approaches. Each of these approaches emphasises spoken language acquisition. The oral approach, in particular, focuses on speech as the medium of expression of the spoken language. As the oral approach chooses the hearing person as a model, its objective is to cure the Deaf person. The Deaf student is therefore

expected to strive towards better hearing and speech at the expense of normal academic programme. By excluding sign language in deaf education, the language rights of the Deaf students are violated.

The issue of sign language as used by Deaf and hard of hearing students is a human right and not one to be considered within welfare or health. The issue correctly belongs within the realm of human rights, language and communication. It is the human right of Deaf and hard of hearing students to use the language to which they have the most access. Deaf people cannot hear but see sign language. It its policy paper, DeafSA (2006) stated that South African Sign Language is a language made in space, perceived by eyes, produced with hands, face and upper body. If Deaf students are forced to speak and lip-read a spoken language in order to access information, their language is suppressed. It is a violation of their human rights not to be allowed to have access information through their most accessible language. Deafness becomes a communication disorder when sign language is not recognized.

Deaf students see themselves as discriminated against on the basis that the hearing society has classified them as disabled because of the pathological view that deafness is a medical disorder rather than a condition which necessitates the use of a different language modality. Deaf people in South Africa use SASL as their primary mode of communication. Once SASL is recognized as the primary language of Deaf people and accorded its rightful status as one of the languages of South Africa, Deaf people will be in position to have full and equal access to the resources of South Africa. They will be full contributing members of the economy and society as a whole. This depends however on the recognition of SASL as the primary language of Deaf people in South Africa. Linguistically and culturally, Deaf South Africans form a community with a sense of identity that transcends all loyalties based on ethnicity, colour, race, religion or spoken language. The primary identification of the Deaf people is that they are Deaf and use SASL. SASL is "the lynchpin of this identity" (DeafSA, 1997, p.3).

From a social and cultural view of deafness, Deaf people, as a community, have a right to education through their national sign language. The Deaf community requires an educational system that allows for teaching and learning in sign language, their first language, with the teaching of a spoken or written language as a second language, in written or spoken form depending on the residual hearing and other abilities of the individual. Such an education system is termed a bilingual and bicultural approach (Foster, 1989). It is currently becoming common practice in other parts of the world.

International research findings on inclusive education

Sameshima (1999) investigated the realities of the tertiary experience of New Zealand Deaf, and hard of hearing students and from their perspectives. She interviewed twenty-eight Deaf university students and fifteen coordinators of support services for Deaf students in universities and polytechnics. The study raised issues, several of which have been raised in previous studies. The salient issues pointed out by Sameshima's (1999) study included: low quality of education prior to entry into university, insufficiently trained sign language interpreters and note-takers, lack of awareness about Deaf students by institutions of higher education, disability office coordinators' lack of knowledge about Deaf students' needs and their lack of signing skills, difficulties with academic discourse because of poor literacy skills and the Deaf students' inability to interact meaningfully with hearing people. In addition she found that seventy-five percent of the participants reported some degree of difficulty in reading and writing English.

In another study Liversidge (2003) used case-study methods to illustrate the phenomenon of how Deaf and hard of hearing students are integrated academically and socially into college life at a Carnegie Research University. She used data gathered from surveys, interviews and focus groups to describe the perspectives of ten participants: five undergraduate and five postgraduate Deaf students. Her findings revealed that "when Deaf and hard of hearing students are positively integrated into college life, they are more likely to maintain a high level of commitment to college and persist" (Liversidge, 2003, abstract). She found out that pre- and within college factors which influenced the

students in their decisions to enrol and stay in mainstream university included previous mainstream experience, self-advocacy, level of commitment to completing a course and availability of sign language interpreters and note-takers.

Komesaroff's (2000) study explored the ways in which culturally Deaf students are included or excluded from epistemology through academic practices, academic literacy and policies of inclusion for students with disabilities including the Deaf. She explored the experiences of two Deaf students in higher education. The students were completing an undergraduate degree with hearing students. Her findings identified key issues for culturally Deaf students in higher education. The issues included access and support, academic literacy, cultural difference or deficit, language and identity.

Lang et al. (2004) studied the perceptions of Deaf students and university staff. They found significant differences between the perceptions of mainstream university lecturers and Deaf students regarding the accommodation of Deaf and hard of hearing students in the classroom. According to Lang et al. (2004) the difference between the students and lecturers might be explained partly due to the lecturers' little or no training with regard to the communication needs of Deaf learners.

Among the old studies on the experiences of Deaf learners in higher education is the research conducted at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) by Foster and Brown (1988). RIT has a unit for Deaf and hard of hearing students, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). The study included forty-six Deaf and hard of hearing undergraduate students. Foster and Brown (1988) found that the students specifically chose to enrol at RIT because of the integration of Deaf and hearing students. The students believed that RIT prepared them for the work environment by providing an opportunity to interact with other Deaf students as well as hearing people. The study revealed other factors which attracted Deaf and hard of hearing students to the RIT as the availability of support services such as sign language interpreters and note-takers. The study found that, although the students were integrated in a hearing classroom, they still felt isolated. According to Foster and Brown (1988) factors that contributed to the

feeling of isolation included the need to be able to see the lecturers, sign language interpreter and teaching aids meant they sat together. In this position they became a distinct group from their hearing peers.

In summary, the research reviewed in this study was conducted in the United States, New Zealand and Australia. Studies conducted in African countries are not readily available. However, it is noted that the needs for support services by Deaf and hard of hearing students are universal. Similar approaches to addressing such needs can be found in various literatures, for example in Cremer, 1991; Lang, 2002; Spradbrow & Power, 2000). The literature reviewed in this chapter is relevant to this study because it gives insight into how Deaf and hard of hearing students cope in mainstream higher education institutions in other countries. Although there are no institutions such as RIT which specialise in the inclusion of Deaf and hard of hearing learners in South Africa, the literature can be used for further studies into inclusive education with regard to Deaf and hard of hearing students. The studies described in the literature review provide important background information for the interpretation of data in this research.

The theoretical framework

A theoretical perspective that forms the framework of this study is a cultural and linguistic view of deafness (Thompson, 2004). There are two main paradigms of deafness, the pathological view and the cultural and linguistic view which are discussed below:

<u>The pathological paradigm: deaf</u>

This is a traditional view of deafness which classifies Deaf people as a disability group (Power, 1992; Vialle et al., 1996; Peel, 2004). According to this view, Deaf people are seen as people with a deficiency that should be corrected. As a result, medical professionals historically tried to correct the deficiency through surgery and hearing aids (Vialle et al. 1996). Research into deaf education reveals that the educational problems

faced by Deaf learners are related to their communication, language, interrelationships and community (Power, 1992; Vialle et al., 1996; Komesaroff, 1998; Thompson, 2004). According to Butow (1994), it is not appropriate to use the pathological view that has been used historically because there is a shift from welfare focus to a human rights focus. This pathological view of deafness is in contrast to the view that Deaf people have of themselves. Deaf people view themselves from a cultural and linguistic paradigm.

The cultural and linguistic paradigm: Deaf

From the cultural and linguistic perspective, Deaf people identify themselves as members of a cultural and linguistic group who communicate through a native Sign Language and share certain values and beliefs, regardless of ethnic background (Baker and Cokely, 1980; Lane et al., 1996; McKee, 2001; Thompson, 2004). Members of the Deaf community, who are the protagonists of the cultural and linguistic view of deafness, argue for Deaf people to be recognized as a distinct cultural group because they do not regard deafness as a special need but a linguistic and cultural issue (Peel, 2004; Thompson, 2004). The term Deaf is capitalized when it is used in Deaf community and cultural context (See footnote 1 and key terms in chapter 1).

I agree with the Deaf community's approach and regard Deaf students not as disabled but as being able to succeed at institutions of higher education provided that they have access to support services such as sign language interpreters. It is because of the experiences of social interactions that Deaf people see themselves differently. Crotty points out that it is through these social interactions that people "enter into the perceptions, attitudes and values of a community" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). How Deaf and hard of hearing students see themselves and others and how they think hearing people see them impacts on their experiences at educational institutions.

This study was based on the cultural and linguistic theory which insists that an inclusive education system must be responsive to diverse needs and aims to create equal education opportunities for all learners. I worked within the inclusive education philosophy to

explore the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in an open institution of higher learning, the University of the Witwatersrand, where students come from diverse backgrounds, particularly linguistic backgrounds, including South African Sign Language (SASL). I look at the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students from a cultural and linguistic perspective. In embracing a socio-cultural paradigm on deafness, I view Deaf people as a cultural group rather than as disabled people. They use Sign Language and identify themselves as members of a Deaf Community (Storbeck & Magongwa, 2006; Ozolins and Bridge, 1999). In the South African context, SASL is the Sign Language used by the Deaf community.

Deaf people in South Africa see themselves as a community within a wider community. Deaf people do not exist in one particular geographical area in a country or continent. DeafSA (1998) points out that ninety percent of Deaf children are born to hearing parents while ten percent are born to Deaf parents. A Deaf community is a group of Deaf and possibly hearing people, "who, based on shared experiences among each other and identification with one another, participate together in a variety of activities" (Higgins, 1987, p. 153). It is typical of the Deaf community to use Sign Language. The language distinguishes members of the Deaf community as a cultural and separate linguistic group. Penn (1993) states that:

> Sign Language is the language of the eyes and hands, of movement and space. Sign Language is the natural language of the Deaf. One of the most important determinants of acceptance into the Deaf cultural group lies in the proficiency of Sign Language. (Penn, 1993, p. 11).

Summary

The literature review provided insight and understanding into inclusive education nationally and internationally. The chapter investigated the research that was conducted on inclusion and its implications related to the South African context. In the study, I view inclusive education from a Deaf cultural paradigm. From the Deaf cultural point of view, Deaf students are not seen as being disabled but as being capable of achieving

anything that hearing students are able to, provided they have access to education through South African Sign Language and the official language of the institution, for example, English, at the University of the Witwatersrand. With the theoretical framework, cultural and linguistic paradigm of deafness explained, in the following section, I discuss the research methodology used in the study. I start with the research design.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This section provides information about how the research was conducted. The cultural and linguistic theory influenced the epistemology for this research. The methodology used was a qualitative research. It was used for the exploration of the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in the Advanced Certificate in Education programme at Wits. A qualitative method "… can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena and interaction between nations" (Strauss & Cobin, 1998, p 10). This research focuses on the experiences of twelve Deaf and hard of hearing students at Wits. The experiences include among others, interaction between Deaf and hearing students, lecturers and the administrative staff, Deaf cultural phenomena, and the organisational functioning of the Disability Unit in terms of education support services to Deaf and hard of hearing students.

The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because I intended to explore how Deaf and hard of hearing students interpret their situation at Wits through their own experiences. The findings therefore were not arrived at by statistical procedures or quantification but by the exploration of experiences as lived or felt by participants (Sherman & Webb, 1988). Haworth (1984) asserts that naturalistic researchers believe that gaining knowledge from sources that have "intimate familiarity" with an issue is far better than the objective distancing approach that characterizes quantitative approaches.

The literature in the field of deafness contains numerous examples of the application of qualitative research methodology. Literature shows that the United States, Australia and New Zealand have a large body of investigations that were conducted using a qualitative methodology. In these countries, particularly the USA, studies were carried out to explore the academic and social integration of Deaf and hard of hearing students in

higher education institutions in order to understand how access to university life might be improved for these students and are relevant to related research, policy and practice.

Research methodology

Participants

A total of fifteen Deaf and hard of hearing students were invited to participate in the study. However three informants could not be reached. As a result twelve students participated in the study. The number is made up of students who have indicated their availability for the research. Four Deaf participants reside in the Gauteng province in which the research site is situated. Eight participants reside in coastal provinces; the Western Cape and KwaZulu/Natal. The interviewees were grouped as follows: eight Deaf students who have just completed Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) studies and four who are currently studying towards the ACE at the University of the Witwatersrand. Since all the Deaf interviewees have studied or are still studying for a qualification, namely the Advanced Certificate in Education, I have given a description of the ACE in the introduction section. In addition to the twelve Deaf and hard of hearing students, the manager of the Disability Unit at Wits was requested to complete a questionnaire because, in her capacity as coordinator of the disability office, she is the main facilitator of students' support services on campus. All the proposed participants were identified and invited to participate in the study as soon as approval was obtained from the ethics committee.

Selection criteria

The criteria for the selection of Deaf and hard of hearing participants were that they are (1) either currently registered at or recently certificated by the University of the Witwatersrand and (2) they are Deaf or hard of hearing and fluent users of SASL. The ACE programme registered the first Deaf student in 2003 and she is one of the participants in this study. The participants were recruited by inviting all past and present ACE Deaf and hard of hearing students registered at the University of the Witwatersrand to participate in this research.

Instruments

Three types of data collection techniques were used in the study. The techniques used include interviews, questionnaire and written narratives. An interview schedule (see Appendix F) consisting of questions was used as a guide during the interview with Deaf and hard of hearing participants. In addition, Deaf and hard of hearing participants were requested to give a written description of their experiences as students at Wits (see Appendix I). A questionnaire (see Appendix H) was used to elicit information from the head of the Disability Unit in order to confirm how and what support services are actually available to Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Interviews

After the completion of the interview guide, I carried out a pilot study in February 2007. The aim of the pilot study was to examine the structure and efficiency of the interviews in collecting the information from Deaf and hard of hearing participants. In the pilot study, three ACE Deaf students were interviewed. They were requested to give feedback on the design and the content of the interview schedule by discussing with me any challenges and possible suggestions regarding the signing, meaning and order of the questions. Minor amendments were then made.

Although I wanted to interview the participants on campus, it was not practicable for all the participants because some had already graduated and left the university. I agreed with individual participants about the places for the interviews. We chose places where the participants would feel comfortable expressing their thoughts. Oppenheim (1997) pointed out that a non-threatening environment ensures and strengthens confidentiality.

Interviews with Deaf and hard of hearing students were conducted in South African Sign Language and recorded on a videotape. The reason for videotaping the interviews was to have concrete and precise data captured for analysis. I used an interview schedule as a guide when conducting the interviews; however additional questions were asked wherever necessary to elicit clearer information from the interviewees, for instance, when

the question was partially answered. The interview schedule was constructed in a way as to allow me to ask additional questions in order to elicit more information.

The difference in why I used different methods of data collection with Deaf and hearing participants is based on the preferred language of the individual participant. South African Sign Language is the first and preferred language for the Deaf and hard of hearing participants in this study. English, in either spoken or written form, is the first language of the hearing participant. South African Sign Language was used in the interviews with the Deaf participants as it is their first and natural language. The hearing participant was sent a questionnaire to answer as she cannot use South African Sign Language.

