

**PhD RESEARCH**

**A Narrative Inquiry of the Journey and Educational Experiences of  
Deaf Learners and their Teachers at a High School for the Deaf in  
Swaziland**

**BY**

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**October, 2020**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.



Zodwa Beatrice Shongwe

October, 2020

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to thank God Almighty for being my pillar of strength throughout this research process. I would also like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Claudine Störbeck and Dr. Guy Mcilroy for their endless professional support and for providing constructive feedback throughout this research work. I also want to thank all the twelve participants for participating in this study voluntarily and for taking their time to share their own personal stories. May God Almighty bless you all!

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, my children and my grandchildren.

## ABSTRACT

This study sought to conduct a narrative inquiry of the journey and educational experiences of Deaf learners and their teachers at a high school for the Deaf in Swaziland. As a researcher, I had observed that the education of the Deaf population has been scrutinized, defined and dominated by the hearing population without giving the Deaf population a ‘voice’ to narrate their educational needs as well as their educational experiences. This study sought to address the following research questions: What are the educational experiences of Deaf learners in the School for the Deaf - High in Swaziland? What experiences do hearing teachers of the Deaf encounter in teaching Deaf students in Swaziland? What experience does the researcher as a teacher and a school principal encounter in teaching Deaf students? What experiences do School for the Deaf-Primary administrators encounter in teaching and learning of Deaf students? Thus, the main objective of this study was to seek viewpoints of the educational experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and that of primary school administrators as people who walked the journey with the students from primary school. The study comprised four Deaf students who had completed Grade 12, six teachers who taught these students at secondary level and two primary school administrators who taught these students at primary level.

The study employed Freire’s critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework in a bid to answer the above research questions. Freire’s critical pedagogy is premised on the notion of liberation and it encourages that students, like the Deaf students in this study, should be involved in a dialogue with teachers and school administrators on issues that pertain to their education so that their voices can be heard. Students who are involved in such dialogues become liberated, learn to think critically and develop critical consciousness which helps them to improve their education and their life conditions in general (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77). The study used in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants and the researcher’s autoethnography to collect data. My own experience as a teacher and the first principal of School for the Deaf-High was presented as an autoethnography in this study. The writing of autoethnography enabled me as a researcher and the school principal to articulate and connect my personal educational experiences to those of Deaf students, teachers and primary school administrators.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research methodology was employed in this study in order to collect, present and analyze data from the participants. Data collected were analyzed according to IPA data analysis stages which include looking for themes, coding and connecting themes. Data were presented under the following broad thematic categories: Self and Identity, School and Communication, Family Involvement and Encouragement, and Improving Deaf Education. Education policy documents which legalize general education and issues related to the education of learners with learning disabilities in the country, were also reviewed in order to locate the study within the education context of Swaziland. The findings of the study revealed Deaf students' resilience in education. Deaf students' experienced challenges which included failure, repeating classes and more years added so that they were able to complete the content in preparation for external examination. However, they managed to pass their Grade 12 examination and received certificates. It is also found that the use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level and lack of signs for abstract concepts being taught at school, is a challenge to Deaf students and their teachers. The general curriculum which is used is not adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students and it has a lot of hearing aspects which are not friendly to Deaf students. It was also found that Deaf students do not have any home language that is being taught as a subject. They are only taught English as a second language. My autoethnography also revealed the importance of introducing sign language as a subject in schools for the Deaf so that Deaf students are also examined in their first language like their hearing counterparts. It is therefore recommended that, in order to improve educational experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and that of school administrators in Schools for the Deaf in the country, they should be given an opportunity to tell their stories. The stories they tell, reflect what actually goes on in their teaching and learning in the classroom, especially the stories of Deaf students as people who are directly affected by the education system in the country. The study also concluded by making other recommendations which may improve Deaf education in Swaziland.

## **Keywords**

Dialogue, liberation, critical thinking, critical consciousness, curriculum, Deaf education

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	i
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	ii
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iii
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iv
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	1
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</b> .....	1
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1 The Context of Swaziland</b> .....	3
<b>1.2. History of Deaf Education in Swaziland</b> .....	6
<b>1.3 Origins of Swazi Sign Language</b> .....	8
<b>1.4 Swaziland Educational Policies</b> .....	10
<b>1.5 Statement of the Problem</b> .....	17
<b>1.6 Aims and Objectives of the Study</b> .....	19
<b>1.7 Research Questions</b> .....	19
<b>1.8 Rationale of the Study</b> .....	20
<b>1.9 Organization of the Study</b> .....	21
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> .....	22
<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	22
<b>2.0 Introduction</b> .....	22
<b>2.1 Critical Pedagogy</b> .....	22
<b>2.1.1 Classrooms as liberating sites</b> .....	26
<b>2.2 The medical and social models of disability</b> .....	28
<b>2.2.1 Medical model</b> .....	29
<b>2.2.2 Social model</b> .....	31
<b>2.3 Narrative Theory</b> .....	33
<b>2.4 Summary</b> .....	36
<b>CHAPTER 3</b> .....	37

<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3.1 The concept of the voice.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3.1.1 Limitations of the voice.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3.2 The Concept of Deaf Culture .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.3 Educational experiences of Deaf students in relation to their teachers’ attitudes, expectations and competence .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>3.4 Teachers’ perspectives on Deaf education .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3.5 Parental journey with a D/deaf child .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>4.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>4.1 Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>4.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>4.1.2 Research site .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>4.1.3 Population and Sample.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>4.2 Data collection tools .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>4.2.2 Audio and video recordings .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>4.2.3 Autoethnography as a research tool.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>4.3 Data collection plan.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.3.1 Piloting .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4.3.2 Ethical considerations.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>4.4 Data collection procedure.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>4.5 Trustworthiness.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>4.6 Reviewed documents.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4.7 Role of the researcher .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.8 Data analysis and data presentation.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>4.9 Summary.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>98</b>

5.1 Vignette 1: My educational background as a Special Education teacher .....	98
5.1.1 Reflection .....	100
5.2 Vignette 2: My experience as a principal and a teacher at School for the Deaf-High .....	101
5.2.1 Reflection .....	103
5.3 Vignette 3: Curriculum Issues .....	104
5.3.1 Reflection .....	107
5.4 Vignette 4: My experience at Gallaudet University in the year 2013-2014.....	108
5.4.1 Reflection .....	111
5.5 Vignette 4: Benchmarking and projects initiated .....	112
5.5.1 Reflection .....	115
5.6 My Doctoral Journey .....	116
5.6.1 Reflection .....	117
5.7 Summary.....	117
<b>CHAPTER 6 .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>DATA PRESENTATION FROM STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>119</b>
6.0 Introduction.....	119
6.1 Summary of students' background information .....	119
6.2 Discussion of students' personal information .....	120
6.3 Data presentation from students' interviews.....	121
6.4 Summary.....	150
<b>CHAPTER 7 .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>DATA PRESENTATION FROM TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS'</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>151</b>
7.0 Introduction.....	151
7.1 Teachers' profile .....	151
7.2 Discussion of teachers' personal information.....	152
7.3 Data presentation from teachers' narratives on their educational experiences .....	153
7.4 PRESENTATION OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF ADMINISTRATORS .....	188
7.5 Discussion of administrators' personal information.....	188
7.6 Data presentation on administrators' narratives.....	189
7.7 Summary.....	204
<b>CHAPTER 8.....</b>	<b>205</b>

<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>8.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>8.1 Analysis of the findings based on participants’ narratives .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>8.2 Discussion of the findings .....</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>8.3 Summary.....</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9 .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>9.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>9.1 Reflections.....</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>9.1.1 Theoretical reflections .....</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>9.1.2 Methodological reflection.....</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>9.1.3 Teachers’ and students’ reflections .....</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>9.1.4 My personal reflection .....</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>9.2 Discussion of the key findings of the study .....</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>9.2.1 Sense of belonging.....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>9.2.2 Communication barrier.....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>9.2.3 Resilience, coping strategies and gaining confidence.....</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>9.2.4 Teachers are blamed for the failure of the students .....</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>9.2.5 Importance of dialogue and interaction with the students.....</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>9.2.6 The use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level .....</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>9.2.7 Introduction of Swazi Sign language as a subject.....</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>9.2.8 Sign language does not have signs for some of the concepts being taught.....</b>	<b>304</b>
<b>9.2.9 Teachers as surrogate parents .....</b>	<b>304</b>
<b>9.3 Implications of the findings of this study .....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>9.4 Limitations of the study.....</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>9.5 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>9.6 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Appendix A: Interview guide for Learners .....</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Appendix B: Interview guide for teachers and administrators .....</b>	<b>344</b>

<b>Appendix C: Invitation Letter to Students .....</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>Appendix D: Student’s Consent Form .....</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>Appendix E: Invitation Letter to teachers .....</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>Appendix F: Teacher’s Consent Form.....</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>Appendix G: Invitation Letter to School Administrators .....</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>Appendix H: Administrators’ Consent Form .....</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Appendix I: Letter to School for the Deaf-High School Chairperson.....</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>Appendix J: Letter from School for the Deaf-High School Chairperson .....</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Appendix K: Letter from Ministry of Education and Training .....</b>	<b>353</b>
<b>Appendix L: Letter for Ethics Clearance .....</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>Appendix M: Editing Certificate .....</b>	<b>355</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Curriculum Structure for Junior Secondary Phase	12
Table 2: Documents which facilitated the writing of autoethnography	81
Table 3: Reviewed Policy Documents	89
Table 4: Stage 1 Data Analysis	93
Table 5: Stage 2: Coding of Themes	95
Table 6: Stage 3: Presentation of Themes	96
Table 7: Students' Profile	119
Table 8: Teachers' Profile	151
Table 9: Administrators' Profile	188

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Map of Africa showing Swaziland	4
Figure 2: Map of Swaziland showing location of Schools for the Deaf	5
Figure 3: Theory of Banking Concepts	25
Figure 4: Classroom Dialogue and Interaction	26
Figure 5: The Medical Model of Disability	30
Figure 6: The Social Model of Deafness	32
Figure 7: Coherent Structure of Narrative	35
Figure 8: Sign Language Training Poster	109
Figure 9: Red Star Process	114
Figure 10: Presentation of Themes and Sub-themes	206

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.0 Introduction

The education system in Swaziland provides education for learners with special education needs including Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) learners who are signers, both in segregated and in mainstream settings. For Deaf learners specifically, this means that they are educated in special schools for the Deaf, which are often referred to as segregated settings, whereas Hard of Hearing (HoH) learners are educated in the mainstream schools which are often referred to as inclusive settings in Swaziland.

In a study that was conducted in the United States, DePew (2015, p. 1) points out that the education system of Deaf learners has been dominated and fashioned by the mainstream population which is made up of those that can hear and speak, consequently, the Deaf community's<sup>1</sup> right to communicate their educational needs has not been considered or even forgotten. Education placements in segregated settings have not resulted in high academic and social achievement for Deaf students. When compared to their hearing peers, lower academic achievement has been consistently reported for students who are Deaf because their education has been chiefly influenced and dominated by the hearing population (Slobodzian, 2011).

Moreover, Moll (2010, p. 454) adds that in education, authority is conveyed through social relations, representations and practices which determine whose language and cultural experiences count and whose do not. This means that the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students is discussed and defined without considering the input of the Deaf community, specialists in the field of Deaf Education or teachers of the Deaf. Giroux (2010, p. 1) reiterates that the critical question here is whose future, story and interest does the education represent. He further argues that “school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological

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<sup>1</sup> Deaf Community refers to Deaf people throughout the world who use Sign language and share deaf cultural values and beliefs (Berke, 2016).

and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of students becomes the defining feature of schooling” (Giroux, 2010, p. 1).

Such a situation indicates that students, including Deaf<sup>2</sup> learners, need to be given an opportunity to voice their views, to narrate their own educational experiences in order to inform school practices. An avenue for considering educational needs of Deaf students, is to engage them in more extensive conversations and include their point of view into education and school curriculum structure (Jarvis, et al. 2003, p. 229) because they understand their own lives better than anybody else does (Spencer-Cavalier and Watkinson, 2010).

If Deaf students are to be successful academically, they need to share their educational experiences which could effectively contribute to the curriculum. School practices should include Deaf students’ ‘voices’, experiences and perspectives rather than an outsider’s perception of what Deaf students may actually encounter (Szymanski, 2013). This means that including Deaf students’ viewpoints and narratives into educational planning could be a valuable way of improving Deaf education practices.

There is therefore a need to involve the Deaf population internationally and nationally in the decision making regarding their education by including them in the discussion pertaining to their educational needs. This study, therefore, seeks to conduct a narrative inquiry of the journey and educational experiences of Deaf students who have successfully navigated their way through Senior Level schooling. This qualitative narrative research study was accomplished through a narrative inquiry which provided Deaf students an opportunity and a platform to narrate their educational experiences, thereby, affording them the opportunity to voice their educational experiences, both positive and negative, with the world by narrating their stories of success. It is therefore essential for the researcher to document their journey in their own words.

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Deaf’ with a capital letter ‘D’ in this study is used to refer to deaf people who are part of the culture and associate with deafness, belong to the Deaf community and use sign language as their primary means of communication whilst ‘deaf’ with lower case ‘d’ refers to persons’ clinical, medical status, denoting hearing loss (Summer, 2012:12).

## **1.1 The Context of Swaziland**

Swaziland is a landlocked country which is situated in Southern Africa. It covers 17, 364 square kilometres in the South Eastern corner of Africa (*see Figure 1*). Three quarters of its area is bordered by South Africa and one quarter by Mozambique. Swaziland has four regions, namely, Hhohho with Mbabane (Capital City), Manzini (the Hub), Lubombo (Low veld) and Shiselweni (Southern part). Schools for the Deaf (a primary and a high school) are both located in the Lubombo region. (*see Figure 2*).



*Figure 1: Map of Africa showing Swaziland.*

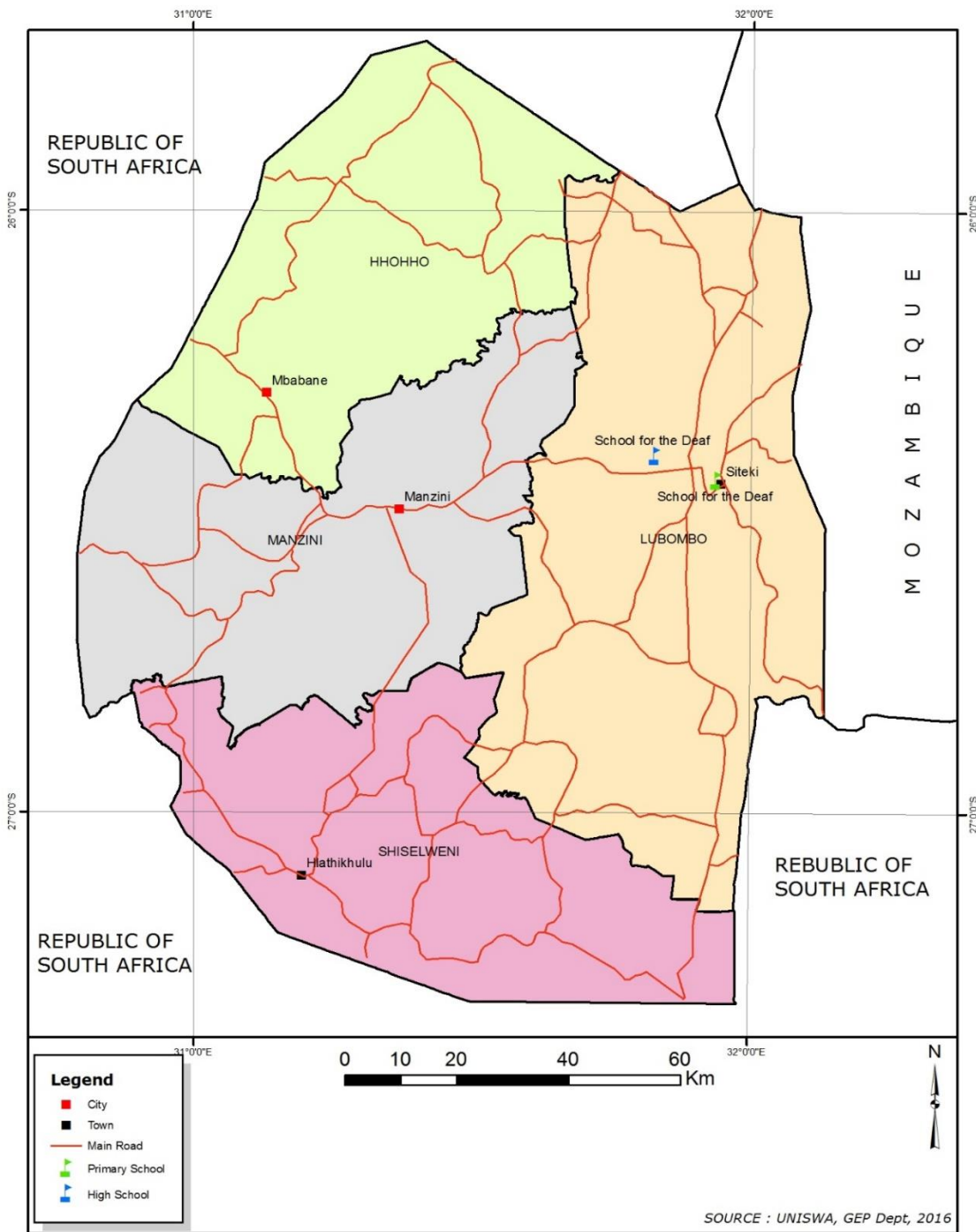


Figure 2: Map of Swaziland and location of School for the Deaf -Primary and School for the Deaf - High

Swaziland has two official languages, namely, siSwati and English. Although Swazi Sign Language (SSL) is the language used by the Swazi Deaf Community, it is not yet recognized as an official language in Swaziland or as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners.

## **1.2. History of Deaf Education in Swaziland**

Deaf education in Swaziland began as a charitable initiative by Roman Catholic Missionaries from Ireland. The first Centre for the Deaf was initiated by Fr. Siro Edoni with the help of a social worker, Mrs Anne Leng from the United Kingdom and a local extension officer, Mr John Mamba at the Enjabulweni Children's Home in Manzini region in 1973. The furniture and other necessary equipment were donated by the Rotary Club of Manzini. The Centre was officially opened by the District Governor, (225RTN), Alf Cunningham of the Rotary District on the 28<sup>th</sup> July in 1975 (School for the Deaf Policy, 2008, p. 2).

When interviewed about the development of the Deaf Centre, Nomphilo Dlamini who was one of the Deaf students at that time and a Swaziland National Association for the Deaf (SNAD) member, pointed out that there were only five Deaf children when the Deaf Centre started operating, three boys and two girls. They were taught by Sr. Gilbert Dowd and Sr. Magdalene from Ireland. The establishment of the first Centre for the Deaf contributed towards the introduction of Deaf Culture and it brought awareness of the Deaf Community into the country. It also brought awareness of Swazi Sign Language<sup>3</sup> (SSL) as a primary language and a first language of the Deaf Community from which beliefs, cultural values and customs transpired and were transferred from one generation to the other. Swazi Sign Language originated from Deaf adults themselves who are signers. When they are together, they communicate in SSL and they also assist the young ones to use proper signs when they are signing. Hence, in schools for the Deaf, Deaf students use SSL. Those who are deaf/HoH and mainstreamed, predominantly do not use SSL in their education.

Deaf children brought their home signs and gestures which they often used as means of communication at their homes since most of them are born from hearing families. At the Deaf Centre, they were introduced to the Swazi Sign Language alphabets, signs and fingerspelling

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<sup>3</sup> Swazi Sign Language in this study refers to the Sign Language which is used by Deaf people in Swaziland (Keilig, 2016)

(using the sign language alphabets to spell and to write words) and to English as a second language. Deaf children were not introduced to siSwati as a language since they did not understand it but relied on signs for communication (School for the Deaf Policy, 2008, p. 2). Even today, they are not able to write SiSwati since they do not learn it at school. For these learners, written English is their second language.

In 1976, the Deaf Centre was moved from Manzini to Siteki because of the increasing number of Deaf students. It is now known as School for the Deaf-Primary. Bishop Mandlenkhosi Zwane (First Swazi Catholic Bishop), Mr. Aaron Zwane (Former Principal Secretary for Home Affairs) and Mr. John Oliver (President of the Rotary Club in Manzini) were pivotal in the establishment of School for the Deaf-Primary in Siteki. Mr. Aaron Mncube was appointed as the first School Principal in 1976 (School for the Deaf Policy, 2008, p. 3).

The School for the Deaf-Primary is currently situated at Siteki Township on government land which was chosen for its proximity to a Good Shepherd Hospital. Thirty-one years later, The Ministry of Education and Training advocated for the establishment of School for the Deaf-High. The Government began to search for the right place to build the school since the land that was allocated for School for the Deaf -Primary was not big enough to also accommodate a high school. For that reason, the school was then built at Matsetsa area under Lugongolweni Inkhundla where the government was given a piece of land by Chief Mlimi. Matsetsa area is also situated in Lubombo Region, 15 km away from Siteki Township.

In 2008, School for the Deaf-High started operating within the primary school premises whilst the construction was in progress. Students and teachers were allocated two classrooms to use for teaching and learning as well as the staffroom. There were only 12 students at that time in Grade 8 and by 2010, the school started to operate fully in its new premises at Matsetsa with 20 students.

In the year 2011, the first Deaf students sat for their external examination at Junior Certificate level (Grade 10) and four of eleven students passed. In 2015, the first four Deaf students sat for their Swaziland General Certificate of Secondary Education (SGCSE) examination (Grade 12) and they all passed. As a researcher and the first Principal of the School, I am so grateful and proud to have witnessed this milestone in the history of Deaf Education in Swaziland.

### 1.3 Origins of Swazi Sign Language

Swazi Sign Language was developed by Deaf people when communicating among themselves. Deaf people developed it as a way of expressing themselves to each other. Reagan, (2008, p. 172) points out that sign languages are fully and completely human languages, meeting every reasonable criterion that might be applied to describe a language. Although “sign language is recognized as an official language in the Scandinavian countries, the USA, among others” (Gor, 2004, p. 4), SSL is not yet recognized as one of the official languages in Swaziland and is not yet introduced and examined as a subject. Such a situation has a negative impact on the development of education for Deaf students in Swaziland. It means that there is no curriculum designed for Swazi Sign Language, thus neglecting to acknowledge it as a first language of Deaf learners through which they access<sup>4</sup> their education (Keilig, 2016, p. viii) The current status of language policy in Swaziland recognizes Siswati and English as the two official languages in the country, English language being the medium of instruction in schools (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 25;The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 2005, p. 3). SiSwati as the mother tongue should be used officially as a medium of instruction for the first four grades of school, after which English shall be the medium of instruction and siSwati and English will continue to be taught as a subject at all grade levels in school system and remain core subjects (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 25).

On the same note, Gor (2004, p. 4) argues that sign language is one of the pillars of Deaf culture and its exclusion in the education policies represents the most oppressive element in the education of Deaf children (Gor, 2004, p. 4). Stapleton, (2015, p. 2) adds that discrimination against and oppression of Deaf people is called audism and it is a complex weave of micro and macro aggressions that leads to a system of over privilege for those that can hear and speak and under privilege for those who are Deaf (Stapleton, 2015, p. 2). Deaf students can also experience audism throughout their education and within their families, almost every day, since 90% of them are born into hearing families with hearing parents (Stapleton, 2015, p. 2). This similar to Deaf students in Swaziland most of them are born into hearing families with hearing parents.

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<sup>4</sup> Access refers to the ability of every individual child to enjoy the right to basic education irrespective of their gender, physical or mental conditions, economic, social, political environmental or cultural status (Goel, 2010).

There is often a common history of oppression and discrimination against Deaf community members who use sign language as their primary means of communication, particularly within the education system (Stapleton, 2015, p. 2). Education system should be diverse and accessible to every child, including Deaf children. To Deaf students, sign language as the language of Deaf people connects them to each other and it serves as a membership card to the Deaf Community, a privilege which not everyone can enjoy (Clason, 2014, p. 1). According to Payne (2015), sign language is a complete, complex language consisting of signs made by hands, facial expressions and body language and it is the backbone of Deaf culture (Clason, 2014, p. 2).

Swazi Sign Language has a variety of signs and Deaf individuals have their own way of expressing themselves, but still, they understand each other. Deaf individuals from the villages use their own signs which are different from those that are used by students in the two schools for the Deaf. Students use well developed signs which incorporate most of the concepts which they learn within different subjects at school. As Deaf individuals were brought together at school, signs for certain concepts develop each day and SSL is repeatedly growing as Deaf individuals interact with others across the globe, as far as United States of America, South Africa, Ghana and Uganda (Keilig, 2016, p. vii). Moreover, the first Irish Dominican nuns made a lasting long impact on the education of Deaf individuals in Swaziland by introducing a combination of signs from Ireland and Germany, consequently, SSL had a minimal influence from English and siSwati. Such a situation has resulted in a proliferation of different varieties of signs and has sparked a debate within the Swazi Deaf community as to how SSL can be standardized and they are striving to work in collaboration with the two schools for the Deaf through the Swaziland National Association for the Deaf (SNAD), in a bid to standardize the signs within the country.

Somewhat contradicting the effort of introducing Deaf education in Swaziland, the Irish nuns used oralism<sup>5</sup> as the sole method of teaching Deaf students in School for the Deaf-Primary. Deaf students were not allowed to sign within the school premises. If they happened to sign and were seen by teachers, they were severely punished. Despite the effort of the nuns to discourage the use of sign language within the school premises, Deaf learners continued to sign in their dormitories, and sign language continued to develop. Years later, teachers of the Deaf with the help of SNAD,

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<sup>5</sup> Oralism in this study refers to the method of communication which is used in teaching D/deaf learners to communicate through speech and lip reading as opposed to using sign language (Fan, 2016)

became resistant to using oralism as the main medium of instruction in school. SSL was embraced by teachers since it was believed to foster self-identity and a sense of belonging to Deaf students as their first language (Keilig, 2016, p. viii). Since then, SSL has been used as a medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf in Swaziland. Let us now turn to the Swaziland educational policies in order to locate the context of the education system that is used by Deaf students in Swaziland so that educational experiences of students and their teachers are illuminated.

#### **1.4 Swaziland Educational Policies**

There has been a great shift in the education of Deaf students in Swaziland, from the special curriculum which has been followed by Deaf students at primary level to the regular curriculum. For that reason, educational policies are discussed in this section in order to locate the educational experiences of Deaf students, teachers and school administrators.

The Special Education Policy Statement (1999) has a provision for special schools for students identified as having special needs because of their various learning disabilities. The policy asserts that every child of school going age is entitled to have access to an education programme and a student requiring a special education programme is entitled to a programme appropriate for the student's needs, age and level of educational achievement (The Special Education Policy Statement, 1999, p. 2). When it comes to curriculum options, the policy also states that "students with special education require specialized curriculum" (The Special Education Policy Statement, 1999, p. 9). Thus, the curriculum was developed and followed in School for the Deaf-Primary and was accepted by the examination board although there were no clear framework guidelines of what needed to be taught in each class or language policy.

The Special Education Policy Statement (1999) has since been reviewed and the Ministry of Education and Training has come up with the new Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018) which is mandated to be used by all schools in the country, including schools for the Deaf. This curriculum framework guides all the teachers and it clearly outlines the structure of the curriculum to be followed by every school in the country from primary to secondary level. This curriculum structure is in line with The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (2011) which seeks to ensure that every learner's educational needs are met,

“regardless of their gender, life circumstances, state of health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstance” (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 16; National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 12). This means that all schools are expected to welcome and serve all the learners with various educational needs in a bid to “uncover and address barriers to learning and recognize and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs” (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 12). The curriculum framework also stipulates that “the purpose of the framework is to make the general curriculum flexible and more responsive to the needs of all learners requiring special needs education in Swaziland’s special and mainstream schools and resource centres” (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 3). This means that the framework is meant to “expand accessibility and provision of appropriate and relevant education to every learner” (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 3).

The most interesting part of this curriculum framework to this study is the subjects, especially languages, which are offered from primary level to secondary level. Table 1 shows the structure of the curriculum for General Education in Swaziland for Junior Secondary Phase. The subjects are shown in the curriculum structure the way they are listed in the document policy, Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 31). As the structure portrays languages that are taught in Swaziland, it is clear that Swazi Sign Language<sup>6</sup> is now recognized as one of the core languages that need to be taught as compulsory subjects in Swaziland alongside SiSwati and English (See Table 1 below).

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<sup>6</sup> Swazi Sign Language should be offered to profoundly D/deaf learners instead of siSwati throughout primary and secondary education (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018:3)

Table 1: Curriculum Structure for Junior Secondary Phase (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018)

Subjects		Periods per Week	Hours per Week	TOTAL
<b>CORE SUBJECTS</b>		<b>40 minutes Each</b>		
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SiSwati/Swazi Sign Language*</li> <li>▪ English Language</li> </ul>	6	4	
<b>Mathematics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mathematics</li> </ul>	6	4	
<b>Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integrated Science</li> </ul>	7	4.7	
<b>ICT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ICT</li> </ul>	6	4	
<b>Health and Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance and Counselling</li> </ul>	3	2	
<b>Human and Social Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Religious Education</li> </ul>	2	1.3	
				<b>33 periods</b>
<b>ELECTIVES</b>	3 Electives to be taken from the following subjects:	3 Electives at 5 periods each	10	<b>15 periods</b>
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ French</li> <li>▪ Portuguese</li> </ul>			
<b>Human and Social Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Geography</li> <li>▪ History</li> <li>▪ Development Studies</li> </ul>			
<b>Arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performing Arts (Music, Drama and Dance)</li> <li>▪ Fine Art</li> </ul>			
<b>Technical and Vocational Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design and Technology</li> <li>▪ Consumer Science</li> <li>▪ Technical Studies</li> <li>▪ Book Keeping and Accounts</li> <li>▪ Entrepreneurship</li> <li>▪ Agriculture</li> <li>▪ Business Studies</li> </ul>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7 Core Subjects</b>		<b>32 hours</b>	<b>48 periods</b>
	<b>2/3 Electives</b>			

It is interesting to note that Swazi Sign Language is expected to be offered throughout primary and secondary education and the Swazi Sign Language curriculum is in the process of being developed. It is therefore anticipated that Swazi Sign Language is going to be recognized and taught as a subject in schools for the Deaf in Swaziland as soon as the curriculum is put in place. In actual fact, the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 30) stipulates that Swazi Sign language should be offered to profoundly D/deaf learners instead of siSwati throughout primary and secondary education. Currently, Deaf students are being taught English Language only even though Swazi Sign Language is their medium of instruction in class, it is neither taught nor examined as a subject yet students in mainstream schools enjoy learning their indigenous language which is siSwati Language.

It is now evident that Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018) promotes bilingual education whereby Swazi Sign Language is to be taught alongside siSwati Language in residential schools for the Deaf. It also means that subjects which are outlined in Table 1 are also done by Deaf students in residential schools for the Deaf, an indication that D/deaf students officially follow the general mainstream curriculum. This kind of curriculum aims at developing Swazi Sign Language which means that it promotes bilingualism<sup>7</sup> and it subscribes to the social model of deafness by advocating for sensitivity and awareness of Deaf culture. I therefore argue that this curriculum emphasizes the importance of supporting Deaf identity and Deaf culture in D/deaf children's overall development.

Bilingual programs consider natural sign language as D/deaf learners' first language (L1) which serves as the medium of instruction in class and also supports literacy development in a spoken language which serves as their second language (L2) despite the fact that almost 95% of these learners are born to hearing parents who do not understand sign language (Knors and Tang, 2014, p. 4). This entails that when D/deaf children can be exposed early enough to sign language by both teachers and family members, their reading and writing skills can be enhanced. Mayberry and Lock (2003) cited in Knors and Tang, (2014, p. 5) attest to the fact that if children's first language exposure is delayed until age of 6 or older, such would have a negative impact on D/deaf children's grammatical development and in reading comprehension.

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<sup>7</sup> Bilingualism refers to having knowledge of more than one language (Knors and Tang, 2014:11).

Pertaining to the status of languages in the country, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act (2005, p. 12) stipulates that the official languages of Swaziland are siSwati and English. Therefore, the National Education and Training Sector Policy dictates that siSwati as a mother tongue, shall be used as a medium of instruction in the first four grades of primary school, after which English shall be the medium of instruction, however, Swazi Sign language shall apply throughout (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 39). This means that Swazi Sign Language is an officially recognized language in all schools should be taught and used where appropriate (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 40). Schools for the Deaf use Swazi Sign Language as the medium of instructions from first grade of primary throughout senior level even though it is not yet taught as a subject in schools for the Deaf. It is interesting to note that the policy recognizes Swazi Sign Language as a core subject, a medium of instruction and an officially recognized language. SiSwati, however, is not taught in schools for the Deaf, which means that it is not considered as the first language of Deaf students.

When it comes to technical and vocational education as stipulated in Table 1, School for the Deaf-High has two main streams which are academic and vocational streams. This entails that students are assigned to these two streams according to their various learning capabilities. Students who are academically inclined, take the academic route whilst students who are not academically inclined, take the vocational route. In the vocational stream, there are various departments which are career oriented. These departments include technical subjects, Consumer Science and Agriculture. Technical subjects include subjects such as carpentry, welding, electrical and fine art. In the Consumer Science department, there are vocational subjects which include baking, sewing and hairdressing whilst Agriculture includes poultry (layers and broilers), vegetables and a dairy cow for milk production for the school.

On teacher development, the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 32) stipulates that the outcome of teacher education is to prepare teachers for the transition of knowledge, independent thinking, organizational skills and development of learners' personalities in preparation for their contribution to society. This means that teachers need to be equipped with necessary skills that will enable them to be independent thinkers in the process of planning lessons for their students so that they can fully engage them in the classroom dialogues.

However, the policy is silent regarding equipping teachers of the Deaf with Swazi Sign Language skills although it is an officially recognized language and the medium of instruction in class. I therefore argue that teachers of the Deaf need to be trained and equipped with skills for communicating with their learners during the transmission of knowledge between the two parties in class.

When it comes to access to assessment, government policies stipulate that assessment should be inclusive and provide equal opportunities to all learners and it should be fair by assessing the competencies in appropriate ways related to the characteristics and circumstances of individual learners (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 44; National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 28; The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 45). This entails that the assessment goal is to develop a national assessment framework to improve quality, equity, relevance, accessibility and effectiveness of education in the country (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 29). It also means that assessment should be inclusive such that the tasks and procedures should not disadvantage any individual learner. It should be manageable such that it does not overload teachers and learners (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 37).

Government policies have further mandated the inclusion of reasonable accommodations in the examination of learners with special education needs. In order to enable D/deaf learners to access the examination, the ECOS policy has since mandated the provision of sign language interpreters, extra time as well as exemption from oral assessment of D/deaf learners during the examination. The <sup>8</sup>ECOS Handbook (2013/2014), a policy document, stipulates that the centre may give candidates with hearing impairment an extra time allowance of up to 25% if their literacy difficulty reduce the speed at which they read and comprehend written questions' (ECOS Handbook, 2013/2014, p. 52; <sup>9</sup>ECESWA Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 16). This means that 25% extra time should be requested according to the needs of most candidates to allow them to finish the examination tasks. The current policy further stipulates that "a sign language interpreter can help the candidates to understand the rubric only" which means that the interpreter must "sign exactly

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<sup>8</sup> ECOS stands for Examinations Council of Swaziland

<sup>9</sup> ECESWA stands for Examination Council of Eswatini

what is written without changing the meaning, adding any information, or providing an explanation of what the rubric requires of the candidate” (ECESWA Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 19). This means that the sign language interpreter is expected to clarify the instructions of what the candidates are expected to do, not what the questions require from the candidates. Such, a candidate should figure out on his/her own self. The policy further states that “it is important that any sign language interpreter used in an assessment knows the sign language of the candidates, and the signs have been used throughout the course of study” (ECESWA Handbook, 2019/2020, p. 19). I therefore argue that schools for the Deaf should have qualified interpreters who are teachers of the Deaf students so that there is no communication break down during the examination session. Students should fully comprehend what the interpreters are signing, not only during the examination, but also during the teaching learning process so that both students and interpreters fully access each other in terms of communication and in signing of the crucial subject concepts. The sign language interpreters should also have experience in teaching D/deaf students. I further argue that these sign language interpreters should also be involved in the marking of the D/deaf students’ examination scripts because they are familiar with the manner in which D/deaf students presents their written work. In this way, D/deaf students may not be disadvantaged or have advantage over other candidates.

The government policy also mandates that when it comes to oral assessments (speaking tests), centres may request exemption from oral assessment for candidates who cannot speak audibly, including D/deaf students (ECOS Handbook, 2013/2014, p. 52). However, in English Language listening tests, access arrangement for candidates with hearing impairment may allow the use of headphones or a transcript with live speakers if the normal method of access is lip reading.

I therefore argue that D/deaf students in residential schools should not be subjected to oral or listening tests because they use sign language as the medium of instruction. It is evident that when it comes to oral and listening tests, the policy stipulates that D/deaf students may be exempted in oral tests but when it comes to listening to passages, D/deaf students are expected to use headphones or transcripts with live speakers to enable them to lip-read. In this regard, the policy clearly favours spoken languages over sign language. The preference of using spoken language over sign language in teaching and assessing D/deaf students is what Bauman (2004, p. 240) calls

audism. Audism is further described by Bauman as the discrimination against D/deaf people by continually judging their intelligence and success on the basis of their ability in the language of the hearing culture (Bauman, 2004, p. 240). In addition, the ECOS Handbook (2013/2014, p. 52) overlooks the fact that not all D/deaf students can use head phones or lip read. It is also evident that neither teachers of Deaf students nor the Deaf populace has been involved in the formulation of this policy because of its biasedness. Some of the English words sound the same when they are being read (homophones) and they can easily mislead a candidate who is lip reading. This means that the policy does not consider how much information a lip-reading candidate can miss during the examination when compared to hearing students even though the government advocates for inclusive assessment.

From the reviewed government policies, it is worth noting that government legislations are meant to break down the barriers in the education system by endeavoring to meet the educational needs of all the learners in the country and to ensure access to inclusive, life-long quality education and training for all Swazi citizens (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 9). However, there might be hindrances in achieving the goals of the policies especially when it comes to equal access of examination if Swazi Sign Language is sidelined in enabling the D/deaf learners in accessing the examination since it is neither taught as a subject nor examined although it is the medium of instruction for D/deaf learners. In addition, Deaf students are still expected to do listening comprehension passages through head phones or lip-reading which is an indication that the examination is dominated exclusively by the hearing populace. I therefore argue that the use of Swazi Sign Language is still considered inferior to spoken languages by the hearing populace yet it is the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf. It is often sidelined because it is neither taught nor used to facilitate the examination of Deaf students in the country. This is an indicator that the education of Deaf students is being dominated by the hearing populace. Next to be presented in this study, is the statement of the problem.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

There is often a common history of oppression and discrimination against Deaf community members who use sign language as their primary means of communication, particularly within the education system globally (Stapleton, 2015, p. 2). Padden and Humphries (2005, p. 76) point out

that Deaf people struggle with the problem of voice, that is, how to make themselves heard over the powerful voice of hearing people who define them and their educational needs differently. To date, the educational needs of the Deaf population have been scrutinized, defined and dominated by the hearing population without giving Deaf populace a 'voice' to communicate their educational needs as well as their educational experiences (Dalton, 2013, p. 127). Deaf students' education has been predominantly shaped by the mainstream hearing population, consequently, the Deaf population's ability to communicate their educational needs has been marginalized (DePew. 2015, p. 1). Giroux (2010, p. 1) then argues that "the critical question here is whose future, story and interest does the education represent?"

Störbeck et al. (2010, p. 5) also aver that the most challenging aspect of the education of Deaf students is knowing that Deaf learners, for the most part, are fully capable of achieving the same educational outcomes expected of any other learner, but are, frustratingly not achieving equal opportunities in an atmosphere of low expectations, and are perceived by the education system as not being able to do so. The most frustrating part in the field of Deaf education on the side of students and their teachers, is that of dealing with the curriculum which is not adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students as well as the assessment system which does not fully accommodate the Deaf students but favours their hearing counterparts (Störbeck et al. 2010, p. 5). Musengi (2014, p. 10) also adds that typically, Deaf pupils in Zimbabwe undergo a primary school education longer than their hearing peers and this longer stay in school is attributed to fact that Deaf students learn the mainstream curriculum followed by hearing pupils which does not suit the educational needs of Deaf students. Consequently, Deaf students who make it into high school level are the exception rather than the rule (Musengi, et al. 2012).

Similarly, in Swaziland, very few students make it into high school level because of the curriculum issues that are faced by Deaf students and their teachers during their teaching and learning. The rest of Deaf students end up being channeled to vocational programs where they are taught practical skills such as wood work, sewing and cooking. Their educational needs and their educational goals are not fully supported by the education system which seeks to ensure that every learner's educational needs are met, "regardless of their gender, life circumstances, state of health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstance" The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (2011, p. 16).

