

**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology**

**The reflections of young Deaf adults regarding the transition from school to higher education and employment within the Western Cape.**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Audiology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that “The reflections of young Deaf adults regarding the transition from school to higher education and employment within the Western Cape” is my own work, that it has never been submitted for any examination or degree in any other university, and that all sources to which I have made reference or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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(Leilani Mitchell)

29<sup>th</sup> day of February 2016 (1<sup>st</sup> submission)

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## **ABSTRACT**

Only a small number of Deaf school-leavers in South Africa enter higher education institutions (DeafSA, 2009). There does not seem to be an incentive to encourage Deaf school-leavers to enter higher education which contributes to the 90% unemployment rate of Deaf adults in South Africa (DeafSA, 2009). Deaf learners do not always seem to have opportunities for further study due to poor literacy skills. Deaf school leavers appear inadequately prepared for further education and employment when they leave high school and experience difficulty with communication and socio-emotional adjustment in the hearing world.

This study explored the preparedness of young deaf adults for further education and employment within the Western Cape by describing the reflections of Deaf school-leavers regarding their transition from school to higher education and vocation. Focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews were conducted with 19 Deaf participants between the ages of 21 and 25 who use SASL as their primary mode of communication and have attended a signing school for the Deaf in the Western Cape. The services of two SASL interpreters were used and the data collected were analysed using a thematic analysis.

The findings of this study point to possible strategies that may facilitate the transition of the Deaf school leaver to higher education and vocation in the Western Cape. The data obtained in this study indicated a need for improved academic preparation of Deaf learners; an increase in educators of the Deaf that are fluent in SASL; an increase in SASL interpreters at higher education institutions and stronger transition programs at schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape. Moreover, participants in this study indicated a need for financial assistance for Deaf students to further their education and expressed the need for Deaf awareness and sensitization training of employers, employees, lecturers and fellow students of the Deaf in the Western Cape. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggested assistance from job placement officers with regard to integration and socialization of deaf employees in the workplace.

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## GLOSSARY

Identity	The development of one’s identity is a socially constructed process which emerges through present and past experiences and interactions between oneself and the surrounding social environment (Stinson & Whitmire, as 2000 cited in Nikolarazi & Hadjikakou, 2006).
Manual method	The manual method employs signs, the manual alphabet and writing to facilitate cognitive development and receptive and expressive writing skills (De Klerk, 2003).
Manualism	A visual gestural language that utilises the medium of space to realise grammar and involves important non-grammatical markers such as facial expression and body movement (Baker, 2015).
Oralism	Oralism promotes the development of speaking and listening skills for communication (ASHA, 2004).
Total Communication	Total Communication refers to using both signing and speech together for communication. Signs are manually-coded English rather than using a Sign Language such as SASL or ASL (ASHA, 2004).
Sign Supported English (SSE)	“Signs are used simultaneously with English speech where the message follows the structure of the spoken language and the matching signs” (Storbeck, 2011).
Inclusive Education	An education process where children with and without disabilities learn together in the same classrooms - enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners (White Paper 6, 2001).
Emic	A cultural construct of Deafness as an ‘insider’s view, where Deafness is seen as a cultural difference rather than a disability (Reagan, 1995, p. 243).
Epistemology	The study of the nature and origins of knowledge (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

Bilingual - Biculturalism	A combination of both Oral and Sign Language, supported by the Deaf community and therefore in line with the philosophy of Inclusive Education (Storbeck, 2011).
Communication support worker	Supports communication of deaf students using a variety of methods including Sign Language to go over notes from lectures , monitor students, provide study skills sessions, etc. (Saunders, 2012).
Note taker	When a deaf person focusses his/her attention by looking at a speaker or interpreter, it can be difficult to take notes at the same time – a note taker takes notes for a deaf student, so that the student can fully attend to instruction (Hastings, Brecklein, Cermak, Reynolds, Rosen & Wilson, 1998).
SETA	SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) were established to develop and implement sector skill plans to increase the skills of people in each sector (Erasmus & Van Dyk, 1999).
Barriers to learning	Refers to difficulties that arise within the education system as a whole, the learning site and/or within the learner him/herself which prevent access to learning and development (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), 2104).
District-Based Support Team (DBST)	A management structure at district level, the responsibility of which is to coordinate and promote inclusive education through: training; curriculum delivery; distribution of resources; infrastructure; development; identification, assessment and addressing of barriers to learning. The DBST must provide leadership and general management to ensure that schools within the district are inclusive centres of learning, care and support (Policy on SIAS, 2014).
School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs)	Teams established by schools in general and further education, as a school-level support mechanism, whose

	<p>primary function is to put co-ordinated school, learner and teacher support in place. Leadership for the SBST is provided by the school principal to ensure that the school becomes an inclusive centre of learning, care and support (Policy on SIAS, 2014).</p>
Full-service Schools (FSS)	<p>Ordinary schools that are inclusive and welcoming of all learners in terms of their cultures, policies and practices. Such schools increase participation and reduce exclusion by providing support to all learners to develop their full potential irrespective of their background, culture, abilities or disabilities, their gender or race. These schools will be strengthened and orientated to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting to serve as flagship schools for full inclusivity (Policy on SIAS, 2014).</p>
Special Schools (SS)	<p>Schools equipped to deliver a specialised education programme to learners requiring access to high-intensive educational and other support - either on a full-time or part-time basis (Policy on SIAS, 2014).</p>
Adaptive / Assistive devices	<p>Any device that is developed or adapted to assist a learner in performing a particular educational task. It is intended to compensate for any form of functional limitation that makes it difficult for learners with special needs to access the curriculum. These include, wheelchairs, prosthesis, hearing aids, cochlear implants, visual aids and specialised computer software and hardware programs, etc. that increase mobility, vision and communication capacities (Policy on SIAS, 2014).</p>

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASHA</b>	American Speech and Hearing Association
<b>CAPS</b>	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
<b>CODA</b>	Child of Deaf Adult
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>DeafSA</b>	Deaf Federation of South Africa
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>FET</b>	Further Education & Training
<b>LOLT</b>	Language of Learning and Teaching
<b>WCED</b>	Western Cape Education Department
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NID</b>	National Institute for the Deaf
<b>PanSALB</b>	Pan South African Language Board
<b>RNID</b>	Royal National Institute for the Deaf
<b>SA</b>	South Africa
<b>SAQA</b>	South African Qualifications Authority
<b>SASL</b>	South African Sign Language
<b>SASLI</b>	South African Sign Language Interpreter
<b>SBST</b>	School Based Support Team
<b>SIAS</b>	Screening, Identification, Assessment & Support
<b>TC</b>	Total Communication
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Wits</b>	University of Witwatersrand
<b>ICDE</b>	International Conference on Deaf Education

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**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE**

## 1. Introduction

Research has shown that deafness is one of the most prevalent disabilities with an estimated prevalence rate of 3-6/1000 live births in developing countries (Swanepoel, Storbeck & Friedland, 2009). According to The Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA) approximately 600,000 South African people are culturally and linguistically Deaf (DeafSA, 2016). These Deaf individuals have accepted South African Sign Language (SASL) as their first language and form part of a Deaf culture where they find expression, belonging, and a sense of identity which is defined by SASL (Batchelor, 2010). This study will differentiate between “deaf learners” and “Deaf learners”, where the former refers to the audiological aspect of having a hearing loss and the latter to the linguistic and cultural minority group where “Deaf” is subsequently spelled with a capital “D” (Padden & Humphries, 1988 as cited in Storbeck, 2011). DeafSA statistics indicate that only one in three Deaf adults who use South African Sign Language (SASL) is functionally literate and that the majority of Deaf adults have literacy levels similar to that of an eight year old hearing child despite attending residential schools for the deaf (De Villiers, 2010; DeafSA, 2009). As a result, only a small number of Deaf school leavers in South Africa graduate to higher education institutions resulting in the ninety percent unemployment rate of South African Deaf adults (De Villiers, 2010; DeafSA, 2009).

Research done on Deaf Education in South Africa alludes to the worrying dilemma of Deaf school-leavers being unable to perform at age-appropriate levels on tests of ability to read or write the spoken language of the society (Batchelor, 2010). Storbeck (2005) expresses how yet after 200 years of development in Deaf Education in South Africa the majority of Deaf learners leave school functionally illiterate and thus unable to find employment. Accordingly, Deaf adults are faced with great challenges as a result of communication difficulties within the hearing community at large (Glazier & Van Pletzen, 2012).

Deaf learners may not always be adequately prepared for further education or employment when they leave high school and have difficulty with additional communication and socio-emotional skills. These complexities are compounded by the further challenge of finding and maintaining employment without transition support between school and post-school activity (Wheeler-Shruggs, 2002; Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012). De Villiers (2010) argues that

the high unemployment rate of Deaf adults can be attributed to the lack of knowledge of leaders of schools for the Deaf and Deaf organizations in supporting the imperative need for skills and occupational training.

Magongwa (2010), who is himself Deaf, asserts that Deaf Education in South Africa has been impacted negatively for more than a decade by a shortage of Deaf role models, a lack of fluent South African Sign Language (SASL) educators and no formal language of learning and teaching (LOLT) for the Deaf, amongst others. For the past five years, I have been working at a school for the Deaf in the Western Cape as an audiologist where I co-ordinate the audiological needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. I am a member of the school's multi-disciplinary team that is responsible for the admission and placement process of learners. My scope of practice at the school involves a range of activities including aural rehabilitation therapy which is focussed on the facilitation of basic sign language, literacy development and auditory verbal therapy.

I am the co-ordinator for the School Based Support Service Team (SBST) that assists with the provision of individualised support for both educators and learners with special needs at both special schools and full service schools guided by the National Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) 2015/2016 document. Because of my passion for the Deaf community and SASL, I annually serve as the co-ordinator for Deaf Awareness at the school where I organize and facilitate the promotion of Deaf Culture and SASL. I feel that my role at the school serves as an advantage in terms of learning and understanding more about the Deaf learner and contributing to the field of Deaf Education. My experience and knowledge gained regarding the Curriculum and Assessment Profile Screening (CAPS) SASL, Deaf school-leavers, and Deaf adults in the workplace in the Western Cape will shed light on the research topic from the perspective of an Audiologist/Aural rehabilitation therapist.

As part of the team admitting learners, from often a very young age, and following these learners throughout their schooling career until school-leaving age, my passion for Deaf learners and Deaf Culture has grown. During my time at the school, I noticed a recurring situation of learners who I have not met before and those who I have come to know very well, return to the school often depressed, frustrated and hopeless. These ex-learners/school-leavers returned to the school in need of 'proof of disability' (audiograms)

for prospective employers, internships and social grants. The general feeling from these young adults was frustration and despondency due to unemployment, communication difficulties in the hearing world and the lack of access to financial support for further education. It is from this point where my interest in transition planning and support for Deaf school-leavers began.

The epistemological approach of this study employed an advocacy/participatory worldview which aimed at addressing important social issues which include empowerment, inequality, alienation, oppression and domination. Cresswell (2009) asserts that advocacy research provides a voice for study participants and aims to create a political debate and discussion so that changes will occur. This study will be based on the interest of the author in Deaf Education, Deaf culture and support for specifically young Deaf adults with regard higher education and the workplace in the Western Cape, South Africa.

As a secondary interest, the author who is a qualified Human Resource Practitioner aspires to employ the knowledge and skills gained throughout this study to support her career goals regarding Human Resource Management for Deaf employees in the workplace to contribute to the area of sensitization training of employers and colleagues of Deaf adults.

Drawing from the paradigm shift in Deaf Education, locally and internationally, of viewing Deaf learners as disabled to viewing them as having the same abilities as their hearing counterparts, this study will focus on the perspectives of young Deaf adults in the Western Cape concerning experiences, expectations and perceived readiness with regard to higher education and employment.

### **1.1 Rationale for this study:**

A study of this nature is necessary to bring into focus an in-depth view of the experiences of young Deaf adults and their evolution from school to the workplace in South Africa. The majority of Deaf learners encounter their first challenges with communication at school when educators are unable to understand or use Sign Language (DeafSA, 2009). The rationale for conducting a study on young Deaf adults in the Western Cape in terms of the transition from school to the hearing world is predicated on the limited literature on this topic. The majority of empirical research on Deaf Education tends to focus on children's

Deaf Education. It is for this reason that naturalistic research on this topic would be beneficial to the relatively limited in-depth understanding of the experiences of young Deaf adults in higher education and employment in the Western Cape. By exploring transition-related concepts and themes, this study draws attention to some important dynamics that prevail in the Deaf community. Some of these include the significant role of educators of deaf learners with regard to advice and guidance for higher education and dynamics pertaining to awareness of issues and practicalities specific to deaf students entering the hearing world. The findings of this study strengthen the knowledge base on which decisions can be made about shaping future projects to meet the needs of the Deaf school leaver in South Africa. This study has been designed to benefit managers and educators of schools for the Deaf, higher education institutions, potential employers and colleagues of Deaf employees, allied health professionals and support staff to better prepare Deaf school-leavers in finding employment and accessing higher education.

**CHAPTER 2:**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

A survey done by the National Training board of South Africa in 1991 focused on the education levels of the different population groups between the ages 20 – 64 years of age. This survey revealed that approximately 30% of South Africa's economically active population is illiterate. From this survey in 1991, it was estimated that six million people will have to undergo lower-level adult education programmes by means of the government's reconstruction and development programme in order to increase South Africa's education levels (Erasmus & Van Dyk, 1999). Current statistics show that thirty percent of youth in the Western province are unemployed (WCED, 2016). It is imperative that the Deaf population not be overlooked when planning for the great training and development needs of the illiterate and unemployed population of South Africa.

A plethora of research conducted on Deaf Education argues that the total subjection of a Deaf child to a means of communication which he/she cannot understand in a school setting is not only unprofessional and usually ineffective, but also a violation of the rights of another human being (Hualand & Allen, 2009). Storbeck (2011) refers to the widespread debate about communication, education and intervention for deaf learners. In a developing country like South Africa, most Deaf learners are not able to be integrated in mainstream schools unless they have cochlear implants and have support services such as speech and auditory verbal/oral therapy on a regular basis. According to Hualand and Allen (2009) full enjoyment of human rights for Deaf people can only be found in a model where Sign Language is the central factor. Hualand and Allen (2009) refer to a model that implements four basic factors for the protection of human rights for Deaf people – Bilingual education, Sign Language, Sign Language interpretation and Accessibility.

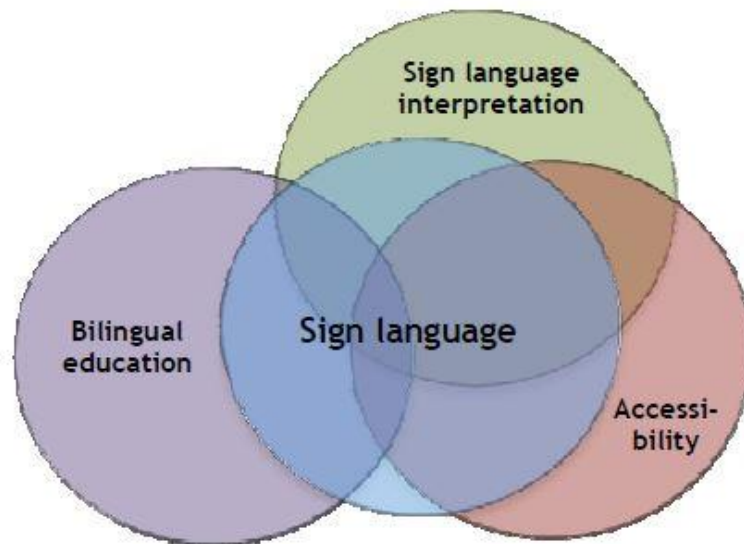


Figure 3.1 Basic Factors of Human Rights for Deaf People - <sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 Deaf Education – Global overview

Historically, studies have shown that there is a significant gap between the educational and employment accomplishments of deaf people around the world compared to their hearing counterparts (Willoughby, 2011). According to Akach (2010) studies in Deaf Education assert that Deaf learners experience difficulty in acquiring reasonable standards of math and reading ability, which prevents them from obtaining high school certificates and, in turn, influences future employment and earnings. Most Deaf learners leave school with partial literacy and unsuccessful general education due to limited communication and lack of access to the content of teaching in the classroom (Akach, 2010). Studies done on children with disabilities show that most children from low- and middle income communities and households, particularly children with hearing loss or other disabilities, have limited access to quality educational services (Tesni, 2014). Some of the reasons listed for this include the belief of parents that their children cannot be educated, stigmatisation of hearing loss in the community and a lack of educational services for children who are deaf (Tesni, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from Hualand & Allen (2009, p. 9)



International research specific to the education of deaf learners reflect that many developed countries attempt to follow an integrational policy of education, where learners who are deaf are required to communicate orally and subsequently have “equal” opportunities. Marschark, Lang and Albertini (2002) report that these “equal” opportunities are seldom the case and those deaf children are still viewed as “disabled” and “different”, resulting in further barriers to full inclusion.

As mentioned before, the definition of deafness can be split into generally two philosophies - one definition is derived from an audiological aspect, where deaf people are seen to lack hearing and subsequently are seen to be flawed in terms of their communication ability; the second definition points to deafness as a linguistic minority group that has a strong Deaf identity and culture (Storbeck, 2011). These two different definitions of deafness stem from two opposing views - the medical model and the social model of deafness. The hearing world saw deaf people as deviants from general societal norms and therefore in need of rehabilitation, which gave rise to the view of deafness known as the clinical/pathological view or the medical model (Akach, 2010).

### **2.2.1 The Medical Model**

The medical view of deafness centres on deaf people being different from hearing people and that these differences are negative. Hence, deaf people are perceived as primarily biologically deficient beings in need of cures or charity to be successfully assimilated into society (Ladd, 2005). This view included ideas that deaf people have learning and psychological problems due to their hearing loss and communication difficulties, and that deaf people should be treated differently than the hearing majority. Akach (2010) reports that this “medical” model led to parents and educators, alike, to rely on medical professionals for information on deaf children, with an associated negative attitude to Sign Language and deafness in general. Furthermore, the approach of medicine to address deafness as a physical defect is looked at with the view of enabling hearing and spoken language as the only means for achieving ‘normalcy’ (Akach, 2010).

### **2.2.2 The Social Model**

The modern view of deafness, the social view, involves the recognition of Deaf people as a cultural minority where Sign Language is recognised and accepted as the natural language of Deaf people. This acceptance includes the acknowledgement that the Deaf community is in fact a sub-cultural group of the wider world and recognizes Deaf people as a group of persons who share common means of communication (Sign Language) and culture, providing them with the basis on which group cohesion and identity develop. Within the Social and cultural view, Deaf people do not consider themselves as disabled or deficient in any way (Storbeck, 2011).

Generally young adults reach psychosocial maturity between the ages of 25 and over, and establish identities through familial, social and vocational relationships (Ref). Young adults are often in flux, progressing from their original family set-up to that of starting their own families and beginning to find their own identities. Deaf adolescents start to shape their identities, gain independence and prepare for adulthood in the same way that hearing adolescents do (Luckner, 2002 in Bonds, 2003).

With regard to the different views of deafness, the identity journey of a deaf person can usually lead to one of two possible sites of self/identity (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011). The first option is to strive to be as much like a hearing person as possible in order to blend into the oral language world (Leigh, 1999, 2009 as cited in McIlroy and Storbeck, 2011). This is done by constructing their identity around their hearing impairment, which is seen as something to overcome as described in the clinical/pathological or medical model. McIlroy and Storbeck (2011) further describes the second option of the two sites of identity - deaf people defining themselves as primarily a member of the socio-linguistic minority in recognition of Deaf rights as framed by the social model.

### **2.2.3 Deaf culture and Deaf Identity**

Padden and Osugi (2003) explain that the term 'Deaf' is written with capital "D"- in the same way as one refers to "Jewish people" using a capital "J". A Deaf researcher has described culture in general as a set of learned behaviour of a group of people which has its own language, values, rules of behaviour and traditions (Philip, 1980 as cited in Padden and

Osugi, 2003). This definition of general culture given by a Deaf adult indicates that Deaf people view themselves as part of a culture (Deaf culture) and that their culture is not different to other general cultures. Deaf culture has its own history, shared values, social norms, customs and technology which are transferred from generation to generation. The Deaf community has its own language (Sign Language) which is the main element that binds Deaf people together (Akach, 2010).

Vygotsky's theory on social constructivism highlights that both educators and older more experienced children play crucial roles on the learning and development of children (Chen, 2011 as cited in Van Zyl 2012). Vygotsky suggests that an individual's culture provides the cognitive tools necessary for development and that parents and teachers act as agents towards the development of a child's culture and identity (Chen, 2011 as cited in Van Zyl, 2012). Deaf children who have been exposed to Deaf culture from an early age shape their identities according to their experiences of relating to Deaf adults and peers, using Sign Language. These children are likely to absorb into Deaf culture and end up establishing themselves within the Deaf Community who advocate that Sign Language, Deaf culture and Deaf identity are important components of their identity as Deaf people (Fraser, Hansman, & Saladin, 2009; Bat-Chava, 2000). Membership into a Deaf community is achieved through identification with the Deaf world, shared experiences that come of being hearing impaired and participation in the community's activities.

A person may be born into a culture, brought up according to these values and his/her personality and behaviour shaped by these cultural views. On the other hand, a person may grow up in one culture and later learn the language, values and practices of a different culture and become 'acculturated' into that culture (Bat-Chava, 2000). McIlroy (2010) who himself is an 'oral Deaf' person (McIlroy, 2008) refers to the concept of bicultural Deaf identity referring to individuals who consider themselves as belonging to both hearing and Deaf worlds. This can be further delineated as a person born into a culture such as children of Deaf parents or acculturated into the Deaf community such as Deaf children of hearing families. McIlroy (2010) stresses the importance of listening to the diversity of lives of Deaf people, in-stead of trying to group them into convenient theoretical frameworks. Moreover, hearing people should be supportive of the struggle Deaf people experience in their identity transition from culturally hearing to a Deaf or bicultural Deaf identity (McIlroy, 2010).

## **2.3 History of Deaf Education**

The medium of instruction of the deaf child has been an ongoing debate that originated as early as the 1800's. Prior to 1750 there was not much optimism for the majority of prelingually deafened individuals in terms of education or literacy. During the sixteenth century, the first employed teacher of the deaf, Pedro Ponce de Leone, a Spanish monk, was employed to teach the deaf children of a noble Spanish family, De Velasquez, to speak, read and write (Lane et al., 1996: 59 as cited in Akach, 2010). The education of deaf learners has taken on different forms over many years and has evolved from pure 'oralism' to the current practice of bilingualism in Deaf Education, which aims to be in line with the philosophy of inclusivity of all learners in the classroom. This form of education will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **2.3.1 The Oral Approach**

Storbeck (2011) defines 'oralism'/the oral approach as a method that includes auditory training using residual hearing with the aid of amplification (hearing aids, FM systems and cochlear implants), speech and lip reading, and prohibits signing or gesturing. The focus of 'oralism' in Deaf Education was on teaching deaf learners how to speak and was idealised over 'the manual method' later known as sign language (Van den Bogaerde, Buré & Fortgens, 2015).

Supporters of 'oralism' believe that by learning how to speak through intense listening, comprehensive identification and meticulous amplification support; the deaf child will be 'normalised' and fully integrated into the hearing world (Storbeck, 2011). Oralists supported the cochlear implant movement which allows for even the profoundly Deaf child to obtain spoken language given the right criteria (De Klerk, 2003). According to Marschark (2007), as cited in Storbeck (2011), preliminary studies indicate that 60 to 65 percent of children with cochlear implants may develop intelligible speech, only less fluent than their hearing counterparts.

'Oralism' was subsequently used in Germany and later became the pervasive method for teaching deaf children in continental Europe. Although this method of teaching deaf children originated in Spain, it became more accepted and entrenched in Germany, later to be referred to as the 'German method' where Samuel Heinicke took a leading role in its further development (Akach, 2010).