Questionnaire

The questionnaires as well as the interview guides are in a specific format that is qualitative. Questions in both cases are designed specifically for this particular research context. The questions used in the interview schedule and the questionnaire were a mixture of structured and unstructured question types. Structured questions may include comparisons, ranking, judging and attitudes. Unstructured questions are open-ended. They elicit autobiographical texts and critical incidents. The other motive to give the hearing participant a questionnaire was to avoid disturbing the momentum of the interview by pausing frequently to write down the answers. I ruled out the use of audio taping the Disability Unit manager as I would not have full access to the data at all times during the analysis.

Documents

As the study is focused on the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students, more data collection techniques are applied in order gather as much information about the experiences as possible and to enhance validation. For instance, the findings from interviews were compared to the findings from written narratives of Deaf and hard of hearing students' experiences. Documentary information formed the basis for biographical details of participants. The implementation of the three instruments

followed a designed procedure. The following procedures guided the whole process of data collection:

Research procedure

The procedure followed in data collection was as follows:

- Clearance for research was secured from the Ethics Committee in Education.
- The aims of the study were explained to potential participants (see Appendix A)
- I personally interviewed the participants and video recorded the interview.
- Participants were asked to read and sign consent forms granting permission to be asked questions, video taped and the use of data collected through interviews. (see Appendices D & E)
- Each participant was interviewed individually at a negotiated time.
- The full duration of each interview was recorded.
- A video camera was used to record the interviews (see Appendix D)
- Data was translated verbatim from SASL to script in English by a contracted SASL interpreter.
- The video tapes are locked away until the research report is completed, assessed and successful. Thereafter the tapes will be available for a period of 5 years for verification.
- The DU head completed a questionnaire (see Appendix H).

Ethical considerations

This study was aimed at the exploration of the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students; therefore their welfare and rights were respected. For this reason efforts have been made to ensure that their decision to participate is informed. An information letter (Appendix A) was given and the content explained to Deaf and hard of hearing participants using SASL in order to ensure they understood the nature, objectives and purpose of the study for which they were invited to participate. I answered questions the participants had about the letter. I also clarified what my expectations were. After the information letter had been clarified, the issues of consents, confidentiality, risks and benefits of their participation in the study were discussed. I stated clearly that

participation in the study was voluntary and that whether they decided to participate or not they would not be penalized in any way. This assurance was to ensure that participants did not feel obliged to participate because I was their ACE Deaf education lecturer and a researcher in this study. The interviews were conducted as objectively and professionally as possible. Since some of the interviews were conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand, main and education campuses, the registrar was notified in writing (see Appendix C).

An application to the Research Ethics Committee was made in order to secure clearance to continue with the study. Ethical considerations discussed show that as a researcher I have a responsibility to the participants on whom I depend for the study. Effects of the research on participants are taken into account in order to preserve their dignity. This is ensured by the formal and written approach to the participants, registrar of the research site and an application to the Ethics committee for clearance to conduct the research. Having discussed the instruments for the research and presented ethical considerations, in the next paragraph I give a brief explanation of how data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

I applied an ethnographic approach to analyse the collected data as my research relied on direct quotation of interviews in the explanation of the results. Two main procedures were conducted; text transcription and coding. The text transcription which entailed the transcription of the videotapes that contained interviews was the first step in the analysis. A South African Sign Language interpreter did the transcription. After that process, four participants who were within my reach were individually asked to verify their transcribed interviews. Minor changes were made where necessary. The coding process was conducted when a printed document of all the interviews was produced. I began by studying the transcripts and identified sections that emerged. This was one of the most challenging stages because "coding procedure requires several passes through the transcript as categories of topics evolved into content" of the interviews (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 105).

In this research I used a coding system for data analysis. The data were organized into codes on the basis of themes, concepts and patterns. As emphasized by Marshall & Rossman (1999) during the organisation of data into codes, emergent understandings were tested and alternative explanations sought. The codes that were used are: MS for motivation to study, PE for prior university experience, AE for academic experiences, SP for students' perspectives, CF for challenges faced and UC for university climate. Sub-codes were used under each major code, for example, under MS there were IM for intrinsic motivation and EM for extrinsic motivation. This method of data analysis is different to that used in quantitative research. A quantitative researcher usually develops several ways of thinking about linking abstract ideas to measurement procedures that produce precise quantitative information about empirical reality. The quantitative investigator conceptualizes variables and refines concepts as part of the process of measuring variables. This is usually done before data collection or analysis. In contrast, a qualitative researcher "forms new concepts or refines concepts that are grounded in the data" (Neuman, 2000, p. 163). In this dissertation, data analysis was done in an ongoing way in order to enable the researcher to explore themes as they emerge.

The conceptual framework that guided my study of the experiences of Deaf teachers and the research questions were also used to identify the patterns and themes. This approach to recording recurring events is described by Matocha (1992) as an analyst-constructed category. Coding in this study entails the analysis of qualitative data that begins with the identification of key themes and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992), a coding system can be used to highlight regularities and patterns as well as topics relevant to a study. The data accumulated through interviews and questionnaires led to the emergence of themes.

The themes, concepts and categories that were explored in this study included the motivation to study at Wits, experiences in an academic environment, challenges Deaf students faced, support services, experiences in a social climate and prior university experience.

As pointed out earlier, qualitative method of research is followed in the data analysis in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe a qualitative data analysis as "primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns … among the categories (p.364). In this research I analysed data by organising them into categories and putting the emerging themes and concepts in each category. Unlike the quantitative researcher who develops several ways to think about and link abstract ideas to measurement procedures that produce quantitative information about empirical reality, as a qualitative investigator, I refined new concepts that were grounded in the data. Where it was not possible to refine concepts from existing data, new concepts were formed. In the analysis of data, the responses of the participants were combined and categorized. I analysed the biographical details, themes, categories and aspects that formed the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at the university.

In the analysis of the transcripts, the themes and categories emerged clearly. I formulated a code for each theme and category. The themes and categories included role models, the need to improve Deaf education, university recruitment drive, support services, inclusive education, prior experience at higher education institutions, forms of assessment, copying strategies, hearing students' attitude and note-taking.

Validity of the data

This research entails a social study. It therefore may not correctly generate issues of validity. There was a possibility that the participants in the study may present experiences that are time specific. What they experienced at the University of the Witwatersrand between 2003 and 2008 may have changed as support services became more or less available. In order to enhance validity of the data in this study, I firstly compared findings of the interviews with the findings from participants' written narrative (documents) of their experiences as students at Wits. A comparison was also made with the existing literature on the experiences of Deaf students in integrated education settings. Secondly, the interpretive accounts of participants' perspectives were based on their own signs or words as recorded on the video tape. Thirdly, peer examination was entertained. A colleague at Wits was requested to review data and conclusions. Fourthly, I analysed

the data by viewing and reading repeatedly the answers, noting the recurring themes (Maxwell, 1992). Maxwell (1996) points out that in qualitative research, the researcher has potential influence on the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. To eliminate my possible bias, "a threat to the validity of qualitative conclusions" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90), I guarded against my own expectations, misconceptions and the need to find answers that support my preconceived notions about the study. A colleague was asked to check the coded data against the participants' signs or words.

This dissertation presented research into the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers of being students at the University of the Witwatersrand. The chapter showed how the study was planned and conducted. The dissertation identified cultural and linguistic perspective of deafness as a force behind the epistemological and the methodological aspects for this research.

Summary

The chapter has described the methodology employed for the purpose of the investigation and the challenges faced. The participants were briefly described. In the chapter I analysed the methods of data collections and the limitations in obtaining information was raised. Using South African Sign Language mainly in the data collection demanded transcriptions of information into text and flexibility in the interviews. The next chapter presents the findings which resulted from the methodology employed.

CHAPTER 4: THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings. Firstly, I present brief biographical details of the twelve respondents to give the reader of this research a glimpse into the background of individual participants. Participants were requested to respond in writing to a background survey. They gave me written notes. I used the notes to describe each participant in order to provide insight of their backgrounds. Level of hearing and speech intelligibility may have an effect on participants' experiences at the university, so they are described here. Secondly, the data which was obtained from the twelve Deaf and hard of hearing participants through in-depth interviews are organized into categories and themes according to the sequence of research questions presented in Chapter One.

Deaf participants' biographical details

This section gives brief biographical information on each participant in the study. I have changed the names of participants to protect their privacy and preserve confidentiality. The order in which the participants' description is given is based on their status as students. Those who graduated first are described first. The description of the participants provides contextual information about their experiences which are the main issue in this study. Besides providing contextual information, the biographical details also assisted in the interpretation of the finding of this study. The categories that were used to characterize the degrees of the participants' hearing levels are presented below:

Levels of hearing

Description	Degree	Measurement
Normal	-10 - 15	Decibels (dB)
Slight	16 - 25	dB
Mild	26 - 40	dB
Moderate	41 - 55	dB
Moderately severe	56 - 70	dB
Severe	71 - 90	dB
Profound	91+	dB

Adapted from: World Federation of the Deaf, & Watkins (2004)

Figure 1: Degrees of hearing

Celia is a Black Deaf woman aged 35. She was the first Deaf student to enrol and graduate from the Further Certificate in Education programme in 2003. The programme changed to Advanced Certificate in Education from 2003. At the time of the interview, Celia was a student in the B.Ed Honours in the field of adult education. Her hearing level is between 26 – 40 dB. Although Celia wears hearing aids and considers herself hard of hearing, she is articulate in South African Sign Language and campaigns for the educational rights of Deaf people. Although she was the only Deaf student in her class and used a South African Sign Language interpreter, she was an active learner who participated in all classroom discussions and debates. During the interview, she was lively and grateful to Wits for the provision of the South African Sign Language interpreters but pointed out that Deaf students should decide who interprets for them and not the Disability Unit.

Paula is a 30-year old Black Deaf woman. Her degree of hearing is 80 – 110 dB and she does not use a hearing aid. She was repeating her last education module at the time of the interview. She attributed her failure in a previous module to the academic language used at university level and her frustration with the South African Sign Language interpreter service. Her interpreter frequently arrived late and sometimes did not show up at all. Paula is a fluent user of South African Sign Language and expresses herself much better

in it than in written languages. Although her parents are hearing, there are Deaf family members. Her nephew, niece and she herself were all born deaf.

Themba is a Black man, aged 29. Themba became profoundly deaf at the age of 10 through meningitis. His hearing level is 80 – 110 dB. He is attracted to the Deaf culture to the extent that he describes himself as a Deaf person. Unlike other Deaf students in his class, Themba enjoys writing and his assignments marks are always high. He is satisfied with the South African Sign Language interpreter service. Themba does not like it when hearing students feel sorry for him because of his deafness. He believes that deafness does not make him a symbol of pity. It is a challenge that he had to overcome.

Rosemary is a Black woman aged 35. She has a physical disability. I chose not to reveal the nature of her physical disability to protect her identity. Rosemary described herself as hard of hearing and wears hearing aids. Her hearing level is moderate to profound, that is, between 40 and 90dB. She communicates primarily in South African Sign Language and speech (IsiZulu and English). She says she interprets voluntarily for other students in the absence of the South African Sign Language interpreter. She is in the process of applying for studies in B.Ed Honours at Wits.

Razina, a 34-year old Black Deaf woman, plans to complete the ACE study after a two-year break. She cited family commitments as a reason for suspending her studies for a while. She was not successful in her first year modules in 2006. Razina describes herself as Deaf and her main language of communication is in South African Sign Language. She is profoundly deaf with a hearing level of 90 – 110dB. She was frustrated that she could not get any academic support despite the availability of South African Sign Language interpreters in the class. She said her desire to excel as a teacher of the Deaf motivated her to study further at Wits.

Misha is an Indian woman aged 32. She describes herself as Deaf and communicates mostly in South African Sign Language. She has a Deaf elder sister, who acts as her role model. Her motivation to follow the teaching profession was the scholarship she

received to study at Gallaudet University in Washington DC and the many professional Deaf people she met while in the United States of America. Misha has a hearing level of 90 – 110 dB. She complained about the allocation and coordination of South African Sign Language interpreters at Wits. At times, one SASL interpreter was allocated to her for the whole day. Due to fatigue and the subsequent way in which the SASL interpreter interpreted, she missed many important discussions in class.

Siyabonga is a 35-year old Black woman. In 2007 she was in her first year of study in the ACE programme. Although she became deaf when she was two years old, she prefers to communicate in speech accompanied by signs. She describes herself as hard of hearing and accepts both hearing and Deaf cultures. Her hearing level is between 56 and 90dB. She was the only student who wrote to the Disability Unit demanding an interpreter who signs and speaks at the same time. She did not have access to a SASL interpreter service while she was at a teacher training college. She was not her usual self during the interview as she had just come out of a stressful divorce hearing.

Nandi is a 29-year old Black woman. Like Siyabonga, she describes herself as hard of hearing and communicates in speech and signs. She is not sure when she became deaf but thinks it was around ten years of age. Her hearing level stands between 41 and 70 dB. Her motivation to study at Wits was that during her teacher preparation she was not trained in deaf pedagogy. She was dissatisfied in curriculum studies, a course in the ACE, because the South African Sign Language interpreters did not interpret everything in the class and as a result the Deaf students did not have equal access to information as the hearing students.

Claude, age 31, is a Black man who is in his final year of study. He prefers to communicate in South African Sign Language, though there is no trace of deafness in his family. He has a profound hearing level of between 91 – 110dB. He identifies himself as Deaf. He is happy with the South African Sign Language interpreter service. He has constructively engaged hearing students who had misconceptions about Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Dumisani is a 33-year old Black woman who became deaf at the age of 11. She describes herself as hard of hearing though her hearing level is 71 – 90 dB. She is a final year ACE student. Dumisani communicates with hearing people and Deaf people in speech and South African Sign Language respectively. Dumisani attended a mainstream school without South African Sign Language interpreters or Deaf classmates. Dumisani is dissatisfied with Deaf and hard of hearing students' access to information when they are off campus because communication is mainly through telephone. She feels that the graduation ceremony for ACE students is a disappointment because they are not hooded like other qualifications.

Emmaarah, a 29-year old Indian woman, is profoundly deaf, a fluent SASL user and married to a hearing man. Her hearing level is 91 -110 dB. SASL is her main mode of communication. She is not willing to simplify SASL in order for students who don't know the language to understand. She would rather write down her words, though reluctantly. Like Paula, she struggled with academic English literacy but, due to hard work and commitment, she succeeded. She socialises mostly with other Deaf students, and when they are not around, she keeps quiet.

Valli, is an Indian woman aged 30. She describes herself as hard of hearing. She can talk over a cellphone, but only to her close family members who are able to understand her voice. People unfamiliar with her cannot understand her voice on the telephone. She communicates well in both speech and SASL. Her hearing level is mild to moderately severe 40 – 70dB. When she meets Deaf people, she uses SASL. She uses speech when she communicates with hearing people. Valli is the only hard of hearing participant who did not depend on the South African Sign Language interpreter in the lecture halls. She attributed her struggles with her studies to ill health and not to communication problems, as seems to be the case with most Deaf and hard of hearing students. She has applied to study in the B.Ed Honours programme in 2008.