As an administrator and a teacher of Deaf students, I have also observed that Deaf students' experiences, perceptions and their 'voices' are absent or marginalized in discussions about how best to support their educational goals and their educational needs. I therefore argue that there is a need to seek viewpoints of Deaf students by giving them a platform to share their educational experiences and to communicate their educational needs through their personal authentic narratives and that is what this study sought to do. A suitable avenue for considering educational needs of Deaf students, is to engage them in more extensive conversations and include their point of view regarding their education and their school curriculum structure (Jarvis, et al. 2003, p. 229). Allowing the viewpoints of students who are Deaf regarding their education, is necessary considering that they understand their own lives better than anybody else (Spencer-Cavalier and Watkinson, 2010). In this study, therefore, Deaf students were given an opportunity to communicate their educational needs and how best their educational goals can be supported in order to improve Deaf education in the country through sharing their personal stories.

### **1.6 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

- a) to investigate educational experiences of Deaf students through their personal narratives
- b) to explore hearing teachers' experiences in teaching Deaf students in Swaziland
- c) to explore experiences encountered by the researcher as a teacher and a school principal in teaching Deaf students through autoethnography
- d) to explore School for the Deaf-Primary administrators' experiences in teaching Deaf students

### **1.7 Research Questions**

- a) What are the educational experiences of Deaf learners in a school for the Deaf in Swaziland?
- b) What experiences do hearing teachers of the Deaf encounter in teaching Deaf students in Swaziland?
- c) What experience does the researcher as a teacher and a school principal encounter in teaching Deaf students?
- d) What experiences do School for the Deaf-Primary administrators encounter in teaching Deaf students?

## **1.8 Rationale of the Study**

Even though there have been various studies on different aspects of Deaf education in Swaziland including those of Thwala, (2015); Vilakati (2012) and Khumalo (2008) among others, no one has paid particular attention to investigating the educational experiences of D/deaf learners in Swaziland through personal narratives. The academic and social experiences of D/deaf students in various settings have been studied from the perspective of hearing educators and so, they do not reflect what students who are D/deaf experience. The rationale of this study, therefore, is to provide Deaf learners an opportunity to ‘voice’ their views pertaining to their educational experiences and to document their journey as the first senior students to have completed their full academic career from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

Since I myself have the experience of teaching Deaf students and that of being an administrator at School for the Deaf-High, I decided to engage autoethnographic research as Kyratzis and Green (1997, p. 17) submit that:

“...narrative research entails a double narrative process, one that includes the narratives generated by those participating in the research, and one that represents the voice of the researcher as narrator of those narratives.”

From the above quotation, it is evident that the voice of the researcher is also important in a narrative inquiry when the researcher is exploring the personal experiences of the participants. In this sense, autoethnography enables the researcher to connect his or her experience to a wider cultural meaning and understanding of the experiences of the participants. So, the main purpose of autoethnography is “to come to understanding of yourself in deeper ways and with understanding yourself, comes understanding of others” as Ellis and Boncher (2000, p. 738) put it. This means that understanding my own experiences and presenting my own voice in this study will enable me to understand my participants’ experiences and interpret their experiences with a critical mind.

This study also employs critical pedagogy, medical model and social model of disability and narrative theory as theoretical framework in order to locate the Deaf students’ voices and their educational experiences.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 of this study presented the introduction to the study, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, rationale of the study and definition of terms. Chapter 2 covers theoretical framework; chapter 3 presents the literature review which will explore literature national and internationally; chapter 4 presents research methodology and research design, the research instruments, chosen population and sample, research site, ethical considerations and piloting of the study; chapter 5 will present and analyse data findings from Deaf students; chapter 6 will present data and analysis from teachers of the Deaf and primary administrators; Chapter 7 presents and analyses the data from my own experiences and chapter 8 presents discussion of the findings; chapter 9 presents conclusions and recommendations of the study. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This study seeks to investigate the journey and educational experiences of Deaf students through their narratives. This means that the journey and the educational experiences of Deaf learners is viewed through the lens of critical pedagogy on the notion of liberation. Medical and social models of disability as well as narrative theory are also discussed in this chapter since they are also not value-neutral. They can either “domesticate or liberate” (Allen, 2011, p. 104) an individual just like critical pedagogy. First to be discussed, is critical pedagogy, followed by medical and social model of disability and then narrative theory.

#### **2.1 Critical Pedagogy**

The mainstream population has historically shaped the education needs of the Deaf community without seeking their participation in the conversation about their needs (DePew, 2015, p. 6). What transpires from such a situation is that one population becomes dependent on the other and is silenced on the issues which relates to their education. Critical pedagogy, premised on the notion of liberation, encourages that in order for liberation to take place, every group should be involved in dialogue so that their voices are heard.

Critical pedagogy is the theory which emanated from the theoretical foundations of critical theory and has been applied to aspects of curriculum in order to deal with issues related to teaching and learning situations in educational settings (Breuning, 2009, p. 248; Kilderry, 2008, p. 2; Burbules and Berke, 1999, p. 1). Critical theory is concerned with transforming oppressive relations of power in a variety of domains that lead to human oppression (Johnson and Morris, 2010, p. 6) and it tries to humanize and to empower learners through problem posing education (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 1). When it comes to the relationship between education and power, the questions that arise from critical theorists among others, include: whose history, whose future, whose story and whose interests are represented by schooling and formal education (Mayo, 2014, p. 2; Giroux, 2014, p. 7; Nikolakaki, 2012; Giroux, 2010, p. 1; Gor, 2004, p. 2).

The concept of critical pedagogy has philosophical roots in the critical theories of the Frankfurt school of Ardeno, Habermas, Hokheimer and Marcuse and those theories that are associated with the teachings of Paulo Freire through his well-known Pedagogy of the Oppressed which captured most teachers and academics across the world (Sarroub and Quadros, 2015, p. 252; Mohammadkhani, 2013, p. 60; Nikolakaki, 2012; Johnson and Morris, 2010, p. 6; Wink, 2005, p. 167). This is an approach “to teaching and learning that seeks to analyse and transform educational contexts by applying principles of critical theory such as critical consciousness, dialogue and liberation” (Wink, 2005, p. 167).

It advocates a social justice orientation for transforming oppressive educational institutions into sites of emancipation and equality (Allen, 2011, p. 104). The primary goal of this approach is to develop students’ and teachers’ critical consciousness of how power tends to serve some groups more favourably than others with the hope that after students and teachers become aware of these dynamics, they can be empowered and inspired to construct and enact alternate more equitable social realities (Allen, 2011, p. 105). Critical pedagogy aims at educating students to recognize that teaching always entails transfer of some values, which means that learning should include students’ personal background, especially cultural traditions and social practices (Beacom and Golder, 2015, p. 7).

I therefore argue that education systems should create space for free communication and dialogical process whereby both teachers and Deaf students can openly share their experiences and ideas as active participants in the school through SSL and beyond the curriculum. Students’ views and perspectives which they bring to the classroom should be acknowledged by teachers (Beacom and Golder, 2015, p. 7; Gomez, 2010, p. 2).

Critical pedagogy relies heavily on the work of “the critical theorist, Paulo Freire who conceptualized liberation in education as a process where learners come to consciousness (*conscientization*) through praxis which integrates critical theory with reflection and practice” (Allen, 2011, p. 104). Freire poses that “educational processes are not neutral; they can either domesticate or liberate students” (Allen, 2011, p. 104). In other words, the manner in which schools are being managed, the type of curriculum which is followed in schools and the way in which the subject content is delivered in the classroom, can either advantage or disadvantage students. Critical pedagogy theory argues that school practices need to be informed by a public

philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experiences of empowerment for the vast majority of students become the defining feature of schooling (Giroux, 2010, p. 1; Beacom and Golder, 2015, p. 72).

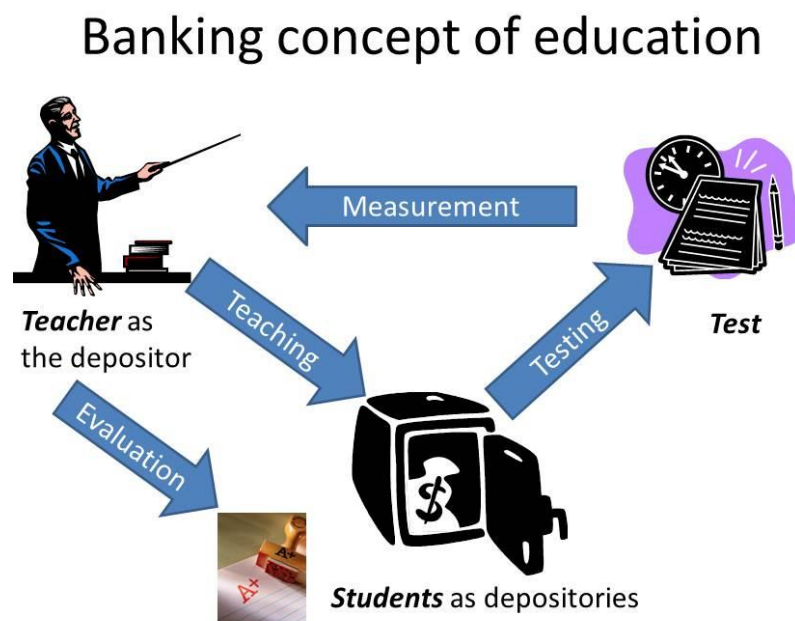
I therefore argue that critical pedagogy, when put into practice, will enable the researcher to give Deaf students a voice to communicate their experiences and to evaluate their education system. Teachers will also work towards improving classroom relationship with their students through dialogue.

Critical pedagogy attempts to give a voice to the marginalized groups such as Deaf students in schools, tertiary institutions and throughout the society as a whole. It advocates for Deaf students' liberation and the promotion of critical thinking and consciousness of students within the education system. It attempts to protect Deaf students from being oppressed by the education system, "from being objects of education to subjects of their own autonomy and emancipation" (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77) so that students can be liberated and learn to think critically and also develop critical consciousness about the issues that relate to their education. Critical thinking implies the ability to think analytically, unpack concepts, develop arguments, provide evidence, question interpretations of evidence and provide alternative interpretations (Pishghadam and Meidani, 2012, p. :465; Soden and MacLellan, 2004, p. 335). This approach stresses the importance of understanding what actually happens in the classroom and what kind of knowledge and practices teachers and students engage in, in such a way that teachers do not only educate students, but they also learn from them (Giroux, 2014, p. 7). In that way, teachers can engage students into discussions which will enable them to develop critical thinking and reasoning which can lead them towards making rational decisions and improve their own life conditions by taking necessary actions in building a "more just and equitable society" through dialogue (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77).

I therefore argue that critical pedagogy is a theory and practice of liberation (Giroux, 2013, p. 7) that can assist Deaf students to gain critical consciousness and begin to relate what is happening in the classroom to their own life circumstances and then think about ways of improving their own education for better future. This study, therefore, seeks to empower Deaf students to think critically about their education and the experiences which they have encountered by engaging them in dialogue so that they narrate their experiences so that their voices can be heard too.

It is also recommended by Aliakbari and Faraji, (2011, p. 78) that teachers should “engage students in dialogue by inviting them to name and narrate their own experiences and allow them to relate those experiences to what they are learning in class and create new forms of knowledge through problem posing education and questioning problematic issues in their lives.” This means that teachers should refrain from old ways of teachings whereby teachers serve as experts who know everything and students as empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge.

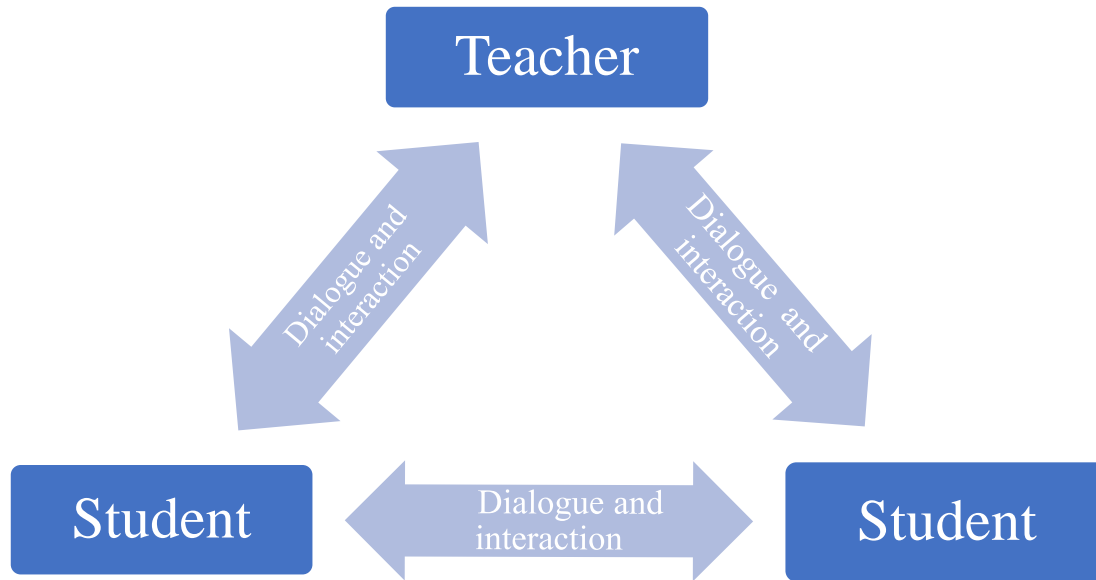
Freire argues that education should not be an act of ‘depositing’ in which students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor of knowledge. Instead of communicating, the teacher makes deposits which students patiently receive, memorize and repeat and (Freire, 1998, p. 30) calls this a ‘banking’ concept of education. This is illustrated in Figure 3 below.



*Figure 3: The theory of banking as a concept of education in the classroom.*  
 Source: Adapted from [www.imagesofcriticalpedagogy](http://www.imagesofcriticalpedagogy)

I therefore argue that Deaf students should be engaged in discussions and in dialogues through their own language (SSL) as participants in this study so that they can become skilled in analyzing issues pertaining to their education as well as their life experiences in general since dialogue breaks the culture of silence. This process is illustrated in Figure 4.

## Dialogue and interaction in the classroom



*Figure 4: Dialogue and interaction in the classroom setting.*

Students should be engaged in problem solving teaching (Allen, 2012, p. 105; Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 78; Giroux, 2010, p. 2, Tobell, 2000, p. 205) whereby both teachers and students learn from each other and aim at achieving the same educational goals in a setting where SSL is not a barrier to both teachers and students. There should be a lot of dialogue and interaction in the classroom among students and teachers. Students should believe that they have a ‘voice’ and they have equal opportunity to share their ‘voice’ and their ideas in the classroom (Parr, 2010, p. 36).

Employing this theoretical framework in this study, therefore, gave a ‘voice’ to Deaf students so that they could present their ideas and their views pertaining to their education through narrating their educational experiences themselves. In this way, teachers, administrators and parents could learn about the experiences of these Deaf students through their own voices. The next section is classrooms as liberating sites.

### **2.1.1 Classrooms as liberating sites**

Classrooms as liberating sites in the education system are essential to this study since it is there that critical pedagogy is being put into practice. In order to apply critical pedagogy in the classroom

settings as practice, both teachers and students need to understand pedagogical classroom practice as a form of power knowledge relations in schools (Sarroub and Quadros, 2015, p. 252) such that teachers teach in a manner which facilitates the empowerment of all students regardless of their life circumstances or disability.

Schools are the most important institutions through which both teachers and students, including Deaf learners, can enrich themselves. Critical pedagogy in every classroom setting, is a moral activity and an opportunity to empower any learner or any teacher so that they can come into terms with their own experiences (McLaren and Kincheloe, 2011, p. 243). This study argues that Deaf students and their teachers can both be empowered through critical pedagogy for the better understanding of their own individual experiences in the education system in Swaziland through their own voices. If teachers involve Deaf students in dialogues in classroom activities, teachers can learn a lot from their students and gain insight into students' perspectives and interests based on the issues discussed. This theory, if put into practice, gives voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless (Wink, 2005, p. 6) and teachers will continue to examine their own classroom practices and realize the possibilities of democratic social values within their classrooms (Breunig, 2009, p. 248).

Schools are places of social transformation and emancipation, places where students are educated not only to be critical thinkers, but also to view the world as a place where their actions might make a difference (McLaren 2003, p. 187). Through schools, students should be able to create new forms of knowledge about their lived educational experiences which become a defining feature of schooling (Giroux, 2010, p. 1).

Freire contends that classroom experiences, through the facilitation of teachers, should become situations in which students are encouraged to engage as active participants in their own education and develop critical awareness to assess fairness within their education and living situations (Breuning, 2009, p. 247; Freire, 1998, p. 30). Critical thinking and liberating dialogue in the education system allows students to develop their own ideas and dreams without being oppressed by teachers as experts, know-it-alls or intellectuals, presenting one particular world view and students being passive (Allen, 2012, p. 105; Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 78; Giroux, 2010, p. 2, Tobell, 2000, p. 205; Hudson, 1999).

I therefore argue that Freire's critical pedagogy provides a space where the unconditional freedom to question and assert oneself is central to the purpose of learning. It is a theory that needs to be connected to practical lived experiences of students and teachers both outside and inside the classroom and it is the responsibility of the teacher to create and apply appropriate teaching strategies and classroom practices which are suitable for that particular class of students (Breuning, 2009, p. 250).

Therefore, in this study, Deaf students were engaged in a 'dialogue', with the researcher who is a teacher and an administrator in the school in order to create an opportunity and a platform for these Deaf students to be heard by the researcher herself and by their teachers as well as other readers, including parents. They were given an opportunity to voice out their views on their educational experiences which is described by Freire as the conquest of the world for their liberation (Giroux, 2010, p. 2). Participants obtain a form of liberation and freedom of communication as well when telling their stories.

I therefore argue that using a critical pedagogy in this study, gave 'voice' to Deaf students, as representatives of Deaf populace as a whole so that they could present their ideas and their views pertaining to their education. This provided them with an opportunity to come to terms with their own experiences and reflect back on their educational journey. Personal educational experiences of Deaf learners in this sense are presented in this study as narratives, as their personal stories and as their ideas and views regarding their education. Deaf learners were engaged in critical dialogue, sharing their own ideas and making meaningful contributions towards their own education.

The next section discusses the notion of medical and social models of deafness as embodied ontological models of disability in order to illuminate and conceptualize the educational experiences of Deaf students. The broader concept of Deaf culture is discussed in the literature review in chapter 3.

## **2.2 The medical and social models of disability**

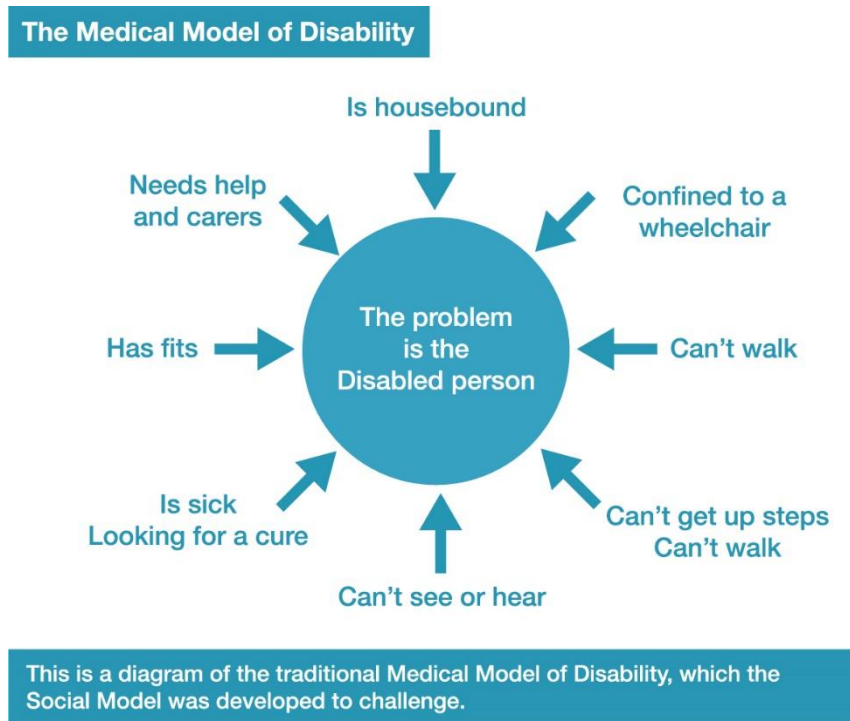
There have been huge debates about models of disabilities and what they mean to disability politics, policies and services as well as how adequate they are as an explanation for the experiences that disabled people have, including Deaf people (Oliver, 2004, p. 19).

While the medical model takes deafness as a problem requiring medical intervention, in contrast, the social model understands deafness as a political problem calling for corrective action by citizens or activists who alter people's attitudes and reform the practices of the state (Silver, 2009, p. 19). Let us look closely at the medical model of deafness.

### **2.2.1 Medical model**

Foucault, a French philosopher and an educator provides an important theoretical insight and mode of analysis in understanding and developing knowledge surrounding his notions of power-knowledge, discourse normalization and subjectivity in relations to exploring the experiences of Deaf students in the education system (Pitsoe and Letseka, 2013, p. 23, Pylypa, 1998, p. 21). He observed how domination and oppression of a culture or system of values, such as the medical model of disability, is sustained through hegemonic control (Pitsoe and Letseka, 2013, p. 24; Foucault 1998, p. 14). With regard to deafness, other audiologists and other medical specialists propose treatment such as the use of hearing aids, cochlear implants, auditory brainstem implants, and speech therapists in order to help deaf individuals to get along in a hearing world because the use of sign language is considered inferior to spoken languages by the hearing populace (Azure, 2017, p. 1).

This means that the medical or pathological perspective, views deafness as a disability which needs to be cured and corrected through medical treatment so that the deaf person is normalized to a hearing dominated society (Berke, 2017, p. 1; Couser, 2010, p. 141) and it uses terms such as hearing impaired, deaf mute and profoundly deaf (Garner and Silvester, 2010, p. 2). In this regard, this model dictates that the actual problem is with the person with the disability who cannot hear, who cannot talk and who needs to be cured, not with the society. This model is illustrated in Figure 5 below.



*Figure 5: The medical model of disability.* Source: adapted from [www.thefourcorners.org.uk](http://www.thefourcorners.org.uk)

The diagram illustrates that thinking about disability within the context of the medical model involves viewing a disability as a problem that exists in a person’s body. Hence, that individual requires treatment or care to fix the disability to approximate normal functioning (Goering, 2015, p. 134; Moyne, 2012, p. 1; Finkelstein, 2007, p. 2).

However, Deaf people view themselves not as a disabled group but as members of a cultural and linguistic minority who share a pride in their sign language and cultural norms that are distinct and in some cases in opposition to that of the hearing society (Obasi, 2008, p. 446).

From the medical perspective, the use of hearing aids by D/deaf students in the mainstream is a socially accepted disability marker (Mcilroy, 2008, p. 19). Therefore, Reagan (2012, p. 1) boldly states that:

“...the dominant perspective is grounded in the pathological view that deafness is essentially a medical condition, characterized by an auditory deficit and such view is premised on the idea that deaf people are not only different from hearing people, but they are also inferior to hearing people.”

This quote highlights that the pathological view of deafness helps deaf individuals to become like a hearing person as much as possible. Leigh (2008, p. 23) cited in Reagan (2010, p. 1) points out that most of the hearing teachers of the deaf view being deaf through the lens of audiology, hearing loss and difference, not as a cultural phenomenon. For that reason, sign language is not recommended to be used to teach Deaf children as the language of instruction. It is rejected as being a deviant counter culture by virtue of being different. Oralism is promoted by the medical model and sign language is often viewed as mere gestures and not as a proper language (Oliver, 2007, p. 219). In contrast, the social model of disability sees deafness differently.

### **2.2.2 Social model**

The social model of disability arose in response to the critique of the medical model of disability. It was developed by people with disability in order to identify and take actions against discrimination and to centre equality and human rights (Partridge, 2017, p. 2; Lang, 2007, p. 3). It originated in the 1970s in United States of America through the publication of *The Fundamental Principles of Disability* by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 (Oliver, 2004, p. 19). Oliver (2004, p. 19), states that:

“In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessary isolated and excluded from full participation in society.”

The social model, therefore, views disability as a disadvantage caused by the influence of a person’s physical or mental traits and by the surrounding environment. This is seen as being partly constructed by others and “it relates to the combination of personal traits and social setting” (Samaha, 2007, p. 4; Reeve, 2005, p. 83). It moves away from a position of blaming the individuals for their short comings and argues that impairments will always be present in society and further suggests that the only logical outcome is to plan and organize society in a way that includes, rather than excludes, people with disability (Partridge, 2017, p. 2)

This means that in social model, the actual problem viewed as being the disabling world which excludes people with disability and is full of barriers, not the individual with disabilities. The construction of special schools was another form of exclusion (see figure 5) and a form of

discrimination of D/deaf students by the mainstream society, however, it ironically led to the promotion of sign language and the strong Deaf culture within such institutions (Reeve, 2004, p. 83; Wrigley 1996, p. 52). The concept of Deaf culture is further discussed and elaborated in the literature review, 3.2.

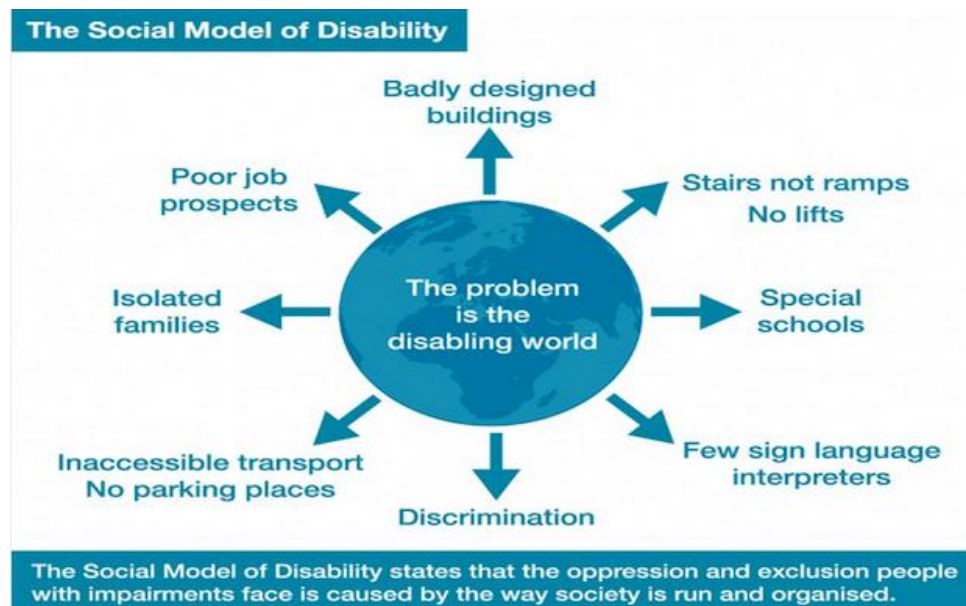


Figure 6: The social model of disability. Source: adapted from [www.thefourcorners.org.uk](http://www.thefourcorners.org.uk)

Therefore, in this model, disability, including deafness is seen as a form of social oppression, rather than an individual problem caused by impairment (Riddle, 2013, p. 1; Reeve, 2004, p. 83). Charlton (1998, p. 5) also maintains that the majority of disabled people, including D/deaf people, have been so psychologically oppressed by society such that their oppression has become internalized and they have developed a Marxian notion of ‘false consciousness whereby they believe that they are less capable than others (Charlton, 1998, p. 5). Charlton (1998, p. 5) further defines ‘false consciousness’ as “an awareness of oneself in the world...which is influenced by social conditions, chance and innate cognition...and can lead to self-pity, self-hate and shame.” Such a state can prevent people with disabilities, including D/deaf students from knowing their full capabilities, their real selves, their real needs and from realizing their future educational goals (Charlton, 1998, p. 27). I therefore argue that Deaf students need to be engaged in a critical

dialogue in relation to their educational experiences so that they can realize how much they have achieved.

Underlying the notion that people with disabilities are oppressed, is the assumption that all societies are characterized by conflict between two competing groups, that is, the dominant and the subordinate and oppression. In this context, Deaf people can be viewed as

“a phenomenon of power in which relations between people and between groups are experienced in terms of domination and subordination, superiority and control; those with power control; those without power lack control”  
(Charlton, 1998, p. 30).

Therefore, the social model in this regard, has been an attempt to identify and address issues of power control that can be changed through collective actions rather than medical treatment (Barclay, 2012, p. 768; Reeve, 2004, p. 83; Oliver, 1996, p. 48).

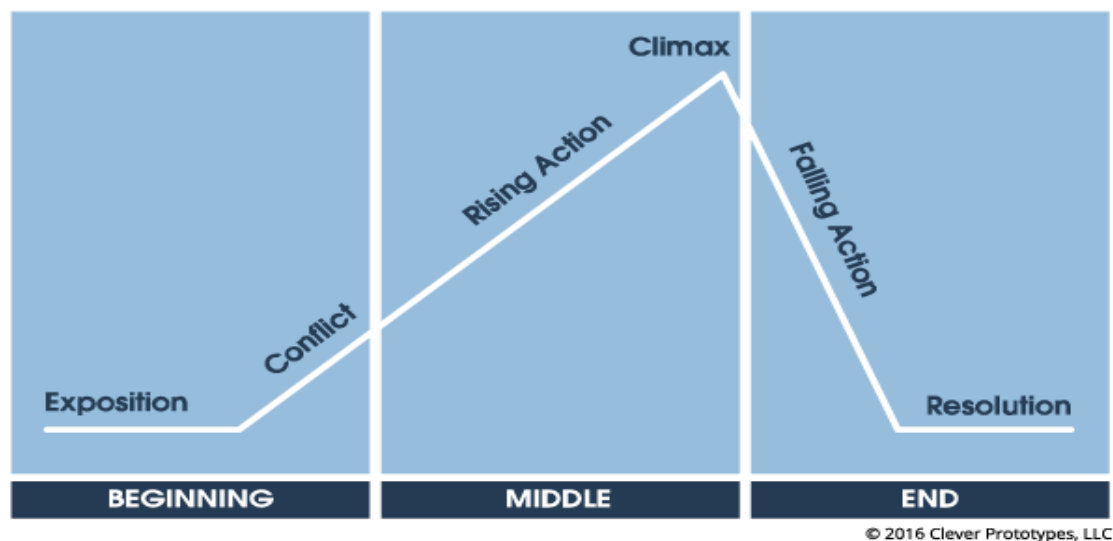
Shakespeare and Watson (2001, p. 10) point out that the main criticism of social model of disability is that it places its emphasis on socio-structural barriers and it ignores the cultural and experiential aspect of disability. Its main focus is on public experience of oppression such as social barriers at the expense of personal experiences of oppression which operates at the emotional level (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001, p. 10; Thomas, 2001, p. 55). However, Zola, (1994, p. 14) argues that, “in actual fact, the attraction of the social model is that people with disabilities, including D/deaf people, are provided with an opportunity to speak out about personal experiences of discrimination as well as having an opportunity to express their needs”. This means that people with disabilities, including Deaf students, are provided with an opportunity to narrate their personal experiences, be it socially, educationally or otherwise so that they can express their views, their feelings as well as their needs. These personal experiences of Deaf students through narratives, are the focus of this study. On that premise, let us now look at the narrative theory which is also a framework of this study.

### **2.3 Narrative Theory**

Narrative theory was developed in the second half of the twentieth century by Gerard Genette and Rene Rivara, among others, in the field known as ‘narratology’ (Patron, 2011, p. 118). They argue

that there can be no narrative without a story to be told and propose that the word ‘story’ should be used to mean narrative content and the word ‘narrative’ should be used to mean discourse or narrative text itself (Genette, 1993, p. xv-xvi cited in Patron, 2011, p. 120). Mendieta (2013, p. 2) adds that in order to trace the origins of narrative, it is necessary to consider the beginnings of human mankind because narratives began with the history of mankind.

Since narrative theory is understood as “a basic human strategy for coming to terms with our human experiences, such as time, process, and change and it studies the distinctive nature of narrative and its various structures, elements, uses and effects” (Patron, 2011, p. 119), these strategies are not value-neutral. They can either domesticate or liberate. Hartner (2013, p. 81) also poses that “from a narrative theory perspective, human beings experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives each with its own conflicts, actions climax and resolutions, that is, the beginning, the middle and the end” (see figure 6). Therefore, narrative is regarded as a life history and as both human experience and meaning making of and for the past, the present and the future (Yang, 2011, p. 202). Engaging in research using narratives means “to study the ways humans experience the world and how they make meaning out of their experiences” (Yang, 2011, p. 202). One of the objectives of this research was to study the way in which Deaf students experience their education and how they make meaning of those educational experiences.



*Figure 7: The coherent structure of the narrative, starting from the beginning of the events, moving to the middle and then to the end.*

Narrative theorists believe that story refers to all the building blocks that can be used to start with such as a bunch of events, people and places but when all are put together systematically, that is when narrative steps in. This includes the manner in which the story material is woven together and given a shape, knowledge and the institutional settings in which they occur and expose issues related to cultural membership (Hartner, 2013, p. 80; Riessman, 1993, p. 29). Therefore, narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot, that is, events that make up a story which relate to each other in a pattern or a sequence (Yang, 2011, p. 203; Polkinghorne 1995, p. 5). Therefore, when engaging Deaf students and their teachers in a dialogue, as a researcher, I had to start at the beginning of their individual educational experiences, and take them through, step by step so that their stories made logic to them as well. Clandinin, 2007, p. 47) postulates that narrative researchers cannot step out or remove themselves from the inquiry but they need to find ways to inquire into participants' experiences, their own experiences and the constructed experiences which are developed through the relational inquiry process. In this sense, the researcher had to be creative and be thoughtful about how the events in the story could be linked together into an organized whole by means of a plot and which is what actually distinguishes a story from a simple list of facts (Clandinin, 2007, p. 47). Provision of connections and coherence gives the participants an understanding of their own experiences as they narrate them from beginning to the end through being engaged in a critical dialogue (Mendieta, 2013, p. 3).

Narrating a story should be a collaborative process through telling, signing, viewing, writing or listening to a participants' story and those who are engaged in this process can penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of the self and the integrity of the other and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 4). The narrative inquirer needs to encourage both 'voices' of the participant and the researcher her/himself to be heard (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000, p. 4). This means that a narrative can come into existence only when two or more voices come into contact, when the voice of the listener responds to the voice of a speaker or the voice of the signer responds to the voice of the viewer (Yang, 2011, p. 213).

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented Freire's critical pedagogy which is premised on the notion of liberation. This discussion highlighted the origins of critical pedagogy, the banking concepts of education, dialogue and interaction in the classroom as well as classrooms as liberating sites. This chapter also discussed the medical and social models of deafness which reveal the different ways in which society perceives deafness in relation to disability. These two models also bring awareness regarding the way the societal views affect the way in which D/deaf people interact with the society and with each other. Narrative theory has also been discussed in this chapter and it is also concerned with people telling their stories in relation to their experiences just like critical pedagogy and social and medical models of disability. All these discussed theories are not value-neutral. They can either domesticate or liberate Deaf students both at school and in life generally. From this point of view, the concept of the voice, amongst other issues, is discussed in chapter 3 in the literature review.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of a review of related literature in the field of Deaf education. Literature has been reviewed locally and internationally in the following categories in order to illuminate:

- 1) The concept of the voice
- 2) Deaf Culture
- 3) Educational experiences of Deaf students in relation to their teachers' attitudes, expectations and competence
- 4) Teachers' perspectives on Deaf education
- 5) Parental journey with a D/deaf child.

#### 3.1 The concept of the voice

It is invaluable to listen to the experiences of Deaf students that are narrated by them through their own voices. Educational experiences of Deaf students are often narrated by their teachers, their parents, their caregivers, their guardians or other professionals as opposed to their own individual voices (Blum-Ross, 2015; Salter, et al. 2015; Ashyby, 2011). Giroux (2010, p. 3) argues that educational experiences of students through dialogue offer them “the conditions for self-reflection and self-managed life and to ask themselves what it means to be citizens”. This means that the narration of educational experiences through Deaf students' voice will enable them to reflect on their own lives as well as on their educational journey. Such reflection is critical in the implementation of academic programs and projects that can enhance their performance in the education system.

‘Voice’ is defined by Britzman, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 132) as “meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community” and it encompasses much more than speech of the speaker (Czerniawski, 2012, p. 14). Giroux (2010, p. 1) adds that student voice refers to the multifaceted and interlocking set of meanings through which students and teachers are actively engaged in a dialogue with one another. The author adds that for students to understand other cultures, they need to first value themselves so that they can feel secured in their own identity whilst they become critically conscious of others (Giroux, 2010, p. 1). I therefore argue that Deaf students' individual voice is an important pedagogical concept because it alerts

teachers to the fact that all teaching and learning processes derive their meaning from communication in the classroom between a learner and a teacher.

Deaf students, who by virtue of their cultural difference from the dominant group have been silenced, disempowered, robbed of their identity, sense of self and sense of value, (Gomez, 2010, p. 8) are therefore given an opportunity to voice their educational experiences in this study. In order to put this theory of critical pedagogy into practice, teachers need to involve students and their parents in discussions and dialogues that will bring about positive and fruitful changes in the education of Deaf students. Each individual voice is shaped by its owner's particular cultural history and prior experiences and it is a means that students have at their disposal to make themselves to be as active participants in the world (McLaren, 2007, p. 1).

This means that a Deaf student's 'voice' may not be understood outside the culture in which it resides and in which dialogue can take place since it mirrors the background information used by each participant to tell his or her own experiences. It is therefore crucial in this study to bring together teachers and students to work towards achieving the same educational goals of Deaf students.

Voice is the key in the narrative inquiry and it is particularly important that all participants are heard. However, students who are Deaf are often denied an opportunity to be heard and listened to (Ashby, 2011, p. 1; Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, p. 4). Deaf students need to be empowered and listened to so that they feel connected to the school setting and develop a sense of equality, and feel valued and cared for. They need to be considered in the issues that relate not only to their educational experiences but also to their life experiences so that they do not feel less equal or oppressed by the hearing population within the school which includes teachers.

The process of listening to Deaf students telling their stories requires utter commitment on the part of the teachers and administrators. Teachers should be in a position to effectively interpret not only the signs used by students, but also facial expressions and other gestures in order to understand their full meanings and full expressions. Teachers and administrators should also be well qualified and fluent in sign language so that no vital information gets lost.

Listening to Deaf students requires time and an authentic approach so that trust is gained between teachers and students, especially when teachers are hearing able. SSL is the means through which

Deaf students can develop their own voice and it is through that voice in which SSL becomes concrete and can strengthen within a school environment (Gomez, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, one of the major objectives of this study is to bring about the ‘voice’ of Deaf students through engaging them in a dialogue using SSL as individuals who do not use speech and as individuals “who are often marginalized and silenced within their schools and communities” (Ashyby, 2011, p. 1).

Giving a ‘voice’ to Deaf students through narratives “enables them to find a thread running through their lives and give them a sense to it” (Meininger, 2006, p. 14). They will be able to confront their past and critically evaluate their future and the future of other Deaf students who are still at secondary level. Critical pedagogy as theory and practice affords Deaf students an opportunity to recount their experiences and break their silence through SSL as the means of their communication. It is through listening to and valuing the perspectives of those who are Deaf that the hearing population can begin to understand that Deaf students too, can tell their stories if given an opportunity to do so (Hosking, 2008, p. 12).

Use of students’ own voice ‘voice’ allows for a rich description of their educational experiences and exploration of their journey and of the information that would have otherwise remain unknown (Wang and Geale, 2015, p. 1). When young learners are consulted about their educational experiences within their institution, there is often improvement in student services, in decision making, greater democracy for learners, fulfilling legal requirements within a school, enhancing children’s critical thinking and empowering child’s self-esteem and sense of worthiness (Czerniawski, 2012, p. 14:).

I therefore argue that school administrators, teachers of the Deaf and other specialists in the field of deaf education will learn a lot from what the students have to say about their educational experiences. Inviting students’ voices in the education system can act as a catalyst for change in schools including improvement in teaching, improving the curriculum, methods of teaching, community consciousness and most importantly, student teacher relationships (Czerniawski, 2012, p. 15; Murphey, et al. 2019, p. 5). Curriculum and teaching methods which are based on positive interaction among teachers and students are honoured and the students begin to value such knowledge in a critical and useful manner and to pride themselves on their contributions (Czerniawski, 2012, p. 15). Such a situation builds up the feeling of oneness, equality and caring for each other with the common intent of achieving the same educational goals rather than

oppressive relations where students are silenced by the school authorities (Murphey, et al. 2019, p. 5). The knowledge gained from students' voices can also offer policy makers, teachers and parents a deeper exploration and understanding of the learners' educational experiences and extra insight to apply to their own contexts through the amplification of the voices that may have otherwise remained silent (Wang and Geale, 2015, p. 195).