The Braidwood family in the United Kingdom (UK) promoted the education of the deaf, where 'oralism' was the method of instruction, possibly influenced by the German example (Akach, 2010). This emphasis on speech was still present a century later when a Swiss doctor, Johan Conrad Amman, claimed that learning to speak was crucial within a Christian tradition (Van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015). Schools for the deaf were founded in the second half of the eighteenth century and curricula for these schools were developed in the whole of Europe (Van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015). Moreover, Deaf Education was the first form of special education in Europe and teachers of the deaf (who founded schools for the deaf) were motivated by Christian values, like charity, and were mainly driven by teaching deaf learners a trade.

The Great Debate in Deaf Education was born as a result of two opposing methods of communicating with and educating deaf learners. The debate centred on an argument between pure 'oralism' versus Sign Language as medium of instruction in the classroom for deaf learners (van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015). Akach (2010) argues that these two controversial methods of instruction in teaching deaf children in Europe marked the beginning of linguistic oppression of Deaf persons. 'Oralism' was seen as the more prestigious means of communication and incorporated Sign Language to be utilized in Deaf Education in the same way that hearing people use spoken language (voice and sound). This was referred to as the 'oral method' and thought to help deaf learners master and use the spoken language of the hearing population.

On the other hand, in instances where Sign Language was accepted as the method of choice for communication and education of the deaf, it was modified to suit the grammar of a dominant spoken language by using Signed Supported English (Akach, 2010).

### **2.3.2 The Manual Approach**

Research done during the 1960's and 1970's on the academic achievement of deaf children of deaf adults and deaf children of hearing adults, reflected that the academic performance of deaf children of deaf adults was higher than that of deaf children of hearing parents (De Klerk, 2003). The majority of the Deaf community supported the manual approach, which supports the principle of a well-developed deaf child who shows typical cognitive skills, a strong cultural identity, social and emotional stability and second language literacy (Storbeck, 2011). The 'manual approach' meant that to teach the deaf child you would need to employ Sign Language. According to Storbeck (2011) the 'Sign Language approach' also known as the 'manual approach' argues that Sign Language – the natural, barrier-free language of the Deaf – is the first language of the deaf learner, and that the language of the hearing majority (the spoken and written language) is the second language.

The Milan Conference in 1880 formally debated these two controversial philosophies on educating the deaf and came to a resolution to formalise the institution of 'oralism as the medium of instruction in Deaf Education, globally (Storbeck, Magongwa & Parkin, 1998). However, only hearing educators were invited to attend this conference and cast their vote. According to De Klerk (2003) the outcome of this conference meant that deaf educators could no longer be employed in the education of the deaf.

As a result of a paradigm shift over time that acknowledged Sign Language as a language as much as any other language, with its own grammar independent of any spoken language, signs were (re-) introduced back into the classrooms that formerly relied on 'the oral method' but only if it would be used in combination with speech (Akach, 2010). This practice known as Total Communication (TC) used strengths from both oral and manual methods in an attempt to reach a middle ground approach to Deaf Education (Storbeck, 2010).

### **2.3.3 The Total Communication Approach**

Total Communication emerged in the 1970's which was based on the idea that deaf children have normal developmental potential, and that a strong and natural interaction between the child and the environment is a first prerequisite. This interaction would allow for all

forms of communication such as the use of voice, facial expressions, finger-spelling, writing, pictures, supporting signs and gestures, sign systems and Sign Language (Van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015). Storbeck (2011) refers to Total Communication as the philosophy of using any or all communication methods singly or in combination, in order to achieve the best results in educating deaf learners. Studies done on the advantages of using Total Communication in Deaf Education revealed that not only does it open different avenues in terms of mode of communication for the deaf child, but that it also has beneficial effects on the holistic development of deaf children with regard to psychosocial, linguistic and academic achievement (De Klerk, 2003).

Van den Bogaerde, et al. (2015) explain how the goal of Total Communication was to achieve optimal skills in speaking and writing the country's spoken language and to that end primarily sign systems were used. It was thought that in this way, the structure of the spoken language was made visible, thus making it more accessible for the deaf child. Although signs were being used, Deaf Education in the Total Communication approach remained in fact monolingual in its general approach. This meant that learning the spoken language of the country was the goal of education, and the sign systems were only used to support the learning of that spoken language.

However, researchers in Deaf Education argue that the disadvantage of Total Communication is such that when material is presented simultaneously in more than one sensory modality to the deaf child, it is often learnt slower than if it was presented in only one modality (Vernon et al., 1990 & Hixon et al., 1980 as cited in De Klerk, 2003). To this end, even though manually coded sign systems were now incorporated in Deaf Education, deaf children were still leaving school with low literacy levels (de Klerk, 2003; van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015). On the other hand, Storbeck (2011) refers to how Total Communication appeared to improve general communication between deaf and hearing people, but that no high-quality long-term research has been done on this topic. Furthermore, a positive social-emotional development of the deaf child as a result of the Total Communication approach could be attributed to the counselling of hearing parents and their young deaf children at that time (van den Bogaerde, et al., 2015).

According to Lukomsky (2007), the type of school placement affects the Deaf learner's social interactions, which in turn influences his or her social-emotional functioning. A study done by Stinson, Whitmire and Kluvin (1996), as cited in Lukomsky (2007), compares the social-emotional functioning of deaf learners in mainstream schools versus deaf learners in special programs for the deaf. The study indicated that Deaf students from mainstreaming programs and special programs for the deaf felt the most emotionally secure with other students with hearing loss. In contrast, Van Eldik (2005), as cited in Lukomsky (2007), found that Deaf adolescents in special programs rated themselves as having more numerous and more frequent withdrawn behaviour, somatic complaints, and anxious or depressed feelings than their Deaf mainstream peers and hearing peers. Lang (2002) reports that to address these challenges experiences by Deaf students, especially in higher education institutions, developing self-advocacy skills with regard to redirecting one's own destiny would be significantly beneficial in terms of adjustment in a predominantly hearing environment (Lang, 2002).

#### **2.3.4 The Bilingual-Bicultural (BI-BI) Approach**

During the 1980's there was an increase in support for Deaf Education to be bilingual which is bimodal and incorporates one language that is visual-gestural (Sign Language) and another language that is written, with the aural-oral component (the spoken version of the written language) as an option (Storbeck, 2011). Scandinavia was the first to start the trend of bilingual education in Deaf Education (bilingualism) and the rest of Europe followed.

Bilingualism, therefore includes the use of two languages and has as its aim a high level of competency in both languages whilst emphasising the equality of two cultures (Deaf and hearing) hence the term "Bilingual-Bicultural" (Storbeck, 2011). Moreover, bilingualism has its foundation in recognising that first language competency is necessary in order to develop typical cognitive processes, and to acquire and develop a second language (Cummins 1984; 1991 as cited in Storbeck, 2011). This approach to second language acquisition (literacy education) for deaf learners is based on the Linguistics Interdependence Principle, which posits that a common underlying proficiency across languages will allow for positive transfer to occur from a first language (L1) to a second language (L2), if there is adequate exposure



to the second language and motivation to learn it (Cummins, 1984; 1991 as cited in Akach, 2010). When Sign Language is established as the primary Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of the Deaf learner, it can be used as a medium for supporting the teaching of an additional written language (Akach, 2010). Bilingualism therefore provides the Deaf child with the opportunity to succeed at school, as literacy skills are developed using the Deaf child's mother tongue (Sign Language) to teach reading and writing.

Technological advancements in Deaf Education resulted in many deaf children receiving cochlear implants at a young age which started the discussion of the role of Sign Language after cochlear implant intervention with regard to bilingualism. Van den Bogaerde et al. (2015) underline that offering both a spoken language and a Sign Language ensure that deaf children develop age-appropriately. There are several ways of how the Bi-Bi approach can be implemented: Sign Language and spoken English (or any other spoken language) plus written English; Sign Language and English that is signed plus written English and finally Sign Language and written English (Watkins, 2004 as cited in Storbeck, 2011).

Van den Bogaerde et al. (2015) discuss how the different forms of bilingual education can be implemented. This includes a bilingual education curriculum where oral performance is required, such as speech and speech reading or a bilingual education curriculum where proficiency in the written form is considered sufficient (reading and writing). In South Africa, for example, speech fluency has a place in the curriculum alongside reading and writing. Van den Bogaerde et al. (2015) indicate that this type of curriculum is often supported by the argument that the use of spoken language supports participation in society as well as due to the limited availability of and accessibility to interpreters.

Trends in the outcomes of bilingual education for the deaf to date, point to faster acquisition of a language when the language of instruction is Sign Language, compared to when the language of instruction is offered in only a spoken language or a sign system. Van den Bogaerde et al. (2015) state that deaf learners are in this way better able to communicate with each other, learn from each other and to process information. Furthermore, these learners are more involved in lessons where a Sign Language is used than where a sign system is used.

Grosjean (2010) warns against misunderstandings concerning bilingualism which include the outdated notion that bilingualism is a near-perfect mastery of two or more languages. Different methods of bilingualism include the one person-one language system (two teachers in the classroom, with the signing teacher responsible for input and education in sign language and the hearing teacher in the spoken language); or alternatively one teacher can be responsible for both signing and the spoken language. The latter would require the teacher to be proficient in both languages.

Furthermore, Van Bogaerde et al. (2015) describe the different ways bilingualism can be achieved in the classroom. This includes simultaneous bilingualism when both languages are offered during the early phases of language acquisition, for example, both languages are a part of the curriculum from the beginning to receive accessible language input and education (in Sign Language), and to develop and stimulate residual hearing (in the spoken language). Sequential bilingualism, for example, occurs when a deaf child first acquires a Sign Language and later, a spoken language (in written form) or vice versa (used as a last resort for pupils who do not become proficient in the spoken language).

#### **2.4 Deaf Education in South Africa**

According to Winn (2007) research findings in Deaf Education indicate that the majority of deaf school-leavers end up either unemployed or working in mainly the trade sector of the labour market. In South Africa, of the Deaf people who are employed, they are reportedly employed in the following sectors: 11.9% are employed in office administration, 4.7% employed in upholstery, 5.9% employed in cosmetology, 8.1% employed in construction, 2.3% employed in early childhood development and 28.5% are employed in hospitality (De Villiers, 2010). Further studies have shown that the poor transition from school to vocation of young Deaf adults significantly contributes to the underemployment and underrepresentation of Deaf adults in the workplace (Winn, 2007). In 2009, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) conducted a desk top survey of all schools for learners who are deaf, and found that the qualifications of teachers and standards of curriculum delivery were unsatisfactory. Statistics on Deaf Education in November 2010 revealed that, of the 903 educators in the 37 schools for the Deaf in South Africa, only 249 (27.6%) hold a formal

qualification in Deaf Education and are trained in SASL, suggesting that 654 (72.4%) educators are without any training in this area of specialisation, and require training in this specialized area to improve their competence for educating deaf learners. Storbeck (2010) argues that the main contributing factor for the above statistics include ill-equipped teachers of the Deaf, as well as inaccessible education for the Deaf community in South Africa.

## **2.5 Historical background of Deaf Education in South Africa**

Magongwa (2010) reflects on how Deaf Education in South Africa has been negatively influenced by Apartheid which characterized the socio-political landscape of the country from the 1940's.

The account of Deaf Education in South Africa dates back to 1863 when the Irish Dominican Order established the first school for the Deaf in Hout Bay under the leadership of Bishop Grimley (Steinberg, 2007). The school was a strictly oral school named the "The Dominican School for the Deaf", and enrolled all races using signed language as the medium of instruction (Akach, 2010). Research conducted on the history of South African Deaf Education reports that the Irish Dominican nuns who taught at The Dominican School for the Deaf used Irish Sign Language to teach the learners. Akach (2010) discusses how proof of this may be found in the fact that the remnants of Irish Signs, especially the unique Irish finger-spelling configurations are still to be found in the Western Cape signed languages. DeafSA (2009) defines Sign Language in South Africa as a well-developed language derived from Irish Sign Language and states that it is a language where one is able to convey abstract thoughts, complex ideas and humour, has its own literature equal to spoken languages, which confirms that this Sign Language is a fully-fledged language. It is therefore, that DeafSA supports the current lobbying of Deaf South Africans to have SASL as the 12th official language of South Africa (DeafSA, 2016).

In 1877, German Dominican sisters opened the Dominican School for the Deaf in King Williams Town, Eastern Cape, which was only accessible to 'European' or white deaf children. The German Dominican School followed a strict oral policy to educate its learners using signs and the two-handed European alphabet (Storbeck, 1998). This school has moved to Gauteng and is currently known as St Vincent School for the Deaf.

The oral approach was implemented in all South African schools for the Deaf in 1920, resulting in Sign Language being banned as the mode of communication and education (Steinberg, 2007). Educators were trained to use only the oral method in classrooms, which gave rise to barriers in communication and language of learning and teaching (Storbeck & Martin, 2010).

In 1881, the Dutch reformed church started a school for the Deaf and blind in Worcester, in the Western Cape, known as the De La Bat School for the Deaf (Storbeck & Martin, 2010). This school for the Deaf employed Total Communication and combined an oral and signing method to educate Deaf learners (Aarons & Akach; Akach, 2010).

The Apartheid policy enforced by the Nationalist Government at the time called for all government schools in South Africa to be separated into 'European' and 'non-European' schools (Peele, 2004). This resulted in schools for the Deaf that were formed and divided according to ethnicity, race and language. In 1934, the Dominican Grimley School for the Deaf was forced to split into two schools; the Dominican Grimley School for the Deaf in Hout Bay established for white Deaf learners only, and the Dominican School for the Deaf in Wittebome, Wynberg, which was formed for coloured Deaf learners (Peele, 2004). In addition, the Dutch reformed Church also established a school for coloured deaf learners known as Nuwehoop in Worcester.

The first school for black Deaf learners was opened in 1941, known as Kutlwanong School for the Deaf in the then Transvaal Province, now Gauteng Province. Kutlwanong School employed a system of signs, invented in Britain, known as the Paget-Gorman System to teach Deaf learners, which encouraged a visually based communication system (Storbeck, 1998).

The Deaf community was further fragmented in 1948 as a result of the Nationalist Government's homeland policy to further separate schools for the deaf according to spoken language, race and ethnic groups (Storbeck & Martin). Akach (2010) explains how schools for Deaf learners from isiXhosa, Sesotho, Setswana and other spoken language backgrounds were built in the belief that the Deaf could be taught to speak using the oral approach. Educators and learners in these schools were now instructed to speak and simultaneously use the Paget-Gorman signs (Akach, 2010). Aarons and Akach (2002) argue that this system

was not a language but a set of invented signs based on unnatural hand-shapes and lacked grammar at all levels. This communication system was similar to 'Total Communication' which was also used in the United States, but had minimal positive communication outcomes in educating Deaf learners in South Africa (Akach, 2010). Akach (2010) argues how Total Communication approach to educating Deaf learners has failed on several accounts, resulting in the Deaf school leaver failing to learn a spoken language; acquiring only partial literacy, if any, and achieving an entirely unsuccessful general education, owing to the resultant limited communication and complete lack of access to the content of instruction and a formalised SASL curriculum in the past.

For South Africa, the further segregation of Deaf black learners occurred in 1948, as part of the Apartheid education system, meaning that more signed language methods would be used in schools for Deaf black learners while oral methods would be employed in the schools serving white Deaf learners (Reagan, Penn & Ogilvy, 2006).

Apartheid gave rise to an education system that was inadequate and discriminatory on the basis of disability, culture, language, race etc. (Peele, 2004). Schools for the deaf that accommodated white learners were well resourced and adopted a sophisticated oral approach whilst those for black Deaf learners used a manual system for communication and were severely under-resourced (Peele, 2004). This catastrophe marked the further devaluation of Deaf Education for black Deaf learners, but also ironically assisted Black learners to acquire and develop their mother tongue – Sign Language (Storbeck & Martin, 2010).

## **2.6 Policies and Practise in Deaf Education Post-1994**

In 1994, after many years under the Apartheid regime, South Africa transitioned into a full democracy, in which all people were enfranchised and afforded constitutional rights to equal and quality education for its multicultural and multilingual population. According to the Department of Education (DoE) (2001) the inequalities of the past education system have negatively affected learners with special needs in South Africa the most. Post 1994, the democratic South African government developed initiatives to encourage and support learners with special educational needs in an attempt to promote their rights to equal

access to education. These initiatives were strongly integrated in its language planning and education policies in an attempt to transform South African education.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) conveyed that all South African learners will have the right to be educated in the language of their choice. Reagan and Penn (1997) observed that in order for the Deaf to achieve their full potential in terms of education and vocation, a solid language policy for the Deaf in South Africa would need to be implemented. Studies on the Sign Language of the Deaf in South Africa concluded that SASL is the official language of the Deaf and should therefore be used as the medium of teaching and learning in all schools for the Deaf in South Africa (Reagan, 1997).

The DoE followed in this vein by introducing 'The South African Schools Act No. 84' (1996) which included a specific section on SASL regarding language policy in public schools. The act stipulates that all South African learners have the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public institutions where reasonably possible. Section 6 (4) of the South African's School Act No. 34 of 1996 recognizes SASL as the LOLT in schools for the Deaf where the majority of Deaf learners are taught via South African Sign Language (SASL) instruction.

Moreover, the DoE reinforced the right to education in the language of your choice by developing the 'Language in Education Policy of 1997' which supports SASL and the Deaf community of South Africa (DoE, 1997). Furthermore, The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in the South African Constitution now recognized a specific National Language Board created for SASL aimed at promoting and developing SASL. Similarly, the Department of Arts and Culture issued 'The National Language Policy Framework' (2002) in support of developing SASL and South African Deaf culture.

Further attempts to support special needs education include 'White Paper 6' from the DoE on Inclusive Education (IE) focusing on supporting learners who experience barriers to learning to reach their full potential (DoE, 2001). Druchen (2010), National Director of DeafSA, lauds DeafSA's ongoing positive role, influence and support to Deaf Education in South Africa.

White Paper 6 for special needs education outlines how to build IE and Training Systems in South Africa and was approved by Cabinet in 2001 (DoE, 2002). The DoE set out to implement the main elements of IE by introducing the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) system. The DoE states that the SIAS policy aims to respond to the needs of all learners in the country, particularly those who are vulnerable and most likely to be marginalised and excluded (DoE, 2014). The introduction of this policy is aimed at allowing a large number of the school-going age population who experience barriers to learning, including those who are disabled, to exercise their right to basic education and to access their local schools as far as possible (DoE, 2014). SIAS introduces new roles and responsibilities for the education support system in South Africa which includes District-based Support Teams (DBST), Special School Resource Centres, Special Schools (SS), Full Service Schools (FSS) and School-based Support Teams (SBST) (DoE, 2014). The DoE supports that this policy will special schools by providing clarity on which learners should be admitted to a particular special school and how their educational needs should be supported (DoE, 2014).

The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Implementation Matrix 2015 – 2030 includes critical policy directives within specified target periods considering the reduction of economic vulnerability and release of capital to persons with disabilities. Amongst these directives are developing and/or strengthening and broadening the geographic reach of programmes and projects designed to reduce poverty amongst people with disabilities which include education and increasing household incomes through access to decent employment and work opportunities. Employment equity and work opportunity targets for persons with disabilities are set to increase to at least 7% from the current employment equity target of 2% (Department of Social Development (DSD) (DoSD, 2015).

A further target projection for 2020 – 2030 is set so that 75% of designated employers and work opportunity programmes reach their employment equity targets (DSD, 2015). This paper also includes integrating socio-economic development programmes to be provided to persons with disabilities on the national employment service database (DSD, 2015). According to the Implementation Matrix 2015-2030 these programmes will include social assistance, rehabilitation and habilitation, skills development, entrepreneurial and

employment support service databases for job-seekers to connect persons with disabilities to job opportunities.

## **2.7 Employment of hearing versus Deaf people in South Africa**

Thirty percent of youth in the Western Province is unemployed (WCED, 2016). Sheppard (2009) highlights that South Africa is faced with a high number of hearing learners who are not involved in post-school study and who are unemployed. Studies done on the poor involvement in post-secondary education in South Africa point to the lack of financial resources of learners to fund their education, a high rate of high school drop-outs and not being adequately prepared academically to cope with higher education (Sheppard, 2009). Failure to complete secondary school is especially high among black and coloured learners who struggle with the academic stream in the education system (WCED, 2012). Deaf learners who receive 12 years of specialized education show similar statistics in terms of academic struggle through their senior phase education.

This leaves only a small percentage of learners who complete their secondary education and enrol into scarce skills programmes at higher education institutions, as a result of poor performances in mathematics and physical science. Further statistics indicate that only 20% of the youth continue to higher education directly after completing secondary school, where an average of 50% of students drop out of degree studies and more than 60% drop out of certificate and diploma studies (WCED, 2012). The unemployment rate of those who drop out of secondary school before completing senior secondary education (59%) is the highest of any education exit group, and these young people represent 40% of the unemployed youth in South Africa (Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET), 2009).

Against the backdrop of the unemployment situation for hearing school leavers, the young Deaf adult's employment prospects may be even further limited. Due to the lack of a solid academic foundation at school level and adequate preparation for tertiary education, young Deaf adults face the labour market with less than a fighting chance (Akach, 2010). When Deaf school leavers exit the school system only able to read or write at a minimal level, they are unable to access higher education, thus amplifying their risk of unemployment compared to their hearing counterparts (DeafSA, 2003 as cited in Storbeck 2005). The colossal struggle for the South African Deaf person to find employment in a predominantly



hearing world and already suffering economy is much more significant compared to the hearing person. With no higher education and an inability to speak the language of a prospective hearing employer, seeking employment for the Deaf person has been a mammoth task. On a positive note, research in Deaf Education has begun to focus on how to bridge the gap between the Deaf learner and the hearing world specifically with regard to the transition between school and employment (Saunders, 2012).

Furthermore, in November 2014, a Newlands hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, The Park Inn Radisson, took the lead in employing deaf workers. Compared to the past 2% target requirement for companies to employ people with disabilities, this hotel is the only hotel in the world with a 30% staff complement of deaf people (Cornelius, 2015). The hotel is in partnership with DeafSA and is built on the DeafSA grounds in Claremont, Cape Town. The DeafSA offices are located within the hotel building and receive a percentage of the hotel profit. The hotel managing director, Clinton Thom, reported that a two-week interview process was held and that the advertised positions were made available to all people. It was made explicit that this hotel will employ applicants who are best for the job across the board. As a result the deaf employees were not just given employment that put them in the back out where no-one could see them, but rather in every department from finance, to front of house and house-keeping positions (Cornelius, 2015).

## **2.8 Transition services: school to higher education and employment**

Transition services, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEAA) of 1997, are seen as a set of co-ordinated activities for students with disabilities, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes the movement from school to posts-school activities such as post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation. Furthermore IDEA stipulates that these services must be based on the individual's needs, preferences and interests which may include instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation, where appropriate.

Allen, et al., 1989 as cited in Bonds (2003) list the effects of deafness that may increase the challenges associated with integrating young deaf adults into the hearing workplace. These include the English-literacy gap, social skills unlearned or not taught, a lack of information needed to benefit from training for and maintaining the job, a lack of knowledge of accommodations necessary to perform jobs and finally reading, mathematics and reasoning skills insufficient for competing in the job market (Allen, et al., 1989 as cited in Bonds, 2003). School-to-Work (STW) programs in the United States have been developed to make the transition from school to work easier to provide deaf learners with career awareness, career exploration and career preparation (Bonds, 2003).

The Transition Competence Battery (TCB) is a tool that fulfils the requirements under the IDEAA to use age-appropriate and results orientated transition assessments that document program and intervention outcomes. A study done in the United States by Luft and Huff (2011) focussed on the transition strengths and needs of 53 deaf students in public schools using the TCB. The findings of this study indicated that although IDEAA and related legislation allow for deaf learners to attend main stream schools and have access to general education classrooms and the curriculum, these schools are often not addressing the specialized needs of deaf learners. Luft and Huff (2011) discuss that specialized education for deaf learners should have dedicated services that include on-site vocational rehabilitation counsellors, work experiences, training, career and academic preparation programs.