In summary, the group of study participants was made up of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers who are or were, students at the University of the Witwatersrand between 2003

and 2008. They were all registered for the two-year Advanced Certificate in Education programme. The group consisted of mostly women, which is a common trend in schools for the Deaf in South Africa. Of the twelve research participants, ten are women and two are men. Seven participants identified themselves as Deaf and five as hard of hearing. Nine participants are Black and three are Indians. Their ages range from 29 to 35. As stated earlier, the participants were past and current students. At the time of research, eight participants were past students and four were current students. The majority of participants (eleven) had exposure to SASL interpreter services prior to their enrolment at Wits. One study participant, Siyabonga, did not, hence her different perspective on the interpreter services offered at Wits. She wanted an interpreter who mouthed and signed every word spoken in the lecture hall.

However, there are common features for all participants. They all, regardless of their level of hearing, make use of SASL interpreter services offered by the university. In addition, their deafness occurred in their early childhood, between birth and eleven years of age. They have hearing parents which means SASL was not their mother tongue but their preferred language. Two participants, Paula and Misha, had Deaf family members, a niece and a sister respectively. It appears that the levels of hearing did not influence participants in choosing whether to describe themselves as Deaf of hard of hearing but categorical allegiance. For example, Siyabonga's audiogram showed that she has a hearing level of between 80 and 120 dB, yet she described herself as hard of hearing.

The hearing levels of the twelve study participants ranged from moderate to profound, that is, from 41 to more than 110 decibels. All but two participants have been successful in their academic studies. Despite the varieties in the levels of hearing loss, all the participants registered with the Disability Unit for support services. The most frequent service used is the South African Sign Language interpreting. Services like note- taking were not used because they were not available. The Disability Unit manager has indicated that there is a limit on the services that can be provided. The limitation is due to the growing number of students with disabilities enrolling at Wits and the need to balance the types of support service provided. Interestingly, there is no participant who

requested other services like computerized note- taking and assistance with extra time applications from the Disability Unit. Siyabonga mentioned that she needed an oral communicator similar to speech transliteration. Whether she took this up with the Disability Unit is unknown as there is no evidence to support that.

The themes and categories were categorized as various factors like motivation to study, individual participant's perspective, academic experiences, challenges faced, university climate and pre-university experience. The table below presents the identified categories and themes.

Research Question no. >	1	2 & 8	3 & 5	4	6	7
Categories >	**Motivation to study (MS)**	**Students' perspectives (SP): Institutional factors**	**Academic experiences (AE)**	**Challenges faced (CF)**	**University climate (UC)**	**Pre-university experience (PE)**
Themes >	Development of Deaf education Role models Wits recruitment strategy Socialization Self-empowerment Upgrade qualification	Social integration Support services First lecture Assessment Administrative Campus amenities	Communication Language access Coping strategies Study skills Limiting factors Studies Academic discourse	Peer attitudes Fellow Deaf peers Lecturer attitudes English literacy Learning methods Note- taking Social isolation Environmental constraints Interpreter shortage Fear of failure Multiple visual tasks Dependence on 3rd party for access to information	Accessibility Awareness Club membership Classroom situation	An all-Deaf class Using interpreters Early inclusion Role of interpreter

Figure 2: Categories and themes

Identified category and themes are discussed in the following section:

Motivation to study at Wits (Related to research question 1)

The participants had various reasons for choosing to study at the University of the Witwatersrand. The motivations were both intrinsic and extrinsic; self- empowerment, socialization, qualification upgrade, role models, recruitment strategies adopted by the university and the need to develop of Deaf education.

Nine out of twelve participants chose to enrol at the university because they wanted to be empowered to develop Deaf education. They wanted to gain knowledge, skills and practical strategies through which they could empower themselves to manage complex Deaf educational issues like teaching methodology, inclusion and language development of the Deaf learner. One of the participants, Rosemary, when asked about what motivated her to study at Wits, responded:

> I wanted to develop education of Deaf learners. At first I went to study at teacher training college in Durban specialising in primary education. The course content did not include any aspect of teaching Deaf learners. That is why I took a decision that I should go to university. I needed to develop my teaching skills so that I can improve education of Deaf learners (Rosemary, personal communication, 26 June 2007).

Rosemary was concerned that she was not well-equipped for teaching Deaf learners because Deaf pedagogy did not form part of her undergraduate training as a teacher. When she learnt that there were upgrade programmes which specialised in Deaf education at Wits, she took the opportunity to enrol so she could develop confidence and pride in her profession and her ability as an educator of Deaf learners. The development of Deaf education was her primary motivation to study at Wits. Rosemary's concern with the development of Deaf education is influenced by her experience as a learner in one of the schools for the Deaf and her challenges at a higher education institution. The majority of the teachers is not trained in Deaf pedagogy and is not fluent users of South

African Sign Language. Deaf education needs development to improve the number of Deaf and hard of hearing learners who exit school functionally literate.

In addition to the development of Deaf education as a motivation to study at Wits, Paula, Themba, Emmaarah and Claude said that Deaf and hard of hearing students who had already graduated from Wits were the reason they chose to study. For instance when Paula was asked why she chose to study at Wits, she replied that:

> I was motivated to come and study at Wits because I am a teacher of Deaf learners. I wanted to come and study so I can empower myself professionally. In addition, I have seen most of my colleagues who came to study at Wits. Judging by the performance of their learners, they became very good teachers after completing their studies. I also wanted to be a good teacher. That is why I decided to come and study at Wits. (Paula, personal communication, June 2007).

Paula's assertion shows that, apart from her intrinsic motivation to study further, her colleagues were role models in her decision to enrol at Wits.

In my analysis of data, I categorized role models as extrinsic motivation. The other notable extrinsic motivation to study at Wits was the University's recruitment strategy. Representatives from the University visited selected teacher development colleges to talk about specialist programmes that are on offer at Wits. Claude responded that in his second year of study, a representative from Wits came to speak to them about programmes that specialised in Deaf education. For the first time, he learned about the programme. He felt that the programme was right for him as he wanted to improve his teaching skills in the Deaf education context.

Celia and Emmaarah's motivation was to socialize with diverse students. At the teacher training college, the Deaf and hard of hearing students were trained as a group and separate from hearing students. Emmaarah commented in the interview:

> When I studied at the Marks (not real name) college, there were only Deaf students in the classroom. There were no hearing students as we studied

> separately. When I first came to Wits University, I noticed that there were diverse students studying together. It was not similar to Marks College. I was so curious. I wanted to study with hearing students. The desire for integration motivated me. (Emmaarah, personal communication, 06 June 2007).

Emmaarah and Celia believed in their capacity to keep up with their hearing classmates and succeed academically at a higher education institution. Though they attributed their desire to study at Wits to socialization with diverse students, they confirmed that they also wanted to empower themselves in a Deaf educational context. Interestingly, the two participants are now among a handful of Deaf and hard of hearing teachers who work at a school for the Deaf. In all schools for the Deaf in South Africa, Deaf and hard of hearing teachers constitute less than five percent of the teacher workforce. The small percentage of Deaf teachers in schools is due the poor quality of education and the discriminatory policies of the previous education system which barred Deaf people from the profession.

Another factor that contributed to the high failure rate of Deaf learners was teachers who were under-qualified. Razina confirmed this when she says that she decided to study because her 3-year teacher training did not empower her well enough to effectively teach Deaf and hard of hearing learners.

For most participants, self-development or empowerment was the motivating factor to enrol for the Deaf education programme at Wits. The reasons for self-empowerment appear to be numerous; for example, to survive in a hearing-dominated teacher workforce, to keep up-to-date with international trends in Deaf education, to upgrade qualifications in order to access further education, to engage in academic discourse, to broaden and deepen their subject, pedagogical subject and educational knowledge and to seek answers for the unanswered questions in Deaf education.

It appears that many Deaf and hard of hearing students find the experience of studying in a hearing institution isolating because of the difficulties which communication poses. All the participants in this study noted that they preferred to attend Wits University, as it

already has a significant community of South African Sign Language users and it is an institution with an active Deaf community.

Deaf participants' experiences: Institutional factors (Related to research questions 2 & 8)

The second category that was identified was the participants' experiences at Wits. The participants gave accounts of their experiences of social integration, support services, orientation lecture, assessment, relationships and administration.

There are two distinct groups of responses in terms of experiences of social integration. One group felt that they were accepted and integrated in the university community. The other group felt isolated from the mainstream community on campus due to difficulties with communication, exacerbated by the lack of awareness about Deaf students and the inability to interact meaningfully with hearing students. Those who felt accepted and integrated were in the majority – nine out of twelve participants. As Emmaarah pointed out, one of her reasons for studying at Wits was the opportunity provided to study alongside hearing students because, at the teacher development college which she attended, her class were comprised of Deaf students alone. Celia added that interaction with diverse students at university level would be beneficial to her development as teacher because students come with a broad spectrum of ideas which are challenged, tested and reconstructed. It is evident from participants' responses that their perspectives on social integration are influenced by their past experiences before they came to Wits, their identity, ability to interact and the degree of comfort in communicating with their hearing counterparts, lecturers and administrative staff.

Paula, Razina and Misha formed the group which felt that they were not integrated due to lack of awareness about Deaf students by the university community, unavailability of SASL interpreters outside the academic context, and their inability to interact and communicate with hearing students. The responses from the three participants reveal that they communicate mostly in South African Sign Language and rely on interpreters for

academic and social integration. When asked how she communicates with hearing people in the absence of a SASL interpreter, Misha said frankly that she would "…ask hearing students who know Sign Language to interpret…" (Misha, personal communication, 13 July 2007). It is important to note that all three have first language users of South African Sign Language in their families. Paula has a Deaf niece and a nephew, Razina is married to a Deaf man and Misha's older sister is Deaf. Misha's adherence to the language might also be attributed to her studies at Gallaudet University in Washington, where American Sign Language is the main form of communication.

All three had never studied formally alongside hearing people. They attended schools for the Deaf, trained as teachers in a special unit for Deaf students in a mainstream college and Misha attended Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts institution of higher education for Deaf people in the world. In her first lecture, Paula was worried that she was the only Deaf student in the class. This is shown by the sign for relief displayed in her answer "…fortunately there were other Deaf students…" (Paula, personal communication, 20 April 2007).

Paula's indifference to interacting with hearing students might be influenced in part by frustration of being asked to repeat herself each time she expresses herself. Since most of her classmates at the university are educators from schools for the Deaf and a small number from full service schools[6], she expected them to be at least familiar with South African Sign Language. However, from the hearing students' point of view, Paula signs very fast. One student went to the extent of teasing her that she signed like a monkey. Hearing students who claimed to know SASL rarely understand her and speech reading is not in her interest. She is a natural user of South African Sign Language.

Razina's negative view about interacting with hearing students was attributed to the reaction of the class when they saw Deaf students. She points out that, "Hearing students were shocked to see Deaf students in the class … wondered how the Deaf students would

[6] Full service schools in South Africa are the type of schools which include ordinary primary and high schools that are equipped and supported by District Support Teams to provide for full range of learning needs.

cope *with the demands of academic work while they struggled at school (Italics added)* (Razina, personal communication, 30 July 2007). What is interesting is that, despite the social challenges, no member of the group dropped out of her studies. Razina was excluded due to unsatisfactory academic performance at the end of 2006. As stated earlier, she attributed the failure to her problem with English literacy and not to difficulties with social integration.

The trio continued with their academic studies despite the challenging social experiences because they had support from various departments at the University such as the Centre for Deaf Studies, Disability Unit and the Academic Writing centre. They received individual academic assistance from their lecturers and tutors, SASL interpreting services from the Disability Unit and moral and financial support from the Deaf Education office. The group, though they had frustrating social experiences on campus, remained inspired by the support of academic staff at Deaf Education to continue with their studies (Razina, personal communication, 30 July 2007).

Of the three participants in the group who felt that they were not fully accepted and integrated within the diverse university setting, Paula's account of her experiences showed that she had a more challenging time feeling socially integrated. She took three years to complete her Advanced Certificate in Education programme instead of the normal two years. Paula did not meet the pass grade for the first year of study. This meant she had to repeat the first year modules when those modules were next offered. During this time she often felt self-conscious about her Deafness as she had to interact with her hearing peers, lecturers and the administrative staff without SASL interpreters. She was fearful of being seen as a nuisance because of communicating in SASL, gestures, and writing, instead of speech, like the other students. She felt isolated from the mainstream university setting. She commented, "… I could not make friends easily because of the communication barriers" (Paula, personal communication, 20 April 2007).

Paula's experiences with the integration into the social and academic setting reveal the challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students, particularly with regard to support

services. The most common types of support services for Deaf students at Wits include interpreting and academic support. The participants felt that the SASL interpreting service is appropriate and were surprised by the university's willingness to make SASL interpreter provision available. The head of the Disability Unit has indicated that the University is probably the only higher education institution in the country to offer free SASL interpreter services for Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Most participants, Themba, Claude, Purity, Rosemary, Paula, Celia, Dumisani and Siyabonga, were motivated to build relationships within the university community. For these participants, having more people who are aware of the needs of Deaf students would enhance their feeling of acceptance and integration in the mainstream society. Themba and Claude, the two men in the group, were often seen in the company of their hearing peers. Despite being profoundly Deaf, their friendly personalities enhanced the ease in which they socialized with their peers, lecturers and the administrative staff. They were excited to make friends with hearing students because in their previous education programmes they did not mix with hearing people and were inquisitive as to what was like to be integrated in an academic and social environment. The hearing students were also happy in the company of Deaf people.

> For me when I looked at the hearing students for the first time, they looked happy and excited because they identified themselves with us as students and teachers of the Deaf. They saw us as a group of Deaf who could sign very well. They seemed not to have seen Deaf students at the university before. That made them excited at the same time. When I looked at the hearing students I think they were excited because they were seeing this group of Deaf students. They wanted to be part of the group. They wanted to know more about this group of Deaf students. They would benefit from the relationship. I think that was what kept their motivation high (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

A network of support such other students, role models, tutors and lecturers were deemed significant for the Deaf and hard of hearing students because they provided support in different forms. Themba and Claude did not think that their Deafness cut them off from other people at the university (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007). The

two participants did not feel isolated or rejected by their hearing peers, or afforded little opportunity to participate in social and academic activities. They were successful in the creation of relationships at the university from the lecturer to administrative staff.