Listening to Deaf students' voices can also provide teachers and administrators with powerful insights into their own experiences and it can highlight that Deaf student can be and should be involved in planning their own education and they must be provided with tools to be effective participants (Esera, 2008, p. 32; Garay, 2002, p. 135). Students can be a key source of information when it comes to implementation of successful programs and projects as well as a way of monitoring the educational success of Deaf students within the school system (Esera, 2008, p. 32; Giroux, 2010, p. 2). Listening to students' voices has the power and potential not only to change forms of discrimination, but also to increase students' understanding of life in general. Students are able to analyze their social existence and to become free individuals and instruments of positive change both in schools and in their communities (Gomez, 2010, p. 10).

In addition, listening to the voices of Deaf students, provides a "wealth of practical information which can be brought together with the wider school system in order to support a positive learning environment" (Esera, 2008, p. 32) as well as positive social changes (Forbes and Kaufman, 2008, p. 302). Thus, listening to Deaf students' voices and that of their teachers and parents by engaging them in discussions about their own experiences can bring about supportive and positive relationships among students, teachers, administrators and parents.

### **3.1.1 Limitations of the voice**

Some of the teachers within their schools are working very hard to promote students' voices in a bid to build inclusive, critical, autonomous and liberating school settings. They are eager to assess and to improve their teaching and learning by engaging students so that they contribute to the development of teaching programs that can afford Deaf students the opportunities to improve their academic performance and to achieve their academic goals. However, there are still power issues within the institutions which could limit the democratizing potential of student voices both inside the classroom and in the school at large (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002, p. 2). Some of the students

are still silenced by teachers when they raise issues that pertain to their teaching and learning such that teachers do not welcome their comments and students are silenced. What students say about teaching and learning may be feared as personally challenging or as threatening to the institution (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002, p. 3). Such a situation limits students' voices within the school and makes them submit to teacher's or administrations' authority through fear of being victimized. I therefore argue that if students are given opportunities to voice their views about their teaching and learning experiences, they should be listened to and their ideas be incorporated so that they become encouraged to voice their opinions in a decent and constructive manner if we are to build "open and trusting relationship and constructive dialogues" (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002, p. 3) with students.

Another limitation of giving opportunity to student voice is that "the practice can actually reinforce the very systems of oppression that it seeks to redress...whereby students with disabilities become objects of research, where their voices are mediated and interpreted" (Ashby 2011, p. 4; Fielding and Rudduck, 2002, p. 4). In most instances, voices of students, especially Deaf students who use sign language to present their views, are often interpreted and reconstructed by the researcher or the editor who put them down in writing. This gives the power to the editor's or the author's "interpretative perspective" (Fielding and Rudduck, 2002, p. 4). Deaf students first voice their experiences in sign language which are later retextualized by the researcher through written language. After retextualization or interpretation, students should be allowed to view the recordings and read the text before the researcher retextualizes it into the final written version (Guarinello, et al. 2014, p. 10).

Abell (2007, p. 15) points out another limitation by adding that "when using 'voice' to collect data, it may not be in a written form, but qualitative researchers transcribe it from sign language to written forms which may be over interpreted in a desire to draw out theoretical issues or practical recommendations". The author advises that students should be encouraged to "prepare their presentations and write journal articles of their own which can be published as they are without any form of interpretations" (Abell, 2007, p. 16). Guarinello, et al. (2014, p. 3) also warns that "transcribing of information interferes with both the form and substance of expression, as well as the content". Deaf students' voices in this study, are presented through written forms of English Language. Data collected from all the participants were made available to them and they be asked

to view their transcribed stories in order to pick up any information that might not have been well interpreted or captured by the researcher in the transcription process.

In addition, student's voice may also be flooded by emotions and by the expectations of others during interviews which may affect what the student wants to say (Blum-Ross, 2015, p. 3; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). In such cases, students may require support and the presence of parents or guardians during the interview so that they are not asked to speak for themselves.

However, Jackson and Mazzei (2009, p. 9) argue that it is the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to "free the authentic voice from whatever retains it from coming into being, from relating the truth about self". It is also vital for the researcher to note and 'hear the silence' if participants, especially Deaf students, are reluctant to give voice to their experiences and to make sense and good interpretation of that kind of silence (Ashby, 2011, p. 8), otherwise, such a situation can become oppressive (Ashby, 2011, p. 8). Students should not be forced to talk about issues they do not want to deliberate on. Although the researcher was interested in presenting students' voices through this study, participants, especially students, were not forced to talk about issues they did not want to talk about. Let us now turn to the concept of Deaf culture.

### **3.2 The Concept of Deaf Culture**

It is interesting to note that Deaf people view deafness not as a disability, but as a linguistic minority and they focus on the strength of Deaf culture rather than the weaknesses of deafness (Azure, 2017, p. 1; Power, 2005, p. 453).

The word 'culture' is derived from Latin word 'colere' which means to tend to the earth and grow or cultivate and nurture (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 2). Culture is also defined by Berke (2016, p. 1) in its broadest sense, as patterns, traits, products, attitudes and intellectual/artistic activity associated with a population. Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group, defined by everything from language, religion, social habits, music and arts (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 2). Deaf culture is therefore defined by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (2019, p. 1) as a way of life and learned way of acting, feeling and thinking based on a group of Deaf people who share sign language, beliefs, values, tradition, social norms and identity in a society. Deaf culture is also defined by Cripps (2019, p. 1) as a set of social beliefs, behavior, art, literary

traditions of communities that are influenced by deafness and which use sign languages as the main means of communication. Therefore, it is important for hearing teachers of the Deaf to empower themselves with Deaf culture, especially sign language skills, as soon as they are tasked with the responsibility of teaching Deaf students so that they are able to communicate with Deaf students effectively. This means that Deaf culture plays a vital role in the education system, that is, in teaching and learning of Deaf students.

Deaf people see themselves as belonging to a linguistic minority with its own culture. Their own lived reality is that of members of a cultural and linguistic minority who share a pride in their signed language and cultural norms that are distinct and in some cases in opposition to that of hearing society (Obasi, 2008, p. 458). Like many other linguistic minorities, Deaf people enjoy a unique culture just as worthy of respect as any other whereby they use sign language as their primary mode of communication (British Deaf Association, 2015; Naidoo, 2008).

Deaf culture is important to Deaf people because it gives them a sense of identity and a sense of belonging by allowing them to be who they are by sharing same cultural values and beliefs. Deaf culture is the heart of the Deaf community and language and culture are inseparable and intertwined, passed down through generations of Deaf people (Cripps, 2016, p. 1).

However, it is essential to note that the term ‘deaf’ has both a clinical and a cultural definition. The term ‘deaf’ with lower case ‘d’, refers to persons’ clinical, medical status, denoting hearing loss but that person does not perceive him/herself as a member of Deaf community whereas, ‘Deaf’ with a capital letter ‘D’, denotes one who is part of the culture, belongs to the Deaf community and uses sign language as primary means of communication (Summer, 2012, p. 12).

Therefore, students who will participate in this study are all members of the Deaf community. They use Swazi Sign Language as their primary means of communication. They are often referred to by using capital letter ‘D’ in this study. Sign language, in each country, represents the creation of a local culture for Deaf community; therefore, it is different in every nation state. In Swaziland, Deaf people use Swazi Sign Language as their natural language and the interviews will be conducted in Swazi Sign Language.

### **3.3 Educational experiences of Deaf students in relation to their teachers' attitudes, expectations and competence**

Even though some research studies have been conducted on Deaf education in Swaziland, there is no study which has captured educational experiences of Deaf students. Deaf students have never been given a 'voice' to share their experiences which Winzer (2010), views as unique in the field of Deaf education. This study affords Deaf learners an opportunity to share their individual stories, their lived experiences in education and to provide their authentic views. The literature review on educational experiences of Deaf students is based on the research that has been conducted and on personal stories of individual D/deaf people, both in mainstream and in schools for the Deaf.

DePew (2015) conducted a study on the perception of the school experiences of Deaf students at Georgia Southern University in both residential and in public school settings. Nine Deaf students shared their first-person narratives of their educational experiences in Deaf education. They shared their narratives on how education impacted their lives positively and negatively. The study revealed that there were low academic expectations of D/deaf learners by their teachers irrespective of the school setting. Lack of sign language skills on the side of teachers was also the biggest barrier to communication and learning (DePew, 2015; Taller- Azulay and Rusu, 2015). It therefore remains to be seen whether these findings will be the same as those of the current study.

Moreover, Rosenbarker (2015) also conducted a study at Hamline University in Minnesota seeking views and experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in their educational settings. The study used Survey Monkey website online to collect data which included closed and open item questions. Twelve individuals decided to participate in the study including students, parents and teachers. The study revealed that Deaf and Hard of Hearing students have high expectations regarding the type of education they anticipate to receive and that the level of education they expect to receive varies based on their teachers' expectations of the students' performance. Students reported that different teachers have different expectations of the level of academic performance they expect from their Deaf students (Rosenbarker 2015, p. 27). Smith (2013) also adds that Deaf students generally consider Deaf teachers of Deaf students to have high expectations of their academic success. They claim that they provide better settings for effective communication and they are empathetic to the Deaf learner's educational needs based on their shared experiences as opposed to hearing teachers of the Deaf. The study also showed that parents of Deaf children are

often faced with the extremely difficult task of choosing the best educational setting for their children and as their children grow, they begin to have a more prominent voice in the type of school setting that would be best for their educational needs whether it's a residential school or mainstream. I therefore argue that Deaf students should be given a chance to choose the best educational settings. They should be given learning opportunities to prove themselves academically and to display their capabilities to both teachers and parents. Both D/deaf teachers and hearing teachers should have high expectations of their students when it comes to their academic success by giving them more challenging tasks like their hearing peers.

Moreover, Rohantyn-Martin (2014) found that Deaf students are being placed in educational settings without considering what the student themselves have to say about their academic experiences in these educational contexts which have been chosen by their parents. In order to embrace a developmental model of education, each child must be individually considered in determining appropriate service and support. Rohantyn-Martin (2014) stresses that a possible way of considering individual students' needs would be to engage them in more extensive conversations and include their points of view into the school structure. I therefore argue that students' perceptions should not be marginalized when it comes to their educational settings and in discussions on how best to support them in order to successfully achieve their academic goals.

It is also invaluable to understand the personal experiences of Deaf people, narrating their own educational experiences and what they went through as D/deaf students both in the mainstream and in schools for the Deaf. On the same note, Dalton (2013) investigated educational experiences of three students with mild and moderate hearing loss (MMHL) in inclusive settings in Canada. The study examined their perspective and reported their voices on how MMHL impacted their educational experiences on peer interactions, teacher relationships and in communication. The study revealed that students with MMHL made adequate academic progress compared to their hearing peers. Participants indicated that although they were motivated to achieve their academic goals like their hearing peers, at times they just could not perform well, especially when fatigued. Although students were using hearing devices, they voiced out that these devices become problematic in noisy environment and students still missed what others could hear (Dalton, 2013, p. 4).

In addition to that, participants also reported that they believed themselves to be unimportant, and a disappointment to their parents even though their intellectual and academic performance were similar to those of their hearing peers. They also asked their parents and teachers to be patient and encouraging so that they do not feel ashamed for not understanding something and they did not want to be viewed as an extra problem (Dalton, 2013). It seems that both teachers and parents should dialogue with their D/deaf students so that they can openly share their educational and socio-emotional experiences. Such a situation will enable both parties to be acquainted with the realities which D/deaf learners encounter in a bid to achieve their academic goals. It is crucial for administrators as well to understand D/deaf learners' lived educational experiences and their coping strategies. This means that if D/deaf students are to be successful both academically and socially, they have a right to contribute to, and to be consulted about their education. Their educational experiences will pave way for a better education for the next generation of D/deaf students by raising complex issues which are often taken for granted. This study, therefore, gave Deaf students an opportunity to voice out their educational experiences and perspectives about their own education and document their journey as senior students.

Lack of sign language in the instruction of Deaf pupils poses a lot of challenges when it comes to communication among students themselves and with their teachers. Educational experiences of Deaf adults in Harare confirmed that sign language was not used as a medium of instruction in their schools for the Deaf hence students were forced to talk because most of the teachers were hearing. These Deaf students were taught orally and this became a hindrance to learning and communication (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014). The study involved ten males and ten females who were Deaf, living in different parts of Harare. They echoed that teachers used the oral method although they would have preferred the use of sign language and it would ensure more effective learning. The study further revealed that although sign language is recognized as one of the official languages in Zimbabwe, it has not been fully developed. Consequently, teachers do not know sign language and they are not compelled to learn it. Most of the students' time is spent in speech reading sessions which are very difficult and ineffective, leading to the inability to grasp concepts that are being taught.

Participants' educational experiences also reflected the laborious task of learning English, including the use of words that are big and sentences that are too long and difficult to understand

(Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 9). Such a situation led to most Deaf learners dropping out of school and to not attend secondary schools because they failed and needed to repeat every grade. Participants further mentioned that it was a huge challenge for Deaf learners to be taught English language before they acquired their primary language which is sign language. They were required to read stories from English books but the teachers did not sign for them (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 9).

I therefore argue that the education system has to adapt to the needs of Deaf learners and educators should not assume that what works for hearing students also works for Deaf learners. The curriculum in general, including text books, have to be modified for Deaf learners so that they are friendly and accessible (Connelly, et al. 2012) and it is essential to introduce Deaf learners to sign language so that they can have a solid background in their first language before they are introduced to English as a second language.

On the same note, Doherty (2012) argues that a Deaf cultural environment where sign language is used by both students and staff members is very conducive for Deaf students. Doherty conducted a study based on the educational experiences and opinions of Deaf pupils in Schools for the Deaf in Northern Ireland and in Sweden. A qualitative approach was used in which interviews were conducted with Deaf pupils who were in their last school year, had left school or were in post-compulsory education. The findings of the study revealed that Swedish educational experiences were more positive compared to those in Northern Ireland. The main reason for this was the encouragement of a Deaf cultural environment where sign language was used by teachers and pupils for instruction and social interaction throughout the school (Doherty, 2012). Although such a culture was not evidenced in Northern Ireland, positive experiences presented by the participants were associated with sign language and a Deaf classroom assistant to facilitate understanding between teachers and pupils.

Evident in this study is the fact that Schools for the Deaf are rich in Deaf Culture and sign language is used as a medium of instruction both inside and outside classroom. Teachers who are not that fluent in sign language should make use of classroom assistants and interpreters in order to effectively facilitate full comprehension of the subject matter between teachers and D/deaf students.

Deaf students, like their hearing peers, also need to make a transition from secondary school to tertiary level at some point and they need to be given a voice to be empowered so that they can make their own choices in life (Mcilroy in Störbeck, 2011). In this regard, Garay (2002), investigated perceptions of Deaf students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in USA in order to identify key services and experiences that facilitated their successful transition from secondary and post-secondary education into adult life and employment. The investigation considered students' participation in the planning process and what effect it had upon their decisions regarding directions or goals they chose to pursue. Implications for teachers and administrators who work with these students were also investigated. The main purpose of the study was to give voice to the Deaf population. It transpired from the Deaf students' perceptions that Deaf students must be allowed to be independent and not be observed or accompanied by their parents at their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. They should be fully engaged in discussions concerning their IEPs and be allowed to voice their opinions when it comes to planning their education and how they can learn best. Their participation in matters that concern their education and employment is crucial (Garay, 2002, p. 135).

The study also revealed that teachers should make efforts to involve both Deaf learners and their families in decision making pertaining their future. They should be encouraged to participate and to share their views to whatever degree possible in identifying transition needs related to Deaf culture. Teachers need to be aware of the feelings of Deaf students and the feelings of their parents. According to the students' views, one way to increase Deaf students' participation is by teaching them how to make decisions about their learning and participation in their transition experiences. In this way, they can be empowered to become active participants in advocating for and negotiating their own futures (Garay, 2002, p. 136). This means that it is essential to empower Deaf students to become critical when it comes to matters that pertain their education goals.

Payne (2015) also documented stories of Deaf students in their residential settings pertaining to their experiences through written essays at senior level. Their stories reveal that some of the Deaf learners had a long journey from mainstream schools to schools for the Deaf where they got self-identity and a sense of belonging. Most of the students also stated that their reading levels were behind when compared to hearing students and English Language was difficult for them to speak and to write. Communication barriers were overwhelming both at home and at school since sign

language was not used as a medium of instruction in either setting (Payne, 2015). Even though these students excelled in sporting activities, they still felt that the expectations of teachers and their parents were high for them from an academic point of view. They were expected to shine academically like their hearing peers which was not that easy (Payne, 2015). Some of the teachers did not have a clear direction on how they should communicate with Deaf learners in class. Smith (2013) calls them the worst teachers since they did not meet the communication needs of Deaf learners.

However, it is interesting to learn that even though Deaf students come across challenges such as lack of clear communication from their teachers, they have their own coping strategies which they employ in class in order to achieve their educational goals. Jambor, et al. (2005) point out that Deaf students use quite a number of coping strategies to manage their everyday school life and to protect their self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. Deaf students need to counteract the hassles they face every day in an environment that is full of communication challenges (Jambor, et al. 2005). Coping strategies attempts on the part of the individual to lessen the physical and psychological pain that are associated with negative life events and ongoing stressors (Jambor, et al. 2005). The adoption of productive coping styles can positively influence the self-esteem of Deaf students (Jambor, et al. 2005). One of the coping strategies that is usually adopted by Deaf people is covering. Covering is a technique that allows D/deaf individuals to pass as hearing. This coping strategy causes a lot of stress because those who choose this strategy can pay a great psychological price since they have to live a life that may collapse at any time (Jambor, et al. 2005). However, Jambor, et al. (2005) warn that only D/deaf individuals who have good speech skills or have some residual hearing may successfully attempt to pass. I therefore conclude that, for Deaf students to achieve their educational goals in this study, they must have used coping strategies which enabled them to succeed to deal with stress and frustration.

In addition, Deaf students undergo a lot of stressful situations in the classroom when they attempt to achieve their educational goals. For Deaf students to thrive and succeed in their studies, they need to gain what Luft (2011) calls resilience. Luft (2011) states that given the poor language and academic achievement outcomes, children with pre-lingual hearing loss are a group who would benefit from activating mechanisms of resilience. Resilience is defined as processes and mechanisms, which in the face of significant trauma or stress, nonetheless work to enable an

individual to thrive and become successful (Young, Green and Rogers, 2008). This means that the decisions that parents make about communication approaches in their child's language acquisition by the time the child enters school, will enhance their child's resilience if successful, or result in a language deficit that may become a lifelong language impoverishment (Luft, 2011). I therefore argue that teachers of the Deaf should be supportive to Deaf students when it comes to language acquisition so that students do not become stressed, confused and frustrated in class.

When the Deaf learners become confused and frustrated, teachers also become frustrated and begin to move these children to different Schools for the Deaf (Smith, 2012). Such a situation means that when Deaf students are being moved from one school to the other, they get more confused since they need to establish their sense of identity. Conventionally, the identity journey can take a D/deaf person to one of the two possible sides of identity; to strive to be as much as possible like a hearing person in order to blend into the oral language world or to define themselves as a member of a socio-linguistic minority in recognition of Deaf rights (Leigh, 2008). Research has revealed that D/deaf persons' educational experiences have a reflective impact on how D/deaf learners understand themselves (Leigh, 2008).

The study that was conducted by Mcilroy and Störbeck (2011) attests to the fact that Deaf identity is not a static concept but a complex ongoing quest for belonging, a quest that is bound up with the acceptance of being deaf while finding one's voice in the hearing dominant society. Transition into Deaf identity occurs when D/deaf students move from mainstream schools to schools for the Deaf since students who attend schools for the Deaf have an identity and a sense of belonging because they are all the same (Mcilroy and Störbeck, 2011). The study investigated identity development of nine D/deaf participants through narratives of their educational experiences in either mainstream or special schools for the Deaf in South Africa. Six oral and three signing D/deaf adults participated in the study. The study explored what it meant to be a D/deaf person as conveyed by the stories of D/deaf adults. The findings of the study revealed that participants were not conscious of themselves as 'a deaf person' as a result they did not make an issue of it until they experienced increasing alienation at school and feelings of frustration and loneliness while trying to survive in the classroom (Mcilroy and Störbeck, 2011). When these D/deaf students were moved to schools for the Deaf, they experienced a profound change of identity and they found a sense of belonging within the Deaf community as valued learners.

Chen (2014, p. 9) adds that the development of D/deaf identity may be affected by a lot of different factors such as mainstream schools, family environment and mode of communication. Most hearing teachers and hearing families view deafness as a disability and the people who hold this view consider that a D/deaf child is not a normal person so he/she must learn to speak, hear and interact with general society (Chen, 2014, p. 9). D/deaf identity is a representation of the self which is based on how school experience and family environment experience become internalized as part of one's identity formation (Mcilroy and Störbeck, 2011, Hadjikakou and Nikolarazi, 2007).

This suggests that D/deaf students from hearing families and in mainstream schools feel rejected, isolated and struggle with communication and with a sense of identity. But as soon as they join schools for the Deaf, they feel a sense of belonging. They don't struggle with their identity and communication barriers are broken. Therefore, reading about the experiences of D/deaf learners in their educational settings will broaden the understanding of administrators, teachers and parents on how these D/deaf learners feel isolated and rejected in mainstream schools so that relevant structures to address these issues may be put in place.

Although D/deaf learners find a sense of belonging in schools for the Deaf, sometime they have to cope with prejudice, rejection by their families and schools hampered by lack of resources (Rustin, 2016). This was revealed in a story of a Deaf child who was interviewed by Rustin (2016) in Kinango School for the Deaf in Kenya. The school is a boarding school and most children there have been rejected by their parents. A 15-year-old girl, expressing herself through the school interpreter revealed that parents don't bring money, the teachers call parents and ask them to come but they don't, they only want to look after their hearing children. She further revealed that before she came to school, her parents never talked to her but they laughed with her hearing siblings. When she arrived at school, she had a favourite teacher who sometimes gave her clothes, food and toiletries. The head teacher also explained that almost all of the Deaf children in that school came from single-parent homes as men commonly leave their families when a child with a disability is born in a family. Some students stay at the residential school through the holidays, relying on small grants from the country government and the kindness of their teachers (Rustin, 2016). This story suggests that some of the parents neglect their D/deaf children by leaving them under the care of their teachers at residential schools even during the holidays.

Due to the low quality of Deaf education, Deaf school leavers are faced with very limited job opportunities (Störbeck, 1997). A study conducted by Störbeck (1997) in South Africa revealed that Deaf people were unhappy with their education, and they expressed feelings of resentment and anger as well as helplessness and hopelessness. The study focused on 23 Deaf South African adults who had experienced Deaf education in South Africa. According to Störbeck, (1997), ten of those who were interviewed had moved to the U.S. while thirteen were still living in South Africa. The participants shared their various educational experiences in relation to teachers during their school career. Communication was identified as a core issue and often appeared to be the biggest problem between the teachers and the pupils (Störbeck, 1997).

The findings revealed that Deaf education was inadequate and the participants complained about the quality of education they received at school. Most of the informants complained about the teachers' lack of sign language use as well as being prohibited to sign among themselves in class. However, the majority of South African Deaf Community living in America revealed that the biggest dilemma in South Africa was lack of services such as interpreter services, relay services, television captioning and support services for Deaf people (Störbeck, 1997). The participants further mentioned that they experienced too much oppression because other parties did not want Deaf people to achieve. They wanted Deaf people to stay repressed and hearing people to remain dominant. Deaf education suffered because there was no specialized teacher training in order to prepare teachers for the task of teaching Deaf students. For that reason, Deaf education has suffered immensely and has been discriminatory (Störbeck, 1997).

From this study, one deduces that Deaf students, like hearing students, need to be taught by teachers who are qualified to teach them. For that reason, there is a need for teacher training colleges where teachers of the Deaf can be trained in teaching techniques and in sign language competency so that Deaf students can receive quality education. It is therefore crucial to document the views and experiences of teachers of the Deaf and hear what they have to say for themselves. Let us now turn to the perspectives and views of teachers of the deaf students.

### **3.4 Teachers' perspectives on Deaf education**

Teachers' of the D/deaf have the capacity to make positive impact on D/deaf students' academic performance. Garberoglio, et al. (2015) express that teachers of D/deaf students have high overall

efficacy beliefs in the area of student engagement as compared to instructional strategies and classroom management. They express that teacher's beliefs in the field of D/deaf education can offer a new way through which to examine the complex dynamics in D/deaf education settings. This new way can also offer a perspective that moves beyond a view of D/deaf students' deficiencies to capturing a broader picture of teacher attitudes and beliefs, using the framework of teachers' self-efficacy in the educational setting in which D/deaf students learn. Teachers with strong sense of self-efficacy who have been found to take on challenging tasks willingly, show increased persistence and achieve high academic performance at work and greater academic success for their students (Abdelhameed, 2015).

However, teachers of the D/deaf learners, like their students, also experience challenges both in mainstream and in residential settings. Thwala (2015) conducted a study on challenges encountered by teachers in managing inclusive classrooms in Swaziland. The findings revealed that teachers of the D/deaf and head teachers experience challenges in trying to implement inclusive education. The challenges mentioned include lack of teaching and learning materials, lack of competencies, large classes which are difficult to manage, environment which is not conducive for learners with disabilities and that most schools are inaccessible to learners with disabilities. Thwala (2015) further asserts that educators need to be empowered with skills to make use of the available communicative technological devices which are available in some schools. The Ministry of Education and Training should consider increasing the availability of special needs courses in various teacher training institutions in the country, workshops and conferences for teachers in primary schools who are working with students with disabilities. However, the study is silent when it comes to the education of Deaf learners and what teachers of the Deaf student's experience in their residential schools as well as in inclusive settings. It is a general study which focused only on primary schools. It therefore remains to be seen whether teachers of Deaf learners in residential settings both in primary and high school for the Deaf are experiencing the same challenges. There is a need to gain viewpoints and voices of teachers of the Deaf which are based on their teaching and learning experiences of Deaf learners.

The journey of becoming a teacher of D/deaf students is not an easy one. A study that was conducted by Musyoka, et al. (2015) investigated experiences of teachers of the D/deaf students with additional disabilities through in-depth individual interviews, revealed that being a teacher of

D/deaf students is not an easy profession. Data was collected from three teachers in two schools for the Deaf and one teacher in a D/deaf education program within a regular school in the United States. Teachers expressed that being the teacher of the D/deaf was challenging to them because parents brought their children to school and solely relied on teachers to educate the children. Parents were not keen to learn sign language in order to facilitate effective communication with their children. Teachers also expressed that some parents were easy to work with whilst others required school administration to intervene (Musyoka, et al. 2015). The study also revealed that school administrators within the school had admitted D/deaf students in the school even though the administrators themselves did not know how to best serve these D/deaf students and they were not familiar with their unique needs. Inclusion<sup>10</sup> of D/deaf learners was a new experience for the teachers as well since teachers were not trained in D/deaf education but school administrators expected them to educate the D/deaf learners. Teachers disclosed that they faced many challenging experiences everyday but eventually, they learned to be patient and to understand how to communicate with the students (Musyoka, et al. 2015). Teachers also revealed that there was a lack of curriculum planning that was relevant to D/deaf learners and they also lacked training on how to communicate with their students. Teachers used a general curriculum for D/deaf students and modifying it was time consuming and challenging. Although classroom management focused on positive reinforcement, teachers also took time to understand their students and such exploratory learning provided opportunities to teachers to learn more about their students' culture and behavior. Teachers also mentioned that D/deaf students required constant family support to ensure success of Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals. Without parental support, teachers experienced conflict in maintaining students' basic needs such as clothing and food (Musyoka, et al. 2015).

I therefore argue that school administrators need to be well versed with the background information on the D/deaf students which they admit in their schools so that they can effectively cater for them. The responsibility of curriculum issues and planning for the D/deaf students should

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<sup>10</sup> Inclusion refers to the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and by reducing exclusion with the education system; bringing in a sense of belonging, value for who you are, feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best (Miller and Kath, 2012).

not be left entirely on the shoulders of the teachers who are not trained for such circumstances. Teachers of the D/deaf need to establish a good rapport with parents of D/deaf children in order to cater for the educational and physical needs of D/deaf students. It therefore remains to be seen whether teachers of the Deaf in Swaziland will share the same experiences.

In addition to that, Al-Othman (2014) reports that inclusion of D/deaf students in mainstream schools has been a bone of contention between teachers and school administrators because the school principals of inclusive schools lack the knowledge and understanding of inclusive education necessary for effective education of D/deaf students. Al-Othman (2014) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia in an attempt to explore the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and experiences of principals, teachers and parents regarding the education of D/deaf students. The goal of the study was to determine the kinds of services that are needed for D/deaf students in the Saudi context. The study revealed that principals of inclusive schools lacked the knowledge and understanding of inclusive education necessary for effective education for D/deaf students. This has negatively influenced their attitudes towards the inclusive education of D/deaf students in their schools. The study had two stages: the first involved exploratory focus-group interviews with staff including principals, teachers and parents of D/deaf students; and, followed by individual interviews, observations and documentary data. There were 61 participants in all.

Whilst the majority of teachers of D/deaf children had more knowledge and the necessary positive views towards inclusive education and had tried to adapt classroom materials and activities to accommodate D/deaf students, the lack of support from principals inhibited them. In addition, parents appeared to lack knowledge about inclusion and its possibilities for their children and such, excluded them from influencing educational policy. They did not play any role in inclusive schools to support their children which Saudi Arabian policy suggests they should (Al-Othman, 2014). Teachers also revealed other inhibiting factors for inclusive education for D/deaf students which included insufficient facilities and resources, lack of training courses and lack of collaboration among school staff and between staff and parents of D/deaf students.

From this study, one argues that there should be a strong working relationship among principals, teachers, parents and the Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training for the school environment to be conducive for Deaf learners. There is a strong need to create instruments that can change the knowledge, attitudes and qualifications of principals, teachers and parents. Therefore, in response

to these findings, I therefore see the need to get students' views and experiences so that whatever strategic plans are put in place, serve the needs of students and come from them as the people who are directly affected by these inclusive programs.

Research has also proven that teacher education programs have insufficiently prepared teachers to teach D/deaf students effectively. Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) conducted a study in Ottawa, Canada regarding teachers' perceptions towards inclusion of D/deaf students. A questionnaire was used to document the attitudes of 63 classroom teachers to determine whether teachers had the attitudes, knowledge and the teaching skills proposed to effectively facilitate the inclusion of D/deaf students in regular classrooms. The study revealed that teachers had favourable attitudes towards inclusion of D/deaf students and they felt confident in their ability to teach them. Teachers were also knowledgeable about the effects of deafness on language and learning. The findings highlighted the need for increased emphasis on the unique educational requirements of D/deaf students in teacher education programs and the provision of appropriate supports for both teachers and students to promote successful inclusion. Most of the teachers stated that teachers do not receive adequate training such that they were not able to meet the educational needs of D/deaf learners in their schools as qualified professionals. They face challenges when it comes to initiating programs for D/deaf learners.

From these findings, I deduce that it is not enough to be knowledgeable about effects of deafness on language development but it is vital that the teacher education programs should prepare teachers of the D/deaf effectively so that they respond appropriately to the needs of D/deaf learners both inside and outside classroom.

On the same note, most of the teachers in Botswana voiced that they lacked the special skills and knowledge to meet the diverse needs of learners with special education needs, including D/deaf learners (Mukhopadhyay and Sriprakash, 2013). The study, entitled 'Voices of Experience', explored primary teacher' experiences and their voices concerning inclusive education and inclusion of D/deaf learners. The study revealed that throughout the interviews, teachers echoed frustration about their lack of training to function effectively in regular classrooms. Teachers were concerned about effectiveness of teacher preparation programs at tertiary level. They echoed that they needed to be provided with professional training to implement inclusive education effectively. This means that most of the teachers who were assigned to handle D/deaf learners were not trained.

Some of them did not even understand sign language. Therefore, it is important to conduct this research in order to get voices and experiences of teachers in special schools in Swaziland so to ascertain whether they are trained to teach D/deaf learners. Hence, one of the objectives of this study was to unearth teachers' experiences, attitudes and beliefs in the area of Deaf students' engagement and their preparedness in classroom management and teaching strategies through their narratives.

It is also necessary for teachers of the D/deaf learners to empower themselves with knowledge of Deaf culture and proficiency in sign language skills (Naidoo, 2008). According to the study that was conducted by Naidoo (2008) in South Africa on Science educators' perspectives and perceptions, teachers that teach Science to D/deaf learners are enthusiastic and committed to their work. They are empowering themselves with Deaf culture and sign language skills but they indicate that there is a need for in-service training and more support from the Department of Education for teachers that teach D/deaf learners. The study involved five educators that teach Science to D/deaf learners. All five teachers felt that D/deaf learners are appreciative and compassionate to others which makes their teachers feel happy to work with D/deaf students. In addition to that, all five teachers expressed their willingness to learn and implement new teaching and assessment strategies in order to enhance the academic performance of their learners (Naidoo, 2008) which is a positive attitude towards assisting D/deaf learners to attain their educational goals. Teachers also felt that they needed more support from the Department of Education which includes formal training of teachers in South African Sign Language since no such training has been implemented in schools for the Deaf learners and it is not a formal requirement for teachers to have training before they enter schools for the Deaf.

It is encouraging to learn that teachers are committed and enthusiastic about teaching D/deaf learners. It is not only a right thing to do but '*ubuntu*' (Störbeck, 2011). One hopes that teachers from Swaziland will also declare a commitment to teaching their D/deaf learners. Musengi, et al. (2012) reiterate that hearing teachers who are assisted by D/deaf adults in their classes are committed and enthusiastic about teaching D/deaf learners and they have achieved a lot when it comes to their communication with D/deaf pupils. This was revealed by a study that was conducted by (Musengi, et al. 2012). Mentors and trainees in three special schools in Zimbabwe were interviewed in a bid explore challenges faced by teacher trainees in teaching D/deaf learners and

the opportunities that they were presented with. The study exposed that, in general, teachers of the D/deaf in sub-Saharan Africa are mostly non-deaf, lack appropriate training, cannot sign and do not view sign language as a complete language, with specific regard to Zimbabwe. Trainee specialists' use of spoken language might indicate continuing trends not only in induction training at special schools for the D/deaf but also in specialist training institutions and that approach is not succeeding as shown by the low reading attainments of D/deaf learners. The study also revealed that the trainees and mentoring specialists with D/deaf assistants who are fluent in sign language found D/deaf assistants acceptable for the quick communication that was necessary for class control but not for academic transmission of concepts (Musengi, et al. 2012).

I therefore argue that teaching a D/deaf child requires the expertise of a well-trained teacher of the D/deaf, thus D/deaf teacher assistants should be trained as paraprofessional teachers and interpreters to facilitate effective communication in the field of Deaf education and to improve reading and writing skills of D/deaf learners.

In some cases, the academic and behavioral expectations of the teachers towards D/deaf students, are lower in comparison to the hearing students and the teachers' attitude in the classroom is reflected on the students' academic performance (Turffour, 2017). The authors argue that in most cases, negative teachers' attitudes force the class to be in lower academic degree and some teachers with high expectations assist the students to work at the same level as their hearing peers. Teachers should change their negative attitudes towards D/deaf learners and should not label them as failures (De Clercq and Phiri, 2013). Instead, they have to raise the bar, expectations and confidence of D/deaf learners so that they excel in what they set out to do (De Clercq and Phiri, 2013). Ting and Gilmore (2012) also recommend that class sizes should be reduced in order to allow teachers to give individualized attention to D/deaf students and that the number of D/deaf students in an English class should not be more than three to enable the teacher to monitor deaf students' work effectively. They proposed that teachers should create an inclusive environment by means of pictures, posters and other visual materials so to maximize opportunities for D/deaf learners to use their visual perceptions when acquiring linguistic knowledge. Regarding the use of sign language, Ting and Gilmore (2012) point out that sign language should not be held responsible for the Deaf Community's illiteracy problem as most teachers do. They state that it is difficult to teach English to a D/deaf child whose primary language is sign language. It is the same as if a teacher is trying

to teach English to someone whose primary language is not English. Ting and Gilmore (2012) postulate that a D/deaf person must learn to read and write English and a teacher of the D/deaf must know sign language to facilitate literacy in D/deaf learners. This means that teachers have to change their negative attitudes towards D/deaf learners and understand that D/deaf learners are capable of achieving in class like any hearing learner.

On another note, research has shown that D/deaf students are consistently trailing behind their hearing peers in academic performance (Nyokabi, et al. 2011). The poor performance is attributed to inappropriate teaching methods, lack of commitment by teachers and communication problems across the curriculum (Nyokabi, et al. 2011, Ayiela, 2012). The study was carried out in Kenya, comprising three head teachers, ten mathematics teachers and 112 students. The study revealed that teachers used inappropriate teaching methods and they were not able to communicate effectively with D/deaf learners. The purpose of the study was to find out curriculum factors influencing performance of D/deaf students in mathematics in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E). Students reported that teachers used peer teaching method in their classes because of language limitation and this led to teachers taking advantage of some students and became reluctant in perfecting their sign skills. The study also established that instructional time allocated for mathematics was not enough for D/deaf students, given the wide syllabus and the special education needs of the students. The low performance in mathematics was attributed to inadequate time on task since D/d students never covered all the syllabus content in the stipulated time (Nyokabi, et al. 2011, Ayiela, 2012). The teachers stated that they were not able to cover the content because the abstract topics that students found difficult to understand were also difficult to teach. This was attributed to D/deaf students' deficiency in English Language which was said to be hindering their understanding, interpretation and visualization of mathematics concepts. Consequently, some of the difficult and abstract concepts ended up not being taught by teachers (Nyokabi, et al. 2011, Ayiela, 2012).

I therefore conclude from these studies that teachers have challenges when teaching D/d learners in terms of time on task, teaching methods, content coverage and medium of instruction because some of them are not conversant with sign language. There is a lack of teachers' proficiency in sign language.

Primary language development is critical for educational success of D/deaf students. Some of them do not have a strong language base in sign language upon starting elementary school which is expected to help them to learn a second language, which is English, for reading and writing (Van Dinther, et al. 2011). The language issues of D/deaf students lead to problems with literacy. Various studies over the years indicate that most D/deaf students graduate high school with a fourth-grade reading level (Connelly, et al. 2012) which qualifies as functionally illiterate.

Teachers should therefore exhibit competences with numerous different kinds of knowledge and skills in order to facilitate D/deaf students' capabilities in reading and writing. The study that was conducted by Van Dinther, et al. (2011) in San Francisco in a bid to identify the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to address the specific needs for their Deaf/d students. The findings of the study indicated that teachers of the D/deaf were not regularly engaged in reading to students. The four elementary teachers of the D/deaf who were participants in a study and were teaching first to fifth grade, admitted that they did not know how to address language delays within the classroom.

The findings of the study further revealed that there were no classroom materials or curriculum guidelines for teachers. The curriculum which they were following was far above the level of their students' linguistic and academic capabilities (Van Dinther, et al. 2011). All four teachers felt that the curriculum conflicted with the needs of their D/deaf students and that stories from the curriculum were irrelevant to D/deaf students since they miss 60-70% of the vocabulary that is in the stories (Van Dinther, et al. 2011, Mwenda, 2010). They added that they had to take their time to make adaptations to the curriculum so that students could access it for literacy activities (Van Dinther, et al. 2011, Mwenda, 2010). The teachers also indicated that they did not know how to address these language delays and felt pressure to follow rigid curriculum guidelines despite the fact that they were above their students' linguistic and academic capabilities. They added that although their classrooms comprised 5-9 D/deaf students, they were just not coping with language delays which they are confronted with in D/deaf learners.

This entails that D/deaf students are faced with an inaccessible and rigid curriculum which in turn, frustrates both teachers and D/deaf students. The language issues of deaf students need close attention which means that college and university programs where teachers of the D/deaf are trained, need to find address the poor reading and writing skills of D/deaf students by capacitating

teachers with the necessary skills to enable them to engage their students in reading and writing effectively (Mwenda, 2010). Curriculum designers also have to see to it that curriculum that is intended for D/deaf learners is adapted and accessible so that teachers do not have to do both teaching and curriculum adaptations.

Teachers also believe that teaching D/deaf students is a great task which is necessary to overcome deafness and to reinstate the D/deaf learners to their place in society (Musengi, 2014). However, this process involves commitment, struggle and eventually a measure of victory (Musengi, 2014). A study was conducted by Musengi (2014) in a bid to find out what hearing teachers know and believe about teaching D/deaf pupils in the three residential schools in Zimbabwe through teachers' narratives. In total, twelve teachers and principals of three special schools were individually interviewed. The study revealed that some teachers are very dedicated to their work and they revealed that they are committed to teaching D/deaf learners although they first struggled to communicate with them. After a few months, they felt victorious because their sign language skills had improved and they were able to remove the language barrier and access their D/deaf learners more easily.