Wilkins and Hehir (2008) believe that one of the overriding factors in Deaf adult unemployment is not just due to low academic achievement among deaf children, but also a lack of structural and relational continuity between secondary education and higher level learning and the working environment. The influence of perceived career barriers plays a major role in the decision-making process of adolescents on whether to complete high school or pursue post-secondary education (McWhirter, 1997 as cited in Punch, Creed and Hyde, 2006). Punch et al. (2006) assert that the school-to-work transition for deaf students presents challenges that include environmental and attitudinal barriers. In the United Kingdom all institutions are required to make appropriate adjustments to enable students to access courses. Saunders (2012) explains that the extent of this support varies greatly between higher education institutions which impact on the overall achievement outcomes

of the Deaf student at higher education institutions. Saunders (2012) discuss how some institutions provide only note takers and interpreters while other institutions add specialist teachers; tutors to support language skills, note takers qualified to note take for deaf students ( and tutorials with the same note taker) and/or a communication support worker.

Are deaf students aware of what to expect when they enter higher education and that support for learning varies across different institutions when they make the decision to select a college or university to further their studies in South Africa? One of the issues in terms of transition planning for deaf students would therefore be to use the information regarding the varied type and level of support at different institutions to prepare students for the transition process (Saunders, 2012). Lukomsky (2007) conducted a study examining the differences between deaf and hearing students' perceptions of their social emotional adjustment as they transition to college. The findings of this study suggest that there are differences between deaf and hearing students who are transitioning to college with regard to their social-emotional adjustment. This suggests that aside from academic challenges that deaf students may encounter as they transition to higher education, consideration should also be given to the social emotional aspect of this transition process.

The overall outcome of research studies done in the United States emphasise that the curriculum in Deaf Education should provide deaf learners with experiences that enable them to function independently in the hearing world and be life-long learners that are able to advocate for themselves where necessary (Bonds, 2002 & Luckner 2003 in Winn, 2007).

In South Africa, The National Institute for the Deaf (NID) College in Worcester, Western Cape Province, was started in 2001 and draws on 130 years of history and experience of the National Institute for the Deaf regarding services to the Deaf and hard of hearing. The NID College, an occupational skills educational institution, is the only Further Education and Training (FET) College in Africa that caters for the specific needs of students with hearing loss (De Villiers, 2010). Currently the NID College has two branches in the Western Cape, where skills training is offered (Wittebome School of Skills for the Deaf in Wynberg and Noluthando School of Skills for the Deaf in Khayelitsha); two branches in Gauteng Province (M.C. Kharbai School for the Deaf and Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf) and two in Kwazulu

Natal Province (Durban School for the Hearing Impaired and Vuleka School for the Deaf). The NID College in Worcester offers various programmes including Agriculture, Beauty and Nail Technology, Care Practitioners, Construction, Early Childhood Development (ECD), Distant Learning, Hospitality Skills Programmes, Information Technology, Jewellery Manufacturing and Upholstery. In line with the National Qualifications Framework for Training and Development, the NID College collaborates with various Sectoral Education Training Authorities (SETA's).

The occupational training programmes offered at the college are aimed at developing the skill level of deaf students and assisting them in obtaining accredited international certification to enter the workplace (De Villiers, 2010). The NID College adheres to South African Education criteria which involve 10 NQF levels of training where the learner obtains credits towards a qualification. The different programmes offered at NID College are each weighted at either NQF levels 2, 3 or 4 which respectively equates to Grade 10, 11 or 12. Training is done by way of two days of subject training (theory and practical), two days of experiential training in the industry and one day of training in additional subjects such as: Life Skills; Communication; Numeracy; Computer Literacy, etc. (Kotze, 2012).

The NID College offers a Links4Life programme which is an exceptional bridging programme for deaf students aimed at helping young Deaf adults communicate better with people around them, and to become important members of society. The NID College explains that Links4Life was designed to give young Deaf adults a better chance of success in their studies, their workplace and in their adult life. This bridging programme was put together to give deaf students skills to be independent, think for themselves, make their own choices and take responsibility for their choices. Links4Life uses a unique teaching model which involves face to face time with the lecturer and incorporating technology in the teaching process. Furthermore, it focuses on developing the Deaf student holistically and aims to help them gain a fuller pool of language and communication skills which they can use with both deaf and hearing people. Programmes like Links4Life are set out to help Deaf students learn how to be critical, creative and to think more carefully; taught to make independent decisions and solve problems, which are skills to better co-operate and work together on tasks to reach goals in life and in the workplace. These students learn to show emotional intelligence, a positive attitude, respect, and satisfactory behaviour in themselves and

toward others. According to NID College, students are given a chance to become true students, to know themselves better and know more clearly what career they aspire to. Students are taught to write down their goals, given the skills to self-study and to fit into the working world. Bridging tools such as Links4Life are imperative to the development of the Deaf school leaver as it is designed not only to empower young Deaf adults but to become useful and important members of society, increase their chances of success in future studies, the workplace, and in life.

Using the NID College Links4Life programme, relevant stakeholders should use this bridging programme as a blueprint for developing similar transitioning tools which also focus on areas such as “communication” where students train to become more successful in communication skills for the working world via accurate SASL, Speech Reading and English language training; “mathematics for life” where students use numbers in real-life examples to gain better logical thinking, better prepare for further studies and to become more confident in their future workplace; “computers and technology” where students would learn how to make use of technology to increase their knowledge and education and discover the interconnected world of Sknowledge. Other programme areas, as with Links4Life, should include “workplace experience” where students visit workplaces to experience and realize the skills they need in the working world and understand how much is needed to choose a certain career and finally “personal development” (life skills), where students will work together to discover their own skills and personal abilities to grow on a personal and physical way. The aim of these bridging tools would be to better equip Deaf students to train for a profession, or further studies of their choice. Deaf students would also be able to enter the workplace better prepared to use computers and a range of communication strategies that will help them to fit into the hearing world more effectively. It is important to note that in South Africa, there is there is a lack of programmes for out-of-school youth to re-enter the system and become qualified.

NID College adds that the majority of teacher assistants in schools for the Deaf do not have the necessary qualifications to access formal teacher education programmes at Diploma and Degree level and that few of these programmes make specific provisions for the Deaf. NID

has concentrated on addressing the issue of admission criterion for Deaf students to access tertiary education for Deaf students and has recently developed a Higher Certificate Programme for Educators of the Deaf and Persons with hearing loss (HCE) which has accessible entry-level requirements and offers prospective students a catalyst into a career in education and training for the Deaf (NID, 2014). The rationale for the HCE is to enable students with potential who do not meet the minimum university diploma/degree admission criteria to follow an alternative access pathway to enter accredited diploma and degree courses in teacher education; improve current practices in working with the Deaf; acquire Open Distance and eLearning skills, higher education language and learning skills, information management skills and basic teaching skills to support ongoing professional development.

This is a promising first step for Deaf adults who want to become qualified teachers. A programme like the HCE provides Deaf adults with a stepping stone and pathway into further diploma and degree programmes and is a possible solution to the problem faced by schools for the Deaf with regard to a lack of linguistic and cultural Deaf role models for Deaf learners.

Furthermore, Belgium Campus in Pretoria, South Africa, was started in 1990 with the goal to alleviate the educational and unemployment challenges existing in South Africa. In January 2015 Belgium Campus specifically started a new programme to tackle the need for creating tertiary opportunities for the deaf in South Africa. Vice chancellor, Jacobs, (2015) describes that while many institutions offer vocational training to deaf students, Belgium Campus is currently the only educational institution that has introduced its new Diploma in Information Technology which is positioned at NQF level 6. This new diploma is spread over four years including one year in-service training with a company and is funded by the National Skills Fund (DHET). The Campus has admitted eight deaf students and employed sign language interpreters to interpret lectures. During the first of year of this course the deaf students attend dedicated classes and from their second year they attend an integrated class to encourage interaction between deaf and hearing students as they work together on projects (Swart, 2015).

eDeaf in Johannesburg, South Africa and the Wholesale and Retail SETA aims to raise awareness to the general community that Deaf people have a right to be educated and employed on an equal basis, just as their hearing counterparts. eDeaf is a deaf-owned company founded in 2007 to proactively counteract the marginalization of people with disabilities. This company was established to provide holistic services to the employer and the deaf employee specifically focussing on the employment sector and aims to empower deaf people through education and training and to provide them with employment opportunities. The Shoprite Group PLC, Shoprite Checkers in conjunction with eDeaf guarantees simultaneous job placements and career path development in a sector ideally suited to the skills of a deaf person. Shoprite Checkers is the first retailer in South Africa to put together a sale skills programme in collaboration with eDeaf and graduated the first 38 deaf learners in 2008. The pilot project involved four months of theoretical training and practical training for the deaf students in retail stores as well as sensitisation training for all Checkers managers. eDeaf is aiming to provide further skills programmes for deaf learners in conjunction with the Wholesaler and Retail SETA to expand beyond the Gauteng region and to execute its programme on a national level in all regions of South Africa (Kotze, 2009). eDeaf has collaborated with retail companies such as Makro, Woolworths and Truworths retails stores and extended its branch to Cape Town, South Africa placing Deaf job candidates in various retail positions. Captieux-Bhana (2010) refers to the objectives of eDeaf which emphasise upgrading the skills of Deaf candidates in terms of scarce skills, critical life skills and job skills where they are prepared for specific suitable employment opportunities.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) persons with hearing loss should have full access to participate in everyday life. In terms of transition support, the Association for Hearing Loss – Accessibility and Development (AHLAD) is an association that lobbies for equal access for persons with hearing loss in South Africa and provide services like note takers and text versions of speeches, etc. AHLAD aims to facilitate appropriate measures to ensure that persons with hearing loss have access to the physical environment, transport, information and communications technology, and other facilities and services provided to the public.

Although efforts are being made to address access to higher education and employment for deaf persons in South Africa, improved academic preparation and stronger transitional training programs continue to be imperative components in bridging the gap between Deaf Education and social capital for Deaf learners (Wilkins & Hehir, 2008).

A number of government investigations and projects have been employed to offer new hope to hearing learners by introducing a way out of poverty and unemployment (DHET, 2009). The South African government aims to provide the much needed scarce skills to the South African economy by trying to address the need of the uneducated and unemployed youth of the country (Minister of Education, 2012; DHET, 2009). The National Youth Committee (NYC) in South Africa recommends that schools provide knowledge and skills for life and work while serving as sites where young people can feel they belong and develop their identities and through personal discovery and social interaction (DHET, 2009). The NYC states that provision should be made for out-of-school youth with second chances to complete their school education and assist in their transition to adulthood by promoting a wider and more flexible range of learning pathways that will positively impact on their prospects for further learning, personal development and employment (DHET, 2009).

A plan for out-of-school Deaf youth would be significantly beneficial as they have to cope with their deafness in many challenging hearing environments every day and face obstacles in most areas of their lives (education settings, the workplace and social situations). Lang (2002) discusses how social/personal skills training of deaf learners during secondary school should form part of academic training and learning through support services (tutoring, interpreting, real-time capturing, note taking and classroom participation) in terms of preparation for higher education. Harvest (2014) emphasises that the challenges that deaf people experience are not due to their deafness alone, but are significantly compounded by social attitudes and lack of access. The communication barrier that exists between deaf and hearing people can also be attributed to the majority of hearing people not knowing or understanding Sign Language or how to communicate with deaf people.

Moseley and Bally (1996) refer to the reactions that occur when a deaf and hearing person enters a conversation. A number of reactions or responses are triggered in each individual when attempts at communication are unsuccessful. The reactions between the deaf person



and the hearing person are frequently quite similar in nature, escalate in intensity, and have a predictable outcome if the communication difficulty is not resolved with the use of appropriate and effective strategies by one or more participants in the situation (Moseley & Bally, 1996). The following table represents an effort to demonstrate a process characterized by increasing struggle on the part of the deaf person and the hearing person.

**Table 1: Parallel reaction to unsuccessful communication**

<u>Parallel reaction to unsuccessful communication</u>	
deaf person	Hearing person
Frustration: can't understand	Frustration: can't make self-understand
Anxiety: discomfort: fear of appearing stupid	Anxiety: discomfort: feeling awkward, not knowing what to do
Impatience: with hearing person for not speaking, clearly and slowly, etc.	Impatience: with deaf person for not understanding, wondering if this is worth the effort.
Anger: at hearing person for not trying harder	Anger: at deaf person for complaining, making demands and getting angry
Feeling of loss of competence and self-esteem: another failure in efforts to communicate; reinforcement of loss of ability to communicate easily and effectively	Feelings of incompetence: inability to deal with communication barrier; lacks skills to cope with the situation; may view deaf person as not competent
Self-pity: "poor me"; "it's not worth trying"	Self-pity: "poor me"; pity for deaf person
Guilt: for making demands, for being a burden	Guilt: for not knowing what to do, for being impatient and angry
Withdrawal: too uncomfortable to remain in situation	Withdrawal: too uncomfortable to remain in situation

**(Moseley & Bally, 1996, p. 141)** Reprinted and adapted with permission.

As per Table 1 the parallel reactions to miscommunication between a deaf and hearing person is a common occurrence in environments where deaf and hearing people are

integrated. It is important to be aware of these feelings when employing and educating Deaf people.

## **2.9 Deaf Education - The current South African context**

A study done by Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) on Deaf perspectives on communicative practises in South Africa revealed a general prevalence of communicative barriers in educational settings. South Africa has 37 schools, units and classes that accommodate Deaf learners (DBE, 2009). Approximately 80% of educators of these Deaf learners cannot use or understand SASL as LOLT well enough to support the required learning outcomes for these Deaf learners at all grade levels (Sign Language Education and Development (SLED, 2012). As mentioned before, DeafSA (2009) statistics confirm that Deaf high school learners are rarely able to read at grade-level and have poor signing skills as a result of not been taught in their mother tongue (SASL) as a first language subject at school (DeafSA, 2009; Akach 2010; Penn & Reagan, 1997). For years, Deaf children around the world, including South Africa, have been denied an education in Sign Language leading to crippling isolation (Barriga, 2013). With a struggling economy, scarcity of funding and other resources and a lack of suitably trained professionals in Deaf Education, general education in South Africa has been given priority over learners with disabilities which include deaf learners (Kiyaga, Nassozi & Moores, Donald, 2003).

DeafSA (2009) reports that failure rates in schools for the Deaf are high and that learners are directed towards more vocational avenues. Repeated failure of Deaf learners and/or late admission to school, result in these learners reaching Grade 9 level between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age, as opposed to their hearing counterparts who are generally aged 14 upon entering their senior year of high school. Further observations have shown that Deaf learners are often directed to leave school due to reaching the age limit of 18, despite the fact that their delayed educational development is not their fault. Prior to CAPS for Deaf learners in 2013, which makes provision for SASL to be taught as a home language, many Deaf learners left school with no Matriculation certificate and functionally illiterate despite attending schools for the Deaf for approximately 12 years. As a result, Deaf learners were faced with great challenges with regard to employment (Aarons & Glaser, 2002; Willoughby, 2011).

In addition, the majority of schools for the Deaf in South Africa did not go beyond grade 9 or 10 level (Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012). Deaf learners who reach age 14 and struggle to cope academically were advised to take up less academic subjects and take on added skills subjects such as hairdressing, plumbing, sewing, etc. According to Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012) there are three options for South African Deaf learners upon completion of the General Education and Training phase which ends in Grade 9. They can either leave formal education or follow an academic stream (Grades 10-12) or continue their studies at a FET college towards a National Certificate Vocational (Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012). Some of the challenges that learners face in this scenario include that there are only 17 schools for the Deaf in South Africa that offer matric, and that these are situated in just three provinces of which only three are in the Western Cape.

**Table 2:** Schools for the Deaf in South Africa

Kwazulu-Natal	Western Cape	Gauteng
KwaThintwa School for the Deaf	De La Bat School for the Deaf	Dominican School for Deaf Children
Vuleka School for the Deaf	Nuwe Hoop Centre for Hearing Impaired	Transoranje School for the Deaf
VN Naik School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Dominican School for the Deaf (Wittebome)	Ekurhuleni School for the Deaf
Fulton School for the Deaf		Sizwile School for the Deaf
Indaleni School the Deaf		MC Kharbai School for the Deaf
Durban School for the Hearing Impaired		Sonitas for Hearing Impaired Learners
St Martin De Porres School		St Vincent School for the Deaf

## **2.10 South African Sign Language (SASL)**

Barriga (2013) emphasises that without the ability to use Sign Language, Deaf people face significant barriers to being independent, finding employment and participating in communities and family life.

Reagan (2008) takes cognisance of the fact that, although educating Deaf learners using Sign Language made sense linguistically and educationally around the world, it was still not used in the classrooms of the Deaf. Deaf people use Sign Language, a natural language of the Deaf community, which is a sophisticated system of hand-signs and non-verbal codes to communicate with each other. It is a language in which facial expressions and hands are used, and in which movement and space is extremely important (Baker et al., 2015). Educators have rarely used formal Sign Language in the classrooms, but rather a form of contact sign language or artificially constructed manual sign codes for a spoken language which has resulted in a delayed language acquisition process of Deaf learners (Reagan, 2008).

The University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa has advocated for the linguistic needs of the Deaf community since it became the first university to offer SASL as an academic course, not only in South Africa, but on the African continent (Targeted News Services, 2013). Dr Philemon Akach, Head of the Department of South African Sign Language at UFS, formed part of the nine-member ministerial task team, which has assisted in co-ordinating the development of the SASL curriculum since 2009. The curriculum was handed to the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga and will be offered as a home language in all schools, where Grade 12 learners will be able to write it as a final-year examination subject as of 2014.

The curriculum has been executed in all 37 schools for the deaf in South Africa and is now taught as a school subject from Grade 0 to Grade 12 (Targeted News Services, 2013). The Western Cape Department of Education has been the leading province in implementing the SASL curriculum Grade R-3 at Noluthando, Dominican Wittebome, Mary Kihn and Nuwehoop schools for the Deaf (DoE, 2013).

Recent developments in South African Language policies have evolved to exploring the possibility of SASL becoming an official language of the country in the future (Druchen, 2016). DeafSA has compiled an SASL petition “Solidarity in South African Sign Language” asking South Africans to support the fight to make SASL the 12<sup>th</sup> official language of the country. Storbeck (2010) discusses the significant role that the Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa, plays in Deaf Education. Courses at this centre are aimed at developing and equipping educators of the deaf and families/communities of hard of hearing family members and infants, with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide people who are Deaf with equal opportunities (Storbeck, 2010). Glaser and van Pletzen (2012) draw attention to a South African reality where Deaf students have emerged from various forms of schooling with poor language abilities which are far from a fully functional language like SASL, hence the resulting difficulty in accessing higher education as well as finding and maintaining employment. One aspect of these courses offered at Wits, for example, provide a step towards developing educators of the deaf to learn more about SASL and Deaf culture, so that there is an improvement in curriculum delivery and therefore literacy levels of deaf learners. According to Barriga (2013) the rights of Deaf people to education in Sign Language have been made official and are safeguarded by the UNCRPD (2006). In support of the successful implementation of the SASL curriculum, educators will now have to be fully qualified in SASL and trained at all levels of education to work with Deaf learners (Barriga, 2013).

In the past, teachers of the deaf in South Africa have not been required to have specialised teacher training to teach the deaf child how to read and write (the spoken language) using Sign Language to support text literacy skills (Glaser and Van Pletzen, 2012). (This process has subsequently resulted in some teachers of the Deaf being unaware of issues such as Deaf culture, Sign Language and the Cognitive and Language Development of the Deaf learner (Storbeck, 2003). Many South African teachers of the Deaf, therefore, went through a process of learning as they go along which inevitably lead to communication difficulties between the teacher, the learner and the learning content (Storbeck, 2003). The current implementation of the SASL curriculum addresses the manifold challenges in Deaf Education.

This study goes beyond hearing impairment as a medical concern or supporting Deaf people with a culture of their own. It highlights the experiences of specifically the young Deaf adult when exiting the school system and entering the hearing world. The researcher aims to draw attention in particular to the obstacles that young Deaf adults are faced with in terms of accessing higher education and gaining employment.

### **2.11 Research Aim:**

This study aims to describe the reflections of young Deaf adults with regard to the transition from school to higher education and employment within the Western Cape.

#### **2.11.1 Sub-aims:**

In order to address the above main aim of the study, the following sub-aims were formulated:

1. To describe the academic and vocational preparation of young Deaf adults during their schooling career.
2. To describe the challenges experiences by young Deaf adults in terms of higher education and employment.
3. To investigate strategies that may facilitate the transition from school to higher education and employment of young Deaf adults.

### **2.12 Outline of the research**

**Chapter 1** provides a background of the South African Deaf school leaver and access to higher education and employment. This chapter provides a rationale upon which this study is predicated upon.

**Chapter 2** provides a discussion on the literature of the history of Deafness and Deaf Education specifically within South Africa. International studies are discussed and analysed in relation to the South African context.

**Chapter 3** focusses on the methodology used to collect data for this study and discusses the specific aim, sub-aims and limitations of this study.

**Chapter 4** reports on the themes and the findings which emerged from the data collected for this study.

**Chapter 5** gives a general discussion of the findings in relation to the aims and results presented in Chapter 4.

**Chapter 6** discusses the concluding remarks and the implications of this study. This chapter provides recommendations for employers and educators of the Deaf and further research areas.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**METHODOLOGY**



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This qualitative research study aims to be in line with the definition of qualitative research given by Creswell (2007, p.37) who states that “qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Using the interpretivist paradigm, the ontology (nature of reality) of the interpretive approach focuses on the internal reality of a subjective experience which requires the researcher to be emphatic and employ observer subjectivity (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006, p. 6). The ontology of this study will therefore look at inter-subjective reality and employ emphatic interaction during the data collection phase. According to Grix (2002) epistemology focusses on the knowledge-gathering process and is concerned with developing knowledge and the ways of discovering knowledge which is not static, but continually changing. The epistemology of this study will focus on understanding the study participants’ subjective perceptions and ideas through interpretive processes.

This multiple case study followed a descriptive design which enabled the researcher to develop descriptions of individuals or settings, analyse data for themes or categories, and draw conclusions or make interpretations about its personal and theoretical meanings (Wolcott, 1994, as cited in Cresswell, 2003).

#### **3.2 Rationale for an interpretive approach within a qualitative study**

According to Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) an interpretive approach focusses on harnessing and extending the power of ordinary language and expression, so as to assist in understanding the social world we live in. A qualitative research approach aims to identify the issues from the perspective of the study participants, and understand the meanings and interpretations that are given to their experiences, beliefs, behaviour and attitudes so that these are incorporated into the data analysis (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). The researcher gathered data from the study participants’ personal views in a natural environment using inductive reasoning to analyse data. In doing this, research findings emerge from the dominant themes found within the raw data (Thomas, 2003). The

researcher considered qualitative research methods appropriate for an analysis of concepts and themes derived from an exploration of the experiences of young Deaf adults in the Western Cape, about which very little is known and about which in-depth understanding will be beneficial to the field of Deaf Education in South Africa.

### 3.3 Visual diagram of study process

The research study will have two distinct data collection and data analysis phases to allow for a comprehensive discussion of the research question.

#### Phase 1:

Research Question



Snowball sampling



Develop Data Collection Tool



Pilot Study



Data Collection: Focus group interviews



#### Intermediate Phase:

Sampling & develop data collection tool for Phase 2



Pilot Study



#### Phase 2:

Data collection: In depth interviews



Data Analysis of phase 1 & 2 results



#### Final Stage:

Integration and interpretation of all results

Figure 2: Visual diagram of study process

### **3.4 Sampling**

#### **3.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

##### *Inclusion criteria:*

According to Hennink et al. (2011) and Patton (2002) participants in qualitative research are selected because they have particular experiences that may contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomena studied.