The other four participants, Valli, Emmaarah, Nandi and Razina, seemed uninterested in creating social relationships on campus. It is significant to note that Emmaarah and Razina were most reliant on the SASL interpreting service for access to lectures and other forms of contact, for example, consultations with lecturers. Valli and Nandi could cope in the lectures and tutorials without the SASL interpreter. The four participants wear hearing aids. Emmaarah, Razina and Nandi in particular did not speak until spoken to. That they did not forge social relationships with their hearing peers might be attributed to their reserved personalities and the lack of sense of cultural belonging. The following quotations from the participants represent the feeling:

> "No, I did not have any misunderstanding with hearing students. Sometimes I wanted to say something but did not know how to say it. I just used to keep quiet" (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007).

> "Well, most Deaf people experienced problems because of the language but most of them try their best. They help each other. If they don't understand, they help each other to make them understand. For me, it was not really a problem because I am hard of hearing. I can lip- read well. We understood each other well but for other Deaf people. I sometimes helped them if there was a misunderstanding" (Valli, personal communication, 06 June 2007).

> …I sometimes felt different from hearing students, for example, when they speak and laugh around me, I cannot follow what is going on. That is when I feel different from them. I am hard of hearing and usually misinterpret the issue being discussed. Sometimes I would just laugh with them for nothing but deep inside me I knew I did not follow (Valli, personal communication, 06 June 2007).

Emmaarah's comments reflect her personality. The quotations from Valli reveal that she does not identify herself with Deaf students and their culture. She does not identify herself with hearing students because of her hearing loss as shown by her feelings in her second quotation. She straddled the Deaf world and the hearing world (Valli, personal

communication 06 June 2007). Based on the biographical questionnaire, Nandi and Valli had mild hearing loss and described themselves as hard of hearing. They could engage in basic communication with students, lecturers and administrative staff without the need for SASL interpreters.

While acknowledging the provision of an interpreter service, the participants felt that the service could be used more effectively. First, the service needs to be available whenever a Deaf student needs it. The SASL interpreters were available in the classroom context. Apart from graduation ceremonies, SASL interpreters were not readily available for social events on campus and individual consultations with lecturers outside classrooms. Celia had this to say about the availability of the interpreters; "…one thing that concerned me was that if I did not understand something and wanted to speak to the lecturer after class, I found out that there were no interpreters available …That is one of the hindrances I had" (Celia, personal communication, 11 June 2007). Although overall Celia noted that she had a good experience as a hard of hearing student, she was not able to have a SASL interpreter whenever she needed the service. This meant she often did not have an interpreter for consultations with lecturers. She communicated with lecturers, tutors and students by paper and pen. Through this form of communication, she was often unable to understand satisfactorily the task in hand.

Secondly, participants felt that the number of SASL interpreters allocated per class, particularly between 2004 and 2006, was not sufficient for their success in academic and social contexts. Dumisani has this to say about the limited SASL interpreter service: "…the University must always provide two interpreters per class, especially for courses like curriculum. One interpreter interprets for hours and gets tired…" (Dumisani, personal communication, 31 June 2007). There were three classes running concurrently at the residential session during 2004 and 2006. There were Deaf and hard of hearing students in these classes but two interpreters were allocated. This created difficulties because the arrangement meant that Deaf students in one of the classes often did not have access to the interpreters. Razina confirmed the situation when she said with frustration, "…in curriculum class there was no interpreter…" (Razina, personal communication, 30

July 2007). Like Celia, she had to resort to communicating with lecturers and other students by using gestures and paper and pen. Often she was not able to understand the given task in the classroom. The Disability Unit responded by allocating four SASL interpreters for the three classes from 2007. The arrangement ensured that each class had an SASL interpreter with one roving at agreed intervals.

Thirdly, the participants felt that the support services for them could be extended to include note-taking, tutoring, real time captioning and extra time for examinations. When questioned if the support services he received were sufficient for epistemological access, Themba responded that having a SASL interpreter in the classroom or lecture hall was not enough for effective social integration. He cited challenges he had in accessing lecture notes. If a Deaf student is watching an SASL interpreter, it is a big challenge to take notes at the same time without missing some information. In this situation, by having a trained note-taker means that the student does not miss anything. From Themba's comments, it should not be assumed that an SASL interpreter resolves the academic difficulties of Deaf students and hard of hearing students. It is important to note that consideration must be made of the fact that the provision of SASL interpretation for classes does not necessarily mean that the barrier for Deaf students' access to information has been breached.

Additional service provision like note-taking, academic support, tutoring and counseling is required for the academic and social integration of Deaf and hard of hearing students in a mainstream setting. By not receiving support, or all the support needed, Deaf and hard of hearing students are put at a risk of becoming isolated in the university environment and thus in danger of not succeeding academically as was the case with Paula and Razina. These two students were more dependent on the SASL interpreters for their academic and social interaction than the other students. Consequently they were extremely frustrated about the inadequate SASL interpreting service, which negatively affected their experience of integration at Wits.

Lastly, although the participants appreciated the availability of the SASL interpreting service, they were of the opinion that the provision was not well- supervised and the allocated SASL interpreters were not trained. The concerns about the supervision of the interpreters emanated from the incorrect allocation of services, unprofessional tendencies such as late-coming and the concentration of several SASL interpreters in one class while the other classes did not even have one. In addition to these imbalances, Claude observed that the interpreters were not often allocated according to their specialization. He noted:

> …I think that for instance in a Deaf education programme, we need to have an interpreter that specializes in education, someone familiar with educational issues. Likewise in legal studies there should be an interpreter who is familiar with legal jargon. This arrangement would ensure that the current trend of having interpreters who specialize in, for example, a legal field is interpreting at Wits School of Education. We tend to expect interpreters to be experts in everything and that is to the detriment of Deaf and hard of hearing students. (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

The experiences described by Claude frustrated Deaf and hard of hearing students during the ACE residential sessions. In suggesting a solution to the supervision issue, Emmaarah commented "…there should be an interpreter supervisor at Wits Education Campus – a senior person or Deaf senior person who can ensure that lecturers are aware they should not continue without interpreters being available if there are Deaf students in the classroom" (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007). Towards the end of 2007 the Disability Unit placed one of its staff members on the education campus. Deaf and hard of hearing students and SASL interpreters should be encouraged to interact with the staff member in an effort to alleviate some of the above problems, the need for a campus interpreter supervisor and the inadequate training of the SASL interpreters.

About the issue of the SASL interpreters' unpreparedness, one participant had this to say;

> … I would like to see SASL interpreters develop and become better than they are at present. In South Africa, we have different dialects of Sign Language, according to the regions. I think that the interpreters need more training. A sustainable training programme is needed. This would ensure

> that when they come to interpret at university level, it will be easy for them to ask the students which dialect suits them best so that they can use that particular dialect… (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

Trained SASL interpreters are required to maintain a standard of professionalism at all times. They are often late for their interpreting duties as experienced by one of the participants, Paula, in her lectures. They are not expected to behave unprofessionally as experienced by Emmaarah when in the middle of the lecture the interpreter stood up and said; "Sorry, I am tired. I need to go." (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007).

When the researcher enquired about SASL interpreters' qualifications, they acknowledged that they did not have any, apart from the two week SASL interpreters' workshops they attended. One SASL interpreter has Deaf parents and noted that she had interpreted for her parents since she was ten years old. There is an acute shortage of SASL interpreters prepared to work in higher education across South Africa and a particular shortage of people qualified in sign language interpreting in general. Despite the lack of qualifications in interpreting, the SASL interpreters were able to facilitate communication between hearing people and Deaf students in the classroom.

Generally, all the participants acknowledged the role of the Disability Unit in the provision of an interpreting service. The twelve Deaf students and hard of hearing students were able to operate successfully using the allocated SASL interpreters, often with a slightly lower level of proficiency. Siyabonga, when asked if she could cope in the lecture hall without an interpreter, responded frankly that; "If the lecturer cannot sign and the interpreter is not available, I cannot cope in the class" (personal communication, 26 September 2007). For some students like Paula and Razina the lack of appropriately trained interpreters affected them adversely.

The participants' experiences in their first lecture and tutorial sessions at the university illustrate the mixed feelings they had about academic integration. The participants'

responses confirmed the existing literature on the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students at higher education institutions, particularly by Liversidge (2003) that social activities and perceptions about integration in a mainstream environment were shaped by their past experiences, communication, personalities and perceptions.

Five participants said they were nervous at their first lecture "because I knew all the students were hearing and didn't know Sign Language. How was I going to communicate with them? At the same time I thought I was going to find it difficult with lecturers. It turned out to be fine" (Celia, personal communication, 11 June 2007). Celia's fear of integration with hearing students stems from her past education experience. She has attended a school for the Deaf and completed her teacher training in a special unit for Deaf and hard of hearing students at a teacher development college. Nandi's nervousness was based on her perceptions of the education she received at schools for the Deaf and at the special unit at the teacher training college. She felt different to her hearing peers when it came to the quality of education received. Dumisani said she, too, was worried about how she would interact with hearing students and lecturers. At the teacher training institution, it was only the hearing lecturer to worry about because her class consisted exclusively of Deaf and hard of hearing students, and was supported by a SASL interpreter and a lecturer.

For these students, studying at Wits was different, as hearing students were in the majority in lectures and tutorial sessions. Like Dumisani, Valli was concerned about coping with her studies among hearing students. She said that "…I knew it was going to be a bit harder than at the …college of education" (Valli, personal communication, 06 June 2007). The last student of the five participants to express uncertainty among hearing students due to past experiences in education was Emmaarah:

> When I got there I felt lost because I didn't know if I should sit next to a hearing student or sit alone in front of the class. At … college we were all Deaf and hard of hearing students so it did not matter where you sit. At Wits we were with hearing students. I really didn't know what to do at first (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007).

It is important to note that Nandi, Celia, Dumisani, Valli and Emmaarah live with hearing partners so their fear of integration in an academic setting seems to have its roots in their experiences with pre-university education. They never formally studied alongside hearing students until they enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand. All four participants could not identify with hearing students. When they were with hearing students, they appeared to have felt self-conscious about their deafness. They were afraid that the hearing students would regard them more as Deaf women than as classmates.

In contrast, seven of the Deaf and hard of hearing students felt excited in their first lecture session among hearing students at Wits despite the same educational background as the group that was not comfortable in their first tutorial session. The group which included two men and five women was comfortable in the academic environment with predominantly hearing students. What is interesting is that all the participants in this group live with Deaf partners, unlike in the group which was not comfortable among hearing students.

Claude indicated that he felt a bit nervous in his first class because of his assumptions about studying at a big university like Wits. However the feeling was quickly replaced by a strong sense of confidence when "…I heard that there were Deaf lecturers there" (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007). Claude has an extrovert personality that appears to have contributed to his confidence. He was always happy in group activities and felt equal to his hearing peers. The feeling of equality with the classmates and the presence of supportive lecturers apparently build confidence in his interaction with hearing people. Siyabonga did not have any difficulty in her first lecture at Wits because she seems to have a strong self-esteem: "I felt very excited. I felt very happy to be in the class with my hearing peers" (Siyabonga, personal communication, 26 September 2007). Although she was the only hard of hearing student in the class, she did not feel that her deafness separated her from people in the mainstream environment. According to comments in her background questionnaire, she was mainstreamed throughout her education career and without an official SASL interpreter. Her positive perceptions about studying alongside hearing students can be attributed to her prior

mainstream experience. She was the only one of the twelve participants to have undergone her teacher training alongside hearing students in a mainstream college. Siyabonga did not receive SASL interpreter support throughout her secondary education and teacher training. She experienced the interpreting service for the first time at Wits.

Like Siyabonga, Rosemary described herself as hard of hearing. Although she had another disability, she chose not to refer to it. Rosemary was trained as a teacher in a special unit for Deaf and hard of hearing students like the other participants except Siyabonga. Responses in her background questionnaire showed that she obtained her primary and secondary education at Deaf and mainstream schools respectively. She was not worried about communication with her hearing peers at Wits because of the extensive social interactive experience she had; "Since I attended a hearing school, the teachers and learners understood my situation. They tried all their best to support me because I was involved in many social activities at the school" (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007). Unlike Siyabonga, Rosemary received her teacher education from a special unit for Deaf and hard of hearing students in a mainstream college.

The remaining four participants, who felt proud in their first lecture at Wits, described themselves as Deaf people, who share a language, namely, South African Sign Language, and cultural values that are distinct from the hearing society (Parasnis, 1998). For this group, the presence of other Deaf students in the class created a sense of identity and they felt positive about socialization. With identity came pride and a feeling that they were not different to other people. The sense of belonging to the Deaf community contributed to the positive experience of integration at the University. They felt comfortable with their deafness, identity and cultural position. Razina commented that in the presence of other Deaf students she did not feel self- conscious about her deafness and she was not fearful of hearing students in the classroom. From the four participants' responses, it is evident that the level of acceptance of their deafness and identification with a linguistic group influenced their perceptions of integration in the university community. They had a positive integration experience from their first lecture and tutorial sessions.

The participants observed that assessment was the same for all students in the programme, regardless of hearing status. Eleven participants did not feel the need for Deaf students to be assessed differently from their hearing peers. They believed that in examinations they could do as much as hearing students provided they received effective and efficient support services. Rosemary commented:

> I feel that assessment form is the same for all students. I believe that it is the same because I have never heard any hearing student complain about the assessment when we compared our assignments. The marks are fairly distributed. The lecturers understand that we are the same. They don't give particular students favours. Hearing students never say they are better than Deaf students and that they expect high marks. Depending on merit, we have situations where Deaf students get better marks than the hearing students (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007).

The eleven participants were generally happy with the same assessment for all the students in the programme. Paula, who took an extra year to complete the two-year ACE programme, attributed her repetition of some modules to her difficulties with academic literacy in English but she was adamant that the assessment was and should remain the same for all students in a programme. The participants feared that if the assessment was different from hearing students, the possibility of compromising the standards would be there and they would not have pride in their qualifications. Themba commented "… to say that hearing students should be given the difficult stuff, and simple stuff to Deaf students is not fair for all the students involved. No. Assessment should be equal. If we are studying the same thing, we should be tested the same way" (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

Despite many participants' acknowledgment of their struggles with academic English, they felt that the assessment should be the same, regardless of the written language challenges. Razina, who was excluded from the university on unsatisfactory academic performance in 2006 but wants to come back, confirmed that writing English was difficult. Examinations were the area that presented her with the greatest challenge. Often she struggled with the structure of the language and words like watershed, pedagogical knowledge, under-conceptualization and ontology, to name a few. She did

not know their meaning and would sit in the examination hall sweating with horror. Her other challenge was expressing her thoughts on paper. She used to leave the examination hall concerned that the markers would be disgusted at her written work because she believed that her reading and writing skills are not on par with that of her hearing peers.