The study also reported that some of the parents had negative attitudes towards D/deaf children and did not want to be associated with disability (Musengi, 2014, p. 273), consequently, some of the children were abandoned by their parents at school. Teachers and principals reported that because of a lack of love and interest in some extreme cases, parents requested that their children be kept at school over the school holidays and the administrators turned down their request. Teachers further reported that for some parents, bringing a D/deaf child to a residential school is a way of hiding the child from the parents' friends and visitors as they are ashamed of a D/deaf child. Teachers further reported that nearly every school holiday they have one or two D/deaf children who are not collected to go home by their parents and sometimes teachers ferry them to their respective homes (Musengi, 2014, p. 273). Teachers also reported that they eventually became surrogate parents to those D/deaf students who were neglected and abandoned by their own parents (Musengi, 2014, p. 288).

The findings of the study further revealed that most teachers had hearing attitudes towards deafness. These attitudes reflected beliefs about the superiority of hearing and speaking and that informed teachers' belief that D/deaf children were deficient learners with language and

experiential deficits which required remedial, therapeutic and vocational teaching. Teachers also believed that Zimbabwean Sign Language was a deficient system of communication which teachers learned informally from their deaf pupils and which needed to be improved in order for it to become more useful for academic purposes.

For this reason, teachers had low expectations for deaf learners even though the government in Zimbabwe had allowed signing of the examinations. Challenges that teachers face in the classroom were largely attributed to the learners' deficiencies and unreasonable policies in Deaf education as well as to the curriculum which D/deaf learners do not understand. Teachers' incompetency in sign language was not reflected upon (Musengi, 2014). Teachers also submitted that specialist training might be de-sensitizing teachers so that they were less aware of the virtues of introspection and the need for impartial academic content rather than dwelling on perceived deficiencies.

It is interesting to learn that some teachers are committed in teaching D/deaf learners and they even advocate the use of sign language during the examination because they want to see these learners moving to secondary and to institutions of higher learning like their hearing peers. This means that it is essential to critically reflect on the stories that teachers live by so as to gain the experiences of what is going on in the classrooms. It is in this regard that the current study obtained stories from teachers of D/deaf learners who taught D/deaf students until they reached Grade 12 level which is thought to be hard for most D/deaf learners to achieve.

In conclusion, this section has reviewed literature on the concept of the voice and its limitation, the concept of Deaf culture, educational experiences of D/deaf students and on teachers' perspectives on Deaf education in order to locate the educational experiences of Deaf students in Swaziland. The study also employs various theories in order to locate the voice of Deaf students in relation to their educational experiences through their personal narratives. The study uses critical pedagogy since educational experiences of Deaf students and the manner in which they are taught are interconnected in the critical theoretical framework's tenets of liberation and emancipation to provide Deaf students an opportunity to narrate their personal experiences from primary to high school level. Medical and social models of disability have also been reviewed. It is invaluable to know and understand what it means to be D/deaf in terms of the social model and how do D/deaf people view themselves in the middle of a political and power struggle for control of Deaf education. Deep understanding can effect changes that need to take place both socially and

educationally. Narrative theory has also been used to draw on the strength of Deaf community, that is, how the society views D/deaf people and how D/deaf people view themselves through narrative inquiry. In essence, this narrative inquiry allows Deaf students to have a voice so that the impact of their educational experiences on their journey can be well understood in their own words. The next section focusses on experiences of parents of Deaf children and their education.

### **3.5 Parental journey with a D/deaf child**

That parental journey with a D/deaf child begins when a child is diagnosed with hearing loss after birth or at a later stage of life. A study that was conducted by Gilliver, et al. (2014) in Australia on parents' recollections of and experiences with a child diagnosed with hearing loss soon after birth, revealed that parents' initial reaction to diagnosis was usually of 'shock' or of being 'stunned' (Gilliver, et al. 2014, p. 4). Forty parents of children aged between three to five years who were diagnosed with hearing loss, were involved in the study. Most of the parents who were interviewed reported strong levels of grief including confusion, devastation and being heartbroken. Consequently, parents began to worry whether their children would be able to attend school like other children. Some of the parents indicated that they had feared that their son might never be able to walk and talk. They were relieved to learn that they could get a hearing aid to fix the problem (Gilliver, et al. 2014, p. 5). This means that parents' lack of prior experience related to deafness leaves them highly dependent on hearing professionals for information on how best to support their child (Gilliver et al., 2014, p. 1). On the other hand, one Deaf family member reported that hearing loss diagnosis was not a problem at all for them. Parents were comfortable with their daughter being the fifth generation of a Deaf family and they knew which school she was going to attend and which communication option she was going to use. They were actually not surprised at all. Parents also reported challenges of handling hearing devices and not being able to tell whether the device was working especially when the child was still young (Gilliver, et al. 2014, p. 7). This is an indication that deafness has a great impact especially on hearing parents of D/deaf children with no history of deafness in their families. Parents need professionals such as audiologists, educationalists and language therapists to assist them in making decisions for their children pertaining to their development and their education. Overall results reported that parents had strong support for early intervention, high expectations of their children's development and a desire for information tailored to individual children's needs.

It is worth noting that about 92% to 97% of D/deaf children are born into hearing families without D/deaf relatives (Basquez, 2018, p. 6, Chen, 2014, p. 4, Hyde, Punch and Komesaroff, 2010, p. 163, Hamers, 1996) to consult with. When a child is diagnosed with hearing loss after birth or at a later stage of life, parents have mixed emotions and become stressed because they are often not sure of what to do. Most parents face tough decisions when raising their child, especially hearing parents of D/deaf children. Basquez, (2018, p. 6) states that “hearing parents of D/deaf children face some unique choices which parents of hearing children may never need to consider such as the type of amplification to pursue, the best educational path to embark upon, and, especially, the language their child will use.” A study was conducted in a bid to identify various factors that had the greatest impact on the educational decision made by parents for their D/deaf children. Out of 20 parents of the D/deaf students from the Maine Educational Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing preschool in the United States of America, 13 participated in this study. All the children of the respondents had been diagnosed with a bilateral hearing loss. The study revealed that the most important factors involved in decision making for the parents included ‘future goals for my child’, ‘my child’s hearing status’, ‘communication at home’ and professional advice’ (Basquez, 2018, p. 19). Most of the parents experienced mixed emotions including denial, anger and guilt (Flaherty, 2015 cited in Basquez, 2018, p. 7). Parents expressed that they had minimal prior experience in interacting with D/deaf individuals (Basquez, 2018, p. 20). Others chose to place their children in the ASL room and others in the English spoken.

Parents who chose ASL room were knowledgeable and experienced in ASL and it was the communication method they used at home. Parents who chose the spoken English room felt that their child had a mild-moderate hearing loss (Basquez, 2018, p. 20) so he could gain more spoken language in that classroom. So, the decision made was based on the degree of hearing loss and on the child’s future goals. This means that hearing parents with a recently diagnosed D/deaf children generally find themselves negotiating a world previously unknown to them as Hyde, et al. (2010, p. 163) put it. These parents find themselves dealing with emotional issues and making crucial decisions while at the same time “readjusting expectations and engendering tolerance” (Flaherty, 2015, p. 4; Young, 2010) of the situation in which they find themselves in. This is an indication that deafness has a great impact, especially on hearing parents with no history of deafness in their

families. Parents worry about so many things such as language development and the education placement of their child.

In addition to that, parents of D/deaf children are likely to experience stress in relation to specific areas of their child's deafness such as communication difficulties and concerns about their future and educational challenges (Lederberg and Golbach, 2000) cited in Sagone, 2017, p. 275). In the study that was conducted by Zaidman-Zait (2008) on everyday problems and stress faced by parents of children with cochlear implants, 40% of the parents indicated that communication problems between their children and themselves were major source of everyday difficulty. This was attributed to the child's immature speech perception, production competence and language level (Zaidman-Zait, 2008, p. 146). The study was conducted in Canada. Open ended questions were employed in this study during data collection. Participants comprised 26 hearing mothers and 5 hearing fathers of children who had undergone cochlear implant surgery. The overall findings of the study showed frequent frustration with misunderstandings on the part of both parent and a child.

Another issue regarding communication that was raised by the parents was that their D/deaf children were placed in the mainstream settings and the children were compelled to rely on oral communication. Such a situation results in a child's loneliness and the experience of very few, if any, close relationships (Zaidman-Zait, 2008, p. 147). Other problems mentioned by parents included needing extra time to acquire new communication skills, difficulties in accessing support services, lack of sufficient numbers of professional with specialized training in working with D/deaf infants and their families in early intervention services, and demands of educating others and serving as advocates whilst they are expected to fulfill their parental roles within their families (Zaidman-Zait, 2008, p. 147). However, when it comes to the role of being advocates, some of the parents expressed that it was a role that was highly rewarding for them. They were able to negotiate with various systems, speak to professionals and work in collaboration with other hearing parents of D/deaf children who need assistance and their parenting experience became enhanced (Szarkowski and Brice, 2016, p. 256).

The study that was conducted by Szarkowski and Brice, (2016) in Washington DC, revealed that hearing parents of Deaf/deaf and Hard of Hearing children face unique challenges and stressors yet little is known about their positive experiences. The study focused on positive experiences of being a parent of a D/deaf or Hard of Hearing child instead of challenges and stressors. Through qualitative sampling design, interviews were conducted with eleven hearing parents (eight mothers and three fathers). Parents expressed that it was vital for each parent to know and understand their child and also to increase involvement with the child. Parents reported that they were much more involved with their child than they would have been if their child had been born with typical hearing (Szarkowski and Brice, 2016, p. 255). They further highlighted that although it was not that easy, they spent most of the time learning and reading about deafness, talking to other parents and they were committed to make sure that their child had every opportunity possible to succeed. They also expressed amazement at the way their children learn and the complex learning that had taken place in their children (Szarkowski and Brice, 2016, p. 256). Nine key themes which characterized parents' positive perceptions of raising a child who is D/HH emerged in the study, namely: knowing the child; appreciating everyday positives; increasing involvement with the child; relishing the highs, that is, the feelings of watching his or her child do well at something which exceeded their expectations; taking less for granted; letting go, that is, understand that as a parent you cannot always protect your child from the world; learning, advocating, and experiencing personal growth.

On another note, some parents are not aware of the causes of deafness in spite of having a child with hearing loss. Thakre, et al. (2012) conducted a study based on parents' experience of hearing loss of their school going children of a rural area of Nagpur in India. The study involved 58 parents. The findings of the study revealed that only 2 parents out of 58 parents were aware of the fact that infections during their pregnancy might have caused hearing loss in their newborn (Thakre, et al. 2012, p. 765). Most of the parents expressed their inability to recognize the symptoms of deafness in young children and the earliest detection they could think of, was when the child was one and half to two years old. Almost all of them reported that the only symptoms they were familiar with, was when their children were not responding to loud sound such as clapping of hands, banging of the door and noises made by their siblings. It was only then that they realized that their children had hearing loss (Thakre, et al. 2012, p. 676).

Moreover, Taller-Azulay and Rusu (2015, p. 1) add that, mothers and fathers of hearing-impaired children deal differently with the birth or the diagnosis of a hearing-impaired child. Their study was conducted in Israel and aimed to examine how Israeli parents (fathers and mothers) of hearing-impaired children deal with disability and which are the dimensions of their involvement in their children's lives later on the school. The major objective of the study was to investigate the parents' involvement in the formal special education of their hearing-impaired children. At least 41 Israel parents were involved in the study, 17 fathers and 24 mothers of the hearing-impaired children from 3 schools of the Northern part of Israel. The ages of the children varied between 6 and 12 years. All the parents filled in the questionnaires. The study acknowledges that parents of disabled children often go through a grieving process after the birth of their children and that fathers are less involved in the school education of their children with special needs. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between men's and women's involvement in the education of their children with special needs (Taller-Azulay and Rusu, 2015, p. 8). The results also indicated that fathers were less involved than mothers in the school education of their children with special education due to the long working hours men have which did not allow them to be available for their children. This means that the burden responsibility for caring for the D/deaf child is mainly carried by the child's mother yet both the child and the mother needed the support from all the members of the family. I therefore argue that both maternal and paternal involvement in the upbringing of the child is very important in terms of seeking professional advice, being involved in the education of the child and creating an atmosphere of acceptance and love in the family. Such a family environment can enhance positive attitudes and high expectations of the child's development in its totality.

Besides all the painful and stressful experiences which hearing parents of Deaf children undergo, it is interesting to note that parents of Deaf children are now in the process whereby they are trying to exercise and impose their rights in order to influence in a positive manner the education which is provided to their D/deaf children at schools, especially in cases of special education schools. The relationship between the education system and the parents is becoming deeper and wider. Parents express their desire to become more involved and to be continuously updated regarding the education of their D/deaf children (Taller-Azulay and Rusu, 2015). Morgan (2014) also submits that pre-school parental involvement is critical since it strengthens children's school

readiness skills and parental involvement is positively associated with children's academic success. She adds that the curriculum that is being implemented at pre-school programs, encourages both parents and teachers to increase their quality of relationship. Showing up for school activities such as field trips, parent volunteering and school wide events, narrows the gap between teachers and parents. Parental involvement both at home and at school predict growth in children's vocabulary, print skills and early writing skills as well sign language skill development (Morgan, 2014).

In addition to that, some of the parents of D/deaf students work hard to meet the educational needs of their children even though they are faced with financial constraints and poverty. They show willingness to support and provide for their D/deaf children so that they remain at school like their hearing siblings. The study that was conducted by Wanjiru (2014) in Kenya revealed that parents of children with hearing impairment face several challenges which include financial constraints, rejection from society and difficulties in communicating with their children (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 83). Participants of the study included 65 parents of hearing-impaired learners who had children in Kambui School for the Deaf in nursery, infant, primary one, primary two and primary three classes (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 55). Close and open-ended questions were used to collect data through questionnaires. Out of 85 parents who were targeted by this study, only 65 responded (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 57).

The findings of the study revealed that most of the parents discovered that their children were D/deaf when they failed to turn their heads when their names were called out and the parents became heart broken and at the same time angry at this realization. Although parents faced many challenges, the study reported that they had positive beliefs, feelings and favorable behavior towards their children. Parents were able to overcome most of the challenges by finding comfort in God and by working hard to meet the educational needs of their children (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 85). Next to be discussed in the following chapter, is the research methodology of this study.

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter has presented related literature which has been reviewed in order to locate the context of this study within the field of Deaf education. The concept of voice has been discussed in relation

to its importance in enabling Deaf students to narrate their educational experiences so that they reflect on their own lives as well as on their educational journey. The limitation of the voice has also been illuminated on the basis that some of the students are silenced by their teachers when they raise issues that pertain to their education and they end up keeping quiet since they fear victimization. The concept of Deaf culture also raised the importance of teachers of the Deaf to learn sign language skills as soon as they are task with the responsibility of teaching Deaf students in order to facilitate effective communication in class. Various experiences of D/deaf students were also reviewed internationally both in mainstream schools and in schools for the Deaf in order to locate this study in the context of Deaf education. Teachers' perspectives on Deaf education were also sought on the basis that teachers' attitude towards Deaf students do affect teaching and learning of the students. It has been illuminated that teachers' beliefs can offer a perspective that moves beyond a view of D/deaf students' deficiencies to capturing experiences of D/deaf students as people who are directly affected by the education system. Parental journey with a D/deaf child was also captured in this chapter since parents are a contributing factor to the educational journey of their D/deaf children as invaluable stakeholders in the education system. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the description of the research design and methodology that have been used in this research. It covers research methodology, research site, population sample, data collection tools, data collection plan, data collection procedure, trustworthiness, reviewed documents, role of the researcher, data analysis and data presentation.

#### 4.1 Research Methodology

In order to explore the journey and educational experiences of Deaf learners in this study, a qualitative research design was employed. Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 5) point out that a qualitative research design allows researchers to access the inner experiences of participants in order to

understand how meanings are formed through personal stories and narratives as opposed to testing variables and calculating statistics. According to Queirós, et al. (2017, p. 370), the major strength of qualitative research “is to produce in-depth and illustrative information” and stable rapport with research participants. This methodology enabled me as the researcher to get detailed information from the participants about their educational experiences. It also enabled me to establish a relationship with research participants as they told their stories and opened up about their educational experiences.

Madrigal and McClain (2012, p. 15) state that qualitative research provides the researcher with details about human experiences and personality characteristics. It allows the researcher to gain new knowledge about people that the researcher knows by sharing their experiences and new information with others (Zemliansky, 2008, p. 24). This means that it places the researcher in a unique position where expressions of emotions and sharing of personal experiences are encouraged. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), researchers who employed the qualitative method are primarily concerned with how people make sense of their lives. The researchers see and understand a given research problem or topic from the perspective of the local population it involves. Thus, the strength of qualitative research in this study is its ability to provide detailed

recorded information about how Deaf students, teachers and school administrators experienced their educational journey as people who are directly involved in this study.

In addition, Bryman (2008) highlights that qualitative research is a research strategy which is used to describe and understand problems and experiences of students and staff which is the phenomenon that is being investigated in this study through interpretative phenomenological approach. This implies that qualitative research is effective in obtaining specific information about educational experiences of Deaf students, teachers and school administrators in Schools for the Deaf in Swaziland through narratives. Therefore, the researcher used the qualitative method in order to qualify the data obtained from the stories of Deaf learners, their teachers and from the school administrators about the educational experiences of the first Deaf senior students in Swaziland. An interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) was also employed in this qualitative study and is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)**

This study employed an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) which is a qualitative methodology that aims to provide detailed examination of personal lived experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2014, p. 41; Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). IPA was derived from phenomenology, a research methodology which was first conceptualized and theorized by Edmund Husserl in 1931 as a way to understand the context of the “lived experiences” of people (research participants) and the meaning of their experiences (Alase, 2017, p. 10; Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 102; Fade, 2004, p. 648).

Phenomenology is defined by Giorgi (2012, p. 3) as the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by people living with those experiences. Creswell (2013, p. 76) adds that a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. This means that “phenomenology is concerned with human understanding” (Fade, 2004, p. 647). Phenomenology as a research methodology originated in ideas of Edmund Husserl in 1936 (Fade, 2004, p. 647). Husserl believed that “what is there in the world can be understood by perceiving it in a manner that is uncontaminated by an individual’s past experiences and viewpoint” (Fade, 2004, p. 647; Giorgi,

2012, p. 3). Giorgi (2012, p. 3) adds that data collected through the phenomenological method does not fit into a statistical test that confines or restricts the interpretation since it is meant to be used for the voices of the participants to be heard. Husserl rejected the view that empirical science is the basis for achieving an understanding of the world, stressing instead the importance of the “life world” or lived experience (Fade, 2004, p. 648). The concept of phenomenology has been revolutionized and conceptualized in today’s practice by Smith, Flowers and Larkin by organizing the new phenomenological research tradition called the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Alase, 2017, p. 10; Fade, 2004, p. 647). IPA is a qualitative data analysis approach which was introduced by Jonathan Smith in the mid-1990s (Clarke, 2010, p. 2). IPA has gained popularity as a qualitative approach to psychological research particularly in the United Kingdom, especially in the areas of clinical, health and counselling psychology (Smith, 2004, 2011 cited in Allan and Eatough, 2016, p. 3). “It started as a psychological-oriented approach” (Alase, 2017, p. 10) and “since then it has been picked up particularly strongly in clinical and counseling as well as in social and education psychology” (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 4). According to Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 53), IPA is a qualitative approach which aims “to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meaning of particular experiences, events and states hold for participants” (Jeong and Othman, 2016; Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). It also aims to “dialogue with mainstream psychology” in understanding people’s lived experiences and the meaning they attach to their experiences (Brocki and Wearden, 2014, p. 3; Clarke, 2010, p. 2). Thus, IPA approach is phenomenological since “it involves detailed examination of the participant’s life world” and “it attempts to explore personal experience since it is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of and object or event” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53; Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Creswell (2012, p. 76) adds that IPA works well in phenomenological studies since it “describes the common meaning for several individuals of lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon”. Although the IPA shares the aims of phenomenology in terms of capturing individual experiences (Grigoriou, 2004, p. 8), it is worth noting that it goes beyond phenomenology since it recognizes the researcher within the research and analytic process (Grigoriou, 2004, p. 8) and it offers a set of guidelines for conducting research that is rooted in an epistemological position (Allan and Eatough, 2017, p. 6). Grigoriou, (200, p. 8) further elaborates that the researcher’s analysis becomes a product of the interactions between the participants and the researcher, and “it is considered to be both phenomenological

(participants' accounts) and interpretative (researcher's interpretations of participants' accounts)" (Grigoriou, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, the term interpretative phenomenological approach, is used to signal the dual facet of the approach and that the joint reflections of both participants and researcher form the analytic account produced (Smith, et al. 1999; Osborn and Smith, 1998; Smith, et al. 1997 cited in Brocki and Wearden, 2014, p. 4).

Moreover, Brocki and Wearden (2014, p. 3) reiterate that IPA had its origins in the fields of inquiry such as phenomenology and symbolic interactionism which hold that human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality, but rather that they come to interpret and understand their world by formulating their own biographical stories into a form that makes sense to them (Brocki and Wearden, 2014, p. 3; Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 54). Alase, (2017, p. 10) also explains that:

“IPA gives researchers the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberation of the lived experiences of the research participants and it allows the interviewees to express themselves and their ‘lived experience’ stories the way they see fit without any distortion or prosecution.”

According to Jeong and Othman (2016, p. 559), there are three theoretical principles of IPA. The first is that IPA values the participants' own perspectives on their experiences since it is concerned with how each participant binds and integrates discrete elements of perceptions, memories, judgements, assumptions and beliefs about something into one unified meaningful experience (Jeong and Othman, 2016, p. 559). The second principle of IPA is that it is committed to examine closely the unique, particular experience of each individual participant, from which themes that respond to the research question emerge (Jeong and Othman, 2016, p. 559; Eatough and Smith, 2012). The third principle of IPA as stated by Jeong and Othman (2016, p. 559), is concerned with interpretative, such as a hermeneutic tradition rather than the descriptive one within the phenomenology. This third principle involves a two-stage interpretation process or a double hermeneutic, meaning that in the first stage “the participants are trying to make sense of their world”, and in the second stage, “the researcher is also trying to make sense of the participants' trying to make sense of their world” (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 53). It assumes a chain of connection between people's talk and their thinking as well as their emotional state (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 54).

This means that IPA employs a realistic approach (Reid et al, 2005, p. 21) which requires the researcher to invite the research participants to offer a rich detailed, reflective, first-person accounts of their lived experiences (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 56; Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 101). Larkin and Thompson (2011, p. 101) add that the outcome of a successful IPA study is likely to include an element of “giving voice”, capturing and reflecting upon the principal claims and concerns of the research participants, and “making sense”, offering an interpretation of the material which is grounded in the participants’ accounts (Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 101). Hence, this study employed IPA research methodology in analyzing the lived educational experiences of Deaf students and their teachers in relation to Deaf education by giving them a platform to share their personal educational experiences through their own ‘voices’. The next section to be discussed is research site.

#### **4.1.2 Research site**

The study was conducted in Swaziland at two residential special schools for the Deaf, that is, School for the Deaf -High and School for the Deaf -Primary (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1). These are the only two schools for Deaf learners in Swaziland.

School for the Deaf-Primary is located at Siteki town and was established in 1976. Only the school principal and the deputy principal were interviewed at this school since they had witnessed the journey for the four Deaf learners who were involved in this study. The rest of the teachers at primary school were new and they had never taught these Deaf learners who were the core of this study.

School for the Deaf- High is a newly established government school which caters to Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners, founded in 2007. It is located in Matsetsa area along the Manzini to Siteki main road in the Lubombo Region. The school is in the Lugongolweni constituency under Chief Mlimi Maziya. On the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010, School for the Deaf-High began to operate fully in its premises after sharing infrastructure with School for the Deaf- Primary for 3 years at Siteki. The school is a special school with boarding facilities for both boys and girls. It has a welcoming environment with state-of-the-art infrastructure and teaching/learning facilities. It promotes Deaf Culture and Sign Language which is the first language of the Deaf students.

This institution strives to implement programs that can enable Deaf learners to sustain themselves lifelong. It offers academic and as well as vocational skills to learners who are not academically inclined. It has a Swazi Sign Language Centre where teachers learn Swazi Sign Language with the help of Swaziland National Association of the Deaf (SNAD). The institution also has a computer program which offers certificates at the end of each module. This is done to equip D/deaf learners with computer skills so that our society can have a Deaf community which is computer literate.

There are 17 teachers who are all hearing. Three of the teachers were trained in Deaf education in Malawi and two in South Africa. Four other teachers are currently being trained in Zimbabwe and three in Southern Africa Nazarene University (SANU) in Swaziland at B.Ed. Degree level in inclusive education. Almost all the teachers came to school from tertiary institutions and from mainstream schools without any training and any knowledge of Deaf culture except for one teacher who is a child of Deaf adults (CODA) who is a member of the Deaf community. He came to school with vast knowledge of Deaf culture and Swazi Sign Language skills. The next section discusses population and sample and how participants were selected.

#### **4.1.3 Population and Sample**

The target population for the study was the four Deaf students who were the first Deaf students to write Grade 12 examination in the country in 2015, six teachers who are the only teachers who taught the four Deaf students in Form 5 (Grade 12) in the year 2015 and two administrators from primary school, that is, one principal and one deputy principal. Creswell (2012, p. 206) asserts that IPA study requires that all the selected participants should have experienced similar phenomenon. Alase (2017, p. 13) adds that participants must be selected from amongst a homogenous sample pool of participants to understand the true make-up of the research subject matter.

When employing the IPA approach, the size of the participants should be small and represent the homogeneity that exists among the participants' pool (Alase, 2017, p. 13). As explained by Larkin and Thompson (2011, p. 104), "IPA studies require small sample sizes because it is the quality, rather than the quantity of data that permits insightful analyses to be developed" The number of participants can be between 2 and 25 (Alase, 2017, p. 13; Creswell, 2012, p. 146). The IPA approach involves a detailed interpretative account of the cases which can only realistically be

accomplished with a very small sample (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 56). Therefore, the total number of participants in this study was 12 in all. The participants were selected based on what Smith and Orsborn (2007, p. 56) call purposive sampling. Smith, et al. (2009, p. 48) add that purposive sampling is good for IPA studies because participants “can offer a research project insight into a particular experience” compared to random sampling strategies. Through purposive sampling, the researcher finds a more closely defined group for whom the research question is more significant (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 56).

The participants in this study were purposively selected because they were capable of giving first-hand information and reliable data concerning the journey and the educational experiences of Deaf learners who were the target for this study. Furthermore, these students made history which needed to be recorded through this study. All the four students completed their Grade 12 in 2015 and they were all big ‘D’ deaf and members of the Deaf Community.

Three of these students started their primary education at School for the Deaf-Primary whilst one of them started in a mainstream school. These Deaf students did their Grade 10 in three years and Grade 12 in three years as part of their <sup>11</sup>curriculum adaptation and they did not give up on their studies. Their long educational journey as well as their achievements deserved to be documented in this study. Teachers were also vital in this study since the researcher believed that they were directly involved in the success and in the improved performance of these learners. Teachers elicited the learners’ experiences, struggles, achievements and teaching strategies that were employed as well as the challenges which both students and teachers faced in the education and assessment of these Deaf students. The next section discusses the data collection tools used in this study.

#### **4.2 Data collection tools**

Data collection tools which were used in this study included semi-structured interviews, interview guide, audio-video recording camera and autoethnography. The tools are discussed in this study as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Curriculum in this study refers to the content which is being taught, how it is taught and under what conditions it is taught (South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2010)

#### **4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews**

The study employed semi-structured interviews and use of documentary sources through video recordings. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 57) stress that IPA studies require a flexible data collection instrument such as semi-structured interviews. They further elaborate that “this form of interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 57). Corbin and Strauss (2014, p. 241) reiterate that semi-structured interviews allow trust and understanding to be built between the researcher and the participant. Smith and Osborn add that the advantages of the semi-structured interview are that it facilitates rapport and it allows a greater flexibility of coverage (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 57; Alase, 2017, p. 14). It also allows the interview to go into novel areas and it produces richer data (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p. 57; Denovan and Macaskill, 2013, p. 8). Larkin and Thompson (2011, p. 104) emphasize that an IPA interview is not about collecting facts, it is about exploring meaning and the researcher has to aim to capture an account that is rich, detailed and reflexive. However, Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 57) point out that some of the disadvantage of this form of interviewing are that it reduces the control the researcher has over the situation; it takes longer to carry out and it is hard to analyze (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 57).

According to Bryman (2008, p. 9), a semi-structured interview is a context in which the interviewer has a few questions in general form to guide an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions. In this regard, an interview guide was designed by the researcher and this enabled the researcher to guide the participants and to probe some of the information whilst listening to stories of the participants (see Appendix A and Appendix B). As a researcher, I did not only depend on the questions in the interview guide but I also had an opportunity to probe an interviewee to obtain more information in response to what the interviewee had said.

In addition to that, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a fairly open frame of mind which allowed for focused, conventional and two-way communication (Bryman, 2008, p. 10). Therefore, the manner in which the researcher approached the questions in the interview guide showed adjustment to suit the personality and circumstances of each participant but the researcher was able to use the interview guide which had open ended questions and prompts in order to enhance the reliability and flexibility to encourage free narrative and detailed responses (Smith

and Osborn; 2008; Smith, 2003 cited in Denovan and Macaskill, 2013, p. 8). This approach gave the participants freedom to provide their own insights into certain incidents. All the participants were able to relate their experiences and insights freely. In taking the students through their journey, the researcher was able to probe and to seek clarifications straight away. All the participants were able to relate their experiences and insights freely.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Interview guide***

In preparation for the interviews, a researcher has to put in place an interview guide which is then used to direct the conversation towards issues which the researcher wants to learn about. The term ‘interview guide’ refers to the list of topics, areas or themes that need to be covered by the researcher during the interview session and is normally created in advanced of the interview (Vaismoradi, et al. 2013). Open ended questions which serve as an interview guide allow a rich quality of data to be collected (Bryman, 2008, p. 9) since each participant ha his/her own experiences and perspective on Deaf education. For that reason, data varied significantly and such occurrence was controlled through the use of open-ended questions in order to have consistency in data collection from different participants. Smith and Osborn, (2008, p. 55) state that interview guide questions in IPA studies should be “framed broadly and openly” in order to enable the researcher to “explore flexibly and in detail an area of concern” Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 55).

In this study, the interview guide enabled the researcher to guide the participants towards the kind of educational experiences that was required by the study and to probe for more information when there was a need. It helped the researcher to give unity to the events by means of a plot or a sequence of events that made up a story of each participant from the beginning to the end (Yang, 2011, p. 203; Polkinghorne 1995, p. 5).

The interview guide was therefore designed around the four following broad preliminary themes:

- Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity
- Thematic Category 2: School and Communication
- Thematic Category 3: Family Involvement and Encouragement
- Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf Education

The interview guide which was designed for students, was signed for the Deaf students by the school interpreter before and during the interview session and that of teachers and school administrators was not signed for since all the teachers and school administrators were hearing (see Appendix A).

#### **4.2.2 Audio and video recordings**

A digital camcorder, audio and video recorder were used in collecting data in this study in order to capture narratives from the students. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 64) point out that it is not possible to do the form of interviewing required for IPA without recording. They assert that “if one attempts to write down everything the participant is saying during the interview, one will only capture the gist, missing important nuances. It will also interfere with helping the interview to run smoothly and with establishing rapport” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 64). Asan and Montague (2014, p. 10) assert that video recording enables the rich collection of data, retains the captured data with no loss of its richness for viewing and it generates a large amount of data. They add that data collected through video recording “might improve ecological validity since the video data gives more complete and visual information about the real environment and in real time rather than traditional observation of notes” (Asan and Montague, 2014, p. 10).

Moreover, another advantage of a recording can be viewed or listened to repeatedly during data analysis and it provides a basis for reliability and validity (Al-Yateem 2012, p. 31). Therefore, in this study, I used audio-video recordings to collect data from all the participants. However, Asan and Montague (2014, p. 9) warn that reviewing, transcribing and coding data is laborious. I used the note book to note down what I had observed after each and every interview session. I also used it for writing down themes that emanated from data during the transcribing process. The note book was also used to note down what I had read or learnt during the interview and also to jot down any thoughts that came up related to the study. The video recordings and the note books would be kept in a safe place and be destroyed after five years for anonymity.

### **4.2.3 Autoethnography as a research tool**

Autoethnography as a method of inquiry was used in this study as a qualitative research tool that enabled the writer to share her own experiences as a hearing teacher and a principal of Deaf learners in Swaziland. Creswell (2013, p. 193) advises that in IPA studies, the researcher should begin by describing her own ‘lived experiences’ of the phenomenon under study in order to avoid interjecting her own personal experiences into the lived stories of the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 193; Alase, 2017, p. 16). For that reason, autoethnography in this study is presented separately in Chapter 5.

Autoethnography is a research tool which is useful in qualitative research and is used to analyze people’s lives. It is defined by Ellis et al. (2011, p. 2) as “an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural...”

From the above quotation, it is clear that autoethnography as a tool enabled the researcher as an insider to connect her personal experiences as a hearing teacher and a school principal with that of Deaf students and their teachers within the Deaf culture by narrating her own educational experiences. Therefore, the writer’s personal experiences provided additional source of data in data triangulation and in understand Deaf students’ experiences and those of their teachers and the school principal. This means that the researcher in this study was a participant observer. This data was collected by the researcher herself by writing down her own experiences.

Autoethnography is also defined as a form of qualitative research in which authors use self-reflection and writing to explore their personal experiences and connect their auto biographical story to wider cultural, political and social meanings and understandings (Guyotte and Sochacka, 2016, p. 2; Mendez, 2013, p. 109; Ellis, et al. 2011, p. 276; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

Moreover, Adams, et al. (2015:1) add that autoethnography is a research method which uses personal experience (‘auto’) to describe and interpret (‘graphy’) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs and practices (‘ethno’). It is a contentious qualitative research methodology which speaks from the heart about the existential experiences (Ellis, et al. 2011, p. 2). It “offers accounts of personal experience to complement or fill gaps in existing research” (Adams, et al. 2015, p. 3) and it “describes moments of everyday that cannot be captured through other traditional research methods” (Adams, et al. 2017, p. 4). In addition to that, autoethnography allowed me as the researcher to “engage in the process of self-reflection/self-critic with an eye towards self-

improvement” (Howard, 2016 cited in Brock, et al. 2017, p. 106) as a school principal so that my work can be positively impacted.

Moreover, Allen (2015, p. 33) points out that “as human beings, we have so many skins inside, covering the depths of our hearts and we know so many things but we don’t know ourselves”. Therefore, employing autoethnography in this study afforded me an opportunity to look into myself, to share my story and to reflect on my own experiences so that I could better understand myself. Adams, et al. (2015, p. 1) add that “through careful self-examination, we are able to understand, empathize and connect our personal experiences to others”. Therefore, the writing of autoethnography allowed me to connect my personal educational experiences to those of Deaf students, teachers and school administrators as the school principal. It illuminated the connection between me as a researcher and the school principal to that of Deaf students, teachers and primary school administrators through shared educational experiences.

The writing of the autoethnography was facilitated by the use of my own experiences as a teacher of the Deaf students and a principal, my experience in Penn State College where I received training in leadership skills, my experience in Gallaudet University where I received training in Deaf curriculum studies and in benchmarking in one of the Deaf schools in South Africa. Table 2 shows the documents which I used to facilitate my writing of the autoethnography.

*Table 2: Documents which were used to facilitate the writing of the autoethnography*

Number	Description	Details	Source
1	A Final Report on Deaf Curriculum Studies (2014)	10 pages	Gallaudet University
2	My Leadership Philosophy (2014)	3 pages	Penn State College
3	My Current Leadership Challenge Review and Challenging the Process (2014)	5 pages	
4	Swazi Sign Language Training and Development Centre (Poster) (2014)	48” wide by 36” high	
5	Individual Program Plan (IPP) (2013)	101 pages	

The documents that are shown in Table 2 were the requirements from my supervisors and my mentors whilst I was undertaking courses on Leadership and on Deaf Education Curriculum Studies in Penn State College and in Gallaudet University. They were my own critical reflection on my leadership philosophy and on my leadership challenges on the processes of how to overcome them. The poster of Swazi Sign Language Training Centre and Development Centre described the project which I intended to implement at school in order to facilitate the internal training of teachers in Swazi Sign Language. Individual Program Plan (IPP) is the document in which I was expected to write my goals, the courses I attended, the conferences and what I learned as well as schools which I visited and what I learned from them in terms of Deaf curriculum. It was like my diary and my field journal. I was expected to submit it to my supervisor fortnightly to be graded. Finally, I had to write a report which I presented to the Ministry of Education and Training together with my IPP on my return home. All these documents have a bearing in my experiences as a school principal and a teacher in School for the Deaf-High. The autoethnography is presented in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Data collection plan**

Various tools and procedures for data collection were piloted before data collection started in earnest. I decided to pilot the data collection instruments in order to identify unanticipated challenges that might be exposed through the piloting process so that I could adjust where appropriate. The use of the school interpreter was also piloted.

#### **4.3.1 Piloting**

In this research, a pilot study was used as a preliminary test of procedures and instruments in order to inform the data collection process. It was a preliminary collection of data to detect if there were weaknesses in design and instruments. Dikko (2016, p. 522) states that a pilot study helps to ascertain how well a research instrument will work in the actual study by identifying potential problems and areas that may require adjustments. Asan and Montague (2014, p. 3) stress that the video recording method requires careful planning in order to gather data successfully so that potential research questions are effectively answered. They add that preliminary testing enables the researcher to determine the suitability of the size of the room, get the best angle to ensure a

clean view of the participant being interviewed and set up the video camera in a fixed position (Asan and Montague, 2014, p. 6).

To facilitate the piloting process, I invited two Form 4 (Grade 11) students who were 20 years old in order to pilot the interview process using the interview guide questions (see Appendix A). These two students were invited for piloting in this study because they were at high school level and the only two students who had similar educational experiences as the students who were participants in this study since they also did Grade 10 for two years, except that they had not yet sat for the Grade 12 examination. Interview guide questions were also piloted in order to ascertain whether they could gather the needed information. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 61) advise that it may be useful to try out possible questions with a colleague and get some feedback on the level of difficulty and tone before the actual interview. They further suggest that prompts that are framed more explicitly may be constructed but not necessarily for every question (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 61).

Piloting the video recording camera and the interview guide questions, therefore, helped me to know exactly where to position the video camera in the room and to check if the questions needed to be redrafted or not. The interviewees found the questions very interesting and straight forward. They were able to tell their stories with ease and understand what was expected from them. There was no modification or adjustment needed on the interview guide questions. I gained the experience on the length of the interview session as well as the experience of interviewing Deaf students through Swazi Sign Language.

The use of a Swazi Sign Language interpreter during the interview sessions was also piloted to ascertain how best to utilize the interpreter's skills and how well the researcher and interpreter could work together in this research so that the learners could be comfortable in their signing and in expressing themselves. Both students acknowledged the presence of the interpreter but they felt that I should sign directly to them since I was fluent in Swazi Sign Language and they could ask the interpreter for clarification only if there was a need. So, there was neither voice over nor talking in the interview room. Only sign language was used. The interpreter remained in the room throughout the interview process. He also played the major role of setting up the interview scenery, and he managed the video/audio recording camera to check if the signing space was well maintained within the camera settings.

The piloting process ran smoothly without any hitches. The students told their stories with ease. The students' experience was that it was good that the interview guide questions were signed to them before the commencement of the interview because such made them to understand what was expected of them. The first interview session lasted for 45 minutes and the second one lasted for 35.12 minutes.

Through this process, I learnt that each interview session would take no more than an hour. I also learnt that it was important to be attentive and focus on the participants throughout the interview session and to give them time to think or recall and to allow them to finish what they wanted to sign before I probe for more information. Students viewed the recordings and read the transcribed texts in order to verify the translated information. The students agreed that the information that was written in transcribed scripts was actually what they had signed.

#### **4.3.2 Ethical considerations**

When collecting data from participants, it is vital for the researcher to consider protecting research participants from possible harm and secure privacy and confidentiality. Ethics refer to what is morally and legally right in the conducting of a research (Caws, 1996). When research was being conducted, the well-being of the participants had to be a priority. For Deaf students, the use of the qualified interpreter was one of the ethical considerations that needed to be taken care of. The students needed to understand clearly the procedures of the interview sessions and the interpreter was responsible for transposing between the two languages (Bonnes, 2016, p. 11) bridging the gap between the hearing principal and the Deaf signing students by allowing them to express themselves accurately and to minimize any communication breakdown. The following principles were considered during this study.