1. Participants had to meet all of the following criteria in order to participate in the current study: Participants were required to be individuals who are identified as Deaf and have attended a school for the Deaf.
2. Participants had to be between the ages of 21 and 35 as this period is known to be the one of forming identities and finding community with those one can identify with (Bull, 1998).
3. Participants had to use SASL as their primary mode of communication (first language). In order to establish this, the researcher required that participants should have attended a signing school for the Deaf in the Western Cape, noting that up to 2013 all deaf learners were educated with the 'Oral' method.

##### *Exclusion criteria:*

Candidates with hearing loss who use speech as their first language will be excluded from this study.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling method:**

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit and identify the study participants for the current study. Hennink, et al. (2011) define 'snowball sampling' as "a method of recruitment suited for identifying study participants with very specific characteristics, rare experiences or 'hidden' population groups, who may be difficult to identify with other recruitment methods". Patton (2000) adds that snowball sampling relies on a chain of informants, who are themselves contacted or interviewed, and asked who else they can recommend and who will meet the participant selection criteria for the study. The researcher used key informants who facilitated the recruitment of volunteers to participate

in this study (Wassenaar p.97, 2006). Once the researcher contacted the referred individuals and asked them whether they also know others in the community with the specific required criteria, the process continued in the same way, increasing the number of participants for the current study (Hennink et al., 2012). The snowball sample obtained in this study included candidates of different ages (some outside of the permissible age group for this study) and candidates who use Sign Language as their only mode of communication and a few bilingual deaf persons who used Sign Language as their first language. Candidates who fell outside of the age bracket stipulated for this study were excluded from the study.

### **3.4.3 Thick description of the participants**

The researcher aimed to produce a “thick description” of the participants’ experiences and expectations with regard to the research aim. “Thick rich” description is one of the procedures used for establishing credibility in a study which involves describing the setting, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A ‘thick description’ used in qualitative analysis can be described as a comprehensive description of the characteristics, processes, communications and contexts that make up the phenomenon being studied, allowing researchers to draw their own interpretations about meaning and significance (Rule & John, 2011; Geertz, 1973 & Denzin, 2001 in Patton, 2002). The researcher aimed to have a group of participants that would be able to identify exactly with what the researcher was looking for in terms of relating to experiences of being at a school for the Deaf and adjusting to a hearing world. Creswell and Miller (2000) refer to how thick description creates statements that allow the readers to feel what they have experienced, or could experience if they were there, and the events being described in a study.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Data collection is the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research aims using methods such as interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, narratives and case histories (Burns and Grove, 2003). In this study, the researcher used focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews.

### **3.6 Pilot Study**

It is often difficult to predict how participants will interpret the questions in an individual or group discussion guide, especially if the researcher makes use of a translator or an interpreter (Hennink et al. 2011) In this study two South African Sign Language Interpreters (SASLIs) were used. The researcher conducted a pilot study by doing a focus group and an individual interview using the same participants ensuring the dependability of findings for the study; check the appropriateness of the interview questions and to assess how the questions are understood by the study participants. In doing this, the researcher was able to consider any revisions and make modifications where necessary (Hennink et al. 2011). During the pilot study, the interviewer found that a few of the participants did not clearly understand the first question “What did you want to become one day when you left school?” This could have been due to an interpreter error clear, however these participants gained clarification on the question once they saw the answers of other participants and then indicated later that they would like to respond to the question.

### **3.7 Interview Process**

#### **3.7.1 Phase 1 - Focus group interviews**

Patton (1990) defines a focus group interview as an interview of one-half to two hour, with a small group of people (typically six to eight people) on a specific topic. According to Patton (1990) focus group interviews have the advantage of providing quality control on data collection in that participants provide checks and balances on each other (Patton, 1990).

The researcher made use of a qualified SASLI to translate the researcher’s questions from English to SASL and the respondents’ answers from SASL into English. The focus group interviews were held at the DeafSA offices in Cape Town as this is where the SASLI has indicated to work for logistical reasons. Participants were invited to the DeafSA premises where they felt more at ease within a Deaf-friendly environment. The participants who did not know where the offices were located were given directions to the building. Participants were given exact dates and times of when the interviews would take place and were

reimbursed for travelling costs. The focus group interviews were each between one-and-a-half hours long with an average time of 40 minutes. The interview questions were formulated by the researcher based on the available literature on Deaf school-leavers. A semi-structured interview generally uses a few open-ended questions to elicit views and opinions from the group participants (Creswell, 2003). In terms of preparing for the focus group the interviewer identified the major objective of the group discussion, developed eight questions, planned the session and invited the participants to the meeting. The interviewer scheduled the focus group discussion to take place to be one to one-and-a half hour long so as to account for any of the participants with transportation issues. The interviewer followed an interview guide formulated specifically for the study and was conducted and interpreted in SASL. The interview questions were asked in a certain order and similar questions were grouped together.

#### Engagement Questions

1. When you were at school what did you want to study or do when you finished school?
2. What is your favourite thing about being employed / working now?
  - What do you do?
  - Tell me more about what exactly your job detail at work is.
  - Does anyone else want to share what their job entails?

#### Exploration questions

3. Do you think your school prepared you well enough for the workplace?
  - Tell me about your experiences at a school for the Deaf.
  - Tell me about how your school supported you for life after school.
4. Did anyone continue their studies after school?
  - Tell me more. Where did you study? What did you study?
  - Describe your experience at college or university.

5. What do you think are the pros and cons about being a Deaf employee in the workplace?

- Describe what you think makes your work environment difficult or easy.

- Help me understand what you mean.

6. Would you like anything in particular to stay the same or change in your workplace?

7. Do you enjoy working with hearing people?

- Tell me more.

- Can you give me examples?

#### Exit question

8. Is there anything you would like to add or say about your experience leaving school and starting a job as a young Deaf adult?

The order of the questions was adjusted at times to allow for the group to control its own process and for more discussion on the different topics. Kintzinger (1995) ascertains that focus group interviews allow for group processes that assist people in exploring and clarifying their views in ways that would not be as easily accessible in a one-to-one interview. The data for the first phase of this study was collected in a group environment, in order to obtain a large volume of information from a variety of perspectives (Hennink et al., 2011).

The researcher conducted two focus group interviews out of the three that were planned in phase 1. The interviewer welcomed the participants and formally introduced the SASLI using basic Sign Language, who then gave the participants a brief explanation of the interview process and the administration involved. Before executing the interviews each participant was handed a copy of the information sheet and the consent letter. All participants gave consent to participating in the study and being video-recorded during the focus group interviews. The participants proceeded to sign the consent forms for the study before starting the interview process. A digital Sony HDR-PJ589V HD video-recorder was propped onto a tri-pod to video record the interview sessions. This was done so as to exclude any

additional persons present at the interview to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees.

Interviews were conducted to saturation, that is, “at the point of theoretical saturation, additional cases no longer provide new information that challenges or adds to the emerging interpretive account and there is a sense that the theoretical account is nearing a complete and adequate form” (Terre Blanch et al., 2006 p 288). Furthermore, theoretical saturation marks the point where the researcher stops collecting new data as it no longer adds anything to the researcher’s unfolding discussion of the analysis process (Terre Blanch et al., 2006, p 288).

The two focus group interviews assisted the interviewer in reaching data saturation and aided in confirming findings and clarifying information obtained in the two different focus group discussions. The researcher produced a ‘thick’ description via data saturation where no new codes or categories emerged from further data collection (Ballinger, 2000). At the end of the focus group interviews participants were thanked for participating in the study, refreshments were served and each participant was compensated for travelling costs to and from the interview venue.

### **3.7.2 Phase 2 - In-depth interviews**

Depth interviewing was used in the second phase of data collection where sampling was done until data saturation was reached. Patton (2003) describes in-depth, open-ended interviews to include open-ended questions that yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005) in order for the researcher to conduct a structured interview that elicits depth, detail, vividness, nuance and richness, a mixture of three kinds of questions should be used, namely ‘main questions’, ‘follow-up questions’ and ‘probes’. By conducting an in-depth interview the interviewer investigated beneath the surface of topics discussed, by asking for detail in order to provide a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s standpoint (Patton, 1990). The researcher followed an ‘interview guide approach’ where topics and issues to be covered were specified in advance in an outlined form (Patton, 1990). This approach allowed the interviewer to carefully decide how best to use the limited time available in the interview situation and made the interview process across a number of different people



more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues that were explored (Patton, 1990).

The questions that were constructed for the interview process are based on the various elements discussed in the literature review. The in-depth Interviews were held at the DeafSA offices in Newlands, Cape Town where the researcher employed the same SASLI's used in phase 1 of data collection for interpretation purposes. Participants were invited to the DeafSA premises where they felt more at ease and familiar within a Deaf-friendly environment and were given exact dates and times of when interviews were to take place and were reimbursed for travelling costs.

As with the focus group interviews a digital Sony HDR-PJ589V video-recorder was used to record the in-depth interviews

### **3.8 The SASL Interpreters (SASLIs)**

The interviewer employed one SASLI per focus group interview. This was due to the availability of SASLIs at the time of the study. The SASLI's were one female aged 25 and one male aged 28 who are both employed by DeafSA Western Cape as qualified SASLI's and SASL co-ordinators. The female SASLI obtained her qualification from North West University, Potchefstroom in South Africa and received a NQF Level 8 in community interpreting, currently interprets for the South African Parliament and has worked as an SASLI for E-TV News in South Africa. The male SASLI has obtained a NQF level 5 qualification in community interpreting from the UFS, Sign Language Education and Development (SLED) Certificates Stage one and two from the ETDP-SETA and SAQA at NQF level 4 and 5 and Certificate in "Introduction to Informed Consent in Research" from the Clinical Research Education and Development group which was accredited by a GCP training provider and currently works as the SASLI at DeafSA, Western Cape. The SASLIs for this study fall within the same age group and general demographic profile as the research participants. The researcher aimed to use these common characteristics to support the ease of facilitating the interpretation process in terms of relatedness and dialectal differences in SASL. The SASLIs adhered to the DeafSA code of ethics for SASLIs and were remunerated for their services according to their private rate of pay for supporting research.

All interviews were conducted by the researcher and translated by the SASLIs to facilitate the interview process and assist with the language barrier as mentioned above.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative content analysis to analyse the data collected. 'Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or 'themes' within the data' (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 81). Different methods of thematic analysis share a search for certain themes or patterns across an entire data set, as opposed to within a data item such as an individual interview or interviews from one person (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 83).

#### **3.9.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to describe the narratives obtained from the interview process by sorting, organizing and interpreting the data collected (Patton, 2002). Braun and Clark (2006) explain that one of the advantages of using thematic analysis is its flexibility. The researcher ensured that the process of thematic analysis remained theoretically and methodologically sound, adhering to the 6-phase thematic analysis guide (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 80; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

- Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing themes
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
- Step 6: Producing the report

Creswell (2003) describes these steps as follows: The first step of this process is to organize and prepare the data for analysis, which included transcribing the interviews. At this point of data analysis the researcher had a preliminary understanding of the data collected and had assembled all texts and findings, whilst engaging with the interview transcripts and field notes. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) p. 322 refer to this stage as the familiarisation and immersion phase. Step 2 involved looking out for general ideas or impressions from the data obtained using the language of the interviews and the interviewees rather than

convoluted and abstract theoretical language (Terre Blanche et al., 2006 p, 322). According to Taylor and Ussher (2001) themes do not passively “emerge” and are not “discovered” but rather, that the researcher plays an active role in identifying themes during this phase.

In step 3, the researcher began to detail analysis with a coding process, organizing material into categories and labelling those categories with a term. The coding process involved identifying a line, phrase or a word that pertained to a particular theme. Terre Blanch et al. (2006 p.325) states that coding refers to a process where the researcher breaks down the body of the data into labelled, meaningful pieces, with a view to later clustering the ‘bits’ of coded material together under the code heading and further analysing them both as a cluster and in relation to the other clusters. The researcher used this coding process in step 4 to describe the participants, settings, categories and themes for analysis. The induction and coding of themes allowed the researcher to fragment the sequence of a linear and chronological format so that events that were distant from one another could be brought together for accurate comparison (Terre Blanch et al., 2006 as cited in Van Zyl, 2012).

Thereafter, thematic data analysis was used to describe the themes emerging from the data collection process. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006 p. 326) this is known as the elaboration process which is done to detect subtle nuances that were previously overlooked by the initial, more rudimentary coding system. The elaboration phase or Step 5 therefore included a detailed discussion of several themes and with inter-connecting themes. The final step in the data analysis was to make an interpretation of the data collected and check for weaknesses, over-interpretations and any contradictions in one’s study (Van Zyl, 2012). During this phase the researcher tried to provide a voice for the participants and to be reflexive in describing and interpreting the research problem so that it extends current literature on this research topic.

Terre Blanche et al. (2006 p 327) notes that during this phase it is important to acknowledge areas where the researcher may have allowed for personal bias to come into play which would affect the validity and reliability of the study.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

There are five widely accepted philosophical principles that are applied to determine whether research is ethical (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001, as cited in Wassenaar, 2006). These principles include the following: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice (Wassenaar, 2006).

#### **3.10.1 Autonomy:**

According to McKee, Schlehofer and Thew (2013) informed consent requires that individuals receive adequate information in order to make informed decisions to participate in research. Furthermore, McKee et al. (2013) discuss that standard informed-consent processes rely on written English forms, which are mostly ineffective for Deaf sign language users for many reasons. One of these would include the low written English proficiency levels often found among deaf adolescents, which would make written consent an inappropriate tool for this ethical consideration (Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Brijnath & Crockett, 2010 cited in Kusters, 2012). The researcher conveyed a simplified and summarised written version of the study purpose to the participants using the SASLI to ensure that the correct message is conveyed to the participants. The SASLI interpreted the explanation of what was stated on the forms to the participants. According to Goldfarb (2007) when a 'short form' consent document is used, it is considered good research practice to have a witness present. The researcher respected the privacy, confidentiality and the anonymity of the research participants and used no deception to secure participation (Cresswell, 2003).

#### **3.10.2 Non-maleficence:**

The researcher ensured that no participant was harmed emotionally or psychologically during the study as a direct or indirect consequence of the research (Wassenaar, 2006). In order to manage or prevent potential levels of stress experienced by vulnerable participants about their current situation, the researcher treated the interviews with care when sensitive or harmful information were disclosed during the data collection phase.

### **3.10.3 Beneficence:**

The researcher informed the participants that they will all be provided with feedback, follow-up and/or intervention for the study participants where applicable. This principle obliged the researcher to attempt to maximise the benefits that the research will afford to the study participants by providing each study participant with a simplified copy of the study report which will summarise the whole research project. The researcher guarded against creating false expectations from the participants as a result of being a part of the study.

### **3.10.4 Justice:**

The researcher treated the study participants with fairness and equity and respect during all stages of the research (Wassenaar, 2006). Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) (Protocol number: H14/07/16).

### **3.10.5 Credibility and Trustworthiness:**

Conducting research in an ethically sound manner enhances the quality of the research and contributes to its trustworthiness (Rule & John, 2011). The researcher paid careful attention to the importance of providing checks and balances to maintain acceptable standards of scientific inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that four factors be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research. These include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to the confidence one has in the truth of your findings and can be established by using triangulation, member checking and negative case analysis (Denzin and Lincoln (1994). The researcher employed member checking which involved text messaging the study participants to check the accuracy of facts and also sought feedback on some of the findings after the initial writing of this study report from educators at schools for the Deaf and members of the Deaf community who did not take part in this study as study participants. In terms of transferability, this study presents findings of 'thick' descriptions of the phenomena.

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

According to Anderson (2010) data collection in qualitative studies usually takes more time when compared to quantitative research. Furthermore, the volume of data usually collected from qualitative studies makes analysis and interpretation time-consuming and is not always well understood within a scientific community (Anderson, 2010). This study was conducted in one geographical area in South Africa that is relatively well resourced in terms of deafness and may, therefore may not reflect the experiences of people in other provinces which may be more resource-constrained or resource-abundant.

# **CHAPTER 4:**

# **RESULTS**

## 4. Results

This chapter presents the findings from the study. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the findings from this study and are presented under the specific themes as derived from the data analysis. Main themes that emerged from the data collected in both the focus group and individual in-depth interviews were categorised into themes and subthemes. Having employed the guidelines of thematic data analysis prescribed by Creswell (2004), seven themes were identified by the researcher. These are as follows: 'unable to meet university requirements', 'communication barrier in Deaf Education', 'study choices offered at Deaf College are limited', 'not enough qualified Deaf teachers', 'unfair treatment in the workplace', 'a need for stronger transition programmes' and 'a need for Deaf awareness training in the workplace'.

### **Demographic profiles of the study participants:**

A total of 19 participants took part in this study of which 14 were of black, 3 were coloured / mixed race, 1 white participant and 1 Indian participant. The majority of the participants were females. The participants' ages ranged from 24 years of age to 35 years of age. Four participants obtained Grade 12 certificates. Although this sample of Deaf adults could be considered big, the feedback obtained from all of the participants was unanimous. This sample of Deaf adults is a representative sample of young, working Deaf adults within the Western Cape and should give an idea as to what the current situation is with Deaf school leavers regarding the transition period from school to the workplace and higher education in this geographical area. The demographic information of the participants is summarised in Table 2.

### *Key*

- SAW – Social Auxiliary Work
- S.O.S – School of Skills
- ECD – Early Childhood Development
- I.T. – Information Technology
- HSP – Hospitality Skills Program
- FET – Further Education and Training



**Table 3: Demographic profiles of the study participants**

Participant	Gender	Age	D.O.B.	Race	Education	Occupation
1	Female	35	1980	Coloured	Grade 7	Factory worker
2	Female	35	1980	Black	Grade 7, SOS Year 4	Hairdresser
3	Female	26	1989	Black	Grade 7, SOS Year 4	Factory worker
4	Female	28	1987	Black	Grade 11	Factory worker
5	Female	28	1987	Black	Grade 9, SOS Year 2, NID HSP Assistant Chef level3	Assistant chef
6	Female	26	1989	Black	Grade 12	Cashier
7	Female	35	1980	Black	Grade 9 NID FET Certificate ECD	Assistant teacher
8	Female	33	1982	Black	Grade 12 DeafSA SAW training	Auxiliary social worker
9	Female	26	1989	Black	Grade 9, NID HSP Kitchen Cleaning level 2	Kitchen cleaner
10	Female	28	1987	Black	Grade 9, NID HSP Kitchen Cleaning level 2	Kitchen cleaner
11	Male	32	1983	Coloured	Grade 7, SOS Year 4	General worker
12	Male	30	1985	Coloured	Grade 12, NID National Certificate IT: End User Computing Level 3	Assistant trade watcher
13	Female	24	1991	White	Grade 11	Cashier
14	Female	28	1987	Indian	Grade 12, NID HSP Assistant Chef – level 2	Assistant Chef
15	Female	33	1982	Black	Grade 9	General worker
16	Female	33	1982	Black	Grade 9, NID HSP Kitchen Cleaner level 2	Assistant teacher
17	Female	26	1989	Black	Grade 9, NID FET Certificate ECD	Assistant teacher
18	Female	30	1985	Black	Gr 7	Factory worker
19	Female	25	1990	Black	Grade 10	Office cleaner

#### 4.1 Theme 1: Unable to meet university requirements

From the results it seems as though Deaf learners in South Africa have difficulty meeting the university requirements.

##### Subtheme 1.1: Few schools for the Deaf offer Grade 12

Only four of the nineteen participants in this study obtained Senior certificates from a school for the Deaf.

**Table 4: Deaf school leavers without a grade 12 certificate**

Subtheme 1.1:	Excerpts from the participants' interviews
Few schools for the Deaf offer Grade 12	<p>Participant 7: <i>"It's difficult for me to continue with my studies but I know I can benefit from it, it will make an easy way for me to get a job. I'm being employed as a contractor because I never finished school so that's why I changed my idea to have my own business because it doesn't require qualifications."</i> Lines 62-65 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 2: <i>"I wanted to finish my matric because I didn't actually achieve what I needed ...I wanted matric when I was done with school to have more knowledge because I am struggling with the words so that I can have better communication skills when I apply for jobs."</i> Lines 17-20 (in-depth interview)</p>

##### Subtheme 1.2: Literacy limitation

The participants in this study had low literacy levels and two of them expressed how they would like to improve their reading and writing skills for improved job prospects.

**Table 5: Deaf learners often have poor literacy skills**

Subtheme 1.2:	Excerpt from participants' interviews
Literacy limitation	<p>Participant 5: <i>"...it was actually easy to study cheffing but I'm struggling with the words, preparing the food, cooking the food that is very easy for me, but the only barrier for me is the words. Some of it I understand, but the meaning of the words I don't understand if you show me something I know what it is, I can understand it but if the manager speaks to me I have to lip-read what the manager is saying."</i></p> <p><i>Lines 67 -71 (in-depth interview)</i></p>

Subtheme 1.3: SASL is not recognised as an official language

Deaf students are unable to engage in higher education.

**Table 6: Deaf learners do not meet university language entry requirements**

Subtheme 1.3	Excerpts from participants' interviews
SASL is not recognized as an official language	<p>Participant 2: <i>"When I completed my matric I applied at Boland college and I tried to apply for IT I was told unfortunately we cannot accept you"</i> Lines 109-110 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>'Participant 1: <i>"I would apply at different tertiary institutions but they wouldn't accept me...that's the reason why most of the Deaf and hard of hearing people in South Africa can't access tertiary education because of communication and that is the biggest problem"</i> Lines 14-15 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 9: <i>"...but because language is a barrier, how do I access tertiary education"</i> Lines 56-57 (Focus Group 1)</p>

Subtheme 1.4: Need for improved academic preparation

All of the participants felt that the academic foundations provided by their schools were very poor and that not much attention was paid to the academic subjects of the school curriculum. The sentiment shared by most of the participants in this study is that the schools for the Deaf generally do not provide Deaf learners with a solid academic background for further education.

**Table 7: Deaf learners need improved academic preparation**

Subtheme 1.4	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Need for improved academic preparation	<p>Participant 3: <i>"The experience I had was not a good experience the teaching part, but the social part was good because I was in a group of Deaf learners."</i> Lines 23-24 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"When I left in grade 11 I didn't understand why the teachers had negative attitudes with us, they forced us to do skills when I didn't actually feel like doing it, they were just giving us skills training to do. They gave us the needle and the iron and I wanted to concentrate more on my books and study. When the teachers treated me negatively at school I thought let me drop out of school."</i> Lines 17-20 (individual interview)</p>

Subtheme 1.5: No financial resources for higher education

The participants felt that there was not enough financial support from the government to further their studies in terms of bursaries, internships, financial aid, etc. Nine of the participants said that they could not afford university or college fees.

**Table 8: Deaf school leavers have no financial resources for higher education**

Subtheme 1.5	Excerpts from participants' views
No financial resources for higher education	<p>Participant 3: <i>"You see so many people want to go to university but because of the cost" Lines 107-108 (in-depth interview)</i></p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"My parents they are unemployed, there was no-one to support me but I did want to go to university anyway. When I applied they said they can't afford to pay for the university so I obeyed what they said, I actually stayed at home."</i> Lines 96 – 98, in-depth interview</p> <p>Participant 5: <i>"The money is the problem because my family does not have enough resources."</i> Line 41 (Focus Group 1)</p>

**4.2 Theme 2: Communication barriers in Deaf Education**

Subtheme 2.1: Educators of the Deaf are not fluent in SASL

The participants expressed that most of the teachers do not have the necessary signing skills in SASL to prepare them to use it as a medium of instruction in the teaching of Deaf learners. One aspect of communication that is shared by all of the participants is that there is a general sense of miscommunication and misunderstanding between the educators and the learners.