One participant, Celia, felt that the mode of assessment should be amended to include SASL, because assessment is based on extended writing in the form of portfolio activities, assignments and examinations. She argued that Deaf students were disadvantaged because of the low standard of education, in particular, English literacy; they received prior to entering tertiary studies. According to the documented low levels of English literacy achievement among Deaf students, (Walker & Richards, 1992), academic literacy presents a challenge to Deaf students and a barrier to higher education. Studies by Allen (1986) and Holts (1993) showed that approximately half of the Deaf and hard of hearing leaving special education programmes did so with a reading ability below the fourth grade level.

Given the results of the research by Allen (1986) and Holts (1993), there is reason for some of the participants in this study to be self-conscious about their educational background and their implementation of survival strategies. Celia pointed out that having the support of study partners and a supportive family contributed to her success at Wits. She would ask them to proofread her assignments before she produced the final one. However, when sitting for examinations, she did not have the opportunity to have her answers proofread by her support network. Consequently, the lecturers did not understand what she had written.

The participants were asked about the alternative forms of assessment they would like. Nine participants believed that assessment should remain the same for Deaf and hearing students as long as Deaf students had an equal opportunity to receive as much information from the lectures as their hearing peers. They felt that evaluating Deaf students differently from hearing students would not be fair. Two participants agreed that the assessment should be the same for all students, but they acknowledged different needs

among Deaf and hard of hearing students. For example, there are students who have limited fundamental English skills in reading and writing on a par with their hearing classmates. The students would therefore require adaptation of assessment tasks, for instance, the provision of SASL interpreting service in the examination hall. When asked if she had a choice as to how she would like to be assessed, Misha responded;

> "For me, the assessment should be the same as other students. It is fine with me but other Deaf students who require a different assessment should be accommodated. Some Deaf people have a problem with English literacy and are not comfortable answering questions through it. They prefer to answer in South African Sign Language…" (Misha, personal communication, 13 July 2007)

In confirmation of Misha's concern, Paula commented that the assessment criteria should be inclusive of the diverse needs of students. She believes that there should be adaptation of the assessment task for Deaf students who do not have good English literacy. Paula felt that SASL could be used as a medium of assessment instead of the written text. Rosemary added that half the assessment task for Deaf students should be in South African Sign Language because of the difficulties with English. They struggle to express their thoughts in English while they easily do so in SASL. From Misha and Rosemary's perspectives, an academic environment is more challenging for Deaf and hard of hearing people than for their hearing peers.

From the responses of the participants, it is evident that the majority felt that the current form of assessment was fair. Deafness did not present any particular difficulties for most students. There is, however, a need to take into consideration the educational background of some Deaf students when assessment is conducted. Some students have difficulties with English literary as a result of their Deafness and need modifications to assessment processes. The adaptations to the examinations that some students may need include alternative venues for examinations, extra time, the use of a SASL interpreter to assist in interpreting the questions and oral/sign assessment using a SASL interpreter to

complement a written examination. Lecturers who are aware of the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students can facilitate epistemological access and achievement. It would be to the advantage of Deaf and hard of hearing students to forge strong working relationships with the lecturers, students, SASL interpreters and note-takers.

The participants' perception of the administrative staff, particularly in regard to registrations, fees, office and libraries was that they were welcoming but communication was not easy, as none knew SASL. The participants felt that the allocation of the interpreting service for structured programmes such as lectures and tutorials only was a "communication barrier" to successful integration with the University community. (Misha, personal communication, 13 July 2007).

Students' academic experiences (Related to research question 3 & 5)

The participants' recollection of their experiences featured mainly communication, language access, coping strategies and limiting factors.

The exploration of the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students displayed some difficulties in communicating with fellow hearing students and lecturers. In her interview, Dumisani indicated the difficulties in communication with her hearing peers.

> It was very difficult to communicate with hearing students without the assistance of an interpreter. For instance in … module, there was sometimes no interpreter. Even as a hard of hearing person I could not cope. I was sitting in the front and trying to lip- read but could not follow. It was much better with the service of an interpreter. The SASL interpreter's service is important in communication. To be honest, it was very difficult without an interpreter… (Dumisani, personal communication, 31 June 2007).

Like Dumisani, Themba narrated his academic experience in regard to communication with lecturers as follows:

> However, if the lecturer is hearing and cannot use SASL, we experience difficulties in communication. We cannot connect. I think to myself; will the lecturer understand me? Should I book the SASL interpreter? Will the interpreter be available? All these kind of questions run through my mind when I want to consult the lecturer outside the classroom context. That is the communication problem I often experience. I try my best to ask questions in the classroom in order to avoid the need to see the lecturer outside the classroom setting (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

The challenge to engage in effective communication with hearing students and lecturers is due in part to previous experiences that either the Deaf or hearing students do not wish to repeat. Dumisani revealed that:

> …some hearing students are even afraid to speak to me as a hard of hearing person because they cannot sign, or if they sign, they think I will laugh at them for making the wrong sign. Sometimes I am the one who is afraid to talk because they will laugh at me for making the incorrect pronunciation (Dumisani, personal communication, 31 June 2007).

Dumisani and Themba's experiences reveal that some communication problems between Deaf and hard of hearing and hearing students make a relationship between the two parties difficult. Dumisani felt fearful to communicate orally in the absence of the SASL interpreter because her wrong sounds might cause laughter from hearing students. She is not willing to be an object of humour and would rather "just keep quiet" (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007). Her choice to not communicate can be seen as a coping strategy (Higgins, 1980) for a Deaf or hard of hearing student in a hearing environment. Kirk et al. (1993) gave an explanation of this strategy when they wrote, "Most people who have severe hearing impairment still find that interaction with the hearing world is both painful and difficult. As a consequence, they segregate themselves as adolescents and adults" (Kirk et al., 1993, p.349).

An analysis of Dumisani and Emmaarah's communication experience in an academic setting shows that it is the lack of awareness of Deaf issues that causes the barrier. The lack of awareness is shown when hearing students and lecturers assume that everyone at the university is able to speak and hear (Higgins, 1980) and that all Deaf people can lip-

read" (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007). Hearing people do not notice deafness until Deaf and hearing people engage in communication. Claude felt that it was a big challenge to change people's perception of deafness.

According to Liversidge (2003, p.5), universities often do not provide total communication and language access that allow effective communication among hearing, Deaf and hard of hearing students in various settings that cater for specific situations and events. Liversidge (2003) found out that services and auxiliary aids such as interpreters, assistive listening devices, television with a provision for closed captions, telecommunication devices for the Deaf and electronic text screens are not available in all places at all times. Common university events like graduation ceremonies, lecture series, guest speakers, seminars and extracurricular activities that are not accompanied by sign language interpreters essentially exclude the participation of Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Some hard of hearing participants, such as Rosemary, Siyasanga, Valli and Nandi felt that they got used to the SASL interpreting service because other options like the communication-access real-time translation, computer-assisted transcription and oral interpreters were not provided. The data from the Disability Office indicate that the support available for Deaf students is the SASL interpreting service (DU, personal communication, 10 August 2007). Since the participants had varying needs, the provision of SASL interpreting service alone means that students often did not have the options that best cater for their individual needs in an academic setting. Siyasanga, for instance, indicated her preference of a total communicator to an SASL interpreter. The former uses a combination of signs, gestures and the same words that the lecturer speaks. The latter conveys the message from one language to the other. This difference displays the variation in the communication need of students. The SASL interpreting service does not meet all the needs.

Deaf and hard of hearing students who use the SASL interpreting service also rely on the skills of the SASL interpreter. Due to a shortage of qualified SASL interpreters and the

increasing need of the service in many sectors, the Disability Office is often forced to allocate unskilled interpreters for students. Liversidge (2003), in her investigation, discovered that services received from unskilled providers lead to "incomplete or distorted information that the students otherwise would have received from qualified, skilled providers" (Liversidge, 2003, p. 5).

Hard of hearing participants such as Valli, Rosemary, Dumisani, and Nandi were comfortable in an integrated setting. They did not see communication as a challenge because they could hear and speak well, compared to Deaf participants. The ease of communication between the hard of hearing participants and their hearing peers was a factor in determining their feelings of comfort. Although they used the SASL interpreting service in the classroom, they did not depend on the service. They used the service to ensure that they did not miss much classroom discourse. Their speech abilities helped them in their engagement in social and academic situations. Asked if there were communication challenges between participants and hearing students, a participant responded; "… it was easy. I think it was easy. There were no communication challenges" (Dumisani, personal communication, 31 June 2007).

Two participants, Celia and Siyasanga, also identified themselves as hard of hearing students but, like Paula, Razina, Misha and Emmaarah, stated that they faced communication challenges in academic and social integration. Although they had SASL interpreters in their lectures, they experienced communication barriers on a daily basis because there is a lot of communication and the interpreters are not always available. For example, the SASL interpreter is not available for the students to access the significant knowledge that is acquired through informal discussions among students. Consequently the Deaf and hard of hearing student is unable to access the tremendous amount of this knowledge (Foster, 1998).

The communication challenges between the hearing and Deaf students have negative consequences for both parties. For example, firstly, significant information is missed and secondly "Deaf people sometimes find it difficult to establish close relationships with

hearing people" (Foster, 1998, p. 129). The situation leads to Deaf and hard of hearing students seeking interaction with other Deaf people in order to find the experiences they miss with their hearing peers.

The success of Deaf and hard of hearing students depends on the individual, the quality of the services offered to that individual and many other factors. The individual has to devise coping strategies. On the lack of SASL interpreters outside the lecture context, two participants, Themba and Claude, stated that they chose to ask the lecturer all the questions they had in the classroom "in order to avoid the need to see the lecturer outside the classroom setting'. (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007). This strategy enabled the two participants to approach their assignments knowing that they had all the information they needed. Themba, in particular, mentioned that he was not comfortable communicating with the lecturers in writing because he did not have confidence in English and did not want to risk miscommunication. He wanted to get as much information as possible from the lecturer while the SASL interpreter was still available in the classroom.

The other ten participants adopted a range of coping strategies to enable them to do their academic work. For example, in the absence of the SASL interpreters, they utilized gestures, notes from students and lecturers, lip-reading, pen and paper or asked their hearing peers who knew SASL to interpret in their consultations with lecturers. Despite her huge responsibilities as teacher, wife, mother and student, Valli's coping strategy included the investment of time in her writing her assignments and preparing for the examinations. She stayed behind at school for two hours daily in order to do her academic tasks. This pro-active approach to her studies was enhanced by her belief in her ability to succeed in a hearing- dominated academic environment. The range of coping strategies used by the participants also showed a high level of commitment towards completing the ACE programme. Participants who were in their final year of study indicated their intention to graduate at the end of the academic year. Paula, in particular, stated that she used every coping strategy available to her as she could not allow

obstacles to delay her graduation at the end of the year. She was repeating her second year.

When the participants registered as students at Wits, they were able to use a variety of study strategies that enabled them to successfully cope with their academic work. For instance, Themba stated that he invested a tremendous amount of time in reading and writing. He was not strained by the long essays, many portfolio activities and examination equivalents he had to do in the ACE programme. He considered academic work as a life challenge that he enjoyed trying to overcome. Like Themba, Claude used the study skills, such as study partners which he acquired at the teacher development college to cope in the academically-challenging university context. Prior to writing his assignments, he would engage in discussion with his study partners about the topics. Consequently he was able to include interpretation, analysis, application and critical evaluation in his assignments. Similarly, the other participants used a variety of study skills required of Deaf and hard of hearing students to access information and succeed in an integrated academic setting.

All the participants had to adopt coping strategies because of the difficulties they had to overcome in order to complete their studies at the university. Although they acknowledged that all students at tertiary institutions adopt strategies in order to succeed in their studies, they believed that there are limiting factors related to deafness, particularly when the majority of people are hearing. When asked what the limiting factors in their endeavor to succeed at the university were, Misha stated that the lack of consistency in the provision of SASL interpreters often undermined her effort to succeed in her studies. Misha asserted that, although the SASL interpreting service was provided in the lectures and tutorials, the service was not available for individual consultations with lecturers in their offices. According to the participants, the inadequate SASL interpreting provision made "access to information that is crucial for successful study difficult" (Misha, personal communication 13 July 2007). The Disability Unit has pointed out the problems with SASL service delivery as: insufficient funding for

interpreters, finding interpreters at short notice and the shortage of competent interpreters.

Both the participants and the Disability Unit manager highlighted insufficient numbers of trained SASL interpreters as their primary concern. The SASL interpreters who are allocated to the ACE programme often lacked interpreting skills. The participants regarded this as a limiting factor in their effort to succeed as university students. With unskilled SASL interpreters, Deaf students do not receive as much information from the classroom as their hearing peers. Participants expected SASL interpreters to be skilled and behave professionally. Emmaarah commented:

> …you see sometimes interpreters come in late or they are on their cellphones. When the phone rings in class, they rush out to answer the call. In the process, we miss a lot of information. Lecturers usually have no option but continue without interpreters. I would like the interpreters to sign a code of ethics which forbids them from answering their cellphones while the lecture was in progress. I would like to see interpreters arrive at least 10 minutes early so she is ready by the time the lecturer commences. In addition, there should be an interpreter supervisor – a senior person or deaf senior person who can ensure that the lecturers are aware they cannot continue without an interpreter being available if there are Deaf students in the classroom (Emmaarah, personal communication, 11 June 2007).

Emmaarahs' feelings illustrate one of the characteristics of learning by Deaf students in a mainstream setting. Unlike hearing students, Deaf students depend "on a third party to provide access to information" (Lang, 2002, p. 270). As a result, there is little direct communication between the lecturers and Deaf students because the information is received by the students through interpreting. The findings of this study show the likelihood of information being lost during the interpreting process and that is to the detriment of Deaf and hard of hearing students, particularly if the interpreter is not skilled.

In addition to using a third party for access to classroom discourse, seven participants indicated that English was a limiting factor in their effort to succeed at the university.

Razina reported that for her the "problem factor was the standard of English used at the university. I am not good in English because, at the schools for the Deaf, the emphasis was on practicing to speak and vocational work" (Razina, personal communication, 30 July 2007). On the issue of English as a problem area, Nandi commented:

> … The barrier I have is the standard of English language used at the university. It's too complex. Some words are difficult to understand. When I look up the meaning in the dictionary and still don't understand, I call the SASL interpreter and ask the lecturer to explain the concept (Nandi, personal communication, 30 July 2007).

The seven participants were uncomfortable with being assessed in English because they felt that they were not good in the language. They believed that their English skills in reading and writing were not on a par with their hearing peers because of their educational background. Literature on spoken language acquisitions show that hearing, speech, reading and writing share a mutual dependence but often develop at different levels in Deaf students.

Five participants, Dumisani, Themba, Siyasanga, Valli and Claude did not view English as a limiting factor for successful university studies. Themba, who is an avid reader, said that there were hearing students who understood English better than him and there were others who were worse than him. For Themba, the limiting factor lies within the students' support system.