First of all, as a researcher, I invited all the participants to participate in this study through invitation letters which I delivered to them myself. The letters were all written in English Language (see Appendices C, E and G). The participants of the study were informed that participation was voluntarily in the study. Such information was conveyed to the participants through letters and through Swazi Sign Language. Information contained in the letters were signed to the students by the school interpreter. They were not coerced or forced in any manner. It was the duty of the researcher to invite them to participate in this study and to let them know that their

participation was voluntary and they could choose not to take part in the study and they could withdraw at any time if they felt like doing so. Teachers and school administrators were also informed through letters that participating in this study was voluntarily and that they could choose not to participate and at withdraw any time. All participants were assured that confidentiality of the information provided would be maintained and that their real names would not be used in the study. They were not coerced at all to participate in this study.

Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for persons during a research (Caws, 1996). The researcher wrote letters to students (see Appendix B), teachers (see Appendix D) and to primary school administrators (principal and the deputy principal) (see Appendix F) inviting them to participate in the study. Information was also interpreted in Swazi Sign Language for the Deaf participants by the school interpreter, informing them about the study. Participants were requested to sign consent forms if they were accepting the invitation to participate in the study. Another letter was written to the High School administration School Board through the Chairperson of High School for the Deaf, requesting their permission to conduct the study and to collect data from the school (see Appendix H).

Prior to data collection, clearance from the university Ethics Committee (Protocol number: 2017ECE026D) for this research was obtained (see Appendix L). All participants were informed that the results and final report of this study would be made available through the University of the Witwatersrand library, at conference presentations as well in Deaf Education related journal articles. All participants of this study signed their written consent forms, granting their permission to participate in this study and to record the interviews sessions though audio-video camera. Next to be discussed, is the data collection procedure.

#### **4.4 Data collection procedure**

After all the participants had signed consent forms and Clearance from the Ethics Committee for this research had been obtained, the one- on-one in depth interview sessions began. In total, twelve participants were interviewed face-to-face, that is, four Deaf students, six teachers and two administrators from primary school (one principal and one deputy principal). This was done according to Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 56) who assert that for the richness of the individual cases, and because IPA is committed to a detailed interpretative account of the cases, the study

needs to be done on a very small sample of one to fifteen participants. The small size of the participants enabled the researcher to develop in-depth descriptions of the participants' educational lived experiences and to explore meanings of their stories (Fade, 2004, p. 647; Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 104; Alase, 2017, p. 9).

All the participants were interviewed at a time and place that was convenient to them and the interviewer. My office was conducive for the interviews since it had a better space for setting audio-video recordings and for signing space. It was also more private than a classroom. Interviewing the participants after school hours was convenient to them since the interviews did not clash with their working schedules. The interviews were conducted on different dates. Interview sessions for Deaf students lasted between 21 minutes and 26 minutes excluding time for signing interview guide question. For teachers, the interview sessions lasted between 22 and 28 minutes and for school administrators, they lasted between 22 and 23 minutes, excluding time for explaining issues of consent.

The data was collected in two stages. Data was first collected from four Deaf students by the researcher with the help of the school interpreter through audio and video tape at different times. During the second stage, the data was collected from teachers of the Deaf and from the primary school administrators (Principal and the Deputy Principal). I collected the data by myself since the teachers and the school administrators were all hearing and they did not need an interpreter. Provision was made for participants who might not be comfortable with the audio-video recording. The participants were informed that their responses were going to be written in a note book as the conversation progressed. However, all the participants were comfortable with audio-video recording and note taking was not used during the interview process. The teachers and the administrators were informed that they were free to use Swazi Language, English or SiSwati Language during the interview sessions. However, they all opted to use English with exception of one teacher who chose to use Swazi Sign Language. The interview sessions took about 4 months to finish.

First to be transcribed, were the video recordings for Deaf students from Swazi Sign Language to written English by the researcher with the help of the school interpreter. The school interpreter was involved so that no information would be missed when transcribing data from the video recordings to written English. Guarinello et al. (2014, p. 10) call this process retextualization by

the researcher through written language. After that, the students were allowed to view their video recordings and the transcription in their own spare time. This was done to confirm their responses so that their 'voices' were not misrepresented. That process enabled me not to lose any valuable information. Guarinello et al. (2014, p. 10) stress that after retextualization, participants should be allowed to view the recordings, read the text and retextualize it until the final writing version meets their satisfaction. Teachers also viewed the recordings and approved of what was written. Next to be discussed is trustworthiness.

#### **4.5 Trustworthiness**

The strength of qualitative research is its validity which is often called trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility (Gunawan, 2015, p. 4). According to Connelly (2016, p. 435), trustworthiness or rigor of a qualitative study refers to the degree of confidence in the protocols, data interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. Nowell, et al. (2017, p. 1) add that for the study to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers should demonstrate that data collection has been conducted in a precise, consistent and exhaustive manner through recording and disclose the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine the credibility of the process. Thus, trustworthiness is one of the ways in which the researcher can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Nowell, et al. 2017, p. 1). In this regard, data were collected from each participant through video recordings. For Deaf students, a qualified school interpreter was present to facilitate interviews in order to avoid any communication breakdown between the researcher and the Deaf students since sign language was used during the interview process. Qualified interpreters are a useful tool for facilitating a sense of belonging for Deaf students, increasing their trust and reducing isolation by allowing them to express themselves fully in their own language (Bonness, 2016, p. 11). Teachers' and school administrators' interviews were also video recorded.

Moreover, Gunawan, (2015, p. 4) points out that trustworthiness is divided into credibility which corresponds with validity and dependability which corresponds with reliability. Tests in this regard include member checking, that is, returning to the participants following data analysis and peer checking, asking peers or a panel of experts or an experienced colleague to analyze some of the data as a way of ensuring that the researcher has analyzed the data correctly.

Bearing this in mind, after the data had been collected and transcribed, all the participants were given an opportunity to view their video recordings and to go through their transcribed texts. This was done to confirm that their 'voices' were not misinterpreted. The participants were also given the opportunity to view and ask questions about the precision of the quotations ascribed to the themes in Chapters 6 and 7. There were no changes which resulted from this exercise. This is the process which Gunawan (2015, p. 4) calls member checking. Guba and Lincoln (1989) regard this process of member checking as the most critical technique for establishing credibility and dependability of the qualitative study.

In addition, Nowell et al. (2017, p. 3) stress the importance of peer checking and debriefing in order to provide an external check on the research process which increases trustworthiness by checking preliminary findings and interpretations against raw data. In this regard, debriefing and peer checking sessions also took place among the PhD cohort I was part of. In this process, students including me shared our data analysis processes, challenging each other to be as accurate and thorough as possible. This was done in order to provide an external check on preliminary findings and the data interpretation process and so increase the dependability of the study. Throughout the writing up process, video recordings and transcripts were often consulted in order to verify information each time a need arose to do so.

Mertler (2006) points out that triangulation in a qualitative study, that is, the use of multiple data collection methods to contribute to the trustworthiness of data. Shenton, (2004, p. 65) also explains that triangulation may involve the use of different methods, especially observation and individual interviews which form the major data collection strategies for qualitative research. Therefore, in this study, triangulation was attained by using the separate in-depth interviews of the four Deaf students, the six teachers, the two school administrators about their teaching and learning experiences. Moreover, official policy documents were reviewed and discussed and the autoethnography of the researcher was also presented in order to cross-check the consistency of the same issues arising from different sources. The school interpreter was present in each interview session to avoid any communication breakdown between the researcher and the Deaf students since sign language was used during the interview process. The next discussion relates to the documents reviewed that guide teaching and learning of the students, including Deaf students in the country.

#### 4.6 Reviewed documents

In order to fully comprehend the educational experiences of Deaf students and their teachers, several documents that are related to education were reviewed in order to provide the background information of this study (see Chapter 1). The documents were also reviewed in order to triangulate the data collected from the participants with regard to their lived educational experiences. The documents which were reviewed were those that contained rules and regulations that guide the teaching and learning of the students, including Deaf learners in the country. This was done on the assumption that the implementation of Deaf education in the country was guided by the policies that were formulated by the government.

The documents reviewed commenced with national documents such as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act (2005) and the Swaziland National Disability Policy (2013). Policy documents from the Ministry of Education and Training were also reviewed, namely, the Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (2011), the National Education and Training Sector Policy (2018), the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018), the Examinations Council of Swaziland (ECOS) Handbook (2013/2014) and the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) Handbook (2019/2020) (see Table 3 below)

*Table 3: The policy documents reviewed in this study*

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF PAGES	SOURCE
1	Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005)	142	Parliament
2	Swaziland National Disability Policy (2013)	58	
3	The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (2011)	59	Ministry of Education and Training
4	National Education and Training Sector Policy (2018)	81	
5	Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018)	48	
6	Examination Council of Swaziland (ECOS) Handbook (2013/2014)	90	
7	ECESWA Handbook EPC & JC (2019/2020)	102	

Almost all the documents were obtained from the Ministry of Education and Training under the wing of Special Educational Needs. All these documents illuminated the context in which the lived experiences of teachers of the Deaf and their students could be understood. The documents were not meant to substantiate the participants' lived educational experiences since there is always a gap between policy (theory) and policy implementation (practice) which is often influenced by "social and cultural differences" between teachers and their students in various institutions (Hatasa, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, lived educational experiences of Deaf students and that of their teachers might not fully match with the reviewed documents in this study. However, the documents illuminate the government's expectations as far as teaching and learning of Deaf students in the country is concerned. Therefore, the documents were used in the data analysis of this study.

#### **4.7 Role of the researcher**

The researcher was the participant observer in the study in order to allow the collection of richer data and to provide a more interesting perspective for its analysis as an autoethnographic researcher. Although in this study I was the researcher and the school principal, I adopted the role of a learner. According to Gullion, (2016), adopting the role of a learner, a listener and a viewer is exciting and presents a significant difference from the role of an authority who makes pronouncement. I wanted to learn more about the educational experiences of students, their teachers and school administrators.

On the same note, Alase, (2017, p. 12) states that the main role of the researcher in a IPA study is to investigate and interpret the impact of the research subject matter on the "lived experiences" of the research participants. Alase, (2017, p. 13) adds that it is the role of the researcher to make sure that the participants are able to share their stories without fear of being intimidated. As a researcher, I did not impose myself on the participants, but I requested their permission to participate in the study so that everyone could feel free to tell their stories without being intimidated or feel subjected to school authority.

In addition, Brocki and Wearden, (2014, p. 32) point out that another important role of the researcher is to write summary notes immediately after each interview session and keep self-reflective notes throughout the research project. As a researcher, I kept my notebook during the interview sessions and was able to jot down a few notes of my own after every interview session.

As a researcher, I assumed the role where I knew very little and was in the setting and conducting interviews to know more (Mertler, 2006). I learned to listen to the students and teachers so as to fully comprehend their educational journey. I gained insight and learnt more about the experiences of the participants in this study. However, as a researcher, I kept a certain level of ‘marginality’ as defined by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), which permitted the researcher to maintain a middle-range position between involvement and detachment. I gave priority to the participants’ opinions and experiences by listening, viewing and focusing explicitly on their stories as Moustakas (1994, p. 135) points out that in order for the researcher to capture the essence of a true research investigation in IPA studies, the researchers must strive to distance themselves from the issue that is being investigated. The next section presents the data analysis process and method of data presentation.

#### **4.8 Data analysis and data presentation**

When it comes to data analysis, Cohen, et al. (2007, p. 461) point out that qualitative data analysis can be described as the process of making sense from research participants’ points of views and opinions of situations, in the process noticing patterns, themes, categories and regular similarities. Data analysis establishes patterns and themes from the raw data as intended by the objectives of the study and qualitative methods are more suitable for looking at the meaning of particular circumstances such as experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 44; Muijs, 2011, p. 9).

This study employed the IPA data analysis approach because it aimed to explore personal lived educational experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators in the School for the Deaf. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 135) and Creswell (2013, p. 44) add that researchers analyze and interpret narratives from their data and try to capture complexity of the experiences of the participants (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, p. 135). Researchers often include the participants’ own words to ensure that data presentation includes the voices of the participants and interpretation of the specified problem (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). In this study, Deaf students used their own language which is Swazi Sign Language during their interview sessions and it represented their own voices.

When it comes to data analysis and presentation, IPA accepts that “the analyst is interested in learning something about the respondent’s psychological world...which may be that the analyst holds that the respondent’s story can itself be said to represent a piece of the respondent’s identity” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 66). Data analysis process involved three stages:

- Stage 1: Looking for themes
- Stage 2: Connecting the themes
- Stage 3: Identifying themes which capture most strongly the respondent’s concerns on this particular topic and then give names to and represent the superordinate themes (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 70-72).

I followed Smith and Osborn, (2008, p. 70-72). steps of analyzing data as laid out below.

#### **4.8.1 Stage 1: Looking for themes**

After transcribing data from the audio-video recorder, I began to go through each transcript looking for themes. I read the transcripts a number of times, trying to make sense of the participants’ stories. I read transcripts a number of times so to become familiar with their stories (Smith and Osborn: 2008, p. 67). I started by reading through each transcript, one by one, quite a number of times in order to discern what was noteworthy about what the participants said in their narratives. I also watched and listened to each audio-video recording a number of times and wrote down notes and comments about what was reflected in each transcript in my note book. This is what Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 67) calls “idiographic approach” to data analysis which means “in-depth analysis of a single case an individual perspective of participants in their unique contexts.” As a researcher, I was determined to make sense of what the participants were saying, “thus moving from the emic and etic perspectives” (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014, p. 366) by going through the data and interpreting it at the same time.

I began by reading in detail the transcripts of individual participants (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 67) commencing with those of students. After that I went through the teachers’ and administrators’ transcripts. It is important in the first stage of the analysis to read and reread the transcript closely in order to become as familiar as possible with the account (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 67).

I could have done the data analysis on the computer through available programs such as Atlas.ti for consistency, as Bender and Ewbank (1994) suggest. However, the computer would have given me oversimplified and flat results. It would deny me an opportunity to be engaged with each and every transcript. Computers are not able to glean qualitative meanings embedded in the narrative data (Becker, 1993). I therefore opted for manual analysis in order to get into the detailed analysis of each participant’s story. The IPA analysis method insists on getting engaged with each transcript “as the potential to throw up new insight” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 66). Some parts of the interviews were richer than others so I had to immerse myself in each individual participant’s experience by going through each transcript. I had to engage in an interpretative relationship with each transcript in order to find meanings of the stories told by the participants (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 66). Meanings of the participants’ stories ‘are not transparently available; they must be obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation’ (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 66).

Table 4 below is an example of the first stage of data analysis and the themes that emerged from each transcript, reflecting the richness of the participants’ experiences.

*Table 4: An example of Stage 1 of data analysis*

<b>Int: Tell me about yourself.</b>	
<b>Prompt: Who you are, how and when did you become Deaf?</b>	
<i>SI: I am a Deaf boy... I remember (thinking...and looking up). when I was 5 years old, I got sick</i>	<i>self and identity</i>
<i>My grandmother cried most of the time</i>	<i>parental devastation about deafness</i>
<b>Int: Tell me about your first day at school.</b>	
<i>SI: I cried most of the time. I felt so lonely. I did know anyone</i>	<i>loneliness</i>
<i>I couldn't hear what the teachers were saying</i>	<i>communication breakdown</i>
<i>But later (scratching his head) I enjoyed it. I made friends</i>	
<i>It felt like home to me. Yes, yes...I belonged there.</i>	<i>sense of belonging</i>
<b>Int: Tell me about your school life at high school.</b>	
<i>I remember that we had several meetings with teachers</i>	<i>dialogue</i>
<i>at high school. More years were added to cover the content</i>	<i>more time needed to cover the syllabus</i>
<i>We all failed that year and I was disappointed</i>	<i>failure and despair</i>

<i>The following year, I spent most of the time studying</i>	<i>commitment</i>
<i>This time three of us had passed</i>	<i>victory</i>
<i>I felt like a hero</i>	<i>heroism</i>
<i>Today I am a university student</i>	<i>liberation</i>
<i>Surely God has been with us in this long journey</i>	<i>divine intervention</i>

After identifying themes on each transcript, I wrote down all the themes that had emerged throughout all the participants' stories as shown in Table 4. I had to capture the quality of what was found in each text as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 68). I then moved on to Stage 2 of data analysis which is connecting themes.

#### **4.8.2 Stage 2: Coding and connecting the themes**

Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 72) refer to stage 2 as the stage of coding and connecting themes. Once the individual transcripts have been read, the list of the themes which emerged from each transcript were coded, brought together and presented coherently under four superordinate themes (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 72). After listing the themes alongside each transcript, I began to code them and look for and look for connections among the identified themes through coding. The actual words said by the participants were checked on each transcript to make sure that the themes were connecting with what had been actually said by the participants. I often checked my own interpretation against the actual words of each participant. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 70) also stress that this stage "involves a more analytical or theoretical ordering as the researcher tries to make sense of the connections between themes which are emerging." Whilst attempting to make sense of the connection of themes, I discovered that some of the themes clustered together and could not be separated. Clustering them together maintained the richness of the data. Each time clustering theme emerged, I had to go back and check in each transcript in order to make sure that they matched with the actual words of the participants and to make sure that there was no valuable data that is discarded. Table 5 is the example of the Stage 2 process of presenting and coding the identified themes.

Table 5: An example of Stage 2 of coding of themes from the first participant.

Coding and connecting themes from the first participant		
<b>1. Self and Identity</b> - Self-acceptance - Parental devastation	1.1 1.7	<i>'I am a Deaf boy. I was born profoundly Deaf'</i> <i>'My mother was crying all the way back home''</i>
<b>2. School and Communication</b> -Communication barrier - Loneliness and abandonment -Sense of belonging - Failure and despair - Struggle and resilience -Coping strategies - More time needed to cover the syllabus - Waiting for the unknown - Commitment - Perseverance - Heroism  - Critical consciousness  - courage	2.15 2.15 2.27 3.53 4.73 2.30 4.78 2.36 3.48 3.59 5.90 5.93  5.109	<i>'I couldn't understand what the students were saying. I was just lost'</i> <i>'I felt lonely and abandoned by my grandmother'</i> <i>'I felt at home and I knew that is where I belonged'</i> <i>'I could see that it was the end of the road for me'</i> <i>'it was hard to write essays but I soldiered on'</i> <i>'I relied on my friends and I attended afternoon classes'</i> <i>'one more year was added'</i> <i>'I spent two years at home after completing Grade 7'</i> <i>'I had to spend most of the time doing my school work'</i> <i>'I had to continue with school but I felt like quitting'</i> <i>'I became a hero at regional level'</i> <i>'I understand that mine was not an easy journey, but it was walkable'</i> <i>'I gained courage when I received my Grade 10 certificate'</i>
<b>3. Family Involvement and Encouragement</b>  - supportive  -Liberation	6.127  6.136	<i>'My grandmother sold goats to buy things I needed for school'</i>  <i>'I feel free to do things for myself now because I am working'</i>
<b>4. Improving Deaf Education</b>  -Teachers' fluency in SSL  -special curriculum  - Qualified Swazi Sign Language teacher	7.140 7.148  7.156	<i>'All teachers should be fluent in SSL. It should be taught in all universities and colleges in the country'</i> <i>'I think...both schools should follow the same curriculum'</i>  <i>'I see myself as a qualified Swazi Sign Language teacher and a qualified teacher of the Deaf'</i>
(1.1 = page1, line 1)		

Table 5, shows superordinate themes which served as categories which facilitated the organization and presentation of the themes from the original sources (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 72). The identifiers indicate where in the transcript instances of each can be found by giving key words from the particular extract plus the page number of the transcript (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 72). Larkin, et al. (2011, p. 107) call this process a line by line coding.

### 4.8.3 Stage 3: Presenting data under superordinate themes

Table 6 below is an example of Stage 3 where the themes which were finally identified from all the transcripts were presented in Chapters 6 and 7 under the superordinate themes which is what Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 76) call the writing up stage.

*Table 6: An example of the Stage 3 of the theme presentation.*

<b>Interview transcript</b>	<b>Themes</b>
When the results came out, they had all passed. I felt like a hero; they had passed my subject (T3)	<b>Victory and heroism</b>
We eventually played at national level. We won and I was crowned as the ‘Best Player’ after scooping position one. I still look at my gold medals even today. That success and victory will remain in my heart forever (S4)	
When I look back, it has been a long journey and ... surely God has been with us (T6)	<b>God’s divine intervention</b>
I remember praying saying...God, if it’s your will for me to be here, let your will be done (A1)	

The themes which are shown in Table 6 are examples of the themes which were chosen because of their richness of information and they were found running throughout most of the transcripts of the participants. Discussion of the findings is presented and interpreted in Chapter 8.

### 4.9 Summary

This chapter has presented the research design and the methodology of this study. The chapter discussed data collection methods and the procedures by means of which data was collected and presented. The chapter also discussed the qualitative and IPA approaches in data collection, data presentation and in data analysis. The use of one-on-one in-depth interviews through semi-structured interviews and autoethnography were used in order to give voice to students and their teachers and administrators to give them the opportunity to narrate their lived educational experiences. Piloting of the study and the importance of using audio video camera for data capturing was highlighted. Trustworthiness of the study was also discussed. Documents which are

related to the education of Deaf students in the country were discussed as sources of data and to establish the context of the study. The data collected from students and teachers are presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 8, presents the findings of the study. The next chapter presents an autoethnography of teaching experience at high school level, that is, my own educational experiences as a principal at School for the Deaf-High.

## CHAPTER 5

### AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

#### 5.0 Introduction

In my search to find out students', teachers' and administrators' educational experiences at a high school for the Deaf and to document their journey, I thought it necessary to first explore my journey with these Deaf students as their first principal at School for the Deaf-High since we started this journey together at secondary level in 2008. This chapter, therefore, presents my voice as self-reflection of my own personal account. Self-reflection and critical consciousness are associated with critical pedagogy which is the theoretical framework of this study, an approach to teaching and learning that seeks to analyze and transform educational contexts by applying principles of critical theory such as critical consciousness, dialogue and liberation (Sarroub and Quadros, 2015, p. 252; Mohammadkhani, 2013, p. 60; Nikolakaki, 2012; Johnson and Morris, 2010, p. 6; Wink, 2005, p. 167). Telling my story brought a sense of liberation and critical consciousness about my career as a teacher and a principal of Deaf students. My experience forced me to engage in a deep introspection and self-consciousness in relation to my practice as a principal.

To start with, I present my educational background as a Special Education teacher, followed by my experience as a Principal at School for the Deaf-High, curriculum issues, my experience at Gallaudet University in the year 2013-2014 as a Humphrey Fellow and my benchmarking exercises with students, teachers, parents and members of Swaziland National Association for the Deaf (SNAD).

#### 5.1 Vignette 1: My educational background as a Special Education teacher

*My teaching career began in 1984 when I was appointed as a Special Education teacher by the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) after graduating with a Diploma in Secondary Education at William Pitcher College, specializing in English Language as a major subject and siSwati Language as a minor subject. I was posted at St. Joseph's High School which is a school for the Blind and physically challenged students. It was my first encounter with Blind students who used Braille for reading and writing.*

*There was a Resource Centre for the Blind students within the school which was responsible for transcribing both written and Brailed work for teachers and students. Teachers had not been trained to read or write in Braille at that time. Only two people from the Resource Centre could do that. I wanted to learn how to braille with all my heart. From that time, my interest in learning more about students with special education needs was kindled.*

*After teaching for two years, I applied to the Examinations Council of Swaziland and I was accepted and trained as one of the external examination markers at Junior Certificate level, which is Grade 10. That marking experience introduced me to the English Language curriculum. I learnt a lot in relation to the English Language syllabus content and to the external examination guidelines. I was also exposed to the reasonable accommodations<sup>12</sup> for Blind students which I took into consideration each time I taught my students. I will forever cherish that experience.*

*Five years later, there was a shift in Special Education whereby learners with special education needs were expected to move away from segregated settings to inclusive settings. Such a shift bothered me a lot such that I felt compelled to go back to the university to learn more about it. I had developed a passion for teaching learners with special education needs. So...in 1994, I enrolled at the University of Swaziland. I was immersed in English curriculum. In 1997, I obtained a Bachelor of Education Degree which I passed with first class, which is 2:1. Unfortunately, I could not go back to St. Joseph's High School since my teaching post was already filled in by another teacher. I had to look for another school. I was then posted to a mainstream school.*

*I then taught in various mainstream schools in Swaziland where I mastered English Language curriculum and I soon became an external examiner at Grade 12 level where I gained more experience as an examination setter and an external examination marker. Such an experience was*

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<sup>12</sup> Reasonable accommodation refers to the necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, in the assessment system, to ensure Persons with Disability the enjoyment on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (Swaziland National Disability Policy, 2013)

*very useful to me in terms of assessment accommodation for learners with special education needs<sup>13</sup> in the external examination.*

*In 1999, I was appointed an acting Deputy Principal in one of the mainstream schools after the school Deputy retired. Little did I know that I was already beginning the journey of leadership. However, my thirst for developing inclusive education curriculum had not been quenched. I could see that what was happening in the assessment system had not been well aligned with what was happening in the classroom.*

*In the year 2004, I decided to go to the University of the Witwatersrand to do curriculum studies in Inclusive Education at Master's level during which a lot of curriculum issues were dealt with. I completed my studies in 2005. It dawned on me that I could be more involved in the area of Inclusive Education as Swaziland was in the process of implementing it and a lot of curriculum issues needed to be unraveled. After completing my studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, I could not find a teaching post because I finished my degree early. I was expected to be at university for two years but I was able to finish my Master's Degree in one year. So, for the remaining year, I was attached at the National Curriculum Centre. After that year, I got my post back and I continued teaching in the mainstream school. I still had differentiation theory and a lesson plan for learners with various learning abilities in my mind. So, I always used it when planning a lesson for my students.*

### **5.1.1 Reflection**

This study has given me a sense of liberation, being able to reflect on my educational experiences as a researcher and a school principal as I dialogue with myself through my autoethnography. This study enabled me to narrate my educational experiences and reflect on them. Therefore, when I look back now, I understand that my mainstream experience and my exposure to these education structures enabled me to become knowledgeable about curriculum issues and assessment system in the country. It was the necessary route that my journey had to take. The knowledge which I

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<sup>13</sup> Special Education Needs refers to learners with Special Education Need (SEN) who do not progress according to their potential because of barriers in their education, their homes and environment (Swaziland National Disability Policy, 2013)

accumulated from both structures helped me a great deal when I became principal at the newly established School for the Deaf - High in 2008.

My marking experience in Grade 10 exposed me to the English Language curriculum. I learnt a lot in relation to the English language syllabus content and I was exposed to examination marking guidelines. I remembered that there was no mention of Deaf students at that time, both in the examination and in the curriculum material which was developed for teachers. Very little was known about teaching and the assessment of Deaf students and about the kind of teaching and assessment guidelines which teachers of the Deaf needed (Marschark, et al. 2002, p. 207). At that time, teachers of the Deaf had developed their own means of teaching and assessing Deaf students which was known as special curriculum and special examination. Teachers taught what they thought was good for their students and they also set and marked the examination themselves at teachers had no curriculum guidelines for their students.

It pains me to realize that even today, there is no curriculum which guides teachers of the Deaf on how to teach Deaf students in residential schools for the Deaf. The regular curriculum that has been mandated by Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 30) does not give clear guidelines on how Deaf students are accommodated and how it can be adapted to suit the educational needs of Deaf students. It only recognizes Swazi Sign Language as one of the compulsory subjects that need to be taught along SiSwati and English (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 31). The recognition of SSL as a subject, is still only at a policy level. It has not yet been implemented and there is no sign language curriculum and no teaching material. There are still no clear guidelines on how students should be taught and no curriculum and teaching material for sign language that have been developed.

## **5.2 Vignette 2: My experience as a principal and a teacher at School for the Deaf-High**

*In the year 2007, there were plenty of administrative posts in leadership roles which were advertised in the local newspapers one of which was School for the Deaf - High principal. I decided to apply for the position of the principal although I had no experience in teaching Deaf students. The eight years of experience of working at a special school, my experience with inclusive curriculum of learners with various learning abilities together with my experience in working with*

*external examiners and curriculum designers, made me realize that I could be an asset in the area of Deaf education as well. I had learned a lot about Deaf students in theory but I had never taught them. After a rigorous interview with the Teaching Service Commission, I received a letter of appointment in January 2008. I knew that there was a huge responsibility awaiting me but I was willing to take the plunge.*

*On the first day of school, I was accompanied by Ministry of Education and Training officials who introduced me to high school teachers as their principal and I was warmly welcomed by both teachers and students. Upon arrival at the School for the Deaf-Primary, I was informed that the Ministry of Education and Training had allocated two classrooms within the primary school to be used by students who had been enrolled for Grade 8, the very first class for School for the Deaf-High and an office for me which was also used as the art room. This was done to accommodate both teachers and students since the high school was still in construction at Matsetsa area at that time.*

*I had to teach English Language because of the shortage of teachers. On the second day of school, after morning assembly, I got my sign name from my students. I also discovered that my sign name was already circulating at school. When I stepped into class, their faces lit up and they were very excited to be taught by their principal. There were only 12 students in my class. I had both academic and vocational students in one class. I could not separate them because there was no other room to use.*

*My Swazi Sign Language skills were very limited and social only. I had to write what I wanted to say on the board most of the time. The students would often give me signs for the words I had written on the board and they were thrilled about being taught by their principal. I practiced my fingerspelling and the signs they had taught me every day. I learnt to concentrate more on their fingerspelling when introducing themselves but they were very fast for me to follow. I discovered that it was a new exciting challenge for me that I had to deal with first. The issue of communication skill became a priority to me. I discovered that Swazi Sign Language was actually the medium of instruction in class. There was no room for oralism. In order for me to teach the students effectively, I had to be good in Swazi Sign Language. I had to deal with it. I needed to take lessons and to learn as many signs as I could (I thought to myself).*

*Every day at home, I would sign the words and practice my finger spelling. When the students were fingerspelling to me, I had to request them to slow down so that I could see each letter clearly, much to their delight. I then asked them to write their names on the board since my sign language skills were not good at all. To my amazement, after class I was approached by three of the students who offered to teach me most of the signs and they told me that they were teaching other teachers as well. The following day, two Deaf adults who worked as assistant teachers, joined the students as my sign language tutors and we spent about two hours each day. The following week, I was settling in very well and my SSL skills were gradually improving. They even taught me some of the songs that were usually sung during morning assembly and their morning prayers.*

*In class, I wrote some of the English words on the board and they gave me signs for each word and they were enjoying it. The progress was very slow but I enjoyed it. So, I taught them English Language and they taught me SSL. I therefore learnt a lot from them as well. With time, I learnt how to make up for the lack of signs for some words. I used a lot of pictures and drawings and we were able to agree on signs to use for certain words and that strategy paved the way for smooth lesson progress.*

*I had eight teachers whom I was working with and they were teaching various subjects. Some of the subjects were new to these students and teachers needed signs for the concepts that they were teaching. So, the curriculum issues surfaced.*

### **5.2.1 Reflection**

My first encounter with Deaf students in class, made me realized that they were very eager to learn by the way in which they participated in the class activities. I then realized that the challenge was with me. Even though I was well equipped with the English Language syllabus and content knowledge, my sign language skills were limited, especially when it came to explaining some of the words that I came across in the text book. I could not fully access them in terms of communication.

As a school principal, my leadership skills were challenged at point because I was expected to address the students and communicate with them directly. Each time I engaged them in a discussion, I had to engage the school interpreter and they could not effectively present their views

directly to me. Such a situation indicated that they were not liberated in terms of communicating their own ideas directly to their principal, even though critical pedagogy calls for students to be involved in a dialogue so that their voices are heard in order for liberation to take place in the school setting. Freire poses that “educational processes are not neutral; they can either domesticate or liberate students” (Allen, 2011, p. 104). This means that the manner in which schools are being managed, the type of curriculum which is followed in schools and the way in which the subject content is being delivered in the classroom can advantaged or disadvantaged students. Therefore, I was compelled to take sign classes, not only to liberate the students, but also to liberate myself as a school principal so that I could fully access and engage in dialogue, not only with the students, but also with the staff members who were Deaf.

What also reflects back to me, is the need for additional training for school principals of schools for the Deaf in handling Deaf students with various educational needs in schools for the Deaf. I found myself teaching Deaf students who were academically inclined together with vocational students. I lacked training on that aspect as a school principal and teachers needed my input on how to accommodate and handle students with various additional learning disabilities in terms of curriculum. Musyoka, et al. (2015, p. 85) also explain that school administrators and teachers of the Deaf need to attend to additional educational needs of D/deaf students besides deafness and that is not a simply task. Therefore, as a principal, I felt that I needed training in handling students with additional disabilities in residential school for the Deaf.

### **5.3 Vignette 3: Curriculum Issues**

*I soon discovered that teachers needed a curriculum to guide them in their teaching on each and every subject which was being taught. I soon learnt that primary teachers had their own curriculum which was different from that of the mainstream schools. Students were sitting for special examination at Grade 7, which was set and marked by only one teacher for all the subjects who then submitted scores to the examination board. After that, the students would receive certificates, getting merits and first class passes.*

*I also discovered that there was no particular curriculum which was being followed in teaching these learners at primary level. Each teacher would teach what he or she thought was fit for the students and then test them on that. I then met with the primary administrators, together with the*

*teachers on the issues of curriculum. We gathered together as subject departments and attempted to modify the regular curriculum for various subjects in a bid to meet the educational needs of our Deaf students. We did a great job on that. We dove tailed the curriculum from primary to secondary level. We also received books and the syllabi from the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) and examination syllabi from Examinations Council of Swaziland (ECOS).*

*After the adaptation and the modification of the curriculum, I realized that we had a responsibility to work together with the Ministry of Education and Training, National Curriculum Centre and different subject panel members to come out with an adapted and modified curriculum for Deaf learners, not just us as teachers alone. A huge responsibility was dove tailing the primary curriculum to that of high school students through workshops. I immediately invited the subject panel members from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Both schools, primary and high school, presented the modified syllabi to the panel members. The meetings were fruitful since all parties agreed that both schools should use the national curriculum and subject panel members were involved in the process of adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of Deaf learners. When it came to assessing Deaf learners, reasonable accommodations such as added time, simplified English and the use of an interpreter were recommended.*

*Meanwhile, teachers were responsible for adapting what to teach and how to teach in SSL since some of the concepts to be taught had no signs. Strategies of bringing pictures to class and drawing images of the content being taught were developed before attempting to read the passage in English. Comprehension passages were cut and divided into small sections for the learners to understand. Speaking skills were replaced by signing skills. The lessons became very interesting since students could also sign some of the words which I would write on board as a vocabulary lesson. My signing skills grew and students began to develop a number of signs as we continued reading short stories and short passages together.*

*I also discovered that even though they had challenges in writing simple sentence structures in English and the progress was very slow, they enjoyed signing stories and that they learnt best when repeating what they had learnt the previous day. They were eager to learn new things and they wanted library books to read on their own. It was very encouraging to see how much they were willing to learn and to do some school work on their own.*

*In 2010, the infrastructure at Matsetsa was completed and we relocated to our new premises. At that time, our students had their own school uniform with school neck ties and it was different from that of the primary school. They actually felt that they were big brothers and big sisters. They also had access to computers and a library of their own. The following year, they complained that they were tired of repeating classes and they wanted to sit for the Junior Certificate public examination. There was a lot of assessment accommodations and adaptations that had to be done in order for them to sit for the Grade 10 examination.*

*I still admire the courage they had in achieving their educational goals. Although they had some challenges in writing skills, this did not deter them from wanting to write the public examination. As a principal, together with teachers, we had to invite relevant stakeholders and engage them in the process of examination preparations. In the year 2011, it was for the first time in the history of Swaziland to have Deaf children sit for Grade 10. When the results came out, they had all failed the examination. What a blow. There was criticism left right and centre from the public. The issue of results was also discussed at parliamentary level. The blame was shifted to teachers. People claimed that the teachers did not know how to teach Deaf learners. I was also blamed for using the national curriculum but I developed a thick skin.*

*Teachers on the other side pointed out that they had not covered all the content that needed to be covered before the students sat for their external examination. The teaching and learning process for the students was very slow. What I liked about that situation was that all the stakeholders wanted to be involved and to assist where they could so that these students could pass their examination. That was a very positive response for me.*

*It was advocated that teachers should be trained in Deaf education and the examination board was willing to implement reasonable accommodations for our students. Our students even had a sign language interpreter in the examination room and the listening comprehension passages were signed to the students. The students were also given extra time during the examination. I could see the way forward to Deaf education.*

*Although none of our students passed in 2011, they tried again in 2012. This time, three of them passed very well and the school had their first Grade 11 students in 2013. The following year, another student passed and she joined the Grade 11 students. From there, the school had four*

*senior Deaf students. We then developed the slogan “DEAF CAN” that year. Our students made it.*

*Since the curriculum was rigid and it was not easily accessible through SSL, instead of 2 years, it took the students three years to do Grade 11 and 12. They sat for their final examination in 2015. When the results came out, it was joy and jubilation. We discovered that they had managed to pass five subjects although they did not do well in English. I soon learnt that when teaching Deaf students, one has to be patient and mostly love them. The saying, ‘Rome was not built in one day,’ rang true. These students achieved certain goals at a very slow pace and the good thing was that, most of their educational goals were definitely achieved.*

*Our students had become Deaf education pioneers and I continued to engage the Ministry of Education and Training in adaptation and modification of the curriculum and assessment system. Today, the school has about four teachers who are involved in the marking of Deaf students’ examinations. This progress made me feel confident, motivated, challenged to do more, inspired to research about best ways of assisting our learners to become better achievers and it gave me a sense of being victorious over the language barrier and curriculum issues that affect our Deaf students.*

*Some of the teachers were sent to Zimbabwe to train on Deaf education and others were trained at Southern Africa Nazarene University in the country. Teachers are now confident and clear at what they are doing. Sign language classes are also conducted within the school to equip teachers with sign language skills, and to share and discuss new signs for new concepts as the curriculum develops.*

### **5.3.1 Reflection**

Failing of students in Grade 10 became a national issue. Regarding this incident, I reflect that even though teachers were blamed for the failure of the students by the public, such a situation made almost all the stakeholders respond positively on the curriculum issues that affected Deaf students. Even though the stakeholders responded after the failure of Deaf students, I still consider it positive because the examination board was involved and the members were willing to implement reasonable accommodations for our students. These included sign language interpreters in the

examination room, signing of English Language listening comprehension passages to students, exemption from oral assessment and allowing students extra time of 25% during the examination (Examinations Council of Swaziland, 2013/2014, p. 53). It was the time when the education system assessment policies began to recognize reasonable accommodation for Deaf students and I could see the way forward to the improvement of Deaf education although there is still a long way to go.

Another reflection is that four Deaf students were able to achieve their educational goals by passing their Grade 12 examination even though it was not that easy. Deaf students had to also commit themselves in working together with their teachers even though one more year was added in Grade 12 so that they could at least cover the content needed for them to sit for the external examination. They became resilient and interacted more with their teachers. Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014, p. 9) also state that even in Zimbabwe, Deaf students spend more years in school than their hearing counterparts because of their limited ability to read and write. However, Dalton, (2013, p. 127) argues that Deaf students fail because their educational needs are dominated and shaped by the mainstream population without seeking their participation and without giving Deaf population a 'voice' to communicate their educational needs. I also believe that if Deaf students can be given an opportunity to 'voice' out their educational needs, they can come up with good recommendations on what can be done to improve their education.