**Table 9: Educators have poor levels of proficiency in SASL**

Subtheme 2.1:	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Educators of the Deaf are not fluent in SASL	<p>Participant 3: <i>"Okay you know being employed I want to become a teacher because you know Deaf Education is a problem in South Africa, the hearing teachers unfortunately they cannot teach in Sign Language." Lines 39-41 (Focus Group 2)</i></p> <p>Participant 1: <i>"...the teaching wasn't South African Sign Language, it was just basic signs, we knew it was not real Sign Language..." Lines 112 – 113 (Focus Group 1)</i></p> <p>Participant 1: <i>"Yes I do assist the teachers like I said last year, but some teachers they are not actually fluent In Sign Language so I'm actually the one who does the relaying of the lesson so that the learners can understand what the teacher says." Lines 30-32 (Focus Group 1)</i></p>

Subtheme 2.2: Resentment towards hearing educators of the Deaf

Two participants expressed some feelings of anger and blame toward their hearing educators for not giving them more support when they were at school. The participants that attended schools that accommodated speaking learners, felt that the speaking learners were treated better than Deaf learners and were much more supported in terms of their academic foundation.

**Table 10: Deaf school leavers' blame educators for lack of support during schooling career**

Subtheme 2.2	Excerpt from participants' interview
Resentment towards hearing educators of the Deaf	Participant 7: <i>"...the hearing teachers didn't know Sign Language they were not fluent enough so I was slow to pick up or understand the school work, so that doesn't mean I am dom or I didn't understand I think I blame the teachers because they are the ones who wasted our time..." Lines 127 -130 (in-depth interview)</i>

	<p>Participant 4: “Yes I left in grade 11 because....the teachers they had negative attitudes towards us, so I didn’t feel like doing skills but they were giving us skills training...” <i>Lines 17-18 (individual interview)</i></p> <p>Participant 4: “...when the teachers gave me negative attitude at school I thought let me drop out of school.” <i>Lines 19-20 (individual interview)</i></p>
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Subtheme 2.3: Deaf students need to pay for their own SASLIs

Those participants that wanted to further their studies expressed that they did not have the finances to pay for their own SASLIs. They were forced to follow different career paths where training was offered in a language they could understand - SASL.

**Table 11: Deaf students do not have the financial resources to pay for their own SASLIs**

Subtheme 2.3	Excerpts from participants’ interviews
Deaf students need to pay for their own SASLIs	<p>Participant 5: “Unfortunately we are stuck there are no interpreting services available, I went to tertiary education I went to UDT Durban University of Technology. I want to study like I said fashion design then they said I must pay R5000 for sign language interpreting.’ <i>lines 102-104 ‘...ok like I said I wanted to become a fashion designer but then I couldn’t achieve that because I asked the sign language interpreter if he is able to help me and I couldn’t even afford the service of the sign language interpreter...’ Lines 31-33 (Focus Group 2)</i></p> <p>Participant 6: “I actually feel good about that because also it’s a good thing to achieve your matric because we as Deaf people we don’t actually have an opportunity to reach our goals. If you can see many hearing people they have access in many things so I’m also lobbying to study in the university but also the barrier is there are no interpreters, so a friend of mine actually advised me to go another place but there was no interpreters at all so that is the barrier for me so that’s why I</p>

	<i>encourage universities that they have the interpreters so that's why I still want to go to university." Lines 60 – 66 (Focus Group 2)</i>
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**Subtheme 2.4: Issues of multilingualism**

Two participants expressed that it is challenging to communicate with someone who does not know Sign Language and whose written or second language is different to their own written or second language. An example of this is when a hearing person tried to communicate one of the study participants by using spoken isiXhosa. Unfortunately the participant did not understand the hearing person clearly because her written (second) language is Sesotho. Similarly the issue of multilingualism arises when a Bilingual Deaf person uses his/her second language, for example, Afrikaans to communicate with an isiXhosa speaking hearing person.

**Table 12: Challenges with multilingualism in a signing environment**

Subtheme 2.4	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Issues of multilingualism	<p>Participant 2: <i>"I don't feel to work with the hearing people because we have a difficulty in communication some they are actually writing the isiXhosa then it's difficult to communicate with me as well, so I will ask what does this mean and so it will then be difficult for them to communicate with me so these are the difficulties that I am getting"</i> Lines 85-88 (individual interview)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"When I finished at school from Limpopo I actually finished at grade 7 I moved to Pretoria and I studied but I actually didn't finish. I finished only grade 11 I didn't have the feeling for school so I thought let me just stay at home then I left school but at school at that time there was nothing serious but I didn't know the English. The language of Limpopo I understand but not English..."</i> Lines 4-8 (individual interview)</p>



### 4.3 Theme 3: Limited study choices offered at deaf college

#### Subtheme 3.1: Unable to follow passion in terms of career/higher education

Six participants could not follow their passion and are unhappy in their jobs.

**Table 13: Deaf school leavers are unable to follow their dreams at university/college**

Subtheme 3.1	Excerpts from participants' interview
<p>Unable to follow passion in terms of higher education</p>	<p>Participant 3: <i>"...when I was on the flight I wanted to become a flight attendant but again I had to drop that dream because it wasn't achievable and at the school the teacher asked me what do you want to aspire to in the future and then I said I want to become a flight attendant and teachers said no you can't do this because you are Deaf at least you must do something different and then I said no...teacher said you will travel to different countries and communication will be a problem"</i> Lines 18 – 25 (focus group 2)</p> <p>Participant 1: <i>"When I was at school...my dream I wanted to become a chartered accountant or do work in administration but unfortunately my dreams were unachievable."</i> Lines 2-3 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"...I wanted to do accounting also work in the office doing administration but I couldn't do that because they said I can't hear on the phone..."</i> Lines 28-30 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 5: <i>"ok like I said again my dream was to become a fashion designer but then I couldn't achieve that because I asked the Sign Language interpreter if he is able to help me and I couldn't even afford the services of the Sign Language interpreter and I was very very stressed and then I found a college in Cape Town I found it but then my parents said do you perhaps want to become a chef and then I said fine and I underwent that training, but my passion is fashion designing so I'm still a chef now..."</i> Lines 31 – 35 (Focus Group 2)</p>

Subtheme 3.2: Students are directed towards vocational training

Four participants communicated that schools for the Deaf generally encourage Deaf learners to follow a vocational training path during their schooling career. Some of the participants felt that they were forced to do skills training.

**Table 14: Deaf learners are directed towards skills training rather than academic training**

Subtheme 3.2	Excerpt from participants' interviews
Directed towards vocational training	<p>Participant 1: <i>"...but all we were told about was vocational work like sewing, welding, hairdressing, cheffing and then about the working world nothing was explained to us..."</i> Lines 120 – 122 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 9: <i>"...because at school they will sometimes call our parents and tell them that we should do artisan or vocational work like sewing or welding and then from that time unfortunately it was more like a cul de sac I did not know where to go afterwards, but then there was nobody to advise me..."</i> Lines 58-61 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 5: <i>"...I couldn't even read or write and then I was taken to a school where I have to go for sewing and then my passion was not there and then I was taken to hair salon I didn't like it and then there was a new call for chef training that's when I looked forward to do that and that's where my passion was. So in 2007 I went to college and studied, I didn't want to go there but then they said no you must go you know your future will be much better if I go and study at the college and then I went there Worcester NID after grade 9 Lines 265–274 (Focus Group 1)</i></p> <p>Participant 7: <i>"...for instance from my school and Noluthando there are no Deaf learners in the universities the Deaf only what they are being given are a skill this don't actually make me happy so it's like they are being forced and it's the same thing happening over and over again so</i></p>

	<i>when that is going to be resolved...so seems like to me it's still continue it's a waste of time it's been happening until now so I have been seeing it's been happening for a very long time..." Lines 144 – 149 (in-depth interview)</i>
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Subtheme 3.3: Need for Deaf role models

At least seven participants felt that they wanted to pursue careers where they could be role models for young Deaf learners and Deaf adults. They stated that there are not enough Deaf role models for Deaf people to mentor and inspire one another.

**Table 15: Young Deaf learners need Deaf role models**

Subtheme 3.3	Excerpt from participants' interviews
Need for Deaf role models	<p>Participant 5: <i>"...I want to teach the children how to bake and stuff but they say I must have a qualification. We have Deaf orphans a lot of them don't even have a support system you know, because we share that same culture and I am Deaf and the kids are also Deaf I think that's what I want to do that's where my passion is. There so many children who their parents don't even take care of them that's why I want to be their support system."</i> Lines 42-46 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 7: <i>"I like to help the Deaf children because the language I want it to improve if they can learn the sign clearly that would be good for me."</i> Lines 31-31 (in-depth interview)</p> <p>Participant 7: <i>"If maybe I can get an opportunity I can actually do the presentation to Deaf people because some Deaf people they say that it's not possible to reach their dreams, but I will represent Deaf people. They can continue with their studies it's the same like I want to become a boss myself. If I'm studying I won't look for work after I am done studying I want to become a boss to own the work industry through my</i></p>

	<p><i>language. The teachers are actually not fluent in Sign Language so that's why I want to teach the early child when they can grow up they can know or prepare to become the teachers of Sign Language so that I can grow and they can teach the generation the Sign Language also"</i></p> <p><i>Lines 67-74, (in-depth interview)</i></p>
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Subtheme 3.4: Need for a standardised SASL curriculum

The participants attended different schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape and each school used different signs. One participant indicated how the use of different signs for one concept can bring about confusion.

**Table 16: Deaf learners need to follow a standardised SASL curriculum**

Subtheme 3.4	Excerpt from participants' interviews
Need for standardised SASL curriculum	<p><i>Participant 9: "...we end up fighting about Sign Language for instance or dialect, it is very sensitive but I'm going to share with you anyway it happened before you know the sign, let's say circumcision for instance, when they sign this sign they say this is where the location of the signing should be... there (participant demonstrating) not here but there and I'd say no no. You know we would fight about such things the localizations of the signs the lap times the hand shapes and whatsoever so now right now what I want to do is how can one research the South African Sign Language maybe we can have a standardised Sign Language in South Africa, I don't know where to go for me to study that and I don't know whether I should go university because I think these politics are going to exist in the Deaf community. With the programme that I'm in now the training that I'm undertaking I believe it might lead me to what I want to see happening in this country" Lines 217 – 228 (Focus Group 1)</i></p> <p><i>Participant 3: "...I went back to school and the teachers were very very</i></p>

	<p><i>happy but then I was moved to Umtata after I completed at the other school in grade 7 in that school Umtata there was no Sign Language but in my previous school Sign Language was the medium of instruction</i></p> <p><i>Lines 311 – 315 (Focus Group 1)</i></p>
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#### 4.4 Theme 4: Lack of qualified Deaf educators

##### Subtheme 4.1: Hearing educators do not inspire learners to reach their goals

All of the participants also felt that their teachers did not encourage them to continue with higher education and rather geared them toward the skills stream of their curriculum.

**Table 17: Deaf learners are not inspired by their hearing educators**

Subtheme 4.1	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Hearing educators do not inspire Deaf learners to reach their goals	<p>Participant 7: “...<i>the teachers there unfortunately they are hearing, they don’t have the passion for working with the Deaf...</i>” Lines 213-214 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 7: “...<i>unfortunately the schooling environment never had... nobody told us you need to aspire to become somebody. Also you have to go and study tertiary education I did not know but now I know you have to work really hard for you to be successful and for you to become wealthy.</i>” Lines 48-51 (in-depth interview)</p> <p>Participant 4: “ <i>at school actually some they can’t actually support us...we thought that we the Deaf learners but the teachers were actually not supportive of us</i>” Lines 78 – 79 (Focus Group 1)</p>

##### Subtheme 4.2: Hearing educators' attitudes towards SASL

The participants who work in schools for the Deaf as teacher assistants feel that their hearing colleagues do not have a positive attitude towards using Sign Language as the main

mode of communication in the classroom and lack the passion to improve their Sign Language skills.

**Table 18: Hearing teachers have negative attitudes towards SASL**

Subtheme 4.2	Excerpt from participant’s interviews
Hearing teachers’ attitudes toward SASL	<p>Participant 7: “ <i>...the teacher will actually fail to help the child or to explain...so what I don’t understand is the teachers did go to university so that is my experience ...</i>” Lines 141-143 (individual interview)</p> <p>Participant 1: “ <i>...I want the hearing teachers to be fluent in Sign Language so it could be easy for me. So that is the negative things that I don’t actually like so I want them to learn Sign Language so if they are willing to learn Sign Language they must go for it but some I notice that they some of them they actually don’t have the passion to learn Sign Language</i>” Lines 71-75 (individual interview)</p>

## 5.1 Theme 5: Unfair treatment in the workplace

### Subtheme 5.1: Only the hearing are employed and promoted

Five participants felt that Deaf employees are always discriminated against in the workplace. Three participants felt specifically discriminated against with regard to sick leave and unfair disciplinary hearings. Due to the language barrier in the workplace the participants often felt misunderstood, unable to communicate their points of view effectively and punished unfairly. Six participants felt that their hearing colleagues in the workplace should learn Sign Language.

**Table 19: Deaf people struggle to find employment or leadership positions within the workplace**

Subtheme 5.1	Excerpt from participants' interviews
<p>Only the hearing are employed and promoted</p>	<p>Participant 1: <i>"...because the hearing world is not accommodative of Deaf people there is no Deaf Communication that exists in that world so as a result of that I had to stay at home doing nothing..."</i> Lines 124 -126 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 1: <i>"...a new director started that was now part of our project and then this person unfortunately was not very passionate about Sign Language. He did not even show an interest, I couldn't even teach him I couldn't impose that he learn Sign Language but in the meetings that was going to be a challenge for me. I couldn't follow the meeting and then you know they will just...when this new person started I was not given a letter that my contract had expired and I didn't know why was it because of my disability the reason why I was fired? I didn't know whether I was being a burden and then as a result of that my contract expired?..."</i> Lines 380 – 389 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 5: <i>"working as a chef it's difficult but what I learn is to become patient so it is difficult for a Deaf person to get a job so for me being patient I think it's a good thing so I can't actually leave that job I will continue."</i> Lines 48 – 50 (focus group 1)</p> <p>Participant 8: <i>"...when a Deaf person says they want to assign duties they wouldn't even speak to us the actions are very very negative and they act negatively towards us when they assign duties."</i> Lines 398 – 400 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 2: <i>"...I'll be off sick I'm not treated equally no I can't even take a sick leave hearing people are allowed to do that and it's really,</i></p>

	<i>really not fair. The hearing person is sick they don't ask for a doctor's certificate but if I can't produce one I get punished for it." Lines 114 – 117 (Focus Group 2)</i>
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Subtheme 5.2: Unfair disciplinary hearings due to communication barrier

The participants felt that Deaf employees are treated unfairly in the workplace and that they are not able to defend themselves when being unfairly disciplined.

**Table 20: Deaf employees are treated unfairly in the workplace due to miscommunication**

Subtitle 5.2	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Unfair disciplinary hearings due to communication barrier	<p>Participant 2: <i>"You know let's say when sometimes when I'm very very angry then managers angry and they are telling me I must do that and that and that quickly and you know I can't even read their lips and then I'll ask them just hang on I don't understand and can you please repeat the instruction and I won't understand anything the manager said and do them wrong." Lines 166-169 (Focus Group 2)</i></p> <p>Participant 9: <i>"...this hearing person first started to punch a Deaf person and that person then retaliated and when the manager asked what happened you know the hearing person started defending herself and unfortunately for my friend she could not even defend herself because due to Sign Language. You know the blame was put on her and then she was fired." Lines 342 – 351 (Focus Group 1)</i></p> <p>Participant 3: <i>"and you know in my workplace I think communication because communication is a barrier it has to change the way we communicate." Lines 161 – 162 (Focus Group 2)</i></p>



Subtheme 5.3: Disrespect and exclusion

All of the participants felt that their hearing colleagues and employers treat them as though they are of a lower status in the workplace because of the communication barrier between them. The participants also stated that they are not included when important information is given to the employees in their workplaces which make them feel excluded.

**Table 21: Deaf employees are disrespected and feel excluded from important issues in the workplace**

Subtheme 5.3	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Disrespect and exclusion	<p>Participant 7: <i>“yes like in my case you know the hearing teachers we being discriminated they disregard us because I’m Deaf they even call us children even if I’m older than them they call us ‘children’ so their negative attitudes prevail in that environment like for instance, in the meetings we are never called sometimes. The only people they are attending are the hearing the meetings are for the hearing and for the Deaf they afterwards”</i> Lines 357 – 362 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>“...what is negative is that they would like say things to me and I would like say no no don’t say that you know they will be saying things to me and I don’t even understand it and then I will sign and when I sign they’ll be laughing, laughing at me and I’ll try to use my voice you know and that upsets me, it makes me very angry and then in that way it makes one to become emotional and you put yourself in a very compromising position.”</i> Lines 366 – 370 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 2: <i>“... I would try to chat and mingle with the hearing people and sometimes there would be something going on and this and that and then I’ll ask the hearing and I’ll ask people why certain things would happen and then they would say nothing happened. You know when there’s gatherings nothing is told about time and even the uniform and if anything happened important that we must know like we wear a</i></p>

	<p><i>uniform there is a specific colour that one has to wear on that day so the information always delayed we are the last one to get the information for instance to celebrate cancer day or breast cancer day the specific colour that one should wear that is not communicated to us.” Lines 179 – 186 (Focus Group 2)</i></p> <p>Participant 3: <i>“I once had a problem with work and I was given a disciplinary letter and I asked for an interpreter and they said no no no there’s no need for interpreter and I said no no I’m not gonna sign that like that.” Lines 199 – 200 (Focus Group 2)</i></p>
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Subtheme 5.4: Power relations in the workplace

One participant felt that when involved in projects at work that the hearing automatically are put in leadership roles and the Deaf are left to follow their lead even when they are the ones who initiate most of the ideas for projects.

**Table 22: Uneven power relations between the hearing and the Deaf in the workplace**

Subtheme 5.4	Excerpt from participants interviews
Power relations in the workplace	<p>Participant 7: <i>“for instance a hearing person will have a product in South African Sign Language and they want to take over but this is my right this is my language I should be the one who is in charge. You know sometimes it’s so confusing and frustrating and I’m thinking if I do this like I’m at school, the teachers are telling me what to do but it’s my language, the hearing and the Deaf community and especially those that are passionate about change in sign language they should work hand in hand those that want to see change they must work hand-in-hand with us they should not tell us what to do..” Lines 239 – 248 (Focus Group 1)</i></p>

### Subtheme 5.5: Need for orientation and induction

A general feeling was communicated of a need for more orientation and guidance when entering a hearing workplace. One participant felt that the job placement officer of Deaf employees should prepare the Deaf employees and hearing employers / colleagues for working with each other.

**Table 23: Deaf people need orientation and induction in the workplace**

Subheading 5.5	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Need for orientation and induction	<p>Participant 2: <i>“Yes, they will tell us your leave, your dates, your development leave, you come late there’s lunch and then you sign the contract and that’s it that’s about it nothing was explained in detail.”</i> Lines 132 - 133 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 9: <i>“Deaf people they must ensure that whenever there is an appointment in that company that at least they can try to accommodate the Deaf person. They should like make reasonable accommodations for Deaf persons for instance you know an interpreter should be appointed and the interpreter should explain the HR and processes the contract, apply leave too should be explained because that has never been explained to us before. One can read herself or even sign the contract they must do orientation maybe one week or two weeks orientation when they explain the processes of companies HR my right Deaf as a Deaf employee, you know what will happen Deaf employees they are being exposed and exploited.”</i> Lines 423 – 430 (Focus Group 1)</p>

**Theme 6: Need for stronger transition programs**

Subtheme 6.1: Need for job readiness training/career guidance

Five participants felt that their school did not adequately train them for life after school.

**Table 24: Deaf school leavers need stronger transitional programmes**

Subtheme 6.1	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Need for job readiness training / career guidance	<p>Participant 7: <i>"I didn't know what to do, I didn't know where to go, it was like my future was destroyed. I could see other Deaf they were going to university and get qualification and in my sleep I could see my dreams I always worry in my dreams. I find myself in a schooling environment in a tertiary environment because that's what I want to do. I want to see myself going to the university but who can help me because my father knew that I can become someone I can contribute to this country but there are always obstacles but where do I go where is my future?"</i> Lines 281 – 286 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 1: <i>"...never we never had a career guidance in school so during the farewell event or celebration we were in it, I was grade 8 okay standard 8 grade 10 and then we were told that those who are oldest they should leave the school where that was actually imposed on us. So during the farewell celebration we went for a camp and in that camp it was more like you know the topic of the workshop in that camp was outside world, what do you do so there was nobody there who is an expert in guidance as to what can one aspire to do but all we were told about was vocational work like sewing, welding hairdressing, chef to become a chef and then what happened in the hearing world the working world for that matter world you know nothing was explained to us. Like a curriculum for instance we didn't even know how to do a CV or how to type that up what skills is it required for one to occupy such work nothing was told to us so in that</i></p>

*farewell celebration we were stuck because the hearing world is not accommodative of Deaf people there is no Deaf communication that exists in that world so as a result of that I had to stay at home doing nothing..." Lines 114 – 126 (Focus Group 1)*

*Participant 1: "...I didn't really know what was an interview and even the way I dressed I wouldn't even dress formally I would be looking a bit shabby because you know nothing was explained that I was going in for an interview..." Lines 134 – 136 (Focus Group 1)*

*Participant 2: "okay you know for me I would say that after completing my schooling I went to look for a job I didn't enjoy that experience and again when I started working I opened up many many accounts and then afterwards when I was unemployed I was so much in debt drowning. I was blacklisted you know and then everyone asking didn't they teach you about financial management and this and that and that was how it was for me .... so now the frustrations they were there I realise that I shouldn't have done that I should have looked for information but unfortunately nobody has told us nobody has advised us" Lines 208 – 214 (Focus Group 2)*

*Participant 2: "Okay it's fine here at school actually there is no support hearing are actually the ones who are given the attention we as Deaf learners we are not being noticed we are side-lined so it's difficult for us to go out and do things for ourselves" Lines 57 – 59 (Focus Group 1)*

*"Participant 3: "The school was only teaching Maths and English they didn't teach us how to make a CV how to introduce yourself how to behave yourself at work such information we never got." Lines 31 – 32 (in-depth interview)*

## Subtheme 6.2: Fear of the hearing world

The participants communicated that they prefer working with Deaf people and felt alienated in workplaces where their colleagues are all hearing.

**Table 25: Deaf school leavers fear the hearing world**

Subtheme 6.2	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Fear of hearing world	<p>Participant 5: <i>"Yes I am from Durban and yes all the teachers at that school were Deaf and you know they will teach us the South African Sign Language and those were our role models. When I finished completed my schooling I unfortunately had to adjust to the hearing world I was use to this world when I entered the hearing world it was a challenge for me and when I went to the workplace there were so many hearing people, they were discriminating against me and just to compare the two worlds it was a big adjustment for me"</i> Lines 81 – 86 (Focus Group 2)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"before when I was working at Altitude there was the hearing, I don't actually feel like working with the hearing people maybe for instance when I want to chat with them they won't actually understand what I'm saying so for me it's better to work with the Deaf person so that we can communicate in an easy way to understand each other."</i> Lines 113 – 116 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 3: <i>"When I started working with the hearing I thought it was going to be easy, but it was very difficult and as a result I just left my job at Makro for 8 months, then I stopped working because the communication was not there and they would just explain to me do this and this and this and this and I didn't understand."</i> Lines 57 – 59 (in-depth interview)</p>

### Subtheme 6.3: Deaf unity in the workplace

The participants felt more comfortable working with Deaf colleagues because they felt they understood each other and felt less alienated and ridiculed.

**Table 26: Deaf people feel more connected to other Deaf people in the workplace**

Subtheme 6.3	Excerpts from participants' interviews
Deaf unity	<p>Participant 4: <i>“Before I felt good, when time goes I felt that now they are abusing us so now I thought okay let me work with the Deaf team so if like for instance I’m trying to explain something they will go on with me, but they don’t understand what I’m saying to them, so I actually don’t feel good about it”</i> Lines 134 – 136 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 3 : <i>“No I don’t feel it’s good to work with them because some hearing they don’t understand the Deafs so if you have done something wrong they don’t know whether you understand what you are supposed to do because of the language barrier etc. Lines 53-54 (Focus Group 2)</i></p>

### **Theme 7: Need for deaf awareness training in the workplace**

Seven of the participants communicated that most of the miscommunication that occurs in the workplace is due to communication barrier between the hearing and the Deaf.