> I would say that the limiting factor is the system. If you look at the institution, you ask yourself if it is possible for a Deaf person to study whatever course she/he wants, you find that there are barriers. The support service in the form of SASL interpreting is not enough or well-balanced. For instance, there are interpreters in education. If you think about a Deaf person who wants to study, for example, social work, you find out that there are barriers because of the lack of interpreting service in that field. I would like to ask the institution to employ more SASL interpreters so that Deaf people can come and enrol for programmes of their choice at the university (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

Of the twelve participants interviewed, seven indicated the limiting factors for academic studies as insufficient support services, particularly interpreting, communication through a third party and English. Five participants acknowledged the difficulties in regard to the interpreting service but felt that English was not necessarily a barrier for academic studies. The participants viewed some of the factors not as limiting for successful academic integration but as challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Challenges faced by Deaf students (Related to research question 4)

The participants identified communication barriers, peer and lecturer attitudes, English literacy, learning methods, note- taking, social isolation, environmental constraints, attending to multi-visual tasks, and dependence on a third party as major challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students at the university.

The participants indicated that they experienced both positive and negative attitudes on campus. The following quotation from a participant illustrates the positive side of Deaf and hard of hearing students' experience on campus;

> Well…from my current experience I think that the university community accepts Deaf people. The community does not exclude you because of deafness. My experience is that when you meet lecturers, they smile and you feel welcome. The services such as support, administration, security etc provided also show that you are welcome. However, communication barriers exist because not everyone in the community uses Sign Language. It is a problem but often we work around that by pen and paper. The university community is warmly welcoming and supportive of Deaf people (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

The impression of Claude and many of his Deaf peers was that the university community in general displayed positive attitudes. Despite the communication barrier, members of the university community had the motivation to work through difficult communication situations. Some Deaf and hard of hearing, however, had sporadic negative experiences. Rosemary, in particular, has expressed her frustration with the security staff at the university. Her student card was not working, so she approached the security staff for

assistance. Due to communication difficulties, she was keep waiting for long while the men talked and joked among themselves (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007).

Participants in this study pointed out that the attitudes of their hearing peers were a challenging factor in social integration. All the participants had positive and negative experiences when interacting with their fellow hearing students. Deaf students, for instance, experienced the acceptance of hearing students who "were interested to have Deaf students in the class" (Nandi, personal communication, 30 July 2007) because they saw this as an opportunity to learn South African Sign Language from the native users (Dumisani, personal communication, 31 June 2007). It must be noted that most ACE with specialization in Deaf education are teachers of the Deaf but are unfortunately not fluent in South African Sign Language, although it is a language of learning in the classroom. The students believed that they could learn the language from their Deaf peers.

Despite this evident acceptance of Deaf students by their fellow hearing students, there were some people who rejected them because they could not stand the challenge of communication. The rejection of Deaf students might be due to their ignorance about Deaf people and their educational background. For example, some hearing students shook their heads in disbelief when they discovered that some of their classmates were deaf (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007).

> Well, hearing students thought that they were the only ones in the class. They were surprised to discover that there were also Deaf students. They believed that it was impossible that Deaf students could study at the university level. That is what they appeared to be asking themselves (Paula, personal communication, 20 April 2007).

> The hearing students were surprised because they believed that they could further their studies and get higher degrees. For them, Deaf people could not get equal qualifications to hearing people. This is not true. Deaf people can achieve academically as much as hearing students. However, we responded positively to hearing students' enquiries about our academic potentials" (Misha, personal communication, 13 July 2007).

> …they were surprised and shocked to see us signing when we queued for tea and biscuits. Hearing teachers from other schools for the Deaf as well would be surprised to see us. At first they didn't believe that as Deaf people we were qualified teachers. Some had the guts to approach us and ask questions like; Are you qualified? Have you studied to become a teacher before? I would say; yes I am qualified, so what? I am here to further my skills. But it was exciting as well and I felt fine about their questions. (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007).

The responses of Paula, Misha and Rosemary show that when discovery of deafness occurred in the academic and social setting, Deaf students and hard of hearing students felt stigmatized because they did not conform to the assumptions of the hearing majority students (Higgins, 1980). However, the discovery of deafness among Deaf and hard of hearing students at an institution enhanced confidence, created friendship, unity and a sense of belonging. There was no feeling of stigmatization for being different.

> When I came to the University for the first class, I looked around because I was worried about being the only Deaf student in the lecture hall. Fortunately, there were other deaf students as well as hearing users of SASL. I felt fine… (Paula, personal communication, 20 April 2007).

Paula's feeling of relief at the discovery of other Deaf students displays a sense of identity. Deaf and hard of hearing students often experience positive relationships with fellow Deaf students because deafness acts as a form of cultural identity (Ladd, 2003). The positive relations with fellow Deaf students create a greater sense of unity and identity than with fellow hearing students who cannot communicate in SASL. A Deaf informant's experience of a Deaf club gives an example of the positive relation. "At a club for the Deaf, if I see a Deaf person who I don't know, I will go up to that person and say "Hi! What's your name?" I would never do that to a hearing person" (Higgins, 1980, p. 39).

Paula and the Deaf informant's feelings towards others show that Deaf students experience more positive relations with one another than with their hearing peers because their Deafness and their language act as a form of cultural and linguistic identity.

Lecturers' attitudes also affect the experiences the Deaf and hard of hearing students in an academic environment. Participants acknowledged the positive attitudes of most lecturers and tutors, despite the communication challenges. Lecturers, the participants stated, were understanding and helpful in ensuring that the needs of Deaf students in their classes were met. Paula indicated that when she struggled to get SASL interpreting service, the lecturer assisted by calling the Disability Unit. She also assisted Paula with a motivational letter to the Unit for an interpreting service. Lecturers and tutors were willing to give Paula their cell phone numbers so she could contact them via short message system (SMS) when she had questions or wanted to make an appointment. This shows that the lecturers who were aware and helpful with the communication needs of Deaf students could facilitate their educational access and success.

Although the positive attitudes of lecturers towards Deaf and hard of hearing students and the SASL interpreting services were significant, they could not equalize their position with their hearing peers in regard to English literacy. Seven participants expressed their feeling about English as used in academic institutions. They felt that English was one of their biggest challenges for them to succeed at the University. This position is supported by Walker and Richards (1992) who documented a low level of English literacy achievement among Deaf students. They argued that poor academic literacy presented a significant challenge to Deaf students and a barrier to higher education. The participants believed that having study partners, academic support, word processors and study skills has been vital to their success at the university, particularly in regard to reading and writing. The participants were concerned about their lack of access to university dialogue, which is usually in English. The loss is experienced by all the students. However, according to Foster (1998, p. 128), since spoken English is the dominant form of communication for conversation at university, hearing users of English are less disadvantaged as a result of these communication barriers than are Deaf students whose main form of communication is SASL.

Apart from the challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students with regard to English, all the twelve participants expressed that taking notes during the lectures was

often difficult. The taking of lecture notes was described as "a difficult task" for Deaf and hard of hearing students in higher education (Lang, 2002, p.272). The following perception of the participants attests to it:

> … Sometimes there are certain things you need to write down. You need to take notes but then as soon as you do you miss a lot from what was said because you face down while you write. Sometimes the lecturers use overhead projectors. You struggle to look at both the SASL interpreter and the screen. I feel that it was … difficult for Deaf students. I also think it was at times embarrassing for us because the hearing students believed that as Deaf people we were limited. We could not access all the information… (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007).

> For hearing students it seemed a easy task to write down notes while the lecturer was speaking. It appeared very easy for them as they could write while listening. Taking notes was almost impossible for Deaf students because they had to focus fully on the SASL interpreter or they would miss information. You cannot take down notes while at the same looking at the interpreter. Writing notes was a big challenge for Deaf students in my class. (Paula, personal communication, 20 April 2007)

The study of the participants' experiences with note-taking reveals that note-taking is helpful but English language skills and the challenge of attending to multiple visual tasks, for example, the lecturer, SASL interpreter and teaching aids made note-taking inefficient for Deaf and hard of hearing students. Literature by Osguthorpe et al. (1980) shows the learning outcomes when Deaf and hearing students reviewed lecture notes and took tests in recall, recognition, concept acquisition and problem-solving. The three researchers reported that repeated review of lecture notes facilitated recall and recognition, but not concept acquisition or problem- solving. Their findings pointed to "the limitations of review as a facilitative learning process" (Osguthorpe et al., 1980, p. 558).

Next to participants' experiences with note-taking, came the learning method as a challenge they faced as Deaf and hard of hearing students in an integrated environment. One of the greatest challenges Deaf and hard of hearing students faced in a mainstream university was learning through support services (Foster, 1998). In effect, this means that there is little direct communication between the lecturer and the Deaf students because

they access information through interpreted mode. Although the participants were dependant on the support service such as SASL interpreting to participate meaningfully in an academic setting, it should not be assumed that the service solved the learning challenges of Deaf students. The following excerpt illustrates a participant's experience of learning through SASL interpreting;

> The challenge was learning through the Sign Language interpreter. Though the provision was appreciated, it was difficult. When the lecturer spoke, the Deaf students were looking at the Sign Language interpreter. Hearing students, on the other hand, were listening and writing down notes. We could not do both at the same time. When the lecturer finished speaking, hearing students had written down notes. Deaf students became uncertain as to whether they grasped the content of the lecture or not because they don't have class notes to compare… (Misha, personal communication, 13 July 2007).

Misha's experience shows that even when SASL interpreters are provided for lectures, successful learning by Deaf students is still frequently limited. Foster (1998) has given several examples of the challenges posed by learning through interpreters. First is the time lag that is "the time between the completion of the teacher's spoken message and the interpreter's translation of the message into sign language" (p.122). As Foster (1998) found, this time lag ensures that Deaf students are always a few seconds behind their hearing peers in accessing the information. This situation hampers effective and timely participation in tutorial sessions and response to the lecturer's questions. Secondly, not all interpreters are similarly skilled. A participant related her experience as an ACE first year student. She explained that it was important for her to have a SASL interpreter who could accurately convey her responses and ideas to the class. She should use academic concepts or vocabulary that present as a university student (Siyabonga, personal communication, 26 September 2007). Siyabonga's feeling is echoed succinctly by an informant in Foster and Holcomb (1990)'s study when he said;

> In order for me to appear intelligent and present myself as a capable student, the interpreter must articulate my comments accurately, that is, use appropriate vocabulary along with inflections that match the intent of my message. Otherwise, my comments might appear choppy,

> unintelligent, or downright inappropriate (Foster & Holcomb, 1990, p. 161).

All the participants in this study were using the interpreting service for access to information in the lecture halls. However, seven participants clearly pointed out that the use of the service did not necessarily mean that they had full access to academic discourse because the service had its advantages and disadvantages. In addition to the issue of learning through interpreters, participants noted that social isolation was a challenge for them in a hearing environment.

Celia, who was the only Deaf student in her class in 2003, reported that she often felt isolated, lonely and resented, particularly in her first year at the university. She experienced alienation from hearing students because of they found communication with her difficult. Some students were frustrated when they had to repeat what they said before she could understand. (Celia, personal communication, 11 June 2007). As a result of communication challenges, she had limited opportunities to develop friendship with hearing students. She often missed the fun and the informal learning that occurs in conversations with friends. The excerpt that follows illustrates Celia's experience of isolation as the only hard of hearing student in her class;

> … I felt different from hearing students, for example, when the lecturer let us work in groups, I felt isolated because the discussions were fast, heated and often students spoke at the same time. Due to the time lag and confusion, I did not have an opportunity to participate. As a Deaf person, I felt left out. I felt like a child. I felt unequal to the whole team. That is why I hated group work but if there were more Deaf people I would be very happy to participate (Celia, personal communication, 11 June 2007).

Significant changes in Celia's social life occurred in her second year when a number of Deaf and hard of hearing enrolled for the Advanced Certificate in Education programme. Though they were not in the same class, they socialized a lot during breaks, lunch and after the lectures. Celia identified herself as hard of hearing but, contrary to the studies by Miller and Mizrahi (2000) that hard of hearing students related more closely to hearing culture than students who are Deaf, she associated with her fellow Deaf peers.

Apart from social isolation experienced by Deaf and hard of hearing students at the institution of higher learning, environmental constraints posed a challenge. Participants pointed out that the members of the security do not know SASL. If they realize that they cannot communicate with the Deaf person, they refuse him entry or just wave the person in without the necessary pass. This created an inconvenience when Celia had to exit the campus. Another participant related the challenging experience of viewing slides in a darkened room. He could not clearly see the interpreter, hence he missed information. Finally, participants gave a few suggestions. First, the security staff on campus should be given lessons in at least basic SASL so they are be able to communicate with, and direct, Deaf visitors (Themba, personal communication, 30 March 2007). Second, lecturers, particularly those who have Deaf and hard of hearing students in their programmes, should be invited for Deaf awareness workshops so that they can consider the needs of Deaf students when they book rooms, choose teaching aids and do demonstrations (Siyabonga, personal communication, 26 September 2007).

Alongside their experiences with environmental constraints, participants spoke about the challenges they faced due to the chronic shortage of SASL interpreters. With the increasing number of Deaf and hard of hearing students entering higher education institutions, the shortage of SASL interpreters is a threat to the aspiration of Deaf people to access education. There is an acute shortage of SASL interpreters prepared to work in higher education, specifically. Participants were often able to study successfully using interpreters with a slightly lower level of proficiency because they have good study skills and a high level of commitment (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007). For some participants such as Paula, Razina and Siyabonga, the lack of appropriately- trained interpreters affected them adversely (Razina, personal communication, 30 July 2007). The shortage of interpreters can dampen a Deaf prospective student's motivation to enrol at an institution of higher learning. The university has a larger number of Deaf and hard of hearing students than other universities because it offers a range of support services, including SASL interpreting. The Unit commented that Wits may be the only institution that provides the service (DU, personal communication, 10 August 2007).

In addition to the challenges of the shortage of SASL interpreters, participants stated that their dependence on a third party to access education among hearing students was a challenge. Reliance on the third party to provide access to information is asserted by Lang (2002, p. 270) as one of the most salient characteristics of learning by Deaf students in a mainstream classroom. A participant believed strongly that lecturers should use SASL.

> I feel that the lecturer himself must know Sign Language and use it – not the interpreter because when she interprets from sign to voice, she uses her choice of words, maybe simple English… I want to learn the academic words… that are used by the lecturers… (Siyabonga, personal communication, 26 September 2007).

The participant's feeling illustrates the need for direct communication between the lecturer and herself as student. For the participant, if the lecturer is not communicating in SASL, she, unlike hearing students, receives the information through interpreting. Successful communication with both lecturers and students is the key to a happy, successful university experience.