#### **5.4 Vignette 4: My experience at Gallaudet University in the year 2013-2014**


*In my quest to improve the curriculum for Deaf learners and to pave their way to tertiary level, it crossed my mind that I had to go internationally to see what they are doing and how they do it. In the year 2012, I approached the US Embassy in my country about the challenges we were facing in deaf education and I got a Humphrey scholarship which enabled me to go to Pennsylvania State University for administration courses and to Gallaudet University for Deaf in Washington DC for education curriculum studies.*

*I was requested to develop my own Individual Program Plan (IPP), that is, what I wanted to study and I was given a mentor to take me through my own educational goals and assist me in choosing the right subject codes when enrolling. At this juncture, I could see that we needed to improve our teaching and the school needed a Sign Language Training and Development Centre where we could develop visual teaching materials and continue to learn SSL on daily basis so that new*

concepts could have signs which are understood by both students and teachers. Below is my poster which I designed and discussed with my mentor as well as other professionals in the field of Deaf education (see Figure 8)

## SWAZI SIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

INCLUDING THE EXCLUDED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM



Zodwa Shongwe, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow, Pennsylvania State University, 2013-2014


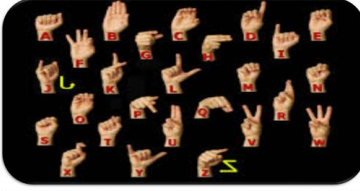
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>Swaziland has adopted Inclusive Education Policy as an education and training policy approach that includes and meets the needs of all learners regardless of their individual aptitude or difficulties.</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>BACKGROUND INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Deaf education in Swaziland is a new phenomenon. There has been only one primary school in the past 30 years and High School for the Deaf has just been established in 2008. Now, there is a need for these Deaf learners to be accommodated in the education system by developing teaching/learning materials and equipping teachers with Swazi Sign Language skills.</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</b></p> <p>Deaf learners are excluded in the education system because there is no Swazi Sign Language (SSL) curriculum for them and teachers are not equipped with SSL skills yet SSL is used as a medium of instruction in class, consequently, they are not able to access the curriculum effectively.</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>OBJECTIVES</b></p> <p>Establishing a Swazi Sign Language Training and Development Center that will develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swazi Sign Language courses for teachers</li> <li>• visual teaching and learning material for teachers and students</li> <li>• Swazi Sign Language curriculum for deaf students</li> <li>• Swazi Sign Language video dictionary</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>INCLUDING THE EXCLUDED</b></p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 5px 0;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>PROJECT BENEFICIARIES</b></p> <p>Deaf and hard of hearing students in the country will be the prime beneficiaries of this project. The secondary beneficiaries will be academic and support staff in deaf education institutions, tertiary institutions, families of the deaf children and the community at large.</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>PROJECT OUTCOME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified teachers of the Deaf who are fluent in SSL</li> <li>• Availability of visual teaching and learning material</li> <li>• Deaf Community members who are well educated</li> <li>• Family members who can communicate with their deaf children without experiencing any communication barriers</li> <li>• Community members who embrace Deaf Culture</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>RATIONALE</b></p> <p>Provision of Swazi Sign Language Training and Development Center will enable deaf learners to access the curriculum without experiencing communication barriers in the classroom.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>LIMITATIONS</b></p> <p>Unavailability of necessary resources and funds to purchase all the required material and to pay Swazi Sign Language instructors.</p> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>REFERENCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baker, S. (2010). <i>Visual Language and Visual Learning</i>. Washington DC: Gallaudet University.</li> <li>• Beech, M. (2010). <i>Accommodation: Assisting Students with Disability</i>. Florida State University: Department of education.</li> <li>• Peel, E. (2006). <i>Inclusive Practice in South Africa: A Deaf Education Perspective</i>. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press</li> </ul>
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Figure 8 The poster which I designed and presented at Penn State University and at Gallaudet University in 2013-2014

I attended various courses and conferences on Deaf culture, American Sign Language and Deaf curriculum studies where I presented my work and answered a lot of questions about Deaf education in my country. I also visited a lot of Schools for the Deaf, both primary and high schools within and outside Gallaudet campus in DC. I had to be continually open to learning as much as I could about Deaf education and curriculum studies. I was aware that I had a huge responsibility to assist both teachers and students to cross the bridge and reach the end so that we could pave the way for Deaf students in our country that would lead them to tertiary institutions and to higher level of education. I had to responsive to the unique needs and demands of Deaf education in our country. I also had to develop a critical consciousness needed to convince both teachers and

*students that we could believe in each other, especially believing in Deaf students that they would do their best in accomplishing their educational goals to the best of their abilities.*

*My mentor, Dr. Diana (name altered) at Gallaudet University welcomed me warmly and she was very patient with me. Although she was not Deaf, she signed most of the time and I was quick to pick some of the ASL. She was an English Language instructor. The following day, she invited me to attend all her lessons and I was shocked to observe that I was the one who needed an interpreter each time I went to attend lessons. Everyone was signing. It was hard to tell if there was anyone who was hearing within the campus. She organized interpreters for me each time I had to attend a conference since everybody was using ASL and I finally understood and experienced how Deaf people feel if there is no interpreter when they find themselves in the mist of hearing people. I spent most of the time in her office if I had no class to attend.*

*I was amazed to discover that Prof. Lawrence (name altered) whom I was communicating with through emails about my accommodation and my study goals was actually Deaf. His English was so good and he was highly knowledgeable. He quickly introduced me to most of the Deaf adults who hailed from South Africa and who were lecturing at the university. Most of them were working in the ASL department and they shared a lot of information with me.*

*I spent most of the time visiting schools for the Deaf within the Gallaudet campus. I designed the final educational program with the help of my mentor after visiting all the relevant departments. It was divided into categories which included primary intervention, secondary intervention and tertiary intervention.*

*Upon my return from Gallaudet university, I presented the curriculum structure first to the Ministry of Education and Training, Special Education Needs Department and to all School for the Deaf teachers, both primary and secondary school in a workshop. I feel proud to say that my teachers welcomed it with both hands. As it is now, we have a bridging class (between primary and secondary curriculum) which focus on language development both SSL and English (reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary etc). This bridging course allows students to be tested on the level of English, Math, Science and SSL. They are taught and tested on basic knowledge and graded on improvement before they move to Grade 8/ Form 1 level or to vocational stream. This bridging class is very important since it enables the students to improve on academic SSL and capacitate them in learning new concepts and vocabulary in Maths, Science and English. It minimizes the*

*gap that exists between primary curriculum and secondary curriculum. When returning from Gallaudet University, I had a lot of work to do.*

#### **5.4.1 Reflection**

My reflection is that at this stage, I was dealing with my leadership challenges which I was experiencing at school. My going to Gallaudet university made me realize that I had a lot which I was dealing with at that time, especially when it came to the curriculum issues of Deaf students. My main goal was to verify whether Deaf students in the USA were using their own specialized curriculum and specialized examination because there was a huge curriculum gap between primary and high school in my country.

My mentor made me develop my own Individual Program Plan (IPP) and my own goals of what I wanted to achieve before returning home. At that point, I realized that the school needed teachers who are conversant in sign language skills. After developing my IPP, I designed a poster (Figure 8) which had objectives based on the development of Swazi Sign Language Training and Development Centre which I intended to implement at school on my return home.

Getting an opportunity to visit Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C, made me marvel how the students were exposed to various disciplines, including forensic skills. I was eager to find out from the schools the strategies which they employed to enable their students to go to university level. I discovered that the students were exposed to a variety of subjects within the state curriculum. However, in Swaziland, students were prohibited from learning subjects like history, religious education, business studies, literature in English (to name a few) because teachers claimed that they were too wordy for Deaf students and they would not be able to understand the concepts embedded in those subjects. I learnt that Deaf students in our country were disadvantaged by being taught a limited range of subjects. Such a situation is an indication that teachers have low expectations from their students. Smith (2016) observed that teachers at residential schools for the Deaf expose Deaf students to an impoverish curriculum because they have a low expectation of their students. The author found that students often complained that the quality of work they received from their teachers was repetitive and unchallenging (Smith, 2016). On a different note,

Musengi (2014) pointed out that teaching Deaf students is a great task and a process which involves commitment, struggle and eventually a measure of victory for students and their teachers.

I took it upon myself to discuss with the teachers the need to expose Deaf students to a wide range of subjects so that their career choices would not be limited. Today, Deaf students are doing all the subjects and they are able to choose their career paths. Amazingly, they are coping and doing very well even though there is still a need to adapt the curriculum so that it meets their educational needs in the same way that it does for their hearing counterparts.

#### **5.5 Vignette 4: Benchmarking and projects initiated**

*Upon my return from the US, as an administrator, I took it upon myself to expose teachers and students to various ways of teaching Deaf students. I initiated internal workshops among us as teachers and sometimes I invited presenters on curriculum issues to come and take us aboard, especially for the newly employed teachers who have just joined Schools for the Deaf. I also made it a point that I involved teachers from School for the Deaf-Primary so that we were sure that we were following the same curriculum. Such opportunities gave us a chance to discuss some curriculum issues together and find a way forward.*

*In the year 2016, one of my students who had passed Grade 12 in 2015, became my personal project. After I had seen the zeal that he had in achieving his educational goals, I had high expectations on him. I wanted to expose him to the institutions of higher learning, both inside and outside the country. I began to look for a scholarship for him. I had seen before that the University of the Witwatersrand had various courses on Deaf education that could be of some great help to him. So, I approached the Manager of the New Day Foundation for Children who was eager to sponsor one Deaf child at tertiary level. I could see that it was the beginning of good things to come. The outcome was that one of the four students who had passed Grade 12 in 2015, was enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand Language School. He has completed his studies on sign language teaching. I am so thrilled about such an achievement. He is my hero and I also feel like a hero although there is a lot that still needs to be done. I feel like God has been always on my side. He protected him throughout his two years of study. I couldn't have done it all alone on this long windy and winding journey.*

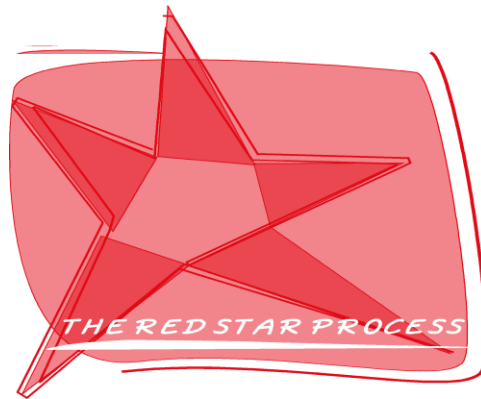
*In the year 2017, I applied to the Ministry of Education and Training for a government bus to take us as a school to Cape Town on a benchmarking exercise. I also took along two parents who were on the school board and two members of SNAD. I did this because I knew that when bringing a change in the school curriculum, major stakeholders should be involved so that we do it together with understanding. We were a great team. We spent seven days at the De la Bat School for the Deaf in Worcester. We were exposed to so many interesting programs and we socialized as sister schools. We all got the opportunity to observe classes and methods that were being used for teaching Deaf students. One of the methods that both teachers and students liked, was the Red Star method which was used to improve reading and writing skills for Deaf students. Everybody was talking about it on our way back when I asked them what they had learned. It was the teaching strategy that we wanted to implement in our school. The team also had an opportunity to visit Table Mountain and Robben Island. Our students still talk about that visit to Cape Town. We also had an opportunity to meet with the DeafNet Chief Executive Officer and her team. The discussions that we were involved in were fruitful and eye-opening experience for me.*

*Driven by the need to improve reading and writing skills for Deaf students, I began to prepare for bringing in and implementing the Red Star program in the country, I had to first consult with the Ministry of Education and Training. Both Schools for the Deaf (Primary and High) administrators and their teachers, the Senior Inspector under the Special Education Needs department and regional inspectors attended the meeting at School for the Deaf-High. I was tasked with the responsibility of communicating with the Chief Executive Officer for DeafNet Africa organization.*

*I invited them to come to the country to present the Red Star program and also to plan for the workshops that were to follow. During that meeting, early in the year 2018, all the stakeholders were present. They had an opportunity to ask questions about the Red Star program and about other issues of interest. The delegation from Cape Town spent two days in our school. After that meeting, the resolution was taken that 6 teachers would be sent to Cape Town to be trained in the Red Star program for 5 weeks. It was three teachers from primary school and three teachers from high school.*

*In August, 2018, 6 teachers were sent to Cape Town by the two schools. They were trained and equipped with rich methods of teaching reading and writing skills to Deaf students through the Red Star program. (see Figure 9).*

## Implementation of reading and writing through bilingualism



*Figure 9: The Red Star used for better understanding of a reading and written language via sign language. Source: adapted from [www.deafnet.org](http://www.deafnet.org)*

*The six teachers completed their course in five weeks and they are now back at school. These teachers were expected to train other teachers upon their return to their schools. At least two workshops have already been conducted whereby all teachers of the Deaf students were workshopped on the new program. So, the Red Star program is currently being implemented in both schools for the Deaf in the country. The following year in 2019, the DeafNet Africa team was expected to come and evaluate the progress and assist where necessary. The program will be often and constantly evaluated by the DeafNet team until it yields the desirable results.*

*Other projects which I initiated in the school include hairdressing, a tuck shop, a feedlot and rearing of dairy cows. The hairdressing project was implemented in order to equip and nurture the talents of Deaf students, (both vocational and academically inclined students). This was done so that they could be self-reliant even after school life. The main objective was to train Deaf students, both boys and girls so that they can be engaged in the business of hairdressing and become professionals. At 6 girls and a boy have been successfully trained and attached to salons whereby they are currently working as hairdressing professionals. This project is currently being supervised by one teacher in the school who is very good at hairdressing. I am still looking forward to bring back to school one of our students from the seven students (the boy) to be permanently employed by the school so that he can train other Deaf students.*

*The tuck shop within the school is currently being run by and managed by two Deaf students from the Vocational stream. They are supervised by a Business Studies teacher. The aim is to equip learners with business management skills so that they can be in a position to manage their own businesses even after school life. They keep financial records and generate their own money which enables them to keep their stock flourishing. They never run out of what to sell. They provide what the Deaf community needs within the school.*

*I also initiated a feedlot and a dairy cows projects within the school so to equip our students with livestock skill. So far, the school has two dairy cows and four cattle in the feedlot project. The cattle in the feedlot projects are sold every three months throughout the year. The dairy cows produce milk for the students. The milk is also sold to the community within the school and in that way, the school generates some funds. These projects are currently run by the Agriculture Department in the school. These projects also sustain the institution financially and boost the kitchen scheme program.*

*I feel so happy and proud about what the school has achieved. I feel happy for both teachers and students for successfully yielding good results academically and in vocational programs. It was not an easy journey at all. It needed perseverance, love and divine strength from above. I give thanks to God Almighty who carried us this far and took away the fear of the unknown.*

### **5.5.1 Reflection**

During the benchmarking exercise, I learnt that it is always advisable not to leave students out, but to involve them so that they understand how other Deaf students are learning outside Swaziland in order to improve their performance. I learnt that involving students enables them to be liberated and learn to think critically about issues that relate to their education (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77).

I also realized the importance of not only involving students and their teachers, but also parents and members of Swaziland National Association for the Deaf (SNAD) so that they can also understand the programs which the school wished to implement to enhance the performance of Deaf students in the country. I also learnt that involving parents cultivate positive interaction between teachers, parents and the school. The foundation for developing effective school practice

lies in the encouragement of parental involvement (Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, 1999, p. 1).

The vocational programs which were implemented in the school, were actually students' ideas which were processed through the Department of Agriculture. As a principal, I had to facilitate those programs financially only. I learnt that allowing teachers and students to submit proposals to the office and to have input in the development of the school programs, brought up brilliant ideas on how to run the program and on what to do with the products.

### **5.6 My Doctoral Journey**

Whilst I was at Gallaudet University, my mentor asked about my goals of pursuing a PhD program which I was very much interested in. Two years after returning from the USA, I felt like I still had not quenched my thirst for pursuing my PhD degree. I decided to apply to the University of the Witwatersrand towards the end of 2015. In fact, I went there in person in order to get all the necessary details and requirements. I was sent to the Centre for Deaf Studies whereby I introduced myself to the Professor who did not waste time and interviewed me on the spot.

The Professor wanted to know about my area of interest in Deaf education. I informed her that I was interested in 'Factors that Contribute to the Poor Performance of Deaf Students' and she wanted to know why. I elaborated that at school, I had only four students who had been able to sit for Grade 12 examination and passed and those were the first group of Deaf students to ever sit for Grade 12 examination in the country. I told her that, in fact, the students made history were a milestone in the education of Deaf students in the country.

The Professor wanted to know why not document the journey of those four students because not many Deaf students are able to sit for the Grade 12 examination and pass. I was stunned and my heart began to leap with joy. She further explained that I could document the students' achievement and change my topic to 'The Educational Experiences of Deaf students in Swaziland'. I was so excited because she also furnished me with a lot of information on how to go about the proposal. I did not waste time; the following year, I registered for my PhD program. Hence, the main objective of this study was to document the journey and educational experiences of Deaf learners and their teachers at School for the Deaf-High in Swaziland.

### **5.6.1 Reflection**

Actually, when I think of it now, I feel embarrassed that I wanted to write about my students' failure, instead of documenting their achievements. This topic has given me an opportunity to engage my students and their teachers in sharing their stories about their educational experiences. It has also afforded me the opportunity to listen to their stories as well as to their suggestions on how Deaf education can be improved in the country.

The topic has exposed me to critical pedagogy which has been used as the theoretical framework of this study. Critical pedagogy is premised on the notion of liberation. It encourages that in order for liberation to take place, students should be involved in dialogue so that their voices are heard. I learnt that schools are the most important institutions through which both teachers and students, including Deaf learners, can enrich themselves through dialogues and discussions. I also learnt that critical pedagogy in every school setting, is a moral activity and an opportunity to empower any learner or any teacher so that they can come into terms with their own experiences (McLarenn and Kincheloe, 2011, p. 243). I was therefore fortunate to get an opportunity to engage students and their teachers in dialogue so that they could openly share their educational experiences with me.

### **5.7 Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented my autoethnography. It has presented my educational background as a special education teacher, my experiences as a principal at School for the Deaf-High, curriculum issues, my experiences at Gallaudet University of the Deaf, the projects initiated thereafter and my journey to a PhD degree.

When I was engaged in writing my autoethnography, I must confess that I struggled emotionally because it reflected back on what I went through with teachers and these students when we first established the School for the Deaf-High. It aroused all the challenges which I went through and what I had personally achieved as an individual and what the whole school has accomplished, especially Deaf students and their teachers. It realized how resilient the students and their teachers were throughout the turmoil of our students' failures and their achievements. It also took me back to the school trips where we went for benchmarking and the great time we spent with other students

and teachers in other schools for the Deaf. I can still see the beaming faces of our students when they participated in the classroom activities in which the students we had visited were engaged.

The topic which was suggested by the Professor also gave me the opportunity to document the stories of Deaf students, their teachers and that of primary school administrators in order to see whether their journey resonates with my story or not. The next two chapters, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, present Deaf students' stories (Chapter 6) and those of teachers and school administrators' (Chapter 7).

## CHAPTER 6

### DATA PRESENTATION FROM STUDENTS' INTERVIEWS

#### 6.0 Introduction

The next stage of data analysis and presentation is Stage 3 whereby the analyzed data is actually presented and categorized according to the themes that emerged in each narrative. The first data to be presented is the background information of students.

Summary of students' background information is first presented below and it is followed by the discussion of students' personal information.

#### 6.1 Summary of students' background information

Table 7 below shows the students' profiles.

*Table 7: Students' profiles.*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>
<b>Age</b>	28 years	27 years	29 years	29 years
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female	Male	Male
<b>Date of Interview</b>	16 February	19 February	23 February	2 March
<b>Interview length</b>	26.12 minutes	23.41 minutes	22.43 minutes	21.14 minutes
<b>Hearing status</b>	Bilateral profound hearing loss	Profound hearing loss in the right ear and severe hearing loss in left ear	Moderate to severe hearing loss in the right ear and severe hearing loss in the left ear	Bilateral profound hearing loss
<b>Identity</b>	Deaf	Deaf	Deaf	Deaf
<b>Becoming Deaf</b>	Born Deaf	Born Deaf	Born hearing but got sick when he was 7 years old	Born hearing but got sick when he was 6 years old
<b>Use of Devices</b>	Never used hearing devices	Used hearing aids up to Grade 4 but not	Never used hearing aids used	Use hearing aids at Grade 1 level but not anymore

		anymore since they broke		as his personal choice
<b>Family</b>	Hearing parents and one maternal Deaf uncle	Hearing parents and family members	Hearing parents and family members	Hearing parents and family members
<b>Medium of communication</b>	SSL	SSL	SSL	SSL
<b>School attended</b>	School for the Deaf Primary	Mainstream then School for the Deaf- High	School for the Deaf Primary	Mainstream then School for the Deaf-Primary

**6.2 Discussion of students’ personal information**

Table 7 shows personal information for four Deaf students who were interviewed in this study. In total, there were twelve participants who were interviewed in this study, that is, four Deaf students, six teachers and two administrators. First to be discussed, were students’ personal information, followed by that of teachers and administrators’ in the next chapter.

All these students completed their Grade 12 at School for the Deaf-High in 2015. There were three males and one female. The eldest of the students was 29 years old and the youngest was 27 years old which means that the average age was 28 years. All the students were born from hearing parents and family members with the exception of one student S1 who has a Deaf uncle on the maternal side.

Only one student S1 was born profoundly Deaf in both ears whereas S2 was born with profound hearing loss on the right ear and with severe hearing loss in the left ear. Two of the students were born hearing and got sick at the age of six S4 and at the age of seven S3.

Two of the students started their primary education in mainstream schools S2 and S3 but only one student S2 stayed in the mainstream school until she passed Grade 7. She was using hearing aids at the mainstream school which broke when she was doing Grade 4 and her family could not afford to get her another set. She then relied on lip reading skill until she finished her Grade 7. However, S3 only started Grade 1 and then refused to continue attending mainstream school because of the communication barrier between himself, his peers and his teachers. He was then transferred to School for the Deaf-Primary to start his Grade 1 all over again the following year with the recommendation of his teacher. His refusal to continue his education in a mainstream school where

he did not benefit from any knowledge educationally and socially, gave him an opportunity to join the school of the Deaf to be with students and teachers whom he could communicate with freely, attaining a sense of belonging and also learning more about Deaf culture.

The remaining two students, S1 and S4 began their primary education in School for the Deaf-Primary. All the students became culturally Deaf after joining schools for the Deaf where Swazi Sign Language is used as a medium of instruction inside and outside school and they all accepted and identified themselves as Deaf.

Below is the data presentation arising from the narratives of Deaf students regarding their educational experiences and the themes and sub-themes that emanated from each under the following four broad thematic categories: Self and Identity; School and Communication; Family Involvement and Encouragement; Improving Deaf Education.

### **6.3 Data presentation from students' interviews**

#### **6.3.1 Introduction**

The first data to be presented is the data from the students' interviews. The data is presented under four broad theme categories in order to provide the context for the sub-themes that emerged from the data content.

The first thematic category is '**Self and Identity**' which explores the self and identity of individual students. It reconnoiters the childhood journey experiences of each participant in relation to the way in which they define themselves, including how and when they became Deaf. Data for this theme was collected through the following interview guide question with prompt:

Question 1: Tell me about yourself. (*Prompt: Who are you...how and when you became Deaf.*)

The second thematic category is '**School and Communication**' which aimed at exploring the experiences of students at school from the first day of school. The following interview guide question was used to collect data for this thematic category:

Question 2: Tell me about your first day at school and your school life from primary to high school. (Prompt: *How you felt when you met other Deaf students, how you communicated with teachers, subjects you enjoyed and your academic achievement*)

The third thematic category is ‘**Family Involvement and Encouragement**’ which explores the role played by the family members in the education of Deaf children. Data for this category was collected from the following interview guide question:

Question 3: What role did your parent/family play in your education? (*Prompt: providing you with your school needs, paying tuition fee, attending school meetings and so on.*)

The fourth and the last thematic category is ‘**Improving Deaf Education**’ which is meant to explore ways in which Deaf education can be improved in the country. The following question guide was used to collect data for this category:

Question 4.1: As far as you are concerned, what needs to be improved in the education of Deaf learners in Swaziland and where do you see yourself in the future?

Question 4.2 Now that you have completed your Grade 12, where do you see yourself in the future?

## **6.3.2 Participant S1**

### **6.3.2.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

The educational journey of participant S1 begins with his childhood experience and his personal identification as a boy who is Deaf and that he was born Deaf. He also reveals that his deafness is hereditary from his maternal family since he has an uncle who is culturally Deaf. Participant S1 declared his cultural status by pointing out that he is profoundly Deaf, meaning that he does not hear any sound and he relies on lip reading and on sign language. He also proclaimed that he had always been aware that he was considered special by his family members because of his deafness.

He recalled the most significant event in his life when his mother took him to hospital although he was not sick at the age of five. He narrates that the doctors conducted several tests on his ears. He

recalls that he was told to raise a hand when he heard a sound and he raised his hand throughout the whole session even if the doctor had moved away from him because he did not understand what they were talking about. He further narrated that, to his family, deafness was still considered as a sickness although there are some family members who are culturally Deaf on his mother's side. He summarized his identity by declaring that he was Deaf. He had this to say:

I am not sick, I am Deaf. I was born profoundly Deaf.

Another episode that he recalled was when his mother cried all the way from hospital because the doctors had confirmed that he was Deaf. Apparently, his mother was devastated by the news of his deafness. Consequently, he was sent to stay with his paternal grandmother. His mother did not accept him since he was Deaf. He puts it like this:

Now I understand that she cried because she had a child who was Deaf like his brother and there was nothing she could do.

He further narrated that when he was seven years old, he was sent by his grandmother to School for the Deaf-Primary to begin his educational journey and that is where S-1 met other Deaf students like him.

### **6.3.2.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

Participant S1 began his educational journey at School for the Deaf-Primary at Siteki. He narrated that on his first day of school, he cried a lot for his grandmother and he felt that he was being abandoned again by his grandmother just like his mother had abandoned him. He knew no one at school and there was none to communicate with. He proclaimed that he felt so lonely and unwanted until his house father, who was Deaf and responsible for looking after Deaf students who were boys at the boys' hostel, came and took him by his hand and led him to the hostel where other children were communicating and chatting happily. He narrated that at that time, he felt compelled to stop crying because everyone was looking at him and some of the students were younger than him. He pointed out that his house father welcomed him and introduced him to other students. One of the boys took participant S1 and showed him where they were sleeping and that was the

beginning of their friendship. He watched with awe as Deaf students were chatting, playing and communicating with each other through sign language. The following day, his friend told him that he had a sign name and participant S1 liked it and embraced it. This is how he summarized his first day at school:

I felt abandoned, lonely and unwanted by everyone. There was no one to talk to. I could see the students laughing and signing at each other but I felt lost. I did not know whether they were laughing at me or not. I just wanted to go back home.

Even though there was a communication barrier during the first few months at school, participant S1 declared that he felt a sense of belonging and love. The school environment was conducive for him unlike at home where he could not communicate effectively with his grandmother and other family members. He pointed out that he hooked up with two boys who became his close friends and they taught him Swazi Sign Language. By the end of first term, he knew a lot of signs. He felt at home and it dawned on him that it was where he belonged, to a Deaf community. Participant S1 also appreciated the love that he received from their Deaf house father who loved and cared for them even during the weekends. He organized games for them and they were never bored. He said:

I felt at home and I knew that it was where I belonged. Our house father loved us and he took good care of us.

When it comes to teaching and learning, the participant narrated that, at primary level, teachers were using oralism as a medium of instruction and he was very frustrated because he had not mastered lip-reading skills. Students were not allowed to sign in class. As a coping strategy, S1 relied on his friends and often copied what they were doing and what they had written. His first two years at primary level was full of struggles and hindrances when it came to learning in class. He explained that later on, teachers began to use SSL in class and Deaf adults were allowed to assist teachers in class. From then onwards, participant S1 began to enjoy his classes. The class he enjoyed the most was the sign language class which was established and was taught by a Deaf

adult. The burden of relying on lip reading was alleviated from his shoulders by the use of SSL in class. He began to enjoy school and gained confidence in himself. This is what he said:

I began to get so many ticks in my classwork. I was so happy. I gained confidence in myself. I was no longer copying from others instead I started to help others who were struggling. I often got position 1 and sometimes position 2. I passed with first class in Grade 7.

In his story, participant S1 also shared his painful experience of spending three years at home doing absolutely nothing after obtaining a first-class pass in Grade 7. He had nowhere to go. There was no secondary school for the Deaf in Swaziland. He watched with envy when his hearing cousins went to school every day. Other Deaf students from well off families went to join Schools for the Deaf in South Africa but for him, it was a different story. His future was bleak at that time. His grandmother could not afford to pay his tuition fee, so, he remained at home. He experienced the pain of exclusion as the only Deaf child at his paternal home. Some of the deaf adults informed him that the government was building a high school for the Deaf but he kept on waiting for the unknown until the year 2007 when he was informed that they could register for Grade 8 within their primary premises. He exclaimed that the opportunity that he was waiting for finally came. His dream of furthering his education was finally realized and students at the school were fully sponsored by the government in terms of accommodation and food. He also voiced out his concern that he did not understand what took so long for the Deaf students to have their own high school because the primary school had been there since 1976. He exclaimed that this was evidence of exclusion of Deaf community in the education system.

Participant S1 also reflected on the impact of being taught by teachers who did not know Swazi Sign Language and Deaf culture as being an impediment and a setback for Deaf education. He narrated that he was overwhelmed by the communication barrier at high school for the Deaf when he was taught by teachers who had never been exposed to Deaf culture. As students they had to teach their teachers sign language every day after school so that there would be progress in class. Sometimes teachers would write words or sentences on the board which they signed together in class. However, he was quick to point out that he felt good when he taught teachers sign language

and he realized that there were things that teachers did not know about Deaf students and could be taught by students. Participant S1 also revealed that spending time with their teachers after school teaching them sign language, enabled them to get engaged in dialogues and in discussions about school activities and other related social matters. He exclaimed that he had good interaction with teachers inside and outside the classroom environment.

In his story, participant S1 conveyed that he had a good memory of his high school teachers. He expressed his gratitude for the teachers' commitment in learning sign language and in teaching them. He exclaimed that his teachers' enthusiasm in teaching them also made him commit himself to his school work. He summed up his story like this:

I enjoyed teaching our teachers sign language every day after school. Our teachers were committed in teaching us and I felt compelled to commit myself to my school work.

Participant S1 further narrated an experience where he met face to face with failure and despair which wrecked his emotion as a Deaf student in his educational journey. He narrated that at that point, he felt like it was the end of the road for him. The incident took place in the year 2011 when they set for the Junior Certificate (Grade 10) national examination and to his surprise, they all failed in his class. He put it this way:

We read about our failure in the local newspapers on the day the results were issued out by the Ministry of Education and Training. There were so many negative comments about our poor performance as Deaf students to an extent that I felt it was the end of the road for us.

He further explained that some people were blaming them for being uneducable and they suggested that Deaf students should not attempt the general curriculum because they were not capable of learning and understanding the concepts that hearing students were learning. The public suggested that Deaf students should go for vocational training and forget about the academic route. Some people blamed teachers for not being able to teach Deaf student through Swazi Sign Language.

He narrated that his moment of failure and despair actually prevailed when some of the teachers told them as Deaf students that they should consider other options such as obtaining vocational skills and forget about following the academic route. S1 felt so discouraged and thought of looking for a job and forget about school.

The positive turning point for participant S1 in his educational journey, was when the school principal summoned teachers, students and parents on a special meeting to discuss the issue of results. He narrated that the meeting resolved a lot of issues through the involvement of the Ministry of Education and Training as well as the examination board in a bid to discuss reasonable accommodation for Deaf students in the examination. Student S1 narrated that he was given a second chance to repeat Grade 10 after one more year and he passed. He gained his confidence and self-esteem and thought about college education. He recalled with pride the words of encouragement which he received from his grandmother who insisted that he should stay at school as long as the school gives him the opportunity to do so. This is summarized in the following extract:

My grandmother was so proud of me. She urged me to go back to school. I never thought I would pass my Junior Certificate examination but I made it. I am happy that I got a second chance and I promised myself that I will never give up on my educational dreams. I gained my confidence and self-esteem. I began to think about college and about being one of the first qualified Deaf teachers of the Deaf in the country.

In his educational experience, participant S1 reflects on the challenges he faced when it comes to reading and writing English Language. He narrated that English Language was the most difficult subject for him. He felt that if only he could sign the composition and then get a scribe to write it for him, it could be much better for him. He quickly voiced out that writing his own work, benefitted him because he gained reading and writing skills which he needed when going to tertiary institutions. He also voiced that he felt comfortable with the visual comprehension passage which was signed to them instead of a listening passage:

It was hard for me to write a composition in English Language and to understand some of the comprehension passages because of the big English words which were used and I had no signs for those words. I wish I could sign the story and get a scribe to write for me. Anyway, writing my own work benefitted me because I have to read and write for myself at university level. However, I enjoyed the visual comprehension passage which was signed to us instead of a listening passage.

Participant S1 also reflects on the time he spent at secondary level, repeating classes in a bid to cover the syllabus so that they would be able to sit for Grade 12 examination. He voiced out that he spent two years covering the content for the Junior Certificate examination and another two years covering the Swaziland General Certificate Education syllabus which would enable him to write the Grade 12 national examination. He voiced out his feelings in the following extract:

We did Grade 10 for two years instead of one year and Grade 12 for three years instead of two. I felt like I would never finish school but I did. I am happy that I preserved all these years. It was not easy at all since I was getting old. But it paid off at the end.

He also reflects on his educational experiences that he would forever cherish in his life. He recalls going to one of the universities in South Africa to enroll. He narrates that it was the opportunity that he was waiting for but that seemed far-fetched for him. He felt like a hero and victorious now that he was being admitted at tertiary level:

I felt like a hero and victorious now that I have been accepted at university level. I have conquered many obstacles on my educational journey. I wish to do well in my studies and become the first Deaf teacher of Deaf students who is qualified to teach Swazi Sign Language.

He also recalled the time where he sat down at home, all by himself, and reflected back on his educational journey and what he had achieved so far. He remembered the time when he received

his Grade 12 certificate from the principal and he was called a ‘Deaf Education Pioneer.’ He also received various tokens of appreciation from the school and he felt proud of himself as one of the first students who sat for Grade 12 examination in the country and passed. He also narrated that he felt liberated and free to do most of the things by himself:

I was so proud of myself. We received various tokens of appreciation from the school. Our principal and teachers called us ‘Deaf Education Pioneers’ and I was beaming with joy inside of me. I feel liberated and free to do most of the things by myself.

He then concluded by voicing out that he felt the need to encourage other Deaf students who are still at school to persevere and not to give up on their educational goals and dreams.

### **6.3.2.3 Thematic Category 3: Family Involvement and Encouragement**

Participant S1 is very proud of his grandmother who supported him all the way. He pointed out that his grandmother always told him that he was a smart child and that she did not blame him for failing Grade 10 but she encouraged him to go back to school. He recalled that she gave him almost everything he needed for school. His grandmother also sent his cousins to attend school meetings and open days at school where teachers and parents met to discuss the learning progress of each student in the school. He further voiced out that even though he had received scholarship, it did not cover things like uniform, toiletries and school trips. He narrated that his grandmother would sell goats or cattle to provide for his school needs since his father had passed away when he was two years old. He recalled that he never lacked anything at school:

I am grateful to my grandmother who always supported me. She provided me with everything I needed for school. She sold goats and cattle to provide for my school needs. She is a pillar of strength to me. My grandmother is still grateful that my principal got a scholarship for me which covered all my needs at tertiary level. She cries tears of joy each time I come home during vacation.

He summed up this theme by narrating that he was happy that he listened to his grandmother when he encouraged him to stay at school if there was still an opportunity to do so.

#### **6.3.2.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

Participant S1 gave various suggestions on how Deaf education can be improved in the country. First of all, he voiced out the importance of teachers' fluency in sign language so that there is no communication barrier among teachers and students in class. He explained that some of the teachers are already very fluent in sign language but new teachers who join the school each year are not exposed to Deaf culture and they do not know sign language. For that reason, he recommended that sign language should be introduced in all the tertiary institutions in the country so that teachers would be able to understand Deaf students and their culture even before they come to teach Deaf students. He also suggested that Deaf adults should be employed in Schools for the Deaf to inculcate the use of sign language in schools for the Deaf. He further explained that if Deaf adults are employed as assistants of teachers of the Deaf in class, Deaf students can benefit a lot and Deaf education can improve in the country:

I suggest that sign language should be introduced in all tertiary institutions in the country so that new teachers who join schools for the Deaf can be exposed to Deaf culture and sign language even before they start teaching Deaf students. Deaf adults should be employed as teacher assistants in class to improve the use of sign language by both teachers and Deaf students in class. In this way, Deaf education can improve a great deal.

Another recommendation that was made by participant S1 pertains to the use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level. He enunciated that both schools should use the same curriculum. He narrated that at primary level, teachers use a special curriculum of their own design with a special examination and as students they learned very little of everything. He pointed out that, for that reason, they had to spend more years at high school level, trying to learn some of the things which they should have learnt at primary level. He further voiced out that, even though the curriculum which they used at high school level was intense and demanding, he believed that if

they had followed the mainstream curriculum from primary level, his reading and writing would have improved a great deal. He summarized his recommendation as follows:

I believe that both schools should follow the same curriculum. Although the curriculum we used at high school level was intense and demanding, I believe that if we started using it at primary level, it wasn't going to be so difficult...especially when it comes to the reading and writing aspects. We were not going to spend more years than expected at high school.

He therefore concluded by expressing his wish of becoming one of the employees at high school for the Deaf so that he can facilitate the teaching of sign language to both students and new teachers who have not been exposed to Deaf culture and sign language but are already posted to schools for the Deaf.

### **6.3.3 Participant S2**

#### **6.3.3.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

Participant S2 introduced herself as a girl who was born with hearing but developed hearing problems at a later stage. She narrated that no one anticipated that she had hearing problems both at home and at school. Her hearing challenges were discovered by her father who got worried by the fact that she kept on failing and repeating almost every class in a mainstream school. She recalled the time when her father took her to hospital for a hearing assessment. She was doing Grade 3 at that time. The diagnosis revealed that she had a profound hearing loss in her right ear and a moderate hearing loss in her left ear. She stated that the doctor cleaned her ears and then prescribed hearing aids for her to wear. She mentioned that the hearing aids helped her a lot, especially on her left ear. Her right ear did not respond to a hearing aid at all. But she could hear with her left ear and that made a huge difference in her life, especially in class.

Moreover, participant S2 reflected on her fathers' reaction towards her diagnosis by pointing out that her father was very shocked and could not understand why she was suffering from a hearing loss because there was no one with that condition in her family. He narrated that her father got distressed about her condition. She said:

My father got so worried about my hearing loss. He thought that I was bewitched and it was a sickness that was caused by demons. Immediately after the diagnosis, I was prayed for by various priests but it did not get any better.

She also remembered the time when she first learnt about deafness. She voiced that she had never heard about Deaf people in her life and had never come across a Deaf person until she joined School for the Deaf-High. Participant S2 revealed that when she met Deaf students for the first time, she wondered how she was going to communicate with them because she did not know sign language. She remembered that, the following day, early in the morning, she stormed into the principal's office to report that she was going back home. She explained that she had not slept at all throughout the whole night, crying and figuring out the best way of escaping from this whole situation:

I was still in tears when I told the principal that I wanted to go back home. She hugged me and told me that I was going to be fine. But I was hysterical. She then called in two Deaf girls who took me to class and they became my friends even after school. One of the girls had some speech and I found it easier to communicate with her.

Participant S2 also reflected on how she gained her new status of being 'Deaf' at School for the Deaf-High. She narrated that the first rule that the two Deaf girls taught her was never to talk back to teachers, but to sign all the time because she was 'Deaf'. She was also expected to sign to everyone who attempted to talk to her that since she was 'Deaf'. She recalled that the following day, she did exactly that, to teachers who tried to talk to her and they were shocked. She said:

When teachers came to class the following day, they tried to talk to me but I signed back by telling them that I was Deaf. I could see the shock in their faces and I and my friends were amused by the teachers' reactions.

She revealed that, this incident led to a major shift in her life and her identity. She stated that she felt love and a sense of belonging which she did not get from the hearing community. She then proclaimed with pride that she was Deaf:

So...I am Deaf and I am happy with that. I belong to the Deaf community and I did not know that. I don't belong to the hearing community. Even at home, they do not talk to me most of the time.

Participant S2 pointed out that she then began to commit herself to learning Swazi Sign Language because it was the medium of instruction in class and she wanted to communicate with her friends and other students freely in sign language.

### **6.3.3.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

Participant S2 reflected on her educational journey which began in a mainstream school where she did her primary education. She recalled her first day experience when she felt lost and confused in the midst of hearing teachers and students. She voiced that she could not follow what was going on around her and she kept on following other students during break and lunch time. She also revealed that she could not communicate effectively with other students because they laughed at her each time, she tried to have a conversation with them. Most of the time other students told her '*ukhuluma kabi*', meaning that she spoke so badly and in a funny way. Teachers also did not speak loud enough for her to hear what they were saying. For that reason, she was scared to talk or to ask questions in class. She stated:

I was scared to answer the questions in class even if I knew the answers because my classmates would often laugh at me and say I spoke badly and funny. I then decided to keep to myself because I did not want other students to know that sometimes I could not hear what they were saying. I was scared to ask them to talk loudly enough for me to hear because they would laugh at me.

She also recalled her painful experience when students played with her hearing aids. She mentioned that other students often threatened her by saying that they were going to break her hearing aids into pieces if she refused to allow them to put her hearing aids into their ears. She recalled that she was always crying because of such painful occasions.