#### Subtheme 7.1: The hearing have no knowledge of Deaf people in the workplace and higher education institutions

The participants felt that the hearing world at large does not know much about Deaf culture and Sign Language and that there should be more companies like eDeaf who conducts deaf awareness training in the workplace for both the Deaf employee and the hearing employer and colleagues.

**Table 27: No knowledge of Deaf people in the workplace and higher education institutions**

Subtheme 7.1	Excerpts from participants' interviews
The hearing have no knowledge of Deaf people in the workplace and higher education institutions	<p>Participant 9: <i>"...awareness raising is very important awareness raising in all the mainstream companies so the JPO (Job placement Officer) I think it's her duty to do that and also to prepare the Deaf people to this new environment. They just place us they have never been patient for that matter, awareness training it's important that it is conducted prior to placement of Deaf employees "</i> Lines 430 – 434 (Focus Group 1)</p> <p>Participant 4: <i>"...I was taken to the chef school but in that school it was all of them hearing and there was no communication and then there was this person was trying to say something in Afrikaans and then I said I don't know and just concentrate on my training and my work and they said just point and said do this do that and then they said you must communicate. They said you must try to have relationships with the hearing and I say no no it can't work I'm Deaf..."</i> Lines 169 – 174 (Focus Group 1)</p>

Subtheme 7.2: Negative attitude towards Deaf people in the workplace

All of the participants found that hearing people generally have a negative attitude toward Deaf people and their language.

**Table 28: Hearing people have negative attitudes toward Deaf people in the workplace**

Subtheme 7.2	Excerpt from participants' interviews
Negative attitude toward Deaf people in the workplace	<p>Participant 1: <i>"You know for me unfortunately I cannot change I cannot change a situation that I am not control of. A person has to change because we are being discriminated against every single day. We have never done anything they must change how they perceive us, a Deaf person, and change their negative attitude."</i> Lines 414 – 417 (Focus Group 1)</p>



	<p>Participant 8: <i>“...I know that there are very few hearing people who want to assist, but there are those that are very negative towards the Deaf people like let’s say for instance that they...where in the working environment you know how they’ll act - you know our culture we’ll talk, the hearing people will think that maybe whatever we will talk we are looking at them and think that we are gossiping about them...”</i>  <i>Lines 394 – 398 (Focus Group 1)</i></p> <p>Participant 5: <i>“...I want to work at a different company but my application was unsuccessful and I don’t like working there so, but then now in that hospital there are so many hearing people working there I’m the only Deaf person at that hospital who works there. The discrimination against me there is very severe”</i> <i>Lines 70 – 72 (Focus Group 2)</i></p>
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### **Summary of results**

The participants reported that the majority of Deaf school leavers exit schools for the Deaf with poor literacy skills and are unable to meet university requirements. From the data obtained during the interviews it seems as though most of the participants did not receive a strong academic programme whilst attending schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape and that communication barriers exist between hearing educators and Deaf learners. The data revealed that the majority of educators of the Deaf in the Western Cape are not fluent in SASL and that hearing educators did not inspire Deaf learners to reach their goals during the schooling career. The results point to a need for more Deaf role models and qualified Deaf educators to inspire young Deaf learners at schools for the Deaf. The participants reported resentment towards hearing educators who seem to have had a negative attitude towards SASL. The participants communicated that SASL is not yet recognized as an official language and that this meant limited language access to higher education institutions for Deaf students.

Furthermore, the data obtained, indicated that few schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape offer Grade 12 level education and those Deaf school leavers generally do not have financial resources to further their education and are unable to pay for their own SASLI's at higher education institutions. The majority of Deaf learners at schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape are directed toward the schools' skills training program which generally results in no accredited qualification in the Western Cape.

The data obtained from the interviews indicated that issues of multilingualism compounds communication barriers between the hearing and the Deaf and that there is a need for a standardised SASL curriculum in schools for the Deaf (participants attended schools for the Deaf prior to CAPS SASL). The participants reported that Deaf learners are often forced to choose from a limited number of career paths offered at Deaf colleges when they leave school and as a result seem to be unable to follow career paths that they are passionate about.

The results revealed that the participants see a need for stronger bridging programmes like career guidance and job readiness programmes for Deaf school leavers in the Western Cape to assist the transition from school to the workplace or higher education. The participants reported that they prefer working with other Deaf people and fear the hearing world where they often feel alienated and discriminated against. From the interviews it seems that Deaf employees are usually disciplined unfairly due to miscommunication. In terms of the workplace specifically, the participants reported that they would appreciate induction and orientation when about to commence new employment.

The results of this study suggest that generally hearing employees are employed and promoted over Deaf employees and that unfair power dynamics exist between the hearing and the Deaf in the workplace. The participants reported that Deaf employees are disrespected and excluded in the workplace and that hearing people in general lack knowledge of Deafness and have a negative attitude towards Deaf people.

Finally, the participants reported that there is a need for Deaf awareness training in the workplace and higher education institutions.

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**DISCUSSION**

## 5. Discussion

This chapter presents the general discussion of the findings of this study in relation to the themes presented in Chapter 4. The researcher explored the experiences of young Deaf adults transitioning from high school to higher education and the workplace within the Western Cape. A small sample of nineteen Deaf participants between the ages 24 – 35 years of age were used to explore in-depth what the experiences of these participants were. This study sought to give these young Deaf adults a voice and gives specific attention to the challenges relating to post-secondary education and occupation.

### 5.1. Theme 1: Deaf school leavers are unable to meet university requirements

Subthemes: 1.1 Few schools for the Deaf offer Grade 12  
1.2 Poor literacy levels  
1.3 SASL not recognized as official language  
1.4 Need for improved academic school preparation for further education  
1.5 No financial resources for higher education

#### ***5.1.1 Few schools for the Deaf offer grade 12***

The results of this study highlighted that most schools for the Deaf in South Africa do not offer Grade 12 and end at grade 9. Furthermore, the results of this study point to the majority of Deaf school-leavers in the Western Cape exit the school system with no Senior Certificate, leaving them with limited options for further education and employment.

Thus, Deaf school leavers in South Africa face an enormous challenge when they embark on a journey to enter the unfamiliar world of predominantly hearing people which is different to the signing school environment that they were used to for approximately 12 years.

The results of this study revealed how many times schools for the Deaf have given Deaf learners a place of safety, served as a source of identity and provided Deaf learners with a sense of belonging and solidarity despite the fact that most teachers of the deaf cannot sign fluently. However, with the introduction of CAPS SASL (2013) SASL is offered as a Home Language and Afrikaans/English as a First Additional Language (FAL) from Grades 1 to 9). In addition, CAPS SASL makes provision for Afrikaans/English to be offered as a Second

Additional (SAL) for Grades 4 – 9. This change in Deaf Education in South Africa means that there is progress towards remedying the problem of university admission criteria for deaf students in terms of language.

Although the majority of Deaf school leavers do not continue onto tertiary education, as found in this study, the number of Deaf students entering higher education institutions in South Africa has increased. It is unfortunate that the lack of transitional services from ‘cradle to career’, places these young Deaf adults in vulnerable positions. On the other hand, Baker et al. (2015) notes that in most countries deaf people have little opportunity to pursue higher education as they have been unable to satisfy the entrance requirements. The DBE (2005) states that higher education candidates, particularly in the faculties of humanities, are required to have passed two of the eleven of the official languages used in South Africa. Magongwa (2007) explains that one of these languages must be a home language or first language and the other must be a first additional language.

Deaf school leavers are unable to empower themselves through further education which perpetuates the cycle of unemployment and poverty. The results in this study reflect that Deaf learners typically leave schools for the Deaf with low self-esteem, low self-confidence and further isolation from a dominant hearing world.

The DHET suggested that admission policies to higher education be reconstructed so that those who do not achieve university admission will still be able to access higher education (DHET, 2009). It was proposed that this is to be executed by expanding post-secondary options for school leavers by having open admission requirements for FET colleges that could act as main institutions for providing second-chance Senior Certificates to out-of-school candidates for both part-time candidates (those who wrote the Senior Certificate after full-time studies, but did not achieve it) and those who have never written the Senior Certificate examination before. Furthermore, the DHET advises that these FET colleges could provide access courses for learners who failed their Senior Certificate examinations or passed it poorly and progressively offer foundation degrees or transfer courses (DHET,

2009). These plans from DHET (2009) are good, except that it does not include accommodations for Deaf learners.

Based on the reality that most Deaf school leavers do not obtain a Senior Certificate as found in this study, a similar initiative for post-secondary options should be considered for the Deaf learner so that they too have the opportunity to access further education and training.

### **5.1.2 Poor literacy skills**

This study reflected that most participants are exposed to a signed language for the first time when they start school and struggle with literacy in terms of second language acquisition. Typically developing countries like South Africa are examples of where Deaf children are late learners of a signed language, which causes a general delay in their language learning abilities including literacy development (Akach, 2010). Baker et al. (2015) adds how this phenomenon is largely due to Deaf children receiving no signed language input until they attend a school for the Deaf where sign language is used.

Ninety percent of Deaf children are born to hearing parents which necessitates the need for parents of Deaf children to learn a sign language as soon as they realise their child is deaf (Baker et al., 2015). More often than not, hearing parents of Deaf children are not able to produce meaningful utterances in sign language during the child's critical period of learning a language. When this is the case, the Deaf child usually experiences a significant delay in learning language in general (Akach, 2010).

The Deaf child learns the spoken or written language of the hearing society in terms of literacy development and in order to do this, the Deaf child as with the hearing child, has to have an intact first language for second language acquisition. When the South African Deaf child starts to learn a sign language for the first time when entering the school system, sign language acquisition happens at a slower rate, compared to Deaf children who have received signed language input from birth (Baker, et al., 2015). This correlates with the poor literacy development seen amongst Deaf learners in South Africa. Deaf children taught in signed languages are faced with the challenge of learning to read and write in a non-signed language hence the enormous challenge for many Deaf people to learn a second spoken or

written language (Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012). Therefore, the majority of Deaf school leavers are functionally illiterate and enter the hearing world with partial or no literacy skills; this further cripples their chances of engaging in higher education, leaving them underprepared to seek gainful employment and engage in any productive way within their society and economy.

### ***5.1.3 SASL is not recognized as an official language***

The results in this study support the recognition of SASL as the first language of the Deaf Community in South Africa and emphasises how the lack of its recognition as a fully-fledged language, affects the future of young Deaf adults who aspire to further their education and quality of life.

By not recognizing SASL as an official language, the hearing community disables the Deaf person by limiting access to equal and quality education in SASL, equal employment opportunities and the ability to participate meaningfully in society.

### ***5.1.4 Deaf learners have poor academic preparation for higher education and the workplace***

In South Africa, the poor level of education at schools for the deaf results in deaf adults being excluded from tertiary education and subsequent employment. The results of this study indicated that Deaf learners in the Western Cape are in need of a stronger academic foundation in order to pursue higher education and/or employment, and that teachers of the Deaf generally have low expectations from Deaf learners.

Akach (2010) describes that, as with other cultural minorities and oppressed groups, teachers' low expectations of deaf children lead to lower levels of academic performance and low self-esteem. Emerging data suggest that literacy levels and general academic achievement levels can be raised when effective early intervention, characterised by a family-centred approach, is implemented. This would involve educators and support staff (speech therapists, audiologists, educational psychologists, etc.) taking on roles as consultants to parents and caregivers and work as a team towards the holistic management of the Deaf child (Marschark & Spencer, 2009).

Storbeck (2005) states that teachers of the Deaf need a multitude of additional understandings and skills (other than sign language and knowledge of Deaf culture) in order to effectively create an inviting and effective learning environment for their Deaf learners. Moreover, these teachers need an understanding and an awareness of Deaf pedagogy (Storbeck, 2005). In addition, optimal development of the Deaf and Hard-of Hearing child requires early access to positive interactions and accessible language (Marschark & Spencer, 2009). Natural sign languages are learned readily and can develop at a pace typical of hearing children's spoken language, but only when fluent sign models are available (Baker, et al., 2015).

Marschark and Spencer (2009) discuss how an evidence base related to educational approaches to promote literacy skills regardless of the models or approaches used for language development is starting to grow. From a pedagogical point of view, vocabulary, syntax and phonological knowledge in Deaf and Hard-of Hearing children continue to be deficient compared to hearing children unless direct instruction is supplied (Marschark and Spencer, 2009). According to Baker et al. (2015) direct instruction provided in meaningful and interactive contexts supports a range of reading and writing skills. Research provides no clear guidelines on how direct instruction should proceed, but shows that early shared reading and writing experiences appear to provide significant support for emerging literacy skills (Marschark & Spencer, 2009). Furthermore, structured but responsive approaches such as that described in the dialogic reading programme, modelling, and turn-taking strategies appropriate to visual communication may be useful for educators and families of children with hearing loss when developing literacy skills (Marschark & Spencer, 2009).

By strengthening the academic preparation of the Deaf learner we are addressing the reality of most Deaf adults who enter the hearing world underprepared to engage in any productive way with the economy of the country. These Deaf adults typically end up depending on disability grants and other funded schemes (Aarons & Akach, 1999, cited in Akach, 2010). Research has shown that although a social and political consensus seems to support the integration of students with and without hearing loss in classes, specific placements options have been found to have little effect on the academic outcomes of



these learners. Marschark & Spencer (2009) discuss how a model where a “critical mass” of children with hearing loss is placed within a somewhat larger group of hearing classmates, appear to have more positive social-emotional effects. Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners tend to have special learning needs in addition to potential communication barriers and therefore educators or an educator team should have a mix of expertise and strong collaboration skills to support these learners within an inclusive education environment (Marschark & Spencer, 2009).

It is important for educators of the Deaf to understand that students with hearing loss show delays and deficits in the areas of literacy and other content areas. According to Marschark and Spencer (2009) these difficulties have been attributed to a variety of factors including under-use of metacognitive strategies, decreased visual attention to information provided in classrooms, lack of language skills for understanding written texts and information presented during class and relatively infrequent exposure to true problem-solving activities during class time. Research shows that achievement tends to be higher when teachers are subject-matter specialists and are also knowledgeable about the special learning needs of students with hearing loss. Marschark and Spencer (2009) report that approaches that emphasise visual modelling and presentation of mathematical concepts visually, appear to be a promising contribution to the education of Deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Furthermore, embedding writing activities into science and related classes appears to have a mutually positive effect on concept development and literacy skills (Marschark & Spencer, 2009).

Education White Paper 6 stresses the importance that the education and training system must change in order to accommodate the full range of learning needs, with particular attention to strategies for instructional and curriculum transformation (DoE, 2001). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) 2013 provide South African schools with guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom with regard to inclusion. The CAPS provide teachers, principals, subject advisors, administrators, school governors and other personnel, alternate methods of instruction and assessment for learners with barriers to learning (DoE, 2011). These involve assessing learners with disabilities’ mastery of grade level-content with a reduced load of content or at a more functional level; providing specific test formats or procedures that provide these learners with equal

opportunities to demonstrate their attainment of content which is at the same grade-level as the general assessment (DoE, 2011). The National policy on the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate states that target learners include learners with hearing loss who need additional, alternate formats, readers, amanuensis, electronic equipment, etc. (DoE, 2011). Educators of the deaf will therefore be able to apply for assessment accommodation and concession for examination purposes (SIAS, 2014).

#### ***5.1.5 Deaf learners cannot pay higher education tuition fees***

The results of this study underline that Deaf students are financially unable to access higher education. The majority of Deaf learners in the Western Cape come from impoverished backgrounds, where the majority of the parents are commonly unemployed or do not earn enough to send their children to university or college. In October 2015, students from universities across South Africa embarked on mass protests calling for an end to tertiary institution fee increases. The “#FeesMustFall” campaign then marched on the Union buildings where the President Jacob Zuma announced all fee increases for 2016 would be scrapped. The South African government has indicated plans to provide free education for underprivileged students by 2018 and has reprioritised R14.5 billion for the 2016/2017 financial year to be allocated to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) (Wort; Theletsane, 2016). According to NSFAS a new funding model will be used with a means test that will seek to address the ‘missing middle’ by specialising in subsidies according to different income levels. The state urges the private sector to assist with funding the ‘missing middle by reflecting that private companies only stand to benefit at a later stage when these students graduate. Gauteng ANC secretary, Hope Papo suggested that the South African economy will benefit with a work force that is skilled in various areas (Theletsane, 2016).

The #FeesMustFall campaign reflects a general difficulty for students in South Africa to access higher education. The results of this study reveals how much more difficult it is for the South African Deaf learner to access Higher Education in general before considering at the lack of financial means to go to university or college. The critical question is “Who is campaigning for them?” The Deaf student has been doubly oppressed in the sense that schools for the Deaf do not prepare them well enough to meet university entry

requirements and the state pays less attention to their lack of financial needs to access Higher Education.

The NSFAS has indicated that R14.5 billion will not pay for those who do not meet the criteria this year, but that the new funding model, which will be piloted in 2017, will have a relative means to determine a family's disposable income. According to the NSFAS the means test will have scientific models to determine whether a household can afford university fees. In addition, the NSFAS indicated that the means test will seek to address the high dropout rate of poor students from tertiary education and aim to provide more than just financial aid but life skills and psycho-social support for those coming from rural areas (Theletsane, 2016). This model should aim to include Deaf learners in general especially the Deaf 'missing middle'.

## **5.2. Theme 2: Communication barriers in Deaf Education**

- Subthemes:
- 2.1 Educators are not fluent in SASL
  - 2.2 Resentment towards hearing world
  - 2.3 Pay for own SASLI
  - 2.4 Issues of multilingualism

In 2006 DeafSA compiled a position paper on the education of Deaf learners which included some comments made by Deaf senior learners and their negative experience of education at schools for the Deaf. The results from this study mirror the reflections and comments of these Deaf senior learners which include:

“The SASL of the teachers is not on standard. We get frustrated and angry if they use too much speech. Aggression of learners is because we don't understand work if teachers speak, speak, speak. Teachers who are appointed at this school must know SASL.”  
(Participant 3)

“We do badly in a subject because the teacher does not sign well. We are punished and sometimes fail because the teacher does not know our language. Is it right? No we must not fail our subject, that teacher must fail her teaching.”

The results of this study similarly stress communication barriers that exist between the Deaf and hearing community, especially in academic settings and accentuates how for most Deaf learners in South Africa, the learning experience takes place in a language that is not their own, for example spoken English or Afrikaans.

Magongwa (2010) discusses how SASL medium schools would create barrier-free inclusive education for deaf students

### ***5.2.1 Educators of the Deaf are not fluent in SASL***

The results of this study draw attention to the fact that educators of the Deaf are not fluent in SASL, which is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) for Deaf learners. These results point to a communication barrier between educators of the Deaf and their Deaf learners. According to Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010), the lack of communication between hearing teacher and deaf pupil is something that has also been observed and described in Deaf Education in many western countries. The South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 states that SASL should be regarded as an official LOLT in South Africa. This study included participants who would have experienced Deaf Education prior to CAPS 2013 when most educators of the Deaf did not have the necessary signing skills in SASL to prepare them to use SASL as a medium of instruction in the teaching of Deaf learners (Akach, 2010) . The results of this study is in line with an investigation done by DeafSA in 2006 which stressed the urgency of a grave situation where Deaf learners had little access to the curriculum for most of the time spent at school because the majority of the educators were not proficient in SASL.

Four participants in this study are Deaf teacher assistants and serve as teacher aides to educators of Deaf learners. Deaf teacher assistants in South Africa are themselves Deaf, competent in SASL but often do not have a National Senior Certificate. The use of Deaf teacher assistants adds to the capacity of teaching through Sign language as they are allocated to specific classes. Ideally, schools for the Deaf require a Deaf teaching assistant for every class but the statistics on Deaf Education in November 2010 revealed that there are 87 Deaf teaching assistants available to only 22 of the 37 special schools for the Deaf.

The results of this study underline the need for great development and additional support for the teaching and learning of Deaf learners. Educators of Deaf learners need to engage in appropriate courses in SASL to appreciate the complexity of signed language and by extension realise what the learners are missing in the classroom. Akach (2010) describes support can be given to educators of the Deaf by way of (i) retraining the teachers on the job (i.e. at school) with assistance of the Deaf adults being employed as classroom assistants; and (ii) making it mandatory that at teacher training facilities the graduating teachers take SASL courses for at least two years.

### ***5.2.2 Resentment from the Deaf towards the hearing world***

The results of this study revealed that Deaf people often harbour resentment towards their past hearing educators and the hearing world in general. They feel that they were often overlooked, and not seen as important compared to their speaking counterparts. Participants felt that they were neglected and received sub-standard education because prior to 2013 SASL was not the LOLT in classrooms for the Deaf. Resentment from these adults come from feelings of being misunderstood, not supported enough academically during their schooling career and being typically directed towards skills training which is not what they necessarily always wanted. The results of this study reflect resentment towards the hearing world wanting to dominate SASL projects and for not recognizing and respecting SASL as the first language of Deaf people.

In a study done by Moroe (2013) CODA's shared their resentment towards professionals like audiologists and social workers. Participants expressed that audiologist do not allow Deaf people to make their own choices in terms of what mode of communication and culture the family prefers. Professionals working in the field of deafness need to adopt a cultural view of deafness, where Deaf individuals are seen and accepted as a cultural minority instead of a disabled community. Research has shown that many Deaf people want the hearing world to understand that deafness is a cultural category and not a disability which is often imposed on Deaf people by the hearing community. DeafSA (2006) reports on the reflections of Deaf school leavers who are resentful towards their past hearing educators who they feel robbed them of a solid academic foundation due to their inability to use SASL fluently and lack of understanding Deaf culture.

### ***5.2.3 Deaf students are expected to pay for their own SASLI***

The results of this study emphasise that Deaf learners do not have the finances to further their skills or education, and lack access to bursaries and internships to strengthen their opportunities for a better future. Deaf school leavers who are able to meet university entry requirements are unable to fund their own personal SASLI. SASLI's are a necessity for Deaf students at higher education institutions. Magongwa (2010) underlines the importance of an SASLI to sign for Deaf students in a higher education setting throughout the academic day. There is a significant need for the advocating for SASL as one of South Africa's official languages and therefore, the importance of SASLI's at higher education institutions. If this is not done Deaf people of South Africa remain invisible and are left with less than desirable prospects and options to better their own lives. According to Akach (2010), no SASL curriculum and teacher attitudes towards SASL as a medium of instruction have pointed to poor academic preparation of Deaf children.

A study done on Deaf students and higher education in the United Kingdom in 1991 revealed that generally a poor level of service is available to deaf students, an ignorance of the required support needs and a low level of representation of deaf people in higher education (Corlett, 1991). Corlett (1991) allude to several suggestions on how policies and practices in institutions could be changed to widen access to deaf students. The study revealed an absence of support and awareness to deaf students which led to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) to aid administrative and teaching staff to adapt to deaf students.

Magongwa (2007) investigated the level of support services provided to students with disabilities including the Deaf at The University of Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa and makes reference to Wits admission policy. The Wits admission policy has been amended to meet the demands of the South African Bill of rights, providing guidelines for access to the university for individuals with disabilities. The admission policy states that students with disabilities will be admitted based on the same criteria as those which apply to other students including academic ability and suitability for the course or degree and 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 makes clear that the provision of appropriate support will be limited by the affordability of support systems.

Wits has aligned itself with the South African and international policy on inclusive education and leads the way in making university degrees accessible to students with disabilities and the Deaf. Wits allocates funds to the Disability Unit for SASL interpreting services annually which provides SASL interpreters of deaf students. Magongwa (2007) reports that the provision of SASLI's at Wits is one of the factors that enhances access to knowledge for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Although, some funding is allocated towards funding for SASLI's, Magongwa's study indicated a concern for a shortage of skilled SASLI's.