The final challenge pointed out by the participants is that the reliance on SASL interpreters leads to them having to attend to multiple visual tasks during the learning process. For example, in order to follow the presentation and access as much information as possible, they need to look at the SASL interpreter, lecturer, screen, students and the lecture's notes, if provided. During the process of attending to these visual tasks, the information is often lost and cannot be recovered immediately. In addition, these multi - visual tasks make note-taking not easily possible while at the same time increasing the workload, time and energy to identify critical points from the presentation as a whole (Lang, 2002). During the presentation: "…I look at the interpreter, lecturer and writing board and at the same time try to jot down some notes. I translate what I get from the SASL interpreter into understandable notes for myself. (Valli, personal communication, 06 June 2007).

The participants' experience with multi-visual tasks in the classroom is a classic example of the challenges faced by Deaf and hard of hearing students at higher education institutions. Often, when they find themselves faced with many tasks at a time, they have to choose between taking notes or following the lecturer by watching her and the SASL interpreter.

As with all students with disabilities, Deaf and hard of hearing students rely to a large extent on the co-operation and support of the institution and the academic staff. The perceptions of the participants in this study showed that even with support, Deaf and hard of hearing students have to work harder than other students in order to fulfill their potential.

University climate (Related to research question 6)

Another category in regard to the experiences of the Deaf and hard of hearing students was the university climate. This included accessibility of the institution, attitudes and awareness about Deaf students, club membership and general classroom environment.

The issue of access as highlighted by the participants can be categorized into two main parts, namely, physical and epistemological access. Physical access refers to admission and adaptations to rooms for Deaf students living in residential accommodation. The general requirements include flashing light doorbells, fire alarms, text telephones and televisions with teletext for subtitles. Epistemological access entails "power that lies behind the way knowledge is used and shared within a University – access to the ways in which the academic world carries out its works…" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005c, p.1). Access to the University is supported by policy documents. According to the University policy on access, one of the principles that inform decision-making about managing access is that:

> Any student who is granted physical access to the University has the right to expect a teaching and learning environment that promotes epistemological access. This means that if a student is admitted in the full

> knowledge that he or she will require educational support or development, it must be adequately provided. It also requires the development of an inclusive University culture (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003, p.1).

One of the purposes of access is to implement the university's principle on diversity in the student body. The body should "…reflect diversity of race, gender, socio-economic background, urban and rural geographic origins, culture, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005c, 1). This interpretation ties in with the South African Constitution of 1996 which specifically promotes equal access to education.

Of the twelve participants interviewed in this study, nine agreed that the university was both physically and epistemologically accessible but there was room for improvement, particularly in the latter. One participant insisted that the university was not accessible in all respects. Two participants felt that they it was difficult to answer because "I am not quite sure if Deaf people can be admitted to any course in the University *and have support services* (italics inserted) (Claude, personal communication, 30 March 2007). The other participant said that it was difficult to answer the question because though they have interpreting service in formal structures like the lecture theatres, Deaf students have no access to the tremendous amount of knowledge that is acquired through informal conversation among the students and with lecturers individually.

Looking at the access guidelines of the institution, one can conclude that Deaf and hard of hearing students are targets in the university's policies as members of an equity target group - students with disabilities. However, in order for students with disabilities, including the Deaf, to maximise the access opportunity in higher education, it is important that the university community displays a positive attitude towards the students.

The participants' impression is that some hearing people on campus simply lacked awareness of communication diversity. They don't know what to do when they are faced by students who use Sign Language (Rosemary, personal communication, 28 June 2007). Unlike others, as Rosemary asserted, they do not have the will to work through difficult

communication situations. She added that some staff members showed an appalling lack of awareness about the communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students, despite the University's support of diversity.

The participants had different perceptions about the awareness of the university community regarding Deaf and hard of hearing students. Their perceptions were categorized into three groups. The first group was the biggest, with six participants saying that the university community was aware of the presence of Deaf and hard of hearing students. They believed that the Deaf education department, Disability Unit, SASL department, the growing number of hearing students taking SASL as a major or minor course and the visibility of South African Sign Language contributed to the awareness. The second group consisted of four participants. They felt that the majority of university staff and students were not aware of the communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students because often they respond with 'shock' when they discover that one is deaf. The third category consisted of two participants who insisted that the awareness of the university community regarding Deaf and hard of hearing students was lacking. They cited the communication barrier and an apparent unwillingness to help when they enquired about the student clubs during the orientation week.

There are many student clubs, societies and extramural activities at the University of the Witwatersrand. Clubs include, among others, the Debating Union. An example of the societies is the Ballroom Dancing Society. There are also the fund-raising activities of RAG (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005a). Any student can register for the club of her or his choice. Extracurricular activities "are generally recognized as vehicles for student development in a variety of areas, including those associated with physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth (Foster, 1998, p.123).

Despite the good purposes of extracurricular activities and the ample opportunities in which students may be socially involved at the university, not one of the participants in this study joined a club on campus. An analysis of their response about their non-

involvement in student activities reveal two reasons. The first reason given is the time constraint. The second reason provided is the communication barrier.

The reasons the participants gave for not being involved in extramural activities seems valid because they come to campus for one week per quarter and their lecture sessions are from 8am to 4.30pm. The rigors of academic work and the associated difficulties certainly took up all their time. The second reason was given by three participants who reside in the vicinity of the university. The participants' feeling is illustrated in the following excerpt;

"Often, deaf students' participation in these activities is severely limited by communication barriers among students and between deaf students and hearing coaches/club advisors" (Foster, 1998, p.122). The students' responses in the background questionnaire showed that they had similar communication experiences at the teacher training college before they came to Wits.

Pre-university experiences (Related to research question 7)

All the participants had experiences with communication barriers prior to enroling at Wits. For example, at the teacher development college, they were not involved in extramural activities. Their non–participation was attributed to language barriers between them and the coaches. They had a limited interpreting service.

Apart from Siyabonga, all the participants had previous experience of SASL interpreting. Therefore, they expected a similar support service at the university. Their knowledge of how to use the SASL interpreting service was an advantage in their lecture and tutorial sessions. However, they pointed out that the learning environment was different because, at the college, the class was made up of Deaf students, the SASL interpreter and the lecturer (Razina, personal communication, 30 July 2007).

All the participants in this study were mainstreamed for at least part of their education. Responses to the background questionnaire show that eleven participants attended a unit for the Deaf at the teacher training college. One participant underwent training as a teacher among hearing students. She wrote that she did not have SASL interpreting. The use of an SASL interpreter for learning was a new experience for her at university. The participants reported negative and positive experiences during their teacher training years. The negative experiences were due to lecturers' ignorance about Deaf students, inadequate support services and stigmatization of deafness. Their positive experience was being trained as teachers of Deaf learners and the study skills they acquired.

Summary

In summary, the research explored the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in an integrated educational setting. The perceptions of the students and the Disability Unit manager were analysed. I identified the emerging themes. The findings are potentially useful information for inclusive education policy planning and practice. The information is particularly significant for educational institutions in meeting the communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students.

This study revealed that the university is attracting Deaf and hard of hearing students into its academic programmes, in particular, the ACE. The investigation of the students' experiences, however, has raised several issues that need to be addressed if Deaf students are to have a successful experience of access and success in education. If the experiences revealed in this study are studied and accommodated, it will encourage more Deaf and hard of hearing students to progress into academic studies. The University would also be meeting its objective to use all its assets – both human and physical - to serve the intellectual, professional and educational needs of South African society

What is evident from the findings is that two main factors serve as motivation for Deaf and the hard of hearing to enrol at Wits. The first is personal commitment to improving Deaf education. The second is the availability of institutional and environmental support

services at the university. The participants, as stakeholders in Deaf education by virtue of being teachers, felt that their previous training system had not adequately prepared them for teaching Deaf learners. Teachers enter schools for the Deaf unaware of appropriate teaching methodologies, Deaf culture, the role of South African Sign Language and the psychosocial development of the Deaf learner. Deaf education programmes offered at Wits were seen by participants as an opportunity to empower themselves so they can contribute to the improvement of education of Deaf learners. In addition, the university is in the vicinity of a strong Deaf community which makes it possible for the students to socialize and receive moral support. The availability of institutional and environmental support services for Deaf and hard of hearing students at the University attract students from all over the country and neighbouring states such as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

The study confirmed the need for reliable provision of support services for Deaf and hard of hearing students to succeed at the university level. The students complained about the quality and inconsistency of the SASL interpreting service which is indicative of a larger problem in South Africa.

What emerged from the data indicates that several factors such as motivation, support services and coping skills and strategies are significant to Deaf and hard of hearing students' access and success in mainstream higher education institutions. An analysis of the experiences showed that all the participants coped remarkably well considering the communication obstacles that they have had to overcome. Tutorial activities such as group work were pointed out by participants as problematic because of the fast-paced and often overlapping nature of spoken exchanges (Foster, 1998). Some of the hard of hearing students found these spoken exchanges impossible to follow through speech reading. Consequently Deaf and hard of hearing students were often excluded in the discussions. With skilled SASL interpreters and change of attitudes by students, both Deaf and hearing, group work could be accessible and inclusive.

A significant finding was that there was a high level of academic competitiveness among Deaf and hard of hearing students and lower levels of self-advocacy and social participation. Some problems, such as the SASL interpreters excusing themselves from duty to answer cellphone calls, could have been prevented if the students had asserted themselves or if SASL interpreters were better trained. Deaf and hard of hearing students, as consumers of the SASL interpreting service, should adopt a proactive approach in advocating for themselves rather than leaving the responsibility to the lecturers. The students should take an active role in ensuring the availability of the quality and consistent services for their studies. However, all participants were determined to accomplish their goal of graduating from Wits by adopting study strategies.

The findings show that hard of hearing students related more closely to Deaf culture than students who were hearing. The relationship is in contrast to findings of Miller and Mizrahi (2000). They studied how hard of hearing university students related to hearing and Deaf culture. They reported how their orientations to these cultures as well as their bicultural identity related to social adjustment and loneliness. Miller and Mizrahi (2000) concluded that hard of hearing students related more to hearing than to Deaf culture (Lang, 2002).

The study confirmed existing literature about the need to get feedback from Deaf and hard of hearing people about inclusive education. Traditionally, research in the area of Deaf education explored the voice of hearing people. There was little attention given to the perceptions of Deaf people themselves. In addition, hearing people, often with basic or no knowledge of Deaf culture and its related factors, conducted the investigation. The 'Deaf voice' was often disregarded (Komesaroff, 1998). The changes which are made as a result of listening to the Deaf voice could be used to make the University more accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Another finding was that Deaf students in higher education prefer to relate to other Deaf students. According to Foster (1998) Deaf and hard of hearing students "often find in a

community of Deaf peers the real conversation, family, information and friendships which they do not get from interactions with hearing people" (Foster, 1998, p.130). Furthermore, difficulties in developing relations between Deaf and hearing students seem to be a result of communication barriers between the two groups. In addition, it may be due to previous bad experiences that Deaf students do not wish to repeat.

It was found that, despite the communication barriers in the classroom context, Deaf students appreciated the positive attitudes of the lecturers, particularly in the ACE programme. The participants were grateful when one lecturer went to the extent of securing SASL interpreters from the Disability Unit by writing request letters and continually supplying the Unit with time schedules when the SASL interpreting services would be required.

This chapter gave detailed descriptions of participants. The next chapter discusses and makes conclusions about the data collected.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings arising from the data collected. This chapter presents a brief summary of the research aims, discusses the findings, provides conclusions and raises the implications for policy and practice.

Summary

This study used qualitative research methods to explore the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in the Advanced Certificate in Education programme at Wits. The investigation used a cultural and linguistic paradigm of deafness as the theoretical framework for describing the social and academic experiences of twelve students. The findings showed that Deaf and hard of hearing students have a different educational experience from their hearing peers in a mainstream higher education environment. Current policy and practice in inclusive education nationally and internationally were examined. The examination of inclusive education in particular revealed that the implementation of the policy with regard to Deaf and hard of hearing students at the University of the Witwatersrand exposed more disadvantages than advantages. The limitation of the study is that only twelve Deaf and hard of hearing students in one university participated in the study. The number of research participants is too small to generalize about the results of the implications of inclusive education for Deaf and hard of hearing students. However, literature reviewed showed that the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students in a mainstream educational environment are universal.

Discussion

Inclusive education for Deaf learners as discussed in this dissertation appears to mean providing Deaf and hard of hearing learners with equal access to learning in a barrier-free modality. Unlike learners with disabilities, barriers to learning for Deaf and hard of

hearing students are language and communication. For the majority of Deaf and hard of hearing learners in South Africa, learning takes place in a language that is not their own, for example, in spoken English and Afrikaans. This kind of learning is inaccessible and thus a barrier to learning. For Deaf and hard of hearing students being placed in such an environment is even less appropriate than it is for hearing people because Deaf learners cannot have access to information in a spoken language as they cannot hear the spoken languages. According to the United Nations, the "barrier for Deaf children in the context of a multilingual class is often the spoken language" (United Nations, 1999, p.10). Therefore having South African Sign Language (SASL) medium schools[7] would create barrier- free, inclusive education for Deaf and hard of hearing students. SASL is recognized as a Deaf person's first and natural language. In a higher education inclusive setting, a Deaf learner would require an SASL interpreter to sign throughout the academic day.

Deaf and hard of hearing participants were generally positive towards inclusive education and its implementation in the higher education institution they attended, although several concerns, such as the issue of the support services and cultural recognition, were raised. The participants' preference to being recognized as a cultural and linguistic minority group is consistent with the view of the Deaf Federation of South Africa, which represents Deaf and hard of hearing people nationally. Organisations of Deaf people worldwide also call for recognition of, and access to, sign language in education. SASL interpreting as shown by this study constitutes the main support service required by Deaf and hard of hearing students.

This study also reveals that the University of the Witwatersrand is recognizing the importance of the provision of SASL interpreting services because annually it allocates funding to the Disability Unit to ensure that the required support services are available to students with disabilities, including the Deaf. However, there are no support services monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure quality of services. It would be appropriate

[7] A school which provides teaching and learning through the medium of SASL is not considered to be a specialised learning context but rather a school identified by the medium of teaching provided (Department of Education, 1997).

that, once the SASL interpreters and note- takers are appointed by the Disability Unit, ongoing evaluation and performance appraisal be done. The evaluation must involve more than reportback by the SASL interpreters themselves. Feedback from Deaf and hard of hearing students as the consumers of SASL interpreting services as well as reportback from lecturers should be considered. Currently, there are several SASL interpreters on campus but there is no person designated as leader or head SASL interpreter. The designated person could, in addition to supervising the interpreting service, organise workshops for professional development and related activities.