In addition to that, she revealed that she kept on failing and she ended up repeating classes even though she had a hearing aid. She mentioned that teachers would talk whilst writing on the chalk board and sometimes they moved around in the classroom and her left ear would not pick up the information. She said that it was much better when she was seated in the front row with her left ear towards the teacher. In that way, she was able to lip read and to get most of the information in class. She pointed out that most of the time she lagged behind with her school and would often copy from other students sitting next to her. She pointed out that later on she managed to befriend two classmates who seemed to understand her plight of being excluded by other students and her performance improved. She revealed:

I kept on failing and repeating classes but deep down I knew that I was not stupid. I was intelligent in my own way. Sometimes my friends would write for me and I would pass my assignments. Even after school they would always help me with my homework. But I was very good in Math. I often spent most of the time by myself at home counting by using stones. I became accustomed to spending time on my own and that gave me plenty of opportunity to work on my Math.

In a nutshell, participant S2 reported that her school life was a difficult and a painful one at primary level in a mainstream school. She narrated that when she was doing Grade 5, her hearing aids broke. She recalled that it was during her mothers' funeral and she found them hidden under her pillow. She did not know who broke them and why. She stated that she cried a lot for her mother and for her hearing aids. So, it was a double tragedy for her. She had to completely rely on lip reading in class. Her Math teacher held remedial classes with her and he would always help her after school. Other teachers also assisted her by giving her notes to read at home.

Participant S2 reflected on another embarrassing and insensitive incident that took place in her life after she had lost her hearing aids. In her story, she narrated that the heartbreaking incident took place during the morning assembly when students and teachers gathered for the morning devotions. She stated that students were often punished by teachers for not closing their eyes during prayer sessions. On that particular day, she closed her eyes and she later found herself standing alone at the assembly square to the amusement of teachers and students. Her friend had forgotten to tap her on the shoulder. One of the teachers took her by the hand and told her not to mind those who were laughing at her. She explained:

I was left standing by myself at the assembly square to the amusement of students and teachers. I felt like sprinting back home. I could not look at other students because they kept on teasing me about it. From that day, I learned not to close my eyes completely but to cover my face with both hands and peep in between the fingers. Even today, I don't like the environment where I would be compelled to close my eyes.

In her story, participant S2 voiced that the positive turning point in her educational journey, was when she joined School for the Deaf-High after she had managed to pass her Grade 7 in the mainstream school. Although she felt lost and confused at first because of the use of sign language inside and outside class, she finally found a sense of belonging and love. Her new Deaf friends had assured her that she was going to enjoy learning sign language and she did. She pointed out that she found finger spelling very fascinating and unique after she had learned the SSL alphabets. She narrated that another positive circumstance was that she discovered that she was very good in athletics and in other sporting activities such as netball and Futsal<sup>14</sup>. Although she was shy at first, she pointed out that she managed to reveal her talent. For that reason, she gained popularity among students and teachers. She felt appreciated and there was a lot of interaction and communication between her and other students. She then committed herself to learning sign language and to spend most of the time doing her school work. She put it as follows:

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<sup>14</sup> Futsal is a sporting activity that is similar to soccer which is played by two teams with five players each side and one of the players is the goalkeeper

By the end of first term, I was popular at my new school because of my ability to play Netball and Futsal. We had a very strict coach who was very talented in Netball. First, I represented my school team very well in athletics and I began to shine in 100m race for girls in the region. It felt good to win against the mainstream schools. We received medals and trophies and I always take time to look at my medals. I felt like a hero during those days.

Participant S2 stressed out that she had to work hard and to commit herself to keeping up with her sign language skills. She continued to learn sign language and to adapt to her new environment. She voiced out that she was fascinated by the fact that they were small in number in their class. In that way, the teachers were able to attend to them individually unlike in mainstream school. She mentioned that whilst other students were teaching her sign language, she taught them Math after school. Later, she was able to follow group discussions in class and contributed her ideas too.

Learning sign language was not that easy. I used to confuse signs but I later enjoyed my sign language classes. I did well in almost all the subjects and I gained confidence in myself. My lip-reading skills helped me a lot when doing one on one sessions with my teachers. They would often sign and talk at the same time.

However, participant S2 narrated that she was very disappointed to learn that she was going to Grade 10 for two years and Grade 12 for three years. She pointed out that she was puzzled by that arrangement but teachers explained that there was a lot of work which she needed to cover before sitting for external examination at both levels. She voiced that it was not easy to accept such an arrangement but it paid off very well at the end. She stated:

When receiving my Grade 12 certificates from the principal, I was so excited. What contributed mostly to my achievement was the courage not to give up on myself. Getting more years in doing Grade 12 also helped us to cover what we needed to learn in preparation for the examination.

She reflected that when she looked back, the journey was a long and a winding one. She never thought she was going to complete Grade 12 in her life. She attributed her success to God whom she regards as her pillar of strength.

### **6.3.3.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

In her story, participant S2 highlighted that her family was very involved in her education, especially her father and her aunt. She narrated that they were very supportive of her. Her Aunt bought her school uniform and everything she needed for school since her father had passed on whilst she was still at primary school. She mentioned that although she had received the scholarship, it did not cover her uniform and other needs such as toiletries, but tuition only. She also pointed out that her family members were very encouraging and proud of her achievement.

My aunt took me to School for the Deaf so that I learn sign language because my hearing problem was getting worse. She bought me everything I needed for school. She also encouraged me to learn and she is very proud of my achievement.

She also narrated that her aunt encouraged her to apply to teacher training colleges since she (S2) wanted to be a teacher of the Deaf students at primary level. She mentioned that her family members encouraged her not to give up on her dreams. She added that she felt liberated and free to make her own decisions as an individual. The fact that she was working and earning her own money, made her responsible for herself. However, she pointed out that she still wanted to pursue her dream of being a teacher of Deaf students at primary level.

### **6.3.3.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

For participant S2, Deaf education can be improved in our country if sign language is introduced in all teacher training colleges. She pointed out that sign language is the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf in the country. For that reason, it is vital that teachers who are interested in

teaching Deaf students are trained before they are posted to these schools. This point is summarized as follows:

I think teachers have to be trained in sign language before they are sent to schools for the Deaf. In this way, teachers will be able to communicate with their students and teach them without encountering sign language problems in their lessons.

She felt that some of the teachers are very good in class but they depend on writing on the board which is a disadvantage to Deaf students. She mentioned that they should be confident in explaining information to students through sign language and students should be able to ask for clarification from their teachers. For that reason, it is important that teachers are trained before they come to schools for the Deaf. She added:

It is not that easy to learn sign language. It takes time and it requires commitment on the side of the teacher. Whilst teachers are learning sign language, students are struggling with their school work.

Participant S2 summed up her story by emphasizing the importance of acquiring sign language skills on the side of the teachers before they begin to work with Deaf students so that they can have confidence in teaching their Deaf students.

### **6.3.4 Participant S3**

#### **6.3.4.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

Participant S3 introduced himself as a Deaf boy who was born hearing and got sick at the age of seven when he was about to enroll for a Grade 1 class. He recalled that his ears were so painful that he was unable to sleep at night. He narrated that his grandmother decided to take him to the nearest hospital where the doctor discovered that his ears had an infection which had affected both his ear drums. Consequently, he was given medication and the pain subsided. He asserted that:

The pain was gone but I could not hear when my grandmother and my friends were talking to me. I got so frustrated. I had to read their lips and

sometimes they would try to shout when speaking to me, but still, it was not easy to follow everything that was being communicated to me. So...I became Deaf.

He recalled that he was taken back to the doctors and they confirmed that he was Deaf. Participant S3 confirmed that he was Deaf, suffering from moderate hearing loss in his right ear and severe hearing loss in his left ear. He remembered that his grandmother prayed for him most of the time. His grandmother believed that he had been bewitched. For that reason, he was taken to various traditional doctors for healing and to priests who prayed for him, believing that he was going to be healed. He also recalled that his grandmother would cry most of the time because she did not understand why he became Deaf since he was born hearing.

I could see my grandmother crying and praying ...checking my ears now and then...and trying to talk to me. I wished I could hear what she was saying. She took me to different priests to be prayed for and to different traditional healers to get healing herbs, but nothing worked.

He stated that it was hard for his grandmother to accept that he was Deaf. It took her a while to take me to School for the Deaf-Primary because she believed that I would get better and gain back my hearing.

#### **6.3.4.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

Participant S3 narrated that he did his primary education in a mainstream school for one year only and the teachers advised his grandmother to take him to School for the Deaf-Primary because he had hearing problems. He remembered that he could not hear what the teachers were saying. He had no friends to play with because he could not communicate with other students. Even if the students tried to talk to him, it was difficult to follow what they were saying and they would laugh at him. The students told each other that he was not able to talk and he was often teased for that. For that reason, he decided to spend most of the time playing outside by himself. He recalled that one day her grandmother was called to school by the teachers and from that day, he was allowed to stay at home for the rest of the year. The following year, he was taken to School for the Deaf-

Primary to do Grade 1 again. He remembered that he was assessed by teachers and they took him to the nearby hospital where he was fitted with hearing aids. He added that his right ear seemed to pick up the sound but his left ear remained the same.

My right ear seemed to pick up the sound but my left ear remained the same.

Participant S3 narrated that when he met other Deaf students for the first time, he was scared, thinking that they would also laugh at him. It took him time to open up to other children and to make friends. At first, he did not know that they too, had hearing problems until his house father told him that he had to learn sign language so that he would be able to communicate with other children who are the same like him. He had this to say:

I eventually learned sign language and I was happy to finally communicate with other children who were Deaf like me. I enjoyed spending time with my Deaf friends even during the school holidays.

He further mentioned that at School for the Deaf-Primary, he found love and a sense of belonging from other children. He was no longer mocked or laughed at, but he was taught sign language. Later, he met other Deaf adults who took them to church conferences of the Deaf and many other events that were related to deaf culture. He asserted that he learned a lot from Deaf adults, especially when he was doing higher grades from Grade 5 to Grade7. He commented that Deaf adults were like family members to him since no one was interested in learning sign language at home.

Participant S3 also narrated that teachers and house mothers were very good to them. He particularly mentioned that he enjoyed school because teachers gave students clothes and toys from the school donors. Some of the teachers used to give them toiletries, especially him because he was like an orphan. His grandmother could not afford to buy him clothes and toiletries since she was not working. He further pointed out that when he moved from primary school to high school, he felt so good. He had passed Grade 7 and he was formally wearing a school neck tie

which he liked. He also had new teachers and a new school principal. To him, going to School for the Deaf-High was the most remarkable moment and the turning point of his life. Most Deaf adults had not gone beyond primary level in their education, so he was one of the first Deaf students who went through high school level.

However, he mentioned that he struggled with reading and writing in English Language. He finally got the strategy of reading and signing to himself to ascertain that he understood what he was reading. He got confident when he got correct answers and when he passed the tests. He mentioned that it was easier when they were signing the answers in class. Participant S3 also pointed out that the most difficult subject for him was English Language because he could not write simple correct sentences. His writing skills were heavily influenced by his signing pattern. He added that he enjoyed Math, Science and Geography because the teachers of these subjects were fluent in sign language and it was easy for him to ask questions and for clarifications where he did not understand. He mostly enjoyed class discussions and debates because that is when they interacted the most with their teachers.

I enjoyed Math, Science and Geography because I was taught by teachers who grew up in a signing environment. The two teachers were hearing but they came from a Deaf family, so it was very easy to communicate with them. They had confidence in us.

He further mentioned that the teachers encouraged them to work hard and the teachers volunteered to assist Deaf students even after school hours. They were often encouraged to read a lot and to focus on what they could do best. Participant S3 highlighted that the negative turning point in his school journey was when he received the news that they had all failed in their class after writing their Grade 10 examination. He declared that he thought he was done with school. He added that negative comments about their failure were written in every local newspaper. The most agonizing comment that hit him hard was that Deaf students were not supposed to write Grade 10 examination but to do vocational skills because they were not capable to write the same examination as the hearing students. He stated that:

My heart sank. I told myself that anyway, I was too old for school so I must drop it. I just lost hope. I just wanted to leave school and stay at home and I was not sure if I was making the right decision until teachers informed us that the school principal wanted to meet us. She wanted us to try again. So, I repeated Grade 10 and I made it the following year.

After that, participant S3 felt that he had made the right choice after he had managed to pass Grade 10. He stressed that he learnt a lesson that perseverance and determination in life help a lot. He also pointed out that his self-esteem was high as he entered the Grade 11 class. He made a promise to himself that he was not going to fail again. He mentioned that teachers informed them that they were going to spend two years in Grade 12 before writing Grade 12 national examination because the syllabus was too long. There was a lot that they needed to cover. He pointed out that he was ready to put all his effort in his study until he finished Grade 12. He stated that he struggled with composition writing but he soldiered on. He did not want to give up at that stage. He also related that there were good and admirable moments in his educational journey even though he struggled with some of the subjects. He pointed out that it felt so good to be a senior student and to be a soccer star. He spelled out that his victory in Futsal games, left a positive mark in his life as a Deaf student. Another victory was when he was given an opportunity to enter for a school competition together with hearing students and he won and received an award of R1200.00 for himself. He asserted that:

I remember those moments as if it was yesterday. What I enjoyed the most, was defeating hearing students in Futsal and we became national champions. We won so many trophies and gold medals as a school team. Those were good and positive educational experiences for me. We outshined hearing students which was something that some people thought we could not do because we were Deaf. I still feel great about that.

He also mentioned that he felt good when hearing students of the losing team and their teachers passed negative remarks to his team during the games and since they were Deaf, they could not hear what they were saying. They just concentrated on the game and beat them.

Another exciting moment which participant S3 recalled, was when he received his Grade 12 certificate. He explained that he cried tears of joy because he never thought that he could obtain a Grade 12 certificate. He pointed out that he often thought that writing Grade 12 examination was for hearing students only.

Now that I have my Grade 12 examination certificate, I feel like I can do anything now. Nothing can stop me. I always think about the words of encouragement from my teachers although some of them did not believe that Deaf students could write the same examination that was written by mainstream students and still pass. That was the greatest achievement for me so far.

He further elaborated that now that he was working, he felt free and liberated to make wise decisions about his money. However, he highlighted that he wished he could celebrate these great achievements with his grandmother. but she had passed on. Participant S3 summed up his educational journey by pointing out that, each time he thought about what he went through in order to achieve his educational goals, he saw the hand of God had led him through since he was an orphan.

#### **6.3.4.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

Participant S3 submitted that he did not have close family since his grandmother had passed on. His mother deserted him upon discovering that he was Deaf. During school holidays, he would stay with his uncle who was responsible for his own children. Therefore, he was mostly assisted by teachers and the school in terms of tuition fees, uniforms and toiletries. He recalled that teachers were fully behind him when it came to school work. He asserted that:

When schools were closed, I used to do gardening for our neighbors and clean their yards for food and pocket money. When schools were opening, I would always wait for my teachers or for a school van to come and pick

me up. So, I was always happy at school. My encouragement came from teachers and my classmates.

He pointed out that there was one particular teacher who somehow adopted him. The teacher bought him toiletries and any other materials which he needed for school. He mentioned that his teacher was very supportive and the teacher was often referred to as his 'father' at school by both teachers and students. He narrated that:

One of the teachers was so supportive financially and in clothing. He would always give me pocket money and bus fare when schools were closing. He often told me that he was proud of me because I was doing very well at school.

He further pointed out that he was very grateful for what this particular teacher did for him. He stated that this particular teacher attended school meetings, especially open days where the school work of individual Deaf child was discussed. Participant S3 also narrated that since he was now working, he was happy that he had his own money. He was able to take care of himself.

#### **6.3.4.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

When asked about what needs to be improved in the education of Deaf learners in Swaziland, participant S3 responded by stating that Deaf education can improve if all teachers can join schools for the Deaf already knowing sign language. He added that when teachers are still learning how to sign, time flies and students struggle with information which they were not able to grasp. He also suggested that teachers should be supported in class by Deaf adults who can work as teacher assistants. In this way, students and teachers can be assisted each time there is a communication breakdown in class.

In addition to that, participant S3 suggested that both schools for the Deaf should follow the same curriculum and the same examination system. He stated that:

At primary, I wrote special examination which was set and marked by teachers and at secondary level, I wrote the kind of examination which is written by all the students in the country. I wish I had followed the mainstream curriculum from the onset. It improved my reading and writing skills.

He emphasized the importance of using the same curriculum in both schools for the Deaf so that Deaf learners can improve their reading and writing skills which seem to be a challenge for the Deaf students.

### **6.3.5 Participant S4**

#### **6.3.5.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

When participant S4 was asked about himself and how he became Deaf, he narrated that he was a Deaf boy who was born hearing to hearing parents. He added that, when he was six years old, he got sick. He had a severe headache such that he could not open his eyes because of the pain. He explained that he was admitted in hospital and when he was discharged, he had lost his hearing in both ears. He asserted that:

I was so frustrated because of the communication barrier at home. I was annoyed and I got angry so easily. I felt like no one understood what it was like for me not to hear what they were saying to me.

He further mentioned that he did not know that he was Deaf and what it meant to be Deaf until he joined School for the Deaf-Primary and met other Deaf students. He also explained he was not the only one who was frustrated by the hearing loss. His parents also did not accept it. He recalled that sometimes her mother consulted different people and at some point, she was given a concoction to pour in his ears by traditional healers but it did not work.

My mother tried everything for me so that I could hear again. I could see that she was not happy about me being Deaf. She also bought me hearing aids which did not help that much. The hearing aids made me to hear funny

irritating noises which I did not understand and I ended up not using them at all.

Participant S4 recalled that he became very good in lip reading. But sometimes he would pretend as if he did not understand what his mother or his sibling were saying if he did want to do what he was asked to do. To his amusement, he explained that his mother would always defend him on the basis that he was sick.

### **6.3.5.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

Participant S4 recalled that on his first day at School for the Deaf-Primary, he cried a lot and ran away from school in a bid to catch up with his mother who had left him in the principal's office. He remembered that he hated his mother that day for abandoning him because he knew no one at school. He felt lost and lonely. He also recalled that when he met Deaf students for the first time, it was worse because they were not talking to him but signing. He asserted that:

It was very difficult for me to understand what they were saying until I understood that they were Deaf like me. They surrounded me and wiped my tears. At that time, I stopped crying and began to follow them.

In his story, participant S4 further elaborated that he was frustrated because he could not communicate with other students at first although he ended up enjoying sign language. After he had learned sign language, he pointed out that he enjoyed spending time with his friends at school and during the school vacations. What he enjoyed most, was when he discovered that some of the teachers did not know sign language. For that reason, sign language became their secret way of talking among themselves as students without teachers understanding what they were saying. He summarized his first day of school by pointing out that he found love and a sense of belonging at School for the Deaf. He felt at home but he still missed his mother. Participant S4 narrated that after he had passed Grade 7, he moved to high school. He explained that life was not as easy as it was at primary level. He found that the subjects which they were doing at high school were many as compared to those that he did at primary level. He further mentioned that he was challenged by his reading and writing skills which were short. He said that:

The books were so thick and very hard to read sometimes. They were also full of words which I could not sign. The school became a nightmare to me. I repeated classes because I couldn't write sensible answers. It was difficult to cope with high school standard.

He further narrated that although it was difficult for him to read and write, teachers were patient with him. At some point, he felt like teachers were just failing him because at primary he had never failed a single class. He explained that what frustrated him the most was that he wanted to move to the next class but teachers kept on saying he was not ready. Eventually, he sat for the Grade 10 national examination. He narrated that:

We finally sat for the Grade 10 examination. I was eagerly waiting for the results like all other students. The next thing, I saw the headlines of the local newspaper, reporting that all the Deaf students had failed. I couldn't eat the whole day. I wanted to know what had happened.

At this point, participant S4 exclaimed that he had never been so devastated in his life. He added that his future was bleak and he didn't know what to do. Deep down in his heart, he did not want to go and mend shoes like other Deaf adults. He narrated that he was relieved when teachers informed him that he could sit for the same examination the following year. Teachers also explained that they too as students, were invited to attend the meeting that was to be held at school concerning the results. He explained that it was resolved that the matter was further going to be discussed with the examination board and the school was going to apply for reasonable accommodation for Deaf students. He pointed out that:

I worked hard the following year. I felt good when the results came out and I was one of the three students who had passed. I was so happy. My confidence and my self-esteem came back. I was now one of the senior students in the school.

Participant S4 explained that he did not regret repeating classes after he had passed his Grade 10 examination. He mentioned that he saw the need of committing himself to school work. He felt that although he struggled with English Language, he wanted to do his best now that he was doing Grade 11. He further narrated that teachers informed them that they were going to add one more year in Grade 12 so that they were able to finish the syllabus and get more practice for the examination. He explained that, at that point, he had confidence in his teachers and he believed that they meant well. He asserted that:

We then moved to Grade 11. We did Grade 11 for two years before moving to Grade 12. I knew I had to roll up my sleeves. I did not want to fail again. I worked closely with teachers and other students. It was not easy at all, but I kept on studying and my English improved.

In his story, participant S4 narrated he thanked God for his teachers who were so patient with them. He pointed out that he finally passed his Grade 12 and it felt so good to hold his certificate. He added that his father was proud of him and supportive all the way throughout his school journey. He narrated that his educational experience taught him that nothing comes easy in life. He pointed out that he had to work hard to achieve his educational goals. Although participant S4 struggled with school subjects, he recalled his happy moments at school when he felt like a hero. He narrated that he was the captain of the Futsal school team who beat all the schools at national level. He explained that it felt good to watch his team lifting up the trophy and putting gold medals around their necks. He said:

I still feel that joy which I experienced when my team lifted up that trophy and receiving the gold medals. I have five gold medals of my own. I must say that I enjoyed my high school life. That success and victory will remain in my heart forever.

He added that, each time schools played against his team, he smelled fear from the other teams' players even before the games started. He knew that other teams were scared of his team and he feel like a hero each time he entered the arena. After finishing his Grade 12 examination,

participant S4 recalled that during the farewell function, he received a T-shirt from the principal on which was written “Deaf Education Pioneer’ and that made him feel like a hero. He added that his self-esteem was very high and that he did not look at himself as a failure anymore, but a hero. He also added that he was proud of himself because he had conquered his fears and he felt like he could do anything by himself now.

### **6.3.5.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

When narrating about the role his family played in his education, participant S4 pointed out that his father had always been there for him even after the demise of his mother. His father continued to support him with everything he needed. He paid school fees, bought him clothes and sent him pocket money. As the youngest in the family, he stated that his older brother also supported him and encouraged him to continue with school.

My brother attended the school meetings since my father was working in Johannesburg, far away from home. I never struggled financially and otherwise whilst I was still at school. My family was fully supportive.

After finishing school, participant S4 narrated that his father encouraged him to look for a job so that he could earn his own money. He also pointed out that his father advised him to apply to teacher training colleges and to save some money for himself since he was already working. He added that he was already working and he felt like he could get anything he wanted as long as he worked hard for it.

### **6.3.5.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

On the issue of improving Deaf education in the country, participant S4 narrated that the special curriculum that they used at primary level for Deaf students was very shallow and had very little information. He suggested that schools for the Deaf should follow the same curriculum that is used in mainstream schools so that Deaf students would be able to learn how to read and write like other hearing students. He stated that:

Deaf students have to be taught everything that is being taught to other hearing students. We also want to learn a lot of things. We want to learn how to read and write properly like hearing students. We should all receive the same education.

He suggested that teachers should be trained in sign language so that they can have confidence when teaching Deaf students. He added that signs for many words that are found in the text books should be developed, especially at high school level. He explained that if many words have no signs, it becomes difficult for Deaf students to read the text books on their own.

#### **6.4 Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented background information on the students. The data from the four Deaf students has been presented under the four thematic categories which are 'self and identity', 'school and communication' 'family involvement and encouragement' and 'improving Deaf education'. The next chapter presents data from teachers and school administrators.

## CHAPTER 7

### DATA PRESENTATION FROM TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' INTERVIEWS

#### 7.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of teachers' and administrators' background information under the four broad thematic categories which are Self and Identity, School and Communication, Family Involvement and Encouragement and Improving Deaf Education. This chapter begins by presenting the teachers' profiles, followed by discussion of teachers' personal information and then teachers' data presentation on their educational experiences. After the presentation of teachers' data, administrators' profiles are presented, followed by the discussion of administrators' personal information and then data presentation on narratives of school administrators on their educational experiences.

#### 7.1 Teachers' profile

*Table 8: The teachers' profile*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>T2</b>	<b>T3</b>	<b>T4</b>	<b>T5</b>	<b>T6</b>
<b>Age</b>	37 years	40 years	37 years	28 years	40 years	25years
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
<b>Date of interview</b>	12 March	16 March	22 March	30 March	5 April	9 April
<b>Interview length</b>	25.07min	24.01min	22.43min	28.43min	26.32min	26.40min
<b>Qualifications</b>	Honours in Deaf Education	Honours in Inclusive Education	Honours in Special Education	B. ED in Special and Inclusive Education	B. ED in Education	Honours in Education
<b>Teaching experience</b>	13 years School for the Deaf	12 years mainstream 11 years	11 years School for the Deaf	5 years School for the Deaf	13 years mainstream 5 years School	5 years School for the Deaf

		School for the Deaf			for the Deaf	
<b>Hearing status</b>	Hearing	Hearing	Hearing	Hearing CODA	Hearing	Hearing
<b>Family Status</b>	All hearing. No history of Deafness	All hearing. No history of Deafness	All hearing. No history of Deafness	Deaf mother and two Deaf uncles	All hearing. No history of Deafness	All hearing. No history of Deafness
<b>SSL Level</b>	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 1	Level 1

**7.2 Discussion of teachers’ personal information**

Figure 13 shows the profiles of the six teachers who were interviewed in this study. All the teachers are hearing and they have no history of deafness in their families with the exception of T4 who is a child of a culturally Deaf adult (CODA). He has two uncles who are Deaf. One of the uncles is Hard of Hearing and he uses SSL and the other one is profoundly Deaf. His late mother was also profoundly Deaf but she used behind the ear (BT) hearing aids. He was exposed to SSL in early childhood since he was born within the Deaf community members. He grew up signing and interpreting in his church for Deaf people. He is very comfortable with signing rather than speaking. He is a qualified national interpreter and also a qualified school interpreter. All the teachers taught the Deaf students who completed their Grade 12 at School for the Deaf-High in 2015. The oldest teacher was 40 years old and the youngest was 25 years old. The average age was 35 years.

All the teachers came straight from their institutions of higher learning after they had finished their training and joined School for the Deaf-High with the exception of two teachers who had the experience of teaching in mainstream schools before they joined School for the Deaf-High. Participant T2 had 12 years teaching experience and T5 had 13 years of mainstream teaching experience. It is worth mentioning that since Deaf students were also following the mainstream curriculum, their experience played a vital role in understanding the concepts that needed to be taught in the subjects they were teaching as well as the reasonable accommodations that had to be effected in the examination of Deaf learners.

All the teachers were posted to the school by the Ministry of Education and Training with the exception of T4 who came to school looking for the job because he was interested in teaching Deaf students and had a strong cultural connection with them. All teachers are now fluent in Swazi Sign language with the exception of teacher T5 and T6 who are still struggling with some of the signs.

### **7.3 Data presentation from teachers' narratives on their educational experiences**

The four thematic categories that were used to collect data from the students' interviews were used to collect data from teachers and from the school administrators as well. However, the question guides aimed at collecting educational experiences relevant to teachers and school administrators were slightly different from those of students. They were as follows:

The thematic category 1: **'Self and Identity'** explored the educational background and identity of individual teachers and school administrators. Data for this theme was collected from the teachers in a bid to find out about their qualifications and about their status of hearing, whether they were Deaf, hearing or CODAS through the following question:

Question 1: Tell me about yourself. (*Prompt: Who you are, your qualifications, how long you have been teaching Deaf students etc.*)

Thematic category 2: **'School and Communication'** explored the experiences of teachers and school administrators at School for the Deaf-High from the first day of school using the following interview question from the Interview Guide:

Question 2: Tell me about your first day at School for the Deaf-High, your experience and how long you have been teaching/administrating there (*Prompt: How you felt when you met Deaf students, how you communicated with them, their academic achievement etc.*)

Thematic category 3: **'Family Involvement and Encouragement'** explored the role played by the family members in the education of their Deaf children. Data for this category was collected from the following question guide:

Question 3: What role did the parents/families of 2015 Grade 12 students play in their academic achievement? (*Prompt: providing their school needs, paying tuition fees, attending school meetings and so on.*)

Thematic category 4: **‘Improving Deaf Education’** was meant to explore ways in which Deaf education can be improved in the country. The following interview questions from the Interview Guide were used to collect data for this category:

Question 4.1: As a teacher/administrator, what do you think needs to be improved in the education of Deaf learners in Swaziland?

Question 4.2: Now that they have completed their Grade 12, where do you see them in the future?

After the presentation of the data from teachers and school administrators, data from both teachers and students is analyzed and discussed under the sub-themes that emerged in both sets of interviews. The sub-themes were then used to facilitate data analysis and to obtain the findings of the study which are discussed in Chapter 8.

### **7.3.1 Participant T1**

#### **7.3.1.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

Participant T1 defined himself as a hearing teacher of the Deaf students at high school level. He narrated that he obtained an Honour’s Degree in Deaf Education from the University of the Witwatersrand and he started teaching Deaf children in 2005 at primary level as a temporary teacher after completing his B.A Degree in Humanities, majoring in English and History. He added that he came straight from the University and was posted at School for the Deaf-Primary and he did not even know where it was. He pointed out that:

I was so happy when I received a posting letter since I was desperate for a job. I did not bother myself with a lot of questions...I just wanted to find the school and start teaching. I had never heard about the School for the Deaf before...so...there was nothing to worry about.

He further stated that when he finally arrived at the school, he discovered that it was not as easy and exciting as he thought it would be. There was a lot of adaptation that he needed to do in order for him to be in the position of teaching and communicating with his Deaf students. He had to adapt to Deaf culture which he did not know but he was willing to learn.

### **7.3.1.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

In his story, participant T1 narrated that his first day of school was a difficult one. His difficulties were based on communication and adapting to Deaf culture. First of all, he pointed out that when he first arrived at the School for the Deaf, he was given a special class which comprised Deaf learners with additional disabilities to teach. He further highlighted that there was neither orientation nor curriculum to use when teaching these Deaf students. Moreover, he did not know sign language. He said:

When I finally got to the school, I was given a special class to teach. The special class comprised Deaf learners with additional disabilities. I was a temporary teacher at that time. I went to class by myself. There was no orientation ...no curriculum to use...whatsoever. I did not know any sign language and it was quite a challenge for me to communicate with them...actually.

He expressed that he experienced communication barriers and frustration in class although the students were excited when he arrived to teach them. He did not know whether what he was doing was right or wrong. He narrated that after he had introduced himself by writing his name on the board, the students responded by giving him their sign names which he did understand. He added that, that was his first exposure to Deaf culture, learning about sign names and fingerspelling.

After introducing myself to the students by writing my name on the chalk board, students responded by telling me their names and their sign names. They tried to fingerspell their names but I could not get it. They eventually wrote their names on the board and then signed their individual sign names to me. I was then exposed to Deaf culture. I learnt about sign names and fingerspelling.

Participant T1 narrated that one of the students in his class was Hard of Hearing and she had some language. She became his interpreter that day and she helped a lot by teaching him sign language. As time went on, he loved teaching those students and he fell in love with Deaf culture. He expressed the joy of having conversations with students after school and teaching him sign language in the process.

That was our everyday game even after school...and I enjoyed it. So...I was their teacher and I belonged to them. I soon got my sign name...after the very first day in my class. That was so interesting and I loved it.

He expressed that his coping strategy was mainly spending most of his time with his students and that led him to gain confidence in his sign language skills. He added that he interacted a lot with other Deaf students as well and they would discuss soccer, school and other things in general. He added that whilst they were communicating, his sign language skills improved a great deal. He gained confidence when it came to sign language and in everything he did in class after that.

Participant T1 remembered challenges which he faced when he was transferred to School for the Deaf-High when it started operating in 2007. He narrated that since it was the first group of students at the high school level, inspectors were also not sure about how they would go about modifying the syllabus for these students. For that reason, there were a lot of obstacles he came across when preparing Deaf students for writing their Grade 10 external examination in English Language. He pointed out that the major obstacle was the mainstream syllabus which the students were expected to follow. He pointed out that the syllabus needed a lot of modification for the students so that it could be accessible and there was an additional problem of not having signs for most of the concepts which were being taught at high school level. He pointed out that the teachers waited for the examination board to prepare a special examination for the students but they refused so there was no turning back. He pointed out that the examination board explained that the content would be weakened if they prepared a special examination for Deaf students and that these students were going to sit for the same examination with their hearing counterparts and get the same certificates at the end. He asserted that:

As a school, we attempted to modify the mainstream syllabus on our own, trying to make it accessible to our Deaf students and we presented it to the Ministry of Education and Training to different subject panel members

who were also not sure what to do. They reported back that the examination board members were clear that they would only issue certificates for Deaf students when they write the same curriculum as other students, and a special examination was abolished. We were not sure of what was going to happen.

At some point, failure and despair engulfed participant T1 when the Grade 10 results came out and all his Deaf students had failed. He narrated that he felt like a failure and he was so devastated. Deaf students had obtained 100% fail and teachers were blamed for the students' failure. The public claimed that teachers did not know sign language and they had no experience in teaching Deaf students.

Participant T1, however, narrated that there was a positive turning point in Deaf education after all the students had failed. Although he had previously felt like a failure and was devastated by the results and by the comments from the public, the Ministry of Education and Training arranged several meetings with relevant stake holders in a bid to find a solution to the challenges that teachers and Deaf students were facing. He added that the students were encouraged to register again whilst the curriculum and examination issues were being sort out. He further pointed out that from that episode, dialogues, interactions and commitments were realized amongst the examination board, the Ministry of Education and Training and teachers.

So...as a school, we had to commit ourselves in doing a lot of presentations to various subject panel members of the Ministry of Education and Training about deafness, curriculum adaptations and reasonable accommodations that needed to be applied in the external examination papers such as time since they were not familiar with Deaf education.

He further commented on the issue of special examinations used at primary level had caused internal exclusion of Deaf students within the education system since those examinations were set and marked by teachers themselves and there were no clear guidelines on the curriculum. He mentioned that when Deaf students were preparing to sit for their Grade 10 examination, they were compelled by the external examination board to follow the mainstream curriculum in order for them to receive the same certificates as their hearing peers.

Previously, teachers at primary level used to set what they had taught and also mark for their students and that was called ‘special examination’. The special examination was thrown out of the window by the examination board. They did not want teachers to set and mark the examination on their own and expect their students to get the same certificate as others. It was abolished. The Schools for the Deaf had to follow the same syllabus as mainstream students and sit for the same examination.

He further narrated that the following year there was jubilation and his self-esteem was lifted up when three of the Deaf students passed after the examination board had effected some of the reasonable accommodations for the examination. He pointed out that some of the reasonable accommodations included extra time for students, provision of signed comprehension passages instead of ‘listening passages’ and a sign language interpreter. He added that students’ and teachers’ perseverance was worth it since it paid off at the end.

Participant T1 also stated that in his experience of teaching Deaf students, he learned that more time was needed for these Deaf students to cover the syllabus as opposed to hearing students. He remembered that they had to spend two years in Grade 10 and also one more year was added before the students sat for their Grade 12 external examination. He expressed that such arrangements, yielded good results for his students. They passed their Grade 12 external examination and one of his students was admitted to one of the universities in South Africa after that. He narrated that he was now looking forward to see them coming back to the school to teach sign language classes after training as Deaf teachers of the Deaf. He added that he was also looking forward to seeing many Deaf university graduates from School for the Deaf-High.

Concerning the achievement of these students, Participant T1 felt that the students had achieved beyond his expectations. He narrated that his students had great achievements, not only educationally, but also in sporting activities. He expressed that he always looked at the trophies which were in the principal’s office and remembered the good days when the students beat mainstream schools and scooped position one in Futsal game. He pointed out that as their sports teacher, he still felt the victory and they would always be his heroes. He said that:

They made us all proud. Because of the effort which they put into everything they were doing, they made me believe in myself as a teacher.

And I don't see myself teaching in a mainstream school. I am immersed in Deaf culture and I don't want to lose that.

He also pointed out it was amazing to watch his Deaf students grow intellectually and became knowledgeable about so many things, from primary school up to this point. He narrated that their way of thinking had completely changed and they changed the perceptions of many people about Deaf students. He added that his students now know what they want for themselves and they had the courage to write job applications and college applications by themselves. That means that they were quite aware of their potential.

### **7.3.1.3 Thematic Category 3: Family encouragement and parental involvement**

When asked about the role played by family members in the education of these Deaf learners, participant T1 said that there was one supportive and grateful parent who was always proud of his son. He pointed out that this parent was there for his son even after his mother had passed on. He provided him with school uniform, toiletries, pocket money and other basic stuff. He added that the father of this one boy would always send his elder brother to attend school meetings, open days and sporting activities without fail.

However, he pointed out that some of the parents of Deaf students are not supportive of their children. He recalled that at some point he had a gruesome experience whereby he ended up being responsible for one of the students after his grandmother had died. His mother had abandoned him and got married to a different man. She then neglected this child completely and left him with his grandmother who tried her best to keep the child at school. He further narrated that after the passing away of his grandmother, the students could not come to school and the school principal would go to his homestead to negotiate with his uncle so that he could come back to school.

The student was so needy but very brilliant in class. So...I used to give him clothing and pocket money but ... (shrugging his shoulders) ... I ended up being fully responsible for buying him clothing, school uniform and toiletries because he was brilliant and I wanted him to continue with school. I did that from when he was in Grade 8 until he completed school. I did not want him to drop out of school.

He also expressed his gratitude with the fact that the boy was now independent. He pointed out that the student was now working and he was an independent young man and as his teacher, he was happy about that especially because he did not give up on him. The student was now free to live his own life and he still chatted with him.

#### **7.3.1.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

In terms of what needs to be done in order to improve Deaf education, participant T1 lamented that there is a lot that still needs to be done in terms of curriculum, assessment and so on. He expressed the need to work closely with subject panel members and the National Curriculum Centre so that these sectors familiarize themselves with Deaf culture and the use of sign language as the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf. He added that Deaf students in Swaziland do not have any indigenous language which they are taught at school. Even Swazi Sign Language is not taught as a subject. He mentioned that even during their external examination, they are only examined in English whilst other students are exposed to various languages including SiSwati. It means that Deaf students do not have their mother tongue. He also stressed that students' vocabulary can improve a great deal if they have a strong sign language base. He said that:

I believe that we need to keep on working on curriculum adaptation and incorporating sign language as a subject in schools for the Deaf in Swaziland. It also has to be examined like other languages in the country.

He added that he believed that teaching English Language to students who have a strong background in Swazi Sign Language, can also help Deaf students to improve in their vocabulary and in understanding the concepts being taught in class. In that way, Deaf students can improve in their reading and writing skills.

Benchmarking with other schools for the Deaf is another option for improving Deaf education which participant T1 suggested. He stated that building friendships with other schools for the Deaf who produce good results for their students can help teachers to gain new teaching strategies and to share information regarding curriculum issues and implement new programs which can improve Deaf education in the country. Participant T1 suggested that Swazi Sign Language should be introduced in all the institutions of higher learning in the country. Teachers who are interested in

teaching Deaf students should learn about Deaf culture even before they start teaching Deaf students.

He also pointed out that it is important for teachers to be fluent in sign language when teaching Deaf learners. He voiced out that the traditional way of learning sign language from students is long outdated now. It robs students of their time of learning because they spend time in class teaching sign language to their teachers instead of learning. He articulated that it is an old-fashioned way of learning sign language. He further stated that teachers should be teachers and students should be given an opportunity to be students and both parties should access each other in class and interact effectively in order for learning to take place. He summed up his points by suggesting that schools for the Deaf need to work on reading and writing programs for Deaf students. He mentioned that Deaf students have a challenge with creative writing. They need to be equipped with reading and writing skills as early as preschool level. In that case, they won't have to spend more years at high school level and they will be able to be independent readers and get more information on their own. He concluded by stating that as a teacher of the Deaf students, he sees Deaf teachers of the Deaf arising from his students.

### **7.3.2 Participant T2**

#### **7.3.2.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and identity**

Participant T2 introduced himself as a hearing teacher who is passionate about teaching Deaf learners. He taught in a mainstream school for many years and then decided to apply to School for the Deaf-High when he saw advertised posts in local newspapers. He narrated that he just needed a change of environment. He added that he holds a B.Sc. Degree in Agriculture. He further pointed out that the Ministry of Education and Training sent him to Malawi to be trained on Deaf education even before he joined the School for the Deaf-High. He decided to further his education and he now holds Masters in Special Education Needs, majoring in Psychology and he joined School for the Deaf-High after receiving a specialized training on Deaf education in Malawi.

### **7.3.2.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

Participant T2 stated that he was trained to teach Deaf learners using oralism and when he arrived at School for the Deaf-High in Swaziland, he discovered that sign language was the medium of instruction in class. He said:

When I arrived here, teachers were using sign language as a medium of instruction in class. So...I experienced challenges and frustration because even the signs that we were using in Malawi were different from the signs which they were using here.