Although universities have begun to employ support structures for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students, there is a need for more comprehensive monitoring of deaf students at higher education institutions (Corlett, 1991; Magongwa, 2007). In accordance with its policy and practice guidelines to support students with disabilities, the Wits Disability unit provides academic support and guidance, assistance with bursary and loan application and services such as SASLI's, note takers, mathematic tutors, adaptive devices, invigilators, application for extra time for tests and examinations, etc. In order to sustain and maintain the services provided by the Disability Unit at Wits which is primarily depended on fundraising effort, NSFAS should consider that the #FeesMustFall campaign extends to Deaf students as well. It is important that Deaf students wanting to access and fund their higher education not be overlooked when the state prioritises money to support underprivileged students.

#### ***5.2.4 Issues of multilingualism***

The results of this study show that both learners and Deaf teacher assistants in schools for the Deaf struggle to develop and maintain their natural sign language. Some of the participants communicated they were forced to use and read speech isiXhosa during the schooling career, which was often in the spoken language of their teachers, parents and the local community (isiXhosa). However, the written language that they were taught at school was in English. For most deaf learners in South Africa, the learning experience takes place in a language that is not their own, for example in spoken and written English or Afrikaans.

The issue of multilingualism arise where Deaf learners are expected to learn their L1 (SASL) whilst using L1 to acquire L2 (written English) and often are expected to speech read isiXhosa (L3). Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012) clarify how Deaf students may be learning SASL as their primary language of communication (under optimal conditions), may encounter English as the dominant language of learning and teaching at school, and may come from families who speak yet another South African language at home. This means that the South African Deaf child may potentially find themselves having to learn at least three languages simultaneously at different levels and for different purposes (Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012).

Grosjean (2010) argues that sign-language and spoken-language bilingualism is the only way that deaf children will meet their many needs. The needs of a deaf child include communicating with their parents as early as possible, to develop cognitive abilities, to acquire knowledge of the world, to communicate fully with the surrounding the world and to acculturate into hearing and the deaf worlds (Grosjean, 2010). Moreover, Grosjean (2010) states that depending on the child, the two languages will play different roles – some children will be dominant in the sign language, others will be dominant in the spoken language and some will be balanced in their two languages. Using a signed language as the language of learning and teaching exposes Deaf learners to a visual (as opposed to an aural) language that they can easily acquire, given their biological readiness and adequate language stimulation (Akach, 2010, Baker et al., (2015) & Glaser & Van Pletzen (2012).

### **5.3 Theme 3: Limited study choices offered at colleges for the Deaf**

- Subtheme:
- 3.1 Unable to follow passion in terms of career/education
  - 3.2 Directed towards vocational training
  - 3.3 Need for Deaf role models
  - 3.4 Need for a standardized SASL curriculum (participants attended schools prior to CAPS SASL)

The results of this study show that Deaf adults have limited study options due to the lack of resources at higher education institutions to accommodate them and that further education is generally not encouraged at school level; hence the lack of interest in higher education from most Deaf school-leavers. In addition, the lack of information provided with regard to



further education and available bursaries to people with disabilities leave these learners feeling like they have nowhere to go. Study choices offered at the Deaf college are limited and focus mainly on artisan-type work. According to the results of this study, those Deaf adults who were fortunate enough to do a courses such as Information Technology and Business studies could still not find employment in the desired field of work. The majority of the Deaf adults who are employed and who have completed a further education qualification are not employed in the desired field of work. Deaf students experience a great communication barrier at mainstream universities and colleges, as no sign language interpreters are made available to interpret for these students in lectures. Deaf students are expected to fund their own sign language interpreters which most Deaf students in South Africa are unable to do.

### ***5.3.1 Unable to follow passion in terms of career choices***

The results of this study show that Deaf learners are generally not able to follow their passion in terms of career or higher education. The participants in this study once aspired to follow careers in Catering, Accountancy, Information Technology, Fashion Design, Air Stewarding, owning a SASL training business and owning a small Baking business teaching deaf learners how to bake. As mentioned before, the history of Deaf Education; the absence of a robust academic foundation and the lack of a standardised SASL curriculum up to 2013, etc. have forced Deaf learners to engage in careers that they are not enthusiastic about. Although, few people reach all their potential, even when very motivated, the results of this study suggest that even fewer Deaf people reach their actual potential or satisfy self-actualization needs in terms of employment. As a result many of these employed young Deaf adults are not reaching a level of self-actualization.

Currently, the two NID Colleges in Cape Town offer only the Hospitality course which consists of a Kitchen Cleaner skills programme and a Cook-Convenience Food skills programme which have exit levels after successful completion of each of programme allowing for entry into the next higher level. After completing these programmes students can be employed as general cleaners in a restaurant, hotel, hospital kitchen, fast food or convenience outlet (NID College Prospectus, 2012). The results of this study show that Deaf learners are rarely able to follow their passion in terms of careers. Furthermore, upon

completion of the first two courses in Hospitality Deaf students in Cape Town may enter the next level of this course which is the Learnership in Professional Cookery – Level 4. Unfortunately, this is only offered at the NID College in Worcester where there is very limited space. Human Resources Manager from the Shoprite Group in Johannesburg, offers a glimmer of hope to Deaf school leavers when she lamented that the skills programme offered by eDeaf in partnership with the Wholesale and Retail SETA, will qualify deaf students to work in retail stores. Upon completion of a further three skills programmes, deaf learners will be able achieve the full qualification which is a National certificate in wholesale and retail operations at NQF level 2 (Burger, 2009).

Lang (2002) summarizes Stinson and Walter's (1997) findings on why colleges and universities must attend to the "whole student" with regard to significant statistical relationships between student satisfaction with classes and their academic achievement and between social satisfaction and persistence/withdrawal. These researchers highlighted three social issues to be addressed for students to adjust effectively to higher education which include: developing social skills, establishing an identity, and acquiring independence and interdependence. Furthermore Lang (2002) considers more specific qualities which may results in an increase in higher success rates for deaf students – self-awareness and its relationship to career awareness (i.e., choosing appropriate major subjects), persistence, self-identity, self-efficacy, perseverance, ability to accommodate oneself in an integrated environment and general maturity.

### ***5.3.2 Deaf learners are directed towards following a skills training curriculum***

The results of this study highlight how most schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape, identify most 14-year-old Deaf learners as academically weak during promotion and progression evaluations, and therefore educators encourage parents to enrol their children into the skills training curriculum of the school. Often, educators are in a predicament when they feel a learner is not academically strong enough to continue to Grade 12, and is likely not able to cope with an academic curriculum above Grade 6.

One would have to consider both the lack of resources and support that the educator has received from the national government in terms of giving the Deaf learner the best quality

education in his/her first language, as well as the learner who has suffered academically due to significant communication barriers. Researches indicates specific differences between learners with and without hearing loss and educators of the Deaf are not often aware that these differences include sequencing skills, integrating information across sources and time, relative focus on detail versus conceptual conclusions, selective and sustained visual attention, prior content knowledge and creative problem solving (Marschark & Spencer, 2009). Structured interventions with Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in especially the higher grades have shown some success in promoting better metacognitive abilities and their use in learning contexts (Marschark & Spencer, 2009). Research in Deaf Education shows that without these interventions, these patterns will interfere with the learning of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing learner across the school curriculum. Marschark and Spencer (2009) emphasise that research, especially focussed on assessing the outcomes of varied interventions regarding the academic preparation of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing learner, is critically needed.

From the results of this study it appears that educators of the Deaf generally try to encourage these learners to follow a skills program, which would ensure that they exit the school system with some form of certification. Unfortunately, the majority of the time this is only a school-leaving certificate in a specific Skill with no accreditation, resulting in the Deaf school leaver struggling to find employment in a predominantly hearing society. In South Africa, only 15% of secondary school learners qualify outright to enter higher education, while 50% obtain only a school-leaving certificate, which is a lower qualification and only admissible at higher education institutions under specific conditions (DoE, 2007).

Often educators are aware of the personal circumstances of their learners and encourage them to follow a vocational route in hope that this will help the learner to earn some money to support their unemployed parents. Sadly, the overall outcome of this system is an impoverished and flawed academic foundation, resulting in Deaf school leavers with a literacy level ranging between grade one and four regardless of whether they were able to succeed “academically” beyond the age of 14 years (Aarons & Glaser, 2002)

### **5.3.3 A need for Deaf role models**

The results of this study suggest that Deaf children would respond better to Deaf role models and therefore more emphasis should be placed in providing young Deaf adults with opportunities and support to access higher education to become educators of the Deaf. More than 90% of Deaf learners are born to hearing parents who cannot communicate in SASL. DeafSA (2006) stipulates that these children need to be exposed to a linguistic role model to facilitate their natural language acquisition process. The absence of such role models has severe implications for the development of Deaf learners especially in terms of acquisition concepts and the learning of a First Additional Language (FAL) (DeafSA, 2006). The history of Deaf Education shows how deaf adults often played the role in education as teacher assistant, and served as language role models for the children (van den Bogaerde, et al., in Baker et al., 2015).

The history of sign language dates back to between the 1600's – 1800's where sign languages blossomed in Deaf Education until 1880. During this period, many Deaf teachers were employed at schools for the Deaf and acted as great role models for Deaf learners in the areas of linguistic and socio-cultural identity (Morgan, 2014).

Magongwa (2010) discusses how the poor academic foundation of Deaf people excluded them from higher education and consequently how opportunities for deaf graduates to return to schools in professional roles and pose as role models for deaf learners are significantly reduced. The results of this study revealed that Deaf adults have a desire to act as role models for young Deaf children so as to inspire them to reach their goals in life. One of the study participants communicated that she wanted to teach young deaf learners how to bake, the other expressed that she wanted to teach deaf learners SASL and train young deaf adults on how to teach SASL to school going deaf learners. One of the male participants communicated that he would like to teach deaf students more about IT and show them that it is possible for a Deaf person to study programme and repair computers. All of these participants felt that by being deaf themselves they would be good role models for young deaf learners as both them and deaf learners speak the same language and could inspire and encourage these learners to further their education.

DeafSA (2006) accentuates that Deaf children who do not acquire language in a natural way by means of exposure to Deaf role models, may experience in communication isolation, low skills and discrimination due to stereotyping.

Research on the industrialization of societies indicate that human developmental stages have been reshaped resulting in adolescence which includes ages 11-19 years to spill into “emerging adulthood” which is the developmental period conceptualized to include ages 18-25 years where the bulk of identity exploration takes place (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Tabar, 1994). According to Arnett (2000) the bulk of identity exploration takes place. When Deaf children from hearing families are not encouraged to have contact with other Deaf children and Deaf adults, the identity exploration process can be complicated (Lukomsky, 2007). Bat-Chava (2000) proposes that for Deaf individuals who have limited contact with Deaf peers, adolescence may be marked with additional challenges such as isolation, loneliness and communication difficulties with parents and peers. Furthermore, for these adolescents, identity exploration may lead to more stress and further diffusion of the individuation process until tertiary education (Bat-Chava, 2000).

#### ***5.3.4 A need for a SASL curriculum in schools for the Deaf***

Participants in this study attended schools for the Deaf prior to CAPS 2013 and was not exposed to a standardized SASL curriculum. The results of this study indicated the support for a SASL curriculum in schools for the Deaf to strengthen the academic experience of Deaf learners. The results reflected how different signs used across different schools for the deaf in the Western Cape can be confusing when interacting with members the Deaf community. A study done on inclusive education for Deaf students highlight many difficulties and challenges around providing fully inclusive education for Deaf students (Glaser & Van Pletzen, 2012). The British Deaf Association (BDA) advocates for sign bilingual education for the majority of deaf children and outlines prerequisites for bilingual education which include “access to Deaf peer group” and curriculum and assessment in the child’s preferred language (Akach, 2010).

Marshark (2009) draws attention to the positive and negative attributes of inclusive education with respect to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing child. The advantages of inclusion involve deaf learners developing social skills and self-esteem and the provision of support services (SASLI's, note takers, tutors and note takers). The drawback of inclusion of Deaf students is that there may be a preference for a barrier-free learning and development environment where they can engage in meaningful interaction with educators and classmates all the time (Magongwa, 2010). According to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) full inclusion of the Deaf is only realized in a totally supportive, signing and learner-centred environment.

The DBE in South Africa is currently in the process of writing a curriculum for SASL for Grades R-12 and has developed a framework for teacher development in the area of Deaf and hard-of-hearing in August 2012. This framework stipulates that the training of educators will be a critical requirement for the successful implementation of the SASL curriculum and will consist of providing training to teachers on two levels - broad training on all aspects of improving curriculum management and delivery at school to ensure education and training in SASL. In 2011 all managers of Deaf Education was trained to establish a basis for the improvement of the standard of teaching and learning in special schools by establishing management structures at schools which would ensure that school improvement plans will be developed. These plans included: improved knowledge of the specific disability - both medical and educational support required; improved curriculum leadership; ongoing staff development plans; improved utilization of specialized learning and teaching support material (LTSM) and assistive technology; sound financial management systems and improved recruitment and utilization of appropriate staff. The DBE plan includes increasing the number of educators who have the necessary levels of specialised training to teach in these schools.

Magongwa (2010) emphasises that as long as the concept of sign language is not fully developed in schools for the Deaf, those schools will render Deaf learners educationally, emotionally and linguistically disabled.

#### **5.4 Theme 4: Lack of qualified Deaf educators**

- Subtheme: 4.1 Hearing educators do not inspire Deaf learners to reach goals  
4.2 Hearing educators negative attitudes towards SASL

##### ***5.4.1 Educators do not inspire Deaf learners to continue their education after school***

It is evident from the results of this study that educators of the Deaf do not generally raise the aspirations of young Deaf people. Young people in general often have no idea of what they want to do or will do after completing schooling. When they do, this notion is usually vague and not grounded in reality. The results of this study suggests that as with hearing learners, Deaf learners need information and support to help them understand the possibilities that exist as they transition from school to life after school. The participants of this study communicated that their teachers neither inspired them to further their education, nor clearly informed them about the possibilities or options available to them post-school, in terms of education. The data obtained in this study revealed that deaf people who work as teaching assistants in classrooms in schools for the Deaf, lack formal qualifications and hence the opportunity to access further formal training and career progression opportunities.

Providing learners with career guidance minimises the chances of large numbers of young people becoming disengaged and unattached for long periods (DHET, 2009). Deaf learners are left without this vital guidance in and outside the education system. It is important that educators of the Deaf along with parents start career specific training during the schooling years of the Deaf learner as early as possible. Educators of the Deaf should prepare parents for the challenge in choosing an occupation for their Deaf child and inform them about researching possible occupations and information regarding further education. The executive director of NID notes that there must be a realistic understanding of the limitations of deafness (e.g. using a telephone) but at the same time parents and learners must make use of creative thinking skills while looking for new possibilities (e.g. email) when choosing an occupation with their Deaf child - when new technological advances are taken into account, limitations in choosing an occupation are being eliminated for the Deaf. A

special effort must be made by educators of the Deaf to inspire and expose the Deaf child to a variety of occupations to get them interested. The results of this study reflected how Deaf children are not inspired to become employed in any particular industry.

The DHET (2009) suggests an intentional and directed support effort be developed and implemented to focus on learners exiting schools and entering FET colleges. Managers of Deaf schools should focus on the development and dissemination of information on opportunities for further study and employment and concentrate on the routine development of exit strategies for each learner (DHET, 2009). These processes, in turn, are likely to establish better connection with employment placement agencies for Deaf and hearing learners.

#### ***5.4.2 Educators of the Deaf have negative attitudes towards SASL and Deaf Education***

The unfortunate lack of communication between Deaf and hearing people in education and the workplace has brought about a lack of understanding between the two cultures which has fostered resentment from Deaf people towards the hearing world. Misconceptions of what it is to be Deaf have led hearing educators in Deaf Education to view Deaf learners as disabled. The results of this study indicate that educators of the Deaf have negative attitudes towards SASL. When hearing teachers of the Deaf develop negative attitudes towards a language that they do not understand (SASL), such as that indicated in the results of this study, they are unable to provide the Deaf child with a sound academic foundation on the one hand, or to inspire him/her to work towards a better future and positive self-identity, on the other.

Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen's (2010) narratives show that in the past Deaf and hearing people had negative attitudes towards sign language, because of the stigmatization of SASL. Today most Deaf South Africans have overcome this stigmatization and are proud of SASL as their first language – a signed language.

One can deduce that due to the lack of understanding from most hearing educators regarding Deaf culture and Deaf identity, negative attitudes towards SASL have been fostered by educators within schools for the Deaf. When schools for the Deaf employ



hearing educators that are not fluent in SASL - or fail to provide them with the opportunities to learn SASL - Deaf children are at the risk of a detrimental communication barrier between themselves and their educator. There is a need for an understanding from hearing educators that Deaf people have their own culture and identity; they are proudly Deaf and want to learn in their own language. When this critical understanding is not present, educators of the Deaf that are not fluent in SASL unknowingly rob the Deaf child of quality education.

Research has shown that teachers often have low expectations of deaf children and view them as unable or slow to learn (Woodward 1982, cited in Napier et al. 2007: 303, cited in Akach, 2010). The results of this study revealed how one Deaf learner dropped out of senior school because she found school uninteresting. Studies show that many Deaf learners drop out of school when they reach senior phase. The DHET (2009) reports on how it appears as if the secondary education agenda makes the secondary phase part of schooling unattractive to many young people. Crouch (2005) writes that boys drop out of school as soon as they find it uninteresting. There is no evidence suggesting that teenage Deaf learners attending schools for the Deaf would be any different in this regard. Learners leave school for different reasons, including a restrictive curriculum that does not cater for a wider range of interests, teachers' lack of competence in the subjects that they teach and/or poor resourcing of schools (DHET, 2009). As mentioned in the literature review, methods such as total communication or signed exact English were seen to be the superior methods to teach Deaf learners, and anything resembling sign language was viewed as less effective. It is important not to overlook the factors that may negatively affect the academic success of the Deaf learner. These include the presence of disabilities in addition to the hearing loss, level of nonverbal cognitive abilities, the degree to which the family provides support to the child and his/her education, the lack of consistent exposure to a fluent language model within the child's sensory processing capabilities and poor attention skills that are needed to reinforce the interaction experience and promotes learning in general (Marschark & Spencer, 2009).

## **5.5 Theme 5: Unfair treatment in the workplace**

Subtheme: 5.1 Only the hearing are employed and promoted

5.2 Unfair disciplinary hearings due to communication barriers

5.3 Disrespect and exclusion

5.4 Power relations in the workplace

5.5 Need for orientation and induction

An estimated 70% of Deaf South Africans are unemployed due to historic factors, including a low standard of education in schools for the Deaf; a low literacy level, and ongoing limited access to information (Captieux-Bhana, 2010).

#### ***5.5.1 Only the hearing are employed and promoted within the workplace***

The results of this study indicate that many Deaf people experience great difficulty with regard to securing and maintaining employment. The participants of this study stated how difficult it has been for them to find employment and more specifically senior positions in the workplace due to communication barriers. The data showed that the communication barrier between the hearing and the deaf in the workplace often result in unsuccessful interview outcomes and job placements.

“Access to work is fundamental human right. Employment enables people to participate in community life and to contribute economically to their households and their communities” (Harvest, 2014). The Employment Equity Act in terms of Section 15 (1) points to the establishment and implementation of measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups (black people – Africans, Coloureds and Indians, women, and people with disabilities) have equal employment opportunities and are equally represented in all occupational categories and levels. Employers, skills training centres and work creation schemes are sometimes hesitant to employ a person who would have difficulty communicating, need special arrangements to perform tasks and resist a position where they would have to ensure their safety (Reynolds & Newton, 2014). Furthermore, employers often discriminate against persons with disabilities during recruitment, due to a lack of awareness of their abilities and potential. According to Reynolds and Newton (2014) employers often need to make special provision or provide special equipment in order for Deaf employees to function optimally at work and may be reluctant to make any of these

modifications or are unaware of them. Even if employers are willing to make the investment, most developing countries like South Africa have limited access to communication technologies for people with hearing impairment.

The results of this study revealed that many young Deaf adults employed in a hearing workplace experience negative attitudes from their hearing colleagues and employers and are generally disrespected, discriminated against, ridiculed and exploited in the workplace. They are usually treated unfairly and are unable to defend themselves in disciplinary situations due to communication barriers. One of the participants in this study who had an accredited certificate in convenience cooking and kitchen cleaning was employed at a retirement village with the assistance of her skills educator. When this participant was informed that her job application was successful she could not believe that she (a Deaf person) was employed and that her family members who are hearing are not. According to Reynolds and Newton (2014) report how family members and the community can hold limiting beliefs about what their relatives with hearing loss are capable of. This can often lead to social marginalisation.

According to a study done by Punch et al (2009), young Deaf adolescents that had a higher perception of hearing-related barriers also reported higher career barriers. Punch et al (2009), suggest that Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing learners who are closer to leaving school may generally be more concerned about ways in which their hearing limitations could affect their post-school educational and career progress and could therefore be a developmental aspect to the adjustment to life after school. People with hearing loss have more difficulty in finding employment and struggle with certain practical aspects such as attending group meetings or answering the telephone (Harvest, 2014). Furthermore, Deaf adults are faced with communication barriers when looking for employment. Often one is required to complete an application form, produce a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and attend an interview. Due to poor literacy skills and the lack of provision of SASLI's during interviews, Deaf adults struggle to find work. Those that try their hands at self-employment face similar restricted access to the job market. Deaf entrepreneurs, like hearing entrepreneurs, need capital to start or build on their own income-generating business and make savings later. Deaf people

often find it difficult to access financial services such as loans due to a communication barrier and loan criteria (Reynolds & Newton, 2014).

The history of Deaf cultures shows how Deaf people were brought together in school environments and how Sign Language was transmitted from one generation of students to the next, in different communities around the world (Baker, et al., 2015). This history involves the roles that schools play in bringing Deaf people together and providing a context for sign language to be learned and shared. Unfortunately this history includes a period of time when Deaf people were forced to learn to speak in schools, and were punished when trying to communicate in sign language. Advanced Hearing-aid technology and use of cochlear implants have provided increased access to auditory information and spoken language for many children with hearing loss (Spencer & Marshark, 2010). Spoken language achievements are significantly more probable than in the past. However, the cochlear implant movement falls short of achieving justice for Deaf people, as it does not address the disempowerment of these people, in that their linguistic and human rights are ignored. An injustice occurs when you take a human right away from a group of people and, in so doing; you take away their ability to shape their own future. Generally, educators and employers of the Deaf are indirectly determining the future of Deaf people, leaving them powerless. Employers of the Deaf should therefore make a conscious effort to empower their Deaf employees.

As discussed earlier in this study, Deaf entrepreneurs need funding to start their own businesses and find it difficult to access financial services such as loans due to a communication barrier and not meeting loan criteria. The Implementation Matrix 2015-2030 stipulates that steps must be taken to ensure that at least 7% of all public and private procurement for bids under R30 000 are allocated with business entities owned by persons with disabilities (DSD, 2015).

The results of this study reflected that hearing people dominate organizations, policies and programmes for Deaf people. A case study done by Akram (2014) highlights how people with hearing loss have fewer chances of getting promoted and obtaining good positions in companies, despite having the talent and ability to do so. Akram (2014) states that the

reason for this is because people with hearing loss cannot usually participate in important meetings and share their valuable input in time and in front of everyone. Furthermore, this case study indicated that email and instant messaging are good tools for people with hearing loss if the company uses these tools appropriately. The Implementation Matrix 2015-2030 highlights the strengthening of the representative voice of persons with disabilities by way of government institutions at all levels and contexts of governance to consult relevant representative organisations of persons with disabilities regarding the design, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of legislation, programmes and services to the public in general as well as services and programmes designed specifically for persons with disabilities (DSD, 2015). Therefore, Deaf people should be participating in important workplace meetings and share their input at different levels in organizations so that they can inform policies and represent the views of deaf employees.

### ***5.5.2 Unfair disciplinary hearings due to communication barriers***

The results of this study revealed that Deaf people in the workplace are often trialled unfairly during disciplinary hearings in the workplace. This is often due to not having an SASLI present to assist the communication, which result in Deaf people being misunderstood and unfairly disciplined when they are not able to defend or express themselves.