Some participants indicated that the support services for Deaf and hard of hearing students were inadequate. The support service that was often provided was SASL interpreting. Other types of support services such as note- taking, tutoring and real time captioning are commonly used by Deaf and hard of hearing students in higher education in other countries such as the United States and Norway but are not available at Wits. The tutoring service could be utilized to provide Deaf and hard of hearing students with content learning and skills development, in addition to their lecture hall experience. The arrangement is not a preferential treatment because Deaf and hard of hearing students do not receive as much information from the lecture and tutorials sessions as their hearing peers (Jacobs, 1977).

The investigation of the experiences of Deaf students with regard to interpreting also showed that communication is frequently limited, even when the SASL interpreters are provided. The differences in language often cause communication barriers between Deaf and hearing students, for example, the former uses SASL and the latter utilizes spoken English. A time lag exists between the completion of the lecturer's spoken message and the interpreter's translation of the message into SASL. Consequently, Deaf and hard of hearing students are frequently a few seconds behind the hearing peers in receiving the message. This situation was found by Foster (1998) to hamper participation in group discussion and response to the lecturer's questions.

In addition to the time lag to demonstrate that interpreting service is inadequate, the participants stated that some SASL interpreters were not similarly skilled. According to a participant, an interpreter who is experienced in the field of medicine is often not skilled in interpreting in the educational context. Incorrectly assigned, an interpreter could adversely affect Deaf students' participation in classroom discussion and general interacting with hearing people. The participants in this study apparently used their literacy strengths to compensate for the interpreting inadequacy because they were successful in their academic studies.

English, and the challenge of attending to the lecturer, interpreter, students and teaching aids make note-taking a difficult task for most Deaf and hard of hearing students at university. The literature on note-taking by hearing students assumes that students take their own notes in the lecture halls but it is not often the case with most Deaf students. It is necessary for Deaf and hard of hearing to get lecture notes. The study by Osguthorpe et al. (1980) showed that notes were very helpful to students. They asserted that the repeated review of the lecture notes facilitated recall and recognition. The service of a note-taker could enhance a Deaf student's opportunities to access information as her or his hearing peers.

Conclusions

There are several conclusions which are related to the literature reviewed in this study and the cultural and linguistic view of deafness

This study suggests that the availability of support services such as SASL interpreters and other Deaf students at Wits University is a motivator for Deaf and hard of hearing students to enter higher education. The availability of other Deaf students offered opportunities for peer interaction and friendship. However, the investigation of students' experiences raised several issues that need to be addressed if Deaf and hard of hearing students are to have a positive experience of social and academic integration. The Deaf

community and educational researchers need to challenge and expose the politics of educational practices and research epistemology.

The Deaf student perception section shows that there is a difference between Deaf and hearing communities on the concept of deafness. Deaf students view themselves as culturally and linguistically different. The university policy and practice position Deaf and hard of hearing students as disabled. This "denial of linguistic and cultural difference, in preference for a disability construction, ignores the situation in which Deaf people find themselves" (Komesaroff, 2000, p. 10). It must be noted, however, that the 'denial' is unintentional as, historically, Deaf people have been viewed by society within a pathological paradigm. The cultural and linguistic view of deafness, however, cannot remain unchallenged. While Deaf people share some characteristics with other cultural minority groups, they also share other characteristics with the disability sector. Thus Deaf people are a cultural group with a difference (Thompson, 2004). Their challenge in a social and academic environment is exacerbated in that they cannot access spoken languages, such as English, as can other minority groups. A possible solution would be for society to shift from regarding deafness as a welfare issue to a human rights issue.

In the academic experience context, the study shows that a number of Deaf and hard of hearing students such as Themba, Dumisani and Valli, to name a few, demonstrated high levels of competence in English literacy. However, several participants expressed the view that English literacy took up most of their energy and time. The lower than average level of English literacy was one of the most difficult barriers for some Deaf and hard of hearing students in the ACE programme to overcome. The problem with English was exacerbated by a number of factors such as poor quality of education in schools for the Deaf, lack of role models at the schools, low expectations of teachers in primary schools and teachers not being fluent in SASL. However, participants could have taken advantage of the academic support service to improve English literacy. It is correct to implore Deaf and hard of hearing learners in higher education "to become more involved in redirecting their own destinies" (Lang, 2002, p.277).

The research reveals that Deaf and hard of hearing students, unlike other students with disabilities, faced communication challenges at Wits. A possible explanation is the lack of awareness about Deaf people's needs as a minority group. Raising and promoting awareness of Deaf and hard of hearing students would promote the idea of inclusion at Wits. The awareness about deafness would assist Deaf and hard of hearing students to feel on an equal level at the university.

The University climate section shows that Wits is generally aware of Deaf and hard of hearing students; however, their social and academic experiences show that they are still not integrated fully in university life due to factors such as communication, inadequate support services and students' lack of assertiveness. Institutions of higher education are appropriate places whose practices can maintain the views of particular cultural and linguistic groups such as the Deaf community.

The investigation of pre-university experience reveals that prior educational experiences acted as either a barrier or an advantage throughout the higher education experience. It is important that schools prepare Deaf and hard of hearing students adequately for higher education. However, there is no guarantee that Deaf and hard of hearing students will have positive academic and social experiences in higher education institutions.

Implications for policy and practice

Since the University of the Witwatersrand (2000) has already identified the need to ensure the diversification of its staff and students as a strategic imperative by proclaiming that 'the university community will reflect and respect diversity', it is necessary to evaluate the impact of the policies on the institutional community. The evaluation however should be more than annual reports from heads of department. Perceptions from the 'insider' view of the policies, such as the disability policy, need to be sought. The examination of the experience of Deaf and hard of hearing students could be used by the University to identify possible gaps between its mission and goals and the actual experiences of the students.

In addition, a possible direction is to create activities that raise and promote the issue of deafness throughout the University community. With the presence of the Centre for Deaf Studies, Disability Unit and the SASL department on campus, there is a support structure for the university to raise and promote the issue of Deaf awareness. One possible option would be to use past Deaf and hard of hearing students to talk to new and prospective students about their personal experiences. This will allow new students to have informed expectations, be aware of the support service available and may help with the promotion of Deaf awareness among hearing students and staff.

The participants in this study showed that they did not know that they had to register with the Disability Unit, have rights to choose the SASL interpreter of their choice and can request other services such as note-takers. The use of Deaf students previously enrolled at Wits as mentors for incoming Deaf students would clarify most of these issues to new students. Raising the issue of Deaf awareness could assist "to promote the idea of inclusion and unity within student body" (Palfreman-Kay, 1998, p.12). This promotion will finally assist the Deaf adult to feel more on an equal level within society and education.

Unlike other students with disabilities, Deaf and hard of hearing students seem to face many challenges in reaching their academic goals. They have unique communication challenges in a mainstream society. Linguistic competence in SASL is a distinct advantage for educators of Deaf learners. It would be beneficial for the Department of Education to investigate how best to accommodate all students in an inclusive education. Deaf people should be involved in the investigation on how to accommodate them in an inclusive education setting. The Department of Education should realize that there need to be further studies of inclusion policies in practice in education. Such investigations can contribute to the understanding of the policy, particularly with regard to Deaf learners. As Powers (2002) confirmed:

> "…there is an urgent need for teachers to develop a shared language and understanding of what inclusion means at school and at classroom level…beyond vague notions of greater participation in mainstream

> settings. I contend that educators of Deaf children, and indeed all educators, need to be aware of the oversimplification and confusion that exists and to work towards a clearer definition of inclusion that can help drive the practice" (Powers, 2002, p.230).

Investigations on inclusion and the Deaf child need to be done in collaboration with Deaf and hard of hearing people so that such studies have an 'insiders' perspective as revealed in this dissertation.

This study has created a foundation for future studies. The study revealed the challenges and difficulties of Deaf and hard of hearing students who often faced many odds to achieve their academic objectives within a university setting. The dissertation emphasized the need to improve support services for Deaf and hard of hearing students as well as to assess the Deaf 'voice'. The emphasis is based on the hope that further research will play a big role in the improvement of the lives of Deaf and hard of hearing people seeking entry into academic fields.

Although the study explored the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students who have managed to reach higher education, there are many more Deaf and hard of hearing students who fail to achieve in secondary education. As a result, they never realize their wish to receive higher education in mainstream universities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Information letter to participants

…….. (Participant)

I am writing to you in my capacity as a part-time Master of Education student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My research topic is "Deaf teachers' experience of being students at Wits". I am sure the findings will be significant to the University management in understanding better how access to higher education might be improved for Deaf students. The study will also shed light about the experiences of Deaf students at the university. I kindly invite you to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary (no payment will be made to you). In order to get your views regarding your experiences as student at Wits, I will need to interview you at an agreed time. The interview, which will be video-taped, will take approximately 45 minutes.

There is no risk in the participation. Your participation or non- participation will not disadvantage you in any way as a Wits student, an alumnus or staff. Your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and used solely for the purpose of this research. Lastly, you have the right to agree or disagree to participate. No penalty in any way will be meted out to you for whatever decision you make regarding your invitation to participate in this study. You may withdraw from the study any time, if you want to, without penalty. If at anytime during the study you have questions about your participation, please don't hesitate to contact me by SMS at 072 542 0875.

Thanks

Lucas Magongwa
Researcher

Appendix B

Participant's informed consent

I ……. ……confirm that the researcher informed me about the nature, procedure and risk of this research. I received, read and understood the content of the information letter. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study if I wish to and that my identity will remain confidential.

I was given a chance to ask for clarity on my participation. I am prepared to participate in the study and give consent.

…….
Signature

……
Date

Appendix C

Letter of notification to the research site

The Registrar
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Private Bag 3
WITS
2050
26/03/2007

Dr D Swemmer

Notice of the intention to conduct research on the main and education campuses

I am a part-time Master of Education by dissertation student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing a research on "Deaf teachers' experiences of being students at Wits University". In order to gather data for the research, I will interview current and past Deaf students who are registered in the Advanced Certificate in Education at Wits. The interviews will be conducted between March and July 2007.

Sincerely

Lucas Magongwa
Student no: 8910575A

Cc Prof M Metcalfe: Head of School – Education
Dr C Storbeck and Prof J Castle: Supervisors

Appendix D

Participants' consent form: Interview

I, ----------, consent to being interviewed by Lucas Magongwa for his research on Deaf teachers' experience of being students at Wits University. I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary.
- No payment in any form is expected from the researcher or the University for my participation in the study.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- The videotape on which my interview is recorded will be handled securely and destroyed five years after the completion of the research.
- The videotape will be used solely for the purpose of this study.
- I have been briefed of the nature, goals and process of the research.

Signed: …….. Date: ……...
Participant

Signed ……. Date: ……..
Researcher

Appendix E

Participant's consent form: Being videotaped

I, ----------, consent to my interview with Lucas Magongwa for his research being video-recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts are for the purpose of this study.
- Identifying information will not be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- The videotape on which my interview is recorded will be handled securely and destroyed five years after the completion of the research.
- No identifying feature will be used in the transcript.
- I have been briefed of the reasons for being videotaped.

Signed: …….. Date: ……

Participant

Signed: ……. Date: ……..

Researcher

Appendix F

Interview schedule: Deaf students at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

1. What motivated you to study at Wits?

2. How did you feel during the orientation and your critical first lecture?

3. How do hearing students react to having you as a Deaf students in the lectures?

4. What are the challenges of Deaf students at the University?

5. Have you ever had any misunderstanding with hearing students and how did you solve it?

6. Is a support service significant for you in the lectures and tutorials sessions? Which support service? Why?

7. Do you think that you would be fully integrated in the learning process if the support service is not available? Describe.

8. What, if anything, would you like done differently concerning the support service you currently receive?

9. In the absence of a SASL interpreter, how do you communicate with hearing students and your lecturers outside the classroom?

10. What would you like done differently concerning the SASL interpreter service?

11. Is your assessment different to that of hearing students? Please explain.

12. If you had a choice, how would you like to be assessed?

13. Have you ever felt different to hearing students? Explain why or why not.

14. Is there any problem communicating with lecturers outside the classroom? Describe the problem if any. How was the problem handled?

15. Do you think the University is now accessible to Deaf students? Why? Why not?

16. Is the University community welcoming to Deaf students? Why? Why not?

17. What would you like the university community to know about Deaf students?

18. What conditions/factors are limiting in your endeavour to study successfully?

19. Do you belong to any student body or club on campus? Why and why not?

20. How do you cope communicating in SASL, a visual language, and studying in English, a spoken language?

21. What is the general level of awareness of your needs as a Deaf student among staff and students?

22. What in your opinion can make it easier for a Deaf person to integrate into the University and mix with other students?

23. Please tell me anything you want to say about your experiences as a Deaf student at Wits.

Thank you for your responses, time and patience.

Appendix G

Invitation: Disability Unit Head

The Head of Department
Disability Unit
Private Bag 3
Wits
2050
26/03/07

……

I am doing Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. My research topic is "Deaf teachers' experiences of being students at the University of the Witwatersrand". I kindly ask you to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire so that I can get your views regarding the support service the Disability Unit provides to Deaf students.

Your responses to the questionnaire will be treated confidentially and used only for the purpose of this study.

Thanks for your cooperation

Sincerely

Lucas Magongwa

Appendix H

Questionnaire: HOD – Disability Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

1. Do you recall the year DU was established? Who were major players?

   ---

2. What are the aims and objectives of the DU?

   ---

3. What is the job description of a DU coordinator? What do you do? What are your normal duties, particularly in terms of support services for Deaf students?

   ---

4. What kind of support does the DU get from Wits in order to provide services to students with disabilities, in particular, the Deaf?

   ---

5. How big is DU in numbers? Staff? Students (according to disability categories?) Volunteers?

---

6. What are the problems in service delivery (implementation) in relation to Deaf students?

---

7. How are the problems handled? By whom?

---

8. Do you think the support service has made Wits more accessible to Deaf students than before? Please explain your answer.

---

9. How is the support service funded?

---

10. What have you learnt from DU in terms of service delivery with particular reference to Deaf students?

---

11. What would you like done differently concerning Deaf students? Why?

---

12. Is there anything you would like to add in terms of the student support services offered by the DU to Deaf students?

Thanks for your time and patience in completing the questionnaire.

Appendix I

Deaf teachers' experiences of being students at the University of the Witwatersrand

Biographical details of participants

Are you Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing? Please attach an audiogram if you have.
……

When did you become deaf or hard of hearing? ……...

Do you have Deaf or hard of hearing or hearing parents?
……....

Are all or some of your brothers or sisters Deaf or hard of hearing?
……....

How old are you this year? ……...

Did you attend a Deaf or a mainstream school?
……..

What challenges did you have in grade 12?
……
……
……

What problems did you have at the teacher training course before you came to Wits?
……
.....
.....
.....

Please tell me of any experience you had at the College of Education; good or bad
……
……
……
……

Please tell me about any experience you had at the University; good and bad
……
……
……
.……..

Thank you