“The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) was introduced in an attempt to redress demographic imbalances (occasioned by past discrimination) in organisations” (Bendix, 2000). The Act has prohibits discrimination on any grounds, including, but not limited to, race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, age, disability, religion, status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth (Bendix, 2000). Furthermore, Bendix (2000) refers to the duty of the employer not only to abstain from initiating any discriminatory practice, but also to eliminate existing discrimination and to guarantee that no discrimination or harassment of employees takes place.

The results of this study reflect that Deaf employees experience a loss of confidence when misunderstanding instructions and taking the wrong action, which can result in misdirected punishment. The participants in this study communicated that when they misunderstand a hearing person it often lead to them responding with an inappropriate or incorrect response, resulting in them feeling embarrassed and reluctant to participate in work and social activity in the workplace.

The results of this study allude to an incident where a Deaf employee was asked to attend a disciplinary hearing without the presence of a SASLI. Employers should ensure that their Deaf employees have access to the company Grievance Procedure, and should make certain that they have access to a SASLI at disciplinary hearings. This would ideally be done using an SASLI during the induction process when starting a new job.

### ***5.5.3 Disrespect and exclusion in the workplace***

The results of this study indicated that Deaf people generally feel left out and disrespected in the workplace when they are employed individually as opposed to a group of deaf people. When Deaf people enter a hearing workplace, they generally feel as though they lack self confidence and self-esteem to perform optimally and as well as their hearing colleagues. Bat Chava (2000) refers to the Social Identity theory which posits that members of minority groups achieve positive social identity by attempting to gain access to the mainstream through individual mobility and working with other group members to bring about social change. Sometimes people use a combination of both strategies (Bat Chava, 200). Deaf employees who start a job with a new company should undergo a process of induction which would include a process of establishing relationships with co-workers and creating a sense of belonging among employees by showing them how their job fits into the overall organisation (Carrol, et al., 1996). The results of this study indicate that often a Deaf person is subjected to bullying by hearing colleagues, when he/she is the only Deaf employee at a company which leads to feelings of isolation and exclusion. Employers of the deaf should consider employing more than just one deaf employee and rather employ groups of deaf people to address feelings of isolation and exclusion in the workplace. Newton and Harvest (2014) draw attention to how people with hearing impairment start to

withdraw from social events as miscommunication causes embarrassment, a lowering of self-esteem and exclusion from the conversation which lead to feeling of isolation and depression. The results of this study highlight how the impatience shown by hearing colleagues with a Deaf person's indistinct speech or their inability to understand Sign Language, may make the Deaf employee self-conscious and could lead to him/her losing self-confidence and self-respect. As found in the results of this study, Deaf people often then lack the motivation to return to their places of employment.

#### ***5.5.4 Power relations between the Deaf and the hearing in the workplace***

Employers or managers are in a position of power by the mere fact that employees need jobs (Bendix, 2000). Individual employees in the workplace system have very little power to counter that of the employer. The results of this study indicate that generally, the Deaf employee is employed by a hearing employer which takes on an added power dimension. Industrial and professional trade unions are established whenever employees willingly come together and form an association with the purpose of trying to regulate the relationship between employees and their employer (Bendix, 2000). Deaf employees usually do not have a trade union to support them by means of regulating an imbalanced relationship between themselves and their employer. Based on the data collected in this study it appears that Trade Unions are not accessible or of much help to deaf members in the workplace.

From the narratives obtained in the study done by Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) it was evident that in South Africa power relations came to light in different dimensions. These include: hearing versus Deaf, white versus non-white, teacher versus pupil (adult versus child). Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) report that a combination or all of these power relations can lead to complete submission or passivity in a person. Furthermore, communication barriers lead to different dimensions of power relations. Deaf learners around the world have experienced oppressive Deaf Education and were punished for using sign language - a result of the ongoing "war of methods" since the beginning of Deaf Education (van den Bogaerde, et al., in Baker et al., 2015; Herreweghe & Vermeerbergen, 2010). The study done by Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) indicate

how participants, when young, were punished for not using speech by being asked to stand in a corner facing the wall, and instructed not to communicate with anyone. Consequences of this type of treatment of deaf people not only impacted on their development but also the Deaf community as a whole (Ladd, 2003 as cited in Herreweghe & Vermeerbergen, 2010). This type of oppressive punishment of deaf children meant that they were completely excluded from any form of human contact. Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) state that since deaf children and adults are forced to rely on vision to create a sense of security, this type of punishment diminishes a child's sense of safety wherever this kind of punishment is used.

Excluding Deaf people from communication or forcing them to learn in a mode of communication unfamiliar or unnatural to them results in them missing out on general knowledge and education. A lack of general knowledge and awareness forces Deaf people into different and imbalanced dimensions of power relations in the hearing world. The end result is a Deaf person in a hearing world left powerless.

The results of this study reveal that Deaf people feel unfairly treated and discriminated against within the workplace specifically regarding promotions and leave structures. The Department of Basic Education is committed to the realisation of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with (CRPD) which was ratified by the South African Government in 2007. Article 24 of the CPRD refers specifically to the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing which stipulates that States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community (Article 24 – Education, n.d.).

The study on done by Rydberg et al., (2011 ) revealed that deaf people more often than hearing people have a higher level of educational attainment than is required for their occupation and that this is an indication of discrimination against deaf people in the Swedish labour market. In South Africa, the opposite is true – hearing people have a higher level of educational attainment than deaf people. This study further showed that 13-15% of deaf people in the United States work in a job below their educational skill level. Bendix (2000) describes the traditional labour relationship which is marked by unequal power dimensions between employers and employees, who then seek to increase their power base



by collective representation. CRPD stipulates that States Parties will accomplish equality for persons with disabilities by taking appropriate measures including facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community; ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, deaf or deaf-and-blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual and in environments which maximises academic and social development (Article 24 – Education, n.d.). In addition, States Parties will employ educators, including educators with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and train professionals and staff in disability awareness and the use of alternative and augmentative means of communication to support people with disabilities at all levels of education (Article 24 – Education, n.d.) This would include orientation and induction for deaf employees in the workplace.

#### ***5.5.5 Need for orientation and induction***

The results of this study indicated that there is a significant need for orientating and induction of Deaf employees in the workplace. The study participants felt that job placement officers could act as a ‘mediators’ between themselves and their potential employers to assist with communication and what is expected from the employer. The data showed that there is a need for job placement officers of Deaf employees to assist with some career counselling and socialisation of the Deaf employee with regard to the workplace. The data also showed a need for orientation to include human resource and labour law issues necessary to know your rights as an employee at any organisation.

Participants clearly stated that the need more information on leave structures and disciplinary procedures. Starting a new job is considered to be one of the most stressful life experiences and a fitting induction process that is sensitive to the needs, anxieties and uncertainties of a new employee is of the utmost importance (Carrel, Grobler, Elbert, Marx, Hatfield & van der Schyf, 1998).

“Induction can be accurately defined as the process of introducing new employees to the goals of the organisation, its policies and procedures, its values, the co-work as well as the tasks to be performed and the equipment to be used” (Carell, et al., 1998).

Carrel et al, (1998) explain how the pool of potential South African employees is increasingly becoming more diverse in terms of age, language and cultural background which include deaf employees. It is for this reason that it is of vital importance that appropriate attention be given to the induction of all new employees starting at a workplace.

The results of this study show how Deaf employees generally feel anxious and insecure when starting a new job.

## **5.6 Theme 6: Need for stronger transitional programmes from school to higher education and employment**

- Subtheme:
- 6.1 Need for job readiness training and career guidance
  - 6.2 Fear of the hearing world
  - 6.3 Deaf unity in the workplace
  - 6.4 Hearing have no knowledge of Deaf people in workplace/HE
  - 6.5 Negative attitudes towards Deaf people in the workplace

### ***5.6.1 Need for job readiness training and career guidance***

Although the Western Cape stands out as being the leading province in South Africa in terms of Deaf Education, it has failed to adequately support and prepare Deaf school leavers for higher education and the workplace. This is based on the data obtained from this study and related statistics obtained from DeafSA (2009). The results of this study reflect how the majority of Deaf school leavers in the Western Cape receive no career guidance or job readiness training in preparation for the hearing world and end up forming part of the great percentage of unemployed Deaf adults in South Africa. Participants in this study revealed that the lack of knowledge of not knowing where to begin in terms of a job search, constructing a CV and preparing for an interview, results in very insecure and vulnerable Deaf school leavers. A vicious cycle of despondency begins which leads to isolation,

demotivation and low self-esteem. Desperation for employment causes these learners to settle for menial jobs where they are more than often exploited and abused by colleagues and employers. The learners who are unable to find any means of earning money return to their school for the Deaf in need of help to secure a disability grant. As mentioned in the literacy review of this study, the high unemployment rate of Deaf adults can be attributed to the lack of knowledge of leaders of schools for the Deaf and Deaf organizations in supporting the imperative need for skills and vocational training. According to Bonds (2003) the transition from school to work can be difficult and that job seekers must have well-developed literacy, communication, and technology skills to enter a vocation and hold down a job. Apart from the school-to-work transition being complicated by hearing loss, and not being adequately prepared academically, Deaf school leavers lack socio-emotional skills to cope in a hearing world unfamiliar to them. The data from this study reflected that participants in this study struggled with feelings of isolation, frustration and social adjustment to a predominantly hearing world.

Bonds (2003) highlights the stance of the National Commission on Excellence in 1983, which defined high school graduates as unprepared to meet the basic problem-solving demands of college or work. Deaf or hard-of-hearing learners require skills that will ease the transition from school to work and need the assistance of transition teams to acquire skills that will help them enter into an increasingly technological and competitive workplace (Bonds, 2003).

Available evidence concerning job search assistance programmes suggests that provision of such programmes not only improves the labour market outcomes of participants compared to non-participants, but that these kinds of programmes may be more effective than other Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP's) (Kluve, 2014). Job search assistance programmes are relatively cost-effective to implement and have been shown to have substantial positive effects in terms of reducing unemployment (Kluve, 2014). A study done by Vanoverberghe, Verhaest, Verhofstadt and Omeij (2008) considers factors pertaining to the speed of the transition process from school to work in Flanders and found that the pace of this transition process is influenced by the level of job search intensity (Vanoverberghe et al, 2008). From the data collected in this study, it appears a similar phenomenon occurs in South Africa.

This study also suggests that those who start their job search prior to leaving school have a significantly shorter period of unemployment and emphasises the role that schools could play in this process. Schools could assist this process by providing information about job search strategies.

The results of this study point to a lack of career guidance provided to Deaf learners. Participants in this study shared that they aspire to enter higher education and expressed a desire to pursue certain career paths, but mainly ended up unemployed or in careers that they have no passion for (tea lady, kitchen cleaner, factory worker, etc.). Factors contributing to this include poor results; financial constraints; inability to meet admission requirements; not having realistic information about institutions and programmes that would meet their abilities and resources and generally, a very confused view of where to begin post high school. Pathways studies done by Cosser (2011) as cited in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) investigation into education show that the lack of information and tools on how to navigate the work-finding system post school could be an even greater impediment for young people than the lack of career information (HSRC, 2011). The lack of information and guidance for students who must make decisions about work and higher education is, therefore, another critical weakness in the system (DHET, 2009). Organizations like these should be encouraged to specifically include supporting the young Deaf adult who is transitioning from school to the working world.

The data from this study suggest that schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape do not provide nearly enough career guidance, job-readiness or life skills training. Although school leavers in the Western Cape are informed about various options for further education and learnerships for Deaf school leavers such as 'I CAN!' (learnerships for adults with intellectual, learning and physical disabilities) and NID vocational training, only a few learners are accepted into these programmes. Most of the skills courses offered by the schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape, except hospitality training, do not guarantee an opportunity for internship or a promise of an accredited qualification further down the line. Learnerships such as "I CAN!" consists of a structured learning component, includes practical work experience of a specified nature and duration and leads to a qualification registered with SAQA and a related occupation. Unfortunately, Deaf school leavers struggle

to meet the requirements to enter the basic courses which require no minimum qualification because they are unable to satisfy the basic literacy entrance requirements.

The data from this study reflected that Deaf school-leavers often lack self-confidence when entering the hearing world, assertiveness training would support Deaf adults to understand the background on disability in South Africa and the impact of Deafness and their rights.

### ***5.6.2 Fear of the hearing world***

The results of this study emphasise the fear that Deaf school leavers have when entering the hearing world. Deaf school leavers expect the hearing world not to trust in their skills because of their deafness. Fear arises with the knowledge that the hearing world makes no real accommodation for Deaf people. The participants in this study stated that they felt scared when leaving their schools because they were leaving behind their Deaf world with regard to their friends and those teachers who cared about them.

According to Punch et al (2006) transitional programmes should include a component where young Deaf adults are trained in self-advocacy skills which helps the Deaf school-leaver identify and explain their own needs in terms of services and support in higher education institutions and to explain the need for and request accommodations in workplace settings, etc. Often hearing people may not make the effort to communicate with a Deaf person or keep the communication very basic, which leads to isolation and adds to the fear of the Deaf person's attempts to engage with hearing colleagues in the future (Ricard, 2014).

### ***5.6.3 Deaf unity in the workplace***

The results of this study narrow in on the experiences of Deaf employees regarding being the only Deaf person in the workplace compared to having one or more Deaf colleagues. One of the participants expresses her feelings when another Deaf person joined her department at work. The participant's significant exhilaration to encounter another Deaf employee was noted as was the disappointment when the other Deaf employee was transferred to another company branch. This participant lip-reads her manager's communication, due to not being able to functionally read or write which can be exhausting.

Employers of Deaf employees do not understand that a Deaf person using signs would very likely depend on the limited information coming from lip-reading within a hearing workplace. When Deaf employees are forced to lip read in a hearing environment they automatically blink less, their eyes dry out, they cannot turn their heads fast enough to lip-read and therefore often miss what is being discussed. This adds to the communication barrier in the workplace between deaf and hearing employees and thus further separation between these two groups (Reynolds & Newton, 2014).

According to Social Identity Theory, an individual will remain a member of a group if it contributes to positive aspects to his or social identity (e.g., self-esteem) Tajfel (1981) as cited in Bat Cava (2000). If group membership does not make such a positive contribution – as in the case of groups whose members are stigmatized by the majority-the individual will attempt to leave the group physically or psychologically. Furthermore, Bat Chava (2000) explains that one may affect psychological departure by denying one's membership in the group, attempting to achieve success in the mainstream or that the negative characteristics associated with the group do not apply to oneself. The departure in this scenario results in higher self-esteem. On the other hand, other members may enhance their self-esteem by identifying with their group and working toward social change. The results of this study reflected that Deaf people preferred to work with other Deaf people and felt safer within a Deaf community.

Narratives from a study done on Deaf perspectives on communicative practices in South Africa by Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) revealed that similar to many other Deaf communities, Deaf identities appear to be shaped by means of alienation from the hearing community and solidarity among the Deaf community. Furthermore, it is maintained that the common negative experiences as a result of lack of communication between the hearing teacher and deaf pupil are the foundation of Deaf communities. Schein (1989) as cited in Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2010) report on how deaf children growing up understanding each other but not their teachers creates, on the one, hand a sense of solidarity among the deaf children, while on the other hand increases a sense of alienation from the hearing society. The data from this study show how negative communicative experiences create a bond between Deaf people, a sense of solidarity which extends beyond

ethnicity which is quite significant in South Africa (Herreweghe & Vermeerbergen, 2010). The participants in this study indicated how Deaf employees regardless of race and religion form a group in a predominantly hearing environment due to familiarity and linguistic and cultural connectedness.

### **5.7 Theme 7: Need for Deaf awareness training in the workplace**

According to Carrel et al. (1996) it is estimated that the number of South Africans with one or more disabilities could be as high as 3.85 million. Carrel et al. (1996) relates how many individuals experience anxiety around workers with disabilities, especially if the disabilities are severe. It would be of benefit to everyone in the workplace if employers of people with disabilities are able set the tone for appropriate treatment of workers with disabilities.

Subtheme: 7.1 Hearing have no knowledge of Deaf people in the workplace

7.2 Negative attitudes towards Deaf people in the workplace

#### ***5.7.1 The hearing have no knowledge of Deaf people in the workplace***

The results of this study revealed that four of the participants have been employed in the retail sector via eDeaf and its partnership with the Wholesale and Retail SETA and indicated that hearing people lack general knowledge about Deafness and Deaf culture. The participants felt strongly that hearing people should learn SASL so that they too can compromise on the communication barrier that exists between the hearing and the Deaf within the workplace. The participants in this study communicated that employers have no idea of what Deafness is and do not know how to interact with a Deaf person. These participants felt that there should be more sensitising workshops to educate companies (employers and employees) about Deafness and that job placement officers should be employed to conduct Deaf awareness training to facilitate the integration between the Deaf and the hearing.

The Human Resource Manager of the Shoprite Group in Johannesburg describes that one of the biggest challenges facing disabled learners when entering the workplace is prejudice.

(Burger, 2009) eDeaf aims to address the need for increased knowledge of deafness (as shown by the data obtained from this study) by way of sensitization workshops for employees and employers of Deaf people (Captieux-Bhana, 2010).

### ***5.7.2 Negative attitudes towards Deaf people in the workplace***

The results of this study show that employers and colleagues of Deaf school leavers generally have negative attitudes toward Deafness. This often leads to negative peer and employer relations that contribute to a lack of job satisfaction and in turn low self-esteem.

### **5.8 Summary of discussion**

There is a great need for equality in the workplace amongst hearing and Deaf employees. In the literature review of this study reference is made to the parallel reactions between deaf and hearing people when communication fail such as frustration, anger, withdrawing from the conversation, feelings of incompetence and low self-esteem, self-pity and guilt. Negative attitudes amongst the deaf and hearing people in the workplace may be born from an inability to communicate successfully and effectively. The results of this study indicate that when Deaf employees feel misunderstood and frustrated with communication barriers at work that they often withdraw and leave the workplace resulting in unemployment. The results of this study emphasises that Deaf employees have a strong need to be understood and feel that negative attitudes toward from the hearing need to change.



**CHAPTER 6:**  
**CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**  
**OF THE STUDY**

## 6.1 Conclusion

This study revealed that young Deaf people encounter many barriers in terms of higher education and employment. Moreover, through a qualitative approach, this study gave insight into the particular experience of Deaf learners and their level of preparedness for higher education and employment in the Western Cape. It appears that the academic foundation of Deaf learners in the Western Cape, prior to the CAPS SASL, has resulted in the immense struggle of these learners to succeed in academic subjects. The limited number of educators of the Deaf who are fluent in SASL has resulted in a communication barrier that has imposed severe restrictions on the potential of Deaf learners in the Western Cape. This communication barrier has often caused Deaf learners to be identified as 'academically weak' and being geared towards doing vocational training at the age of fourteen. The majority of these learners exit schools for the Deaf in the Western Cape after 2 to 4 years of skills training with only a school-leaving certificate which holds no accreditation.

A positive turn for Deaf Education in the Western Cape is CAPS SASL and the recent training of staff in Deaf culture, SASL linguistics and teaching methodology in Deaf pedagogy. CAPS SASL has allowed the implementation of SASL as the official LOLT in the education of Deaf learners and provides a standardized SASL curriculum included in the generic unit standards for all languages (DeafSA, 2009).

This study highlighted poor literacy levels of Deaf adults in the Western Cape which can be attributed to a lack of early exposure to a fluent first language (Sign Language) during their schooling career. First language acquisition is essential for learning and developing a second language for literacy skills in deaf learners. An exposure to both a natural sign language and the spoken language of the hearing community (through speech, print, and/or signing) and intensive parental involvement appears to be the best formula for literacy success (Akach, 2010). The findings of this study suggest that the successful implementation of the Bi-Bi approach in schools for the deaf in the Western Cape would benefit the deaf learner in terms of linguistic, cognitive and social development (Storbeck, 2011).

Low expectations and lack of understanding of the Deaf child result in Deaf learners receiving no inspiration to follow career goals or motivation to pursue different career options. In the past, many educators of the deaf, have unfortunately not been able to adequately meet the linguistic and cultural needs of Deaf children in the Western Cape and appears to have been struggling to make a paradigm shift from the medical model to a social model in how they view the Deaf child. It is critical that Deaf learners are exposed to a wide range of occupations and be inspired regarding career choices and further education goals.

Furthermore, this study indicated that Deaf learners in the Western Cape need an environment where they are being exposed to Deaf role models to foster their sense of identity and belonging. The language models that Deaf children are exposed to are as important as the learning of these languages by the children. In addition, educators of the Deaf must also have conversational fluency as well as academic language fluency levels higher than the children that they are responsible for.

Since SASL is not yet recognised as an official language most Deaf learners are unable to access higher education institutions as they do not meet university language entry requirements (Baker, 2015). SASL as South Africa's 12<sup>th</sup> official language would be a monumental development in terms of accessibility to higher education for Deaf learners.

In terms of employment, this study revealed that young Deaf adults in the Western Cape encounter barriers in terms of communication with hearing colleagues and employers and generally feel unfairly treated and excluded in the workplace.

This study indicated that most young Deaf adults in the Western Cape are unable to the fund any further education and are generally unemployed due to a lack of FET qualifications and insufficient knowledge of employability skills. From the data gathered in this study, it is clear that a lack of education and workplace support exists for young Deaf adults in the Western Cape.

## 6.2 Implications and Recommendations

The data from this study suggests that the South African Deaf school-leaver needs better academic preparation for higher education, vocation and independent living. Schools for the Deaf should include transition programmes as part of every Deaf learner's Individual Support Plan (ISP). The ISP of the Deaf learner should aim to mirror the principles of IDEA which was started in the United States of America (Bonds, 2003). These transition programmes should promote academic and career development of students who are deaf and not overlook the importance of literacy development. As mentioned before, in this study, it is of paramount importance for the Deaf learner to learn the spoken language for reading, in order to facilitate integration into the hearing world.

As proposed by Bonds (2003) transition plans for deaf learners should include detailed and specific programs, activities and services that address the obstacles that youth with disabilities face as they make the transition to work as well as career counselling to introduce various career options for the Deaf learners.

Deaf learners require the ongoing support of SASL interpreters and this has financial implications and tertiary institutions are urged to budget for this" (DeafSA, 2006). There is a need for an increase in universities and FET colleges that make provision for SASLI's in order to provide support to Deaf students and to create equal opportunities, equal access and equal rights to Deaf students. Deaf students will benefit from additional support such as note-takers, specialised written material/handouts, computer-aided transcription services and access to the writing centre of the institution, where available (Lang, 2002). Employers and tertiary institutions should be made aware of AHLAD who provide communication access via sensitisation and the use of technology like loop systems and other means of support such as closed captions on all television programmes, DVD to text options and speech to text options to assist deaf students and employees.

Deaf people need to be respected in the workplace and employers should facilitate the integration and socialization between hearing and Deaf employees. Deaf awareness training should incorporate equality and discrimination in the workplace. Employers of Deaf people

should be responsible not just for raising the awareness of the needs of Deaf employees but also undertake reasonable accommodations for them and adapt workstations and various work systems where necessary. South African employers should aim to be in line with the “White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Implementation Matrix 2015 – 2030” and accept more Deaf trainees and/or interns to help with the problem of unemployed young Deaf adults.

### **6.3 Further research**

Since not much is known about the unemployed Deaf adult, it would be beneficial to do a similar study involving young, unemployed Deaf adults and extend this research to other provinces in South Africa. Additional research is needed on higher education of deaf students particularly in Africa and the specific support service innovations needed to reduce the obstacles encountered by the deaf students. Furthermore, studies regarding intervention strategies such as programs focussing on study skills and career awareness are needed in schools for the Deaf, as well as programs aimed at improving academic achievement and retention of deaf students in degree programs in South Africa.

Additional research on the use of SASLIs in the workplace to aid integration and socialization between hearing and Deaf employees will add to research on the socialization of deaf employees in South Africa. Finally, research on Trade Unions for deaf employees will be a valuable area of study to add to current literature on the deaf employee.

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