In his story, he related that he had to start learning sign language from students and he also discovered that the subject he was teaching had its own jargon because some of the words which they used in class had no signs. He explained that he had to first write the word on the board and explain its meaning before he started teaching. At some point they had to develop some of the signs together with the students as they continued learning so they could understand each other.

He voiced out that whilst his sign language was improving, students also improved in their vocabulary and in understanding of the subject matter. He then felt at home and enjoyed signing after sometime although it was difficult at first.

However, participant T2 narrated that the greatest challenge that he faced was that students had to follow the regular curriculum yet at primary level they had done a special examination which was set and marked by their own teachers. He explained that the special examination mainly covered what their teachers had been able to teach their students and then they were awarded the same certificates as mainstream students by the examination board. He stated:

The turning point was when the examination board abolished the special examination on the basis that it waters down the standard of the examination. If Deaf students were to continue obtaining certificates from them, they had to write the same examination as other students.

He further explained that he had to adapt and modify the curriculum by devising some strategies of writing short notes for students in sentence form on the chalk board and simplify the questions for them. At some point, Participant T2 explained that he had to develop some signs for certain

academic words which had no signs and were new to the students. He added that at the end of each month, he gave students tests and was so happy when some of them passed those tests because he got the confirmations that they understood what he was teaching them. He then gained confidence in himself although he was moving at a very slow pace.

Participant T2 narrated that when his students were expected to sit for their Grade 10 external examination, there were some aspects of the syllabus which had not yet been covered. The syllabus was too long for Deaf students to cover all the aspects. They needed more time. However, he pointed out that:

I discovered that it was time for them to sit for the external examination, and the students were also complaining about repeating classes. So, they could not wait any longer. They wanted to write their Grade 10 examination. We had to let them write and we did not know what the outcome was going to be.

He stated that he felt embarrassed and disappointed when he read that all his students had failed and the failure became a national issue. He explained that what disappointed him the most was the fact that teachers were blamed for the failure of the students and nobody cared about their primary background and the fact that they had written a special examination at primary level.

But I swallowed that bitter pill. I eventually accepted it since our principal held teachers' and students' meeting before the schools were opened and encouraged us to find a way forward by involving other stakeholders.

Participant T2 voiced out that it was his first experience to teach Deaf students up to Grade 10 level. He pointed out that, as a school, they had to hold several meetings with the students and parents, explaining to them that they needed to add an extra year in Grade 10 and in Grade 12 so that they could have enough time to cover the syllabus. Students were also asked to give their own opinions and they agreed to sit for Grade 10 examination for the second time. He added that one more year was added for the students at Grade 12 level and this strategy worked for them although it meant spending more years for Deaf students as compared to their hearing counterparts.

The positive and rewarding experience for participant T2 was when three of his students passed and he was thrilled by the news. The following year, again, one of the students passed Grade 10

and he ended up having four Grade 11 students who eventually sat for Grade 12 external examination. He further related that teachers' and students' determination and perseverance paid off at the end.

I was so happy and my self-esteem became high. I now know that I can successfully teach Deaf children without doubting myself.

He pointed out that he struggled with the Grade 12 syllabus which was long and demanding on his students. He explained that he engaged the students in study groups after school to discuss class work and past examination questions. He added that he could see that the students were eager to pass because they were then believing in themselves.

We used the slogan 'Deaf can' at school and each time they passed a test, I would say, 'Yes...Deaf can!'

Another positive turn around was the fact that the examination board, applied a reasonable accommodation in essay writing by allowing students to write essays in a note form so that they would present all the points they needed to add in their essays. He recalled that when more years were added for the students to cover their syllabus, participant T2 agreed that he saw a great improvement in their writing skills and the students became committed to their work. He also pointed out that he sincerely believed that what contributed most to the success of his students was that they were determined to learn. They did not give up on their educational goals.

Participant T2 proudly asserted that although he was not a sport fanatic, he would like to point out that his students were heroes in the Lubombo region when it came to sporting activities. They beat mainstream schools by far in Netball and in Futsal games. He boldly stated that the trophies that remained in the office were a constant reminder of their victory and heroism. He asserted that:

They were all excelling in sports and in other school competitions such as Junior Achievement. They were crowned the best SUSPED Football Champions in 2011 after scooping the first position. We had a great celebration at school and took a lot of pictures whilst they had their gold medals on. I could see that they were heroes and they felt it too.

He confidently proclaimed that academically, the students were named ‘Deaf Education Pioneers’ since they were the first group to write Grade 12 external examination and they were the first students to be admitted in the School for the Deaf-High when it started in 2007.

He happily declared that those Deaf students today are working adults and one of them had enrolled in one of the universities in South Africa. He added that two of the students are interested in training as teachers of the Deaf and one of them is interested in being police person. They can now think for themselves and they believe that they can do whatever they set their minds upon. Most of them are interested in teaching sign language in the school to both teachers and students.

They make me feel proud when I look back from where we came from with these learners. I feel like crying tears of joy but men do not cry.

He summed up his point by mentioning that he is astonished each time he meets them and he highly appreciates the way they have grown and are taking care of themselves.

### **7.3.2.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

When asked about the role played by the family members of these learners in their education, participant T2 pointed out that most of these students were taken care of by their grandmothers. He added that, even though their grandparents were not able to attend the meetings, they usually sent students’ brothers and sisters to attend. He summed up his point by stating that the family members of these students were very supportive and grateful to teachers and the school administrators after their children had passed their Grade 12 examination. He pointed out that the comments from parents changed from that of being negative to very positive towards the school. They appreciated what the school did for their children.

He mentioned that one of these students was fully catered for the school in terms of uniform and tuition fee. This student was registered as one of the orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in the school after his mother had abandoned him and his grandmother had passed on. When discussing the issue with his uncle, he proclaimed that it was clear that his mother wanted nothing to do with him after discovering that he was Deaf. He added that the student was a very brilliant boy and well behaved and he was liked by almost all the teachers. Some of the teachers would give

him pocket money when schools were closed and sometimes spent school holidays with him. He often received clothes and toiletries from male teachers and from the office. He boldly asserted the student was an independent and liberated adult now.

#### **7.3.2.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

On the issue of improving Deaf education in the country, participant T2 stressed that he believed Deaf education can improve in our country if sign language can be taught as a subject from primary level and be assessed. He stated that:

It can give our students a good foundation in creative writing and in critical thinking. Their English writing skills can improve from story signing to writing. We also need to work on the signs for new concepts so that their thinking is broadened.

He also believed that benchmarking with other schools for the Deaf in the SADAC region can be an eye opener to most of the teachers. He highlighted that it can give both teachers and students an opportunity to learn about other programs and other methods of teaching which other schools use to improve reading and writing skills. He also suggested that teachers should come from tertiary institutions with knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture and sign language. He added that it is important that they are fluent in sign language skills when coming to schools for the Deaf, otherwise it takes time for some of the teachers to adjust to Deaf culture because they rely in writing on the board and students signing for them.

Participant T2 further acknowledged the fact that written language is still a challenge to his learners and it needs to be improved. He said that most of the time students sign correct answers during discussion sessions but when they are supposed to put the answers in writing, they struggle. His view was that the curriculum issue needs to be addressed soon because it is a major obstacle now to the achievement of Deaf learners. Deaf students need to do well in English Language since it is a passing subject in the country. He said he was happy that the school has benchmarked with one school for the Deaf in South Africa and teachers are now in a process of implementing a Red Star reading and writing program.

I can't wait to see it happening. It can be a major breakthrough.

He summed up his story by emphasizing that the four students were his heroes. He explained that most people had low expectations of them but they made history in Deaf education in Swaziland. He added that it had been a long and winding journey for both students and their teachers but it was fruitful. He boldly asserted that Deaf students were now knocking at tertiary institutions where their curriculum had to be put in place and that he would like to see them being trained as professionals in the fields of their own interest. He lastly added that he would like to see them training as Deaf teachers of the Deaf so that they can teach Swazi Sign Language as a subject to other Deaf students.

### **7.3.3.3 Participant T3**

#### **7.3.3.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and identity**

Participant T3 introduced herself as a hearing teacher who taught Deaf students at high school level. She pointed out that she was one of the teachers of the Deaf who had been teaching Deaf learners since the inception of School for the Deaf-High in 2007. She elaborated that after graduating from the University of Swaziland, she was posted straight to School for the Deaf-High. She had a BSc Degree in Consumer Science. She mentioned that when she was posted to the school for the Deaf, she had no training in Deaf education and she had never heard about the School for the Deaf-High or Deaf students before. All she knew was that the school was a newly established school.

#### **7.3.3.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

Participant T3 declared that her first day experience was so traumatizing and overwhelming in such a way that she thought of quitting and looking for a mainstream school. She explained that she was mostly bothered by the fact that she could not communicate with her students in class because she did not know even a single sign. She pointed out that she prayed to God to help her with the decision which she was about to make, that of quitting and looking for another school. She added that:

On the first day at school, I met other teachers to whom I expressed my fears. I was worried sick about the situation I had found myself in. They

told me that they also had the same experience and encouraged me to learn sign language and there was no orientation. I was told to go by myself so that I could get used to the students.

She then confessed that when she entered the class, she discovered that the students were so friendly except that they were signing very fast such that she could not even follow their hands and she only smiled back. She added that they finger spelled their names and signed their sign names. She mentioned that after writing her name on the board, the students also wrote their names and they also gave her a sign name and she loved it. She explained that her mind was still not settled. She mentioned that at the back of her mind, she was still asking herself how she was going to teach them. She lamented that what made matters worse, was the fact that the students who were Deaf and those with additional disabilities were in the same class. The school had only two classrooms to use within the primary school; one for students and the other one served as the teachers' staffroom. In due course, she discovered that two of the students in her class were Hard of Hearing and they had some language and they enjoyed interpreting for her.

I then asked them to teach me sign language after school. The two girls who were very friendly often taught me sign language after school and they greatly assisted me in class. Basically, we were teaching each other. They got angry when I kept on forgetting the signs which they had taught me. I told them that they also forget what I had taught them...so...they should not be angry with me...and we laughed.

Participant T3 alluded that she later gained confidence in her signing skills but she discovered that the learning process was slow since the students did not know all the signs for the words that she had written on the board. She added that she discovered that there were social signs and academic signs.

She also narrated that students enjoyed her subject and she enjoyed teaching them although the progress was very slow. She had to modify the curriculum herself by breaking it into small portions of information, trying to simplify it as much as she could. She explained that it took some time for the students to cover the content that would enable them to write the external examination. For that reason, one more year was added for them before they sat for the final examination.

Moreover, participant T3 declared that she was scared to death when the time of writing external examination came because the examination board had refused teachers permission to prepare a special examination like they had done at primary level. So, the students were given the examination papers without any modifications what so ever. The examination board could not entertain any submissions, claiming that the standard of the examination would be watered down if they did.

I could see that they were still struggling with reading and writing although they would always give correct answers when using sign language. We could not make them wait anymore, they wanted to write the examination. To make matters worse, they had gone to the office to complain about teachers refusing them an opportunity to write examination.

Participant T3 admitted that students failed because they were no reasonable accommodation in their examination. She mentioned that Deaf students' failure became a national issue and it was even discussed at parliamentary level. It was only then that the examination board seemed to be willing to engage in dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Training and teachers pertaining to reasonable accommodations. This resulted in students being given extra time with the interpreter in the examination room. She added that at least three students passed and the following year one more passed and then the school had four students in Grade 11. However, she pointed out that teachers still needed assistance in modifying the curriculum for Deaf students since they were teaching Deaf learners in Grade 11 for the first time.

In her story, participant T3 declared that perseverance on the side of both students and their teachers paid off in the end. After students had passed, she stated that teachers were very happy and her confidence in teaching Deaf students became high. She asserted that it was time to prepare the students for Grade 12 examination. She stated that:

I ran from pillar to post in a bid to get other resources that could facilitate their learning. I also visited other experienced mainstream teachers. The process was exhausting and tiring, but I had a desire to see them achieving their educational goals.

She also stated that she was so thrilled when the students passed their Grade 12 examination because at that juncture, the students began to believe in themselves and she also believed in them. She applauded the decision that was made by the students to add an extra year to their Grade 12 so that they could cover all that was needed for them to be comfortable when writing their examination. She happily narrated that when the results finally came out, the students had all passed her subject. She asserted:

When the results came out, they had passed. And one of the subjects which they had passed was my subject (smiling proudly). I felt like a hero. I still smile when I remember those moments. After receiving the results, we called them our Deaf Education Pioneers. I thank God Almighty for such a success.

Participant T3 summed up her story by pointing out that it was courageous to see her students talking about what they want to do in future and making decisions on their own. She added that she had observed that they had grown up intellectually and they were highly knowledgeable about most of the things that pertained to their lives. They were not content about working in giant supermarkets but they wanted more. Some of them wanted to be police, others wanted to be teachers of the Deaf. They now know that they are valuable in society. She smilingly said that one of her students had already enrolled in one of the prestigious universities in South Africa.

### **7.3.3.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

When asked about the role that was played by the parents of the four Deaf students in their academic achievement, T3 mentioned that most of the parents of these Deaf learners were very supportive even though some of these students grew under the care of their grandmothers. She elaborated that some of the students were taken care of by their siblings after the demise of both parents.

She further narrated that she remembered that the student who is now at the university was the most neglected one. He spent most of the time with his grandmother who could not attend meetings. He was the responsibility of the office. She elaborated that he got a very good scholarship which catered for his tuition fee and the school uniform. However, when arrangements

for enrolling him at the university had been completed by the sponsor and the office, his mother surfaced to say 'thank you'. She elaborated that the students' mother was grateful but she had never been to the school. She added that some parents take advantage of the school provision and neglect their Deaf children but they want to be part of their achievement at the end. She also pointed out that parents often neglect their Deaf children and they become the responsibility of government and the school. In the process, teachers become surrogate parents to these students. She recalled an incident of one the teachers who actually took care of one of these students by buying clothes, toiletries and giving him pocket money. His mother had gone to marry somebody else, leaving the child with his grandmother who later died. She added that what was remarkable about that student was that he was well behaved and very brilliant. Even if the mother was called by the principal, she would not come to school and the school gave up on following her. She concluded by saying that she was happy that the child was now an independent child who was working but he still needed his mother's love.

#### **7.3.3.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

For Deaf education to improve in the country, participant T3 submitted that teachers and the school need to continue to attend to curriculum issues by modifying the syllabi for Deaf students and also by improving on various ways of delivering the information in class. She added that teachers still need to work on academic sign language because there are still many words which have no signs. She pointed out that what was interesting was that these four students had developed a lot of signs and they had to come back to school to teach sign language to both teachers and students so that everyone can access the curriculum effectively.

Participant T3 also stressed the importance of teachers' fluency in sign language. She pointed out that both teachers and students need to have a strong Swazi Sign Language from primary level. She stressed that sign language is the backbone of Deaf education and a curriculum delivery vehicle. She added that reading and writing programs need to be implemented, starting from primary level so that when students come to high school level, they already have reading and writing skills that will enable them to learn effectively. She submitted that:

If teachers have good sign language skills, it will be easier for them to involve students in discussions in class and be in control of the content which they teach.

She further pointed out that teachers also need to be recognized by school administrators for the good work they are doing in school so that they can feel appreciated. She pointed out that as teachers, they also appreciate that most of them were now being trained in Deaf education and they had the latest technology which they use in teaching Deaf students such as videos, internet, screen projectors, cameras and white boards. She foresees that in future, Deaf graduates will come back to school to teach sign language and other subjects.

### **7.3.4 Participant T4**

#### **7.3.4.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and identity**

In his signed story, participant T4 introduced himself as a hearing teacher and a child of a Deaf adult (CODA) and a school interpreter. He explained that he was very comfortable with Swazi Sign Language because he was born within the Deaf community. He elaborated that on his maternal side, his mother was profoundly Deaf and he also had two uncles who were Deaf. One of his uncles was Hard of Hearing and the other one was profoundly Deaf. He added that his mother used to wear hearing aids but his uncles did not use hearing devices. Participant T4 stated that:

I observed that if she was not wearing her hearing aids, she would hear nothing at all. I was so close to my mother. She would sign to me whilst I was still a child. We would chat about anything that was there to talk about through sign language.

He further elaborated on how he fell in love with SSL which led him to being an interpreter. He explained that he used to go to church every Sunday with his parents but one day, he noticed that the congregation was divided into two parts. One group which was sitting on his left, was hearing and they did not need an interpreter but those who were sitting on his right side had an interpreter all the time. He then decided to join the Deaf congregation members. He added that he was

fascinated by the use of SSL and that was how he began to gain interest in being an interpreter. He said that he thanked God for that because he gained much experience in the church.

Participant T4 also narrated that he went through primary and secondary education in a mainstream school with ease until he finished his training at college level. After that, he began to develop hearing problems in both ears and that is when he decided to join School for the Deaf-High as a teacher and as a school interpreter. He explained that he taught Deaf students Math and Science and he had been in the School for the Deaf for five years now. In terms of qualifications, he explained that he had just completed his B. Ed degree in Special and Inclusive Education at the Southern Africa Nazarene University (SANU) and he enjoyed teaching Deaf students.

#### **7.3.4.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

When it comes to school and communication, participant T4 pointed out that he enjoyed teaching Deaf students since there was no language barrier between him and the students. However, he stated that most of the time he discovered that the topics that he was teaching to the Deaf students were too difficult for them and he had to make an effort to simplify information using ‘village’ sign language. He narrated that the minute he stepped into class; he fell in love with his students because they were so willing to learn. He explained that the sense of belonging and love was there for him even before he joined School for the Deaf-High because most of the students knew him already because he belonged to the Deaf community. He stated that:

I never felt lost nor frustrated when I taught them. It’s just that some of the stuff that was in the syllabus was new to them and I had to go back, especially in Math and lay the background information for them. That alone, needed a lot of time and we were moving at a very slow pace.

In terms of coping strategy, participant T4 explained that he had to find a way of breaking the information down by using illustrations and everything that could help him so that students would understand and he always simplified the concepts that he taught to his Deaf students. He elaborated devised a strategy of taking them at a very low level and building up on what they had done. He also repeated the lessons again and again until the students grasped that information. He added that:

I also engaged them in a dialogue in one on one or in group discussions. This method improved my relationship with the students and we talked about anything even after school.

He further mentioned that it took a long time to cover the syllabus and he would also attend to them individually; luckily, there were only four. He elucidated that it was like first chewing the food for them and making it soft so that they could swallow it easily. He pointed out that sometimes he used videos and cameras and that meant that each time he prepared a lesson, he first thought about the teaching strategy which he was going to use when presenting that particular topic. He said:

I used to give them tests now and then and past examination papers to work on so that they would get used to the manner in which examination questions are set. It was a challenging and laborious work which was fruitful at the end.

Participant T4 mentioned that when he thought about Deaf students writing the same examination as hearing students, he was afraid because they were used to the special examination which was set and marked by their teachers at primary level. However, the students were eager to write and they did not want to repeat another class again. He explained that the examination board had flatly refused to modify their examination in terms of simplified English. They would not hear of it. He expressed that:

I was shocked when some of the examination board members asked if Deaf students were using braille. From there, I was convinced that they had no clue about the nature of the students we were talking about.

He further narrated that the students had to sit for their Grade 10 examination and they did not make it. They all failed. He stated that he had to tell them that in life, sometimes you pass and sometimes you fail. But it was important that they should never give up on their dreams, on things that they wanted to achieve in life and they were eager to try again. He added that he told them that we were not the only school which had bad results, other mainstream school children also had failed and he did not understand why they made such a big deal when Deaf students failed. He finally concluded that:

It was God's way of drawing attention, making the Ministry of Education and Training and other stakeholders to be aware of the challenges that we faced in terms of curriculum and external examination. I encouraged them not to give up because teachers and the school administration were on their side all the way.

He further explained that he was happy that the curriculum issues such as that of reasonable accommodations were then addressed, although not all of them. But both students and teachers got the attention they deserved at that time. He pointed out that Deaf students finally sat for the same examination again the following year. This time around, they passed and he was so excited. He felt that he had passed too and had achieved a lot in everything that he had tried to do when teaching these students. He excitedly stated that he was very proud of his Deaf students and for himself as their teacher. He explained that it was a day of jubilation when schools opened. Teachers and students met, hugged and congratulated each other.

Moreover, participant T4 remembered that at some point, some of the teachers doubted the capabilities of their Deaf students. They feared for the unknown. Some teachers suggested that the four students should go to vocational training courses because Grade 12 would be too difficult for them. He further stated that when students were consulted about the issue of vocational training, they declared their interest in continuing with their academic education. They wanted to write the Grade 12 examination like their hearing peers.

Concerning teaching strategies, participant T4 explained that he continued to adapt the syllabus on his own. He divided the work into small pieces and presented it to his students through videos, power points and in whatever method he thought would work for his students. He pointed out that he struggled together with his students and could see that they were keen to learn because they did all the assignments he gave them. He narrated that:

Students attended classes during the weekends and after school. At that time, other teachers had joined us. We were all committed and we wanted to do our best for them. We had no signs for other concepts that we were teaching. At some point, I volunteered to interpret for other teachers in class and assist the students when doing their assignments in other subjects.

He elaborated that in the process of teaching Deaf learners, he discovered that he was moving at a very slow pace since he had to repeat some stuff and do it all over again. For that reason, he needed more time to cover all the content before the students wrote their Grade 12 examination. He added that the issue of adding more time was discussed with the school administrators and the students and it was clear that one more year was needed to give students and teachers time to cover the syllabus in each subject before the students sat for their external examination. They were willing to add one more year to Grade 12 although they complained that they were getting old at school but they too, wanted to do their best. The disappointing moment for Participant T4 was when he discovered that the papers still had no reasonable accommodations. The students had to write the examination papers as they were like their hearing counterparts. But that did not deter the Deaf students from achieving their educational goals. They wanted to write the examination. He mentioned that when the results came out, they had passed five subjects but failed English and he felt like a hero. He explained that:

After our Deaf students had passed, we then called them Deaf Education Pioneers since they broke the chain of fear of the examination among Deaf students. Today other Deaf students are eager to go through Grade 12 no matter the circumstances.

On another note, participant T4 recalled certain events whereby Deaf students exhibited their capabilities in a quiz competition. He explained that they were competing with other hearing students and one of our Deaf students came up number three and he received an award for that. He expressed his appreciation to the school for exposing Deaf students to so many national competitions where they got prizes and medals including sporting activities. He added that they are still known as Lubombo champions in Netball and national champions in Futsal. He further stated that he loved the fact that his Deaf students were capable of doing what they wanted to do in their lives and they still wanted to pursue their studies without being pushed by someone else. He expressed that they now have the courage to do new things in their lives, things that people think that Deaf people cannot do such as being a police officer. He also added that one of them is at university and he is looking forward to welcoming him as a sign language teacher in the school.

### **7.3.4.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

When asked about family involvement in the education of Deaf children, participant T4 raised a concern about parents of Deaf children who rely too much on teachers when it comes to the education of their children. He explained that when parents of Deaf children are expected to attend open days to look into the work and performance of their children, most of the time they send students' siblings to attend meetings. In that way, it is not easy to fully discuss the needs of the students. He highlighted that most Deaf children end up being the responsibility of the government and the school. He stated that:

It's like parents are ashamed of their Deaf children. They are the least of their priorities and that disappoints me a lot. Parents often claim that they cannot communicate with them. I don't even think that they are interested in learning sign language.

He stated that it is important for parents of Deaf students to love and support their children and also to make a follow up on their school work so that they can discuss some of the challenges that their children come across at school and in life in general.

Participant T4 also added that some of the students are taken care of by teachers. He highlighted that some of the students become the responsibilities of the teachers in terms of uniform, toiletries and pocket money. He pointed out that their parents do not even visit them during the weekends. Boarding school becomes their home until schools are closed. He explained that when the neglected students are expected to come back to school after the school holidays, they do not show up and it becomes the responsibility of the school to go out and look for them, and take them back to school, especially those students that are orphaned. He concluded by saying that he was happy because some of the neglected students have been able to finish school and they are now working.

### **7.3.4.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

In order to improve Deaf education in the country, participant T4 suggested that the school together with the National Curriculum Centre, need to find a way of modifying the curriculum in all subjects, by breaking it down into small chunks of information. He added that the books that are used to teach hearing learners, are not friendly at all to Deaf students. He explained that the books

have a lot of speaking and listening exercises and it takes time for teachers to modify the texts so that teachers are able to sign them to Deaf students.

Furthermore, participant T4 emphasized that Swazi Sign Language has to be introduced as a subject in both Schools for the Deaf. He added that Deaf children are deprived of their culture and of their sense of belonging if SSL is not taught in their schools yet it is the medium of instruction. He stated that SSL should be taught and examined as a subject. He said:

Deaf students in our country learn only one language, which is English. They have no mother tongue. I wonder how Swazi Sign Language can gain a national status as one of the official languages if it is not even taught in Schools for the Deaf in the country.

He summed up his point by pointing out that SSL curriculum has to be developed so that it can serve as a basis for Deaf students when they are being taught English as a second language. In that way, he continued, Deaf students can greatly improve in their reading and writing skills.

Teachers' fluency in SSL is another issue that surfaced in participant T4's teaching experience. He pointed out that teachers' proficiency in sign language cannot be overlooked if Deaf education is meant to be improved in the country. He asserted that teachers of the Deaf need to be fluent in sign language so that there is no communication barrier in class. He further suggested that teachers who are posted at Schools for the Deaf should learn sign language and be aware of Deaf culture before they are posted in these schools. He added that teachers who are interested in teaching Deaf students should at least have sign language certificates, at level two, so that they do not struggle in class.

### **7.3.5 Participant T5**

#### **7.3.5.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and identity**

Participant T5 introduced herself as a hearing teacher who had taught in mainstream schools for about 23 years. She narrated that she joined School for the Deaf-High in the year 2012 and she was allocated the Grade 11 class in which she taught four students. She further explained that she

held a B. Ed. Degree in Education but she did not have any training in relation to Deaf education and she had never taught a D/deaf child before.

### **7.3.5.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

In her story, participant T5 expressed that she was engulfed with fear when she arrived at the School for the Deaf-High. She pointed out that she was actually so frightened that she felt like quitting the following day. She stated that:

I observed the first lesson which was conducted by a teacher who was very fluent in sign language and I made up my mind that I was going to quit, then go and look for another school. I went back to the staff room and shared my thoughts with some of the teachers who told me that they also had the same experience and they encouraged me to stay.

She further elaborated that teachers encouraged her to join sign language classes for teachers which were conducted every morning at school. After learning a few signs like 'hello' 'how are you' 'I am fine' from other teachers, participant T5 explained that she went straight to class by herself the following day. After exchanging a few greetings with her students in sign language, she got a positive response from her students and they had smiles on their faces. She said:

That was the beginning of my journey with my Deaf students. From there, I gained confidence in standing in front of them.

When it comes to communication, participant T5 said that she relied on writing on the board and students signing what she had written. She narrated that she was so fortunate that she was teaching Grade 11 because they had so many signs and their vocabulary was good.

Participant T5 clarified that although she attended sign language classes every day at school, it was not enough to enable her to communicate fluently with her students in class. She eventually discovered that most of the words that were in text book which they were using in class, actually had no signs. She further explained that she decided to consult almost every teacher and Deaf adults who could assist and they were able to come up with some signs, together with her students. She added that she felt at home after learning how to communicate with her students and she

developed motherly love for them. She further narrated that she loved her students mostly because they were well behaved and they were committed in doing their school work, especially their homework.

In terms of teaching strategies, participant T5 explained that she had to make sure that she thoroughly prepared what she had to teach at least three days ahead so that she could ask other teachers to help her with the signs of concepts which she did not know. She elaborated that she had to bring pictures to class and draw on the board when explaining some of the information. She also highlighted that she was fortunate that her students were brilliant and they assisted her greatly in terms of communication in class. She proclaimed:

But still, it was not easy for me. I could not engage them fully in a dialogue since my sign language was not good. But now my signing skills have improved a great deal.

Moreover, participant T5 narrated that she experienced pressure from other teachers who constantly reminded her that she had vast experience in teaching the subject she was teaching in the mainstream before she joined School for the Deaf-High. For that reason, she mentioned that she was so scared when it was time for her students to write the Grade 12 examination. She pointed out that:

I knew that I needed more time to cover the content. I became so desperate to make it work but time was against me. I was afraid of being the reason for my students' failure. I felt hopeless and other teachers were putting pressure on me by reminding me that I had a vast experience in teaching the subject.

When the office was consulted on the issue of adding more time for students, participant T5 explained that she felt so relieved because of the positive response they got from the office and from the students. At this juncture, she reported that she decided to seize the opportunity by inviting one of the hearing mainstream teachers to assist her in teaching other topics which she felt were difficult for her to handle. She then committed herself to come to school every weekend to attend to those sessions and the students were very happy. She added that there was a lot of

interaction among the office, the students and the outside teachers who were willing to assist the learners.

Moreover, participant T5 narrated that her educational experiences at some point, were full of disappointments. She elaborated that when the Grade 12 results came out, she was so disappointed when she discovered that her students did not do well in her subject. She lamented, pointing out that it was probably because her students did not cover all the content since the syllabus was too long, but they did all that was there to be done. She asserted that:

What I know is that, it was not about me or about the passing and the failing of the students. It was about them accomplishing their dreams. They received their Grade 12 certificates and we still call them our Deaf education pioneers. One of my students is at the university level as we talk. No one saw that coming. Every child in the school is now looking forward to going to institutions of higher learning because of our heroes.

She added that, even though her students did not do well in her subject, she knew that they were able to learn a lot of things which opened their minds and afforded them an opportunity to gain critical thinking skills. She explained that her students now have the courage to plunge into whatever they want to do without thinking negatively about themselves. She added that her students still want to further their studies and she knew that they can do well in whatever they put their minds to.

### **7.3.5.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

When it comes to family involvement, participant T5 attested to the fact that students were supported by their family members and parents although most of them were looked after by their grandparents. She explained that parents got an opportunity to go through the children's tests and to discuss behavioral problems if any with their parents and how they could work together with teachers to support their children. She added that grandparents would also send relatives or siblings to attend the meetings. They supported these students physically, financially and emotionally. When schools closed for the holidays, they allowed them to remain behind and continue learning

for a week or two whilst other children were enjoying their holidays. There was dedication and commitment and support from their family members as well.

However, participant T5 pointed out that one of her students mostly got support from teachers since his grandmother had passed on. She explained that the boy was taken care of by some of the teachers because he was abandoned by his mother at a young age after discovering that he was Deaf and was left with his grandmother to take care of him. She added:

At some point he considered abandoning school. But the principal got a sponsorship for him and also provided him with toiletries and the like. Teachers also bought a school uniform for him. During the holidays he stayed with his uncle who was unemployed.

She further mentioned that teachers often encouraged the boy to stay at school since he had received a sponsorship. They also gave him pocket money so that he could be like other children who were cared for by their family members. She asserted that some parents of Deaf children abandon them at school after discovering that they are Deaf and they become the responsibility of the government, the school and the teachers.

#### **7.3.5.2 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

In order to improve Deaf education in the country, participant T5 posited that Deaf students need to be given more years so that they can finish the syllabus before they write their external examinations. She added that by doing so, their performance can improve a lot because it takes time for them to cover the specified content in each subject. She also explained that the regular curriculum which the Deaf students follow, has a lot of aspects of hearing which are not friendly to students. She asserted that the curriculum itself needs to be modified and adapted to the needs of Deaf students.

In addition to that, participant T5 mentioned the importance of sign language to be introduced as a subject at school because it is the first language of Deaf students. She elaborated that Deaf students are tested in only one language which is the English language whilst hearing students are tested in two languages, which are siSwati and English. She added that the issue of sign language needs to be addressed urgently by curriculum designers. Participant T5 also added that the school

needs to make sure that teachers work on their sign language skills. She explained that it is important that teachers are well equipped in sign language since it is the medium of instruction for Deaf students.

If teachers do not know sign language, there will be a communication breakdown in class. Teachers will not be able to engage students in dialogues hence there will be no learning taking place.

She pointed out that it takes time for teachers to learn sign language while also trying to teach the Deaf students. She added that she experienced it herself and she knew how difficult it is for both new teachers and Deaf students to communicate in class if the teacher does not know sign language.

### **7.3.6 Participant T6**

#### **7.3.6.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and identity**

Participant T6 introduced herself as a hearing teacher who came to School for the Deaf-High because she was interested in teaching children with disabilities. She explained that she did a course at the University of Pretoria on how to facilitate in teaching functional speech and the course is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

#### **7.3.6.2 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

In her story, she described her first day at School for the Deaf as a frightening experience. She explained that she was scared and frustrated because she had never dealt with Deaf students before. She soon discovered that she was lacking in SSL. Although she had acquired all the knowledge about teaching students with disabilities to read and write, she could not communicate with Deaf students. She narrated that what was more frustrating for her was that sign language was used as the medium of communication in class and she found it hard to communicate with the students in class. She explained that her students rescued her by teaching her sign language. She added:

I prayed every day for God's guidance since I needed this job.

She said that since she taught English language to her students, she had to teach them composition writing and she had a lot of information concerning composition writing which she wanted to pass on to the students but it was difficult to explain to students because of lack of sign language. Participant T6 explained that she then decided to use pictures to help the students to organize their stories and to connect them into full cohesive stories. She said:

That's how my students became so interested in telling their stories and they got new ideas from storytelling method. So, from there, I had a great time and I saw my Deaf students gradually improving in their creative writing.

She further shared her most devastating experience when she discovered that there were no reasonable accommodations for her students in the Grade 12 examination. Her Deaf students were exempted on speaking skills but they had to do listening passages just like other hearing students. However, she explained that through the negotiations and talks with the examination board, it was finally agreed that the listening passages would be signed for students. She explained that she was devastated because she was not sure whether the signing of the passages was going to work or not. She further explained that she had trained her students to watch the video signed passages which made it easier to rewind without the story being interrupted. It was just a trial and error situation. She asserted that at some point she could see that she was failing to teach Deaf students and she was on the verge of giving up. She stated that:

I continued teaching them English but I could tell that I was failing. At some point I wanted to give up. My students could not write correct sentences as was expected on the examination. They had all the information needed but their writing was highly influenced by sign language. So, the addition of other language skills such as idiomatic expressions and the like, were hard to introduce.

She indicated that the content of the Deaf students' compositions was great, but the grammar of the language was interrupted and influenced by sign language. In that way it was hard to find correct sentence structures. She added that her Grade 12 students were committed to working hard and to do whatever was expected of them although it was difficult for them. She mentioned that she had a lot of discussions and interactions with other English teachers so that they could also

give her some tips on how to help her students in writing correct sentences. She confidently asserted that her students improved a great deal in their reading and writing.

In her story, participant T6 shared her experience on having several meetings with the examination board in a bid to apply for reasonable accommodations such as simplified English language but all in vain. She narrated that when writing for the Deaf students' external examination was close, as teachers, they had a hope that their examination was going to have reasonable accommodations like it was done in Grade 10, but that did not happen. She explained that several meetings were held with the examination board but they were clear that Deaf students had to sit for the same examination as expected of hearing students if they were to receive the same certificates at the end of the day.

So, we exposed our students to a lot of signed texts using previous examination papers. Our students wrote the examination as it was. It was only listening comprehension which was signed during the examination and additional time.

However, participant T6 narrated that she was proud of her students because they were determined to pass. She asserted that it she gained confidence in herself and in her students after observing that their writing skills were improving. It was evident that they had gone through so many classes and were willing to soldier on.

As she was preparing for her students to write their Grade 12 examination, participant T6 elaborated that she also saw a great need of preparing herself as well in terms of improving her sign language skills. She explained that although there were sign language classes for teachers every morning at school, she felt that the time spent on those classes was not enough for her. She struggled a lot. She needed to do a thorough preparation for her lesson plan so that she could sign most of the words before going to class. She mentioned that it was a long and a laborious process but it helped her and the students a great deal. She added that she also engaged students in dialogues and discussions in class and in that way, her sign language improved. She said:

Learning sign language was not easy at all. I struggled a lot. Even today, I am still learning new signs from students, teachers and Deaf adults at school. Although we had sign language classes every morning, I

discovered that it was not enough for me. I had to continue practicing and to engage students in some dialogues in the classroom and they often wrote what I did not understand on the board. I loved my students.

She also mentioned that adding more time to cover the syllabus was a great advantage for her and her students since they needed more time to practice creative writing and to clean up their English expressions. She added that other teachers also felt that there was a lot to cover in their subject areas before the students sat for the examination. She pointed out that it was only after several meetings with the office, students and the parents, when it was finally agreed that students should add one more year in their Grade 12.

However, participant T6 felt that her students had done very well after they passed their Grade 12 examination even though they did not do well in English. She called them her heroes. She added that when she looked back, it had been a long journey but surely God had been with her and her students. She added that teachers and Deaf students could not have done it on their own.

### **7.3.6.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

Participant T6 felt that some parents were very supportive of their Deaf children. They attended open days and parents' meetings but others only sent siblings. She added that most parents of Deaf students do not work in collaboration with the school and teachers. She explained that parents tend to rely on teachers when it comes to looking after their Deaf children. She added that most of the time parents claim that they cannot talk to their children when they exhibit behavioral problems but they do not show any interest in learning sign language. She added:

I feel like parents need to spend time with their children because they can teach them sign language if parents show interest. Most of the time it's the siblings who understand sign language because they spend time with their brothers and sisters.

She further added that, parents of Deaf children are less supportive in terms of communication and taking care of emotional needs of their children. She explained that parents rely mostly on teachers to discipline their Deaf children and to take care of their emotional needs. She also proclaimed

that Deaf children are often neglected by their parents when it comes to their educational and social needs.

#### **7.3.6.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf education**

Participant T6 pointed out that Deaf education can improve in the country if teachers in both Schools for the Deaf in Swaziland can follow the same curriculum and the same examination system. She asserted that:

Deaf students should not write special examination at primary level and follow regular curriculum at high school level. It doesn't balance up. This needs to be fixed.

She also asserted that Deaf students should have reasonable accommodations in their examinations and for that reason, personnel who understands Deaf education and SSL should work with the examination board so that Deaf students can also be accommodated in the assessment system. She suggested that teachers should have proper teaching qualifications that are related to Deaf education before they are employed at schools for the Deaf. Teachers who are being trained at different institutions of higher learning in the country should be introduced to Deaf education so that when they are posted in schools for the Deaf, they are at least familiar with Deaf culture and Swazi Sign Language. She added that it takes some time for newly arrived teachers to master sign language which they mostly learn from their students.

In addition, participant T6 raised the issue of sign language curriculum. She pointed out that Deaf students should have a sign language curriculum taught by Deaf teachers to instill Deaf culture in schools. She asserted that sign language should be taught as a subject and examined by examination board in schools for the Deaf because sign language is their first language and it can serve as a base when teaching English as a second language.

She concluded by stating that reading and writing programs for Deaf students from primary to high school level have to be put in place so that their English writing is nurtured from the lower grades. She explained that learning most of the stuff at high school level, delays Deaf students. If reading and writing programs can be put in place, students' progression from one class to the next can be smooth and they can develop language and vocabulary at an early age. She felt that Deaf students

can in the future go to universities just like their hearing peers. She stated that she sees Deaf students being trained as teachers of the Deaf and coming back to school to teach other Deaf students. Next, is the presentation of data and the background information of the primary school administrators.

#### 7.4 PRESENTATION OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF ADMINISTRATORS

Table 9 below shows administrators' profiles

*Table 9: Administrators' profiles*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>A1</b>	<b>A2</b>
<b>Age</b>	38 years	49 years
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female
<b>Date of interview</b>	13 April	17 April
<b>Interview length</b>	22.41	23.43
<b>Qualification</b>	Masters in Leadership and Management	Masters in Leadership, Management and Policy
<b>Teaching experience</b>	14 years in School for the Deaf	24 years in School for the Deaf
<b>Administration experience</b>	3years	3years
<b>Hearing status</b>	Hearing	Hearing
<b>SSL Level</b>	Level 3 - interpreter	Level 3 (does not interpret)

#### 7.5 Discussion of administrators' personal information

Table 9 shows profiles of the two administrators who were interviewed in this study. The two administrators came from School for the Deaf-Primary and they are both females. They taught the Deaf students who completed their Grade 12 in 2015. They are administrators and teachers at the same time. They still have classes which they are teaching even today. There is only one administrator at School for the Deaf-High who is the researcher in this study and there is no deputy head teacher as yet. Therefore, only the primary administrators were interviewed.

Both administrators are hearing and they have no history of deafness in their families. They are 49 years old (A2) and 38 years old (A1). They have both been teaching at School for the Deaf - Primary for years now; A2 has been teaching for 24 years and A1 has been teaching for 14 years. They were both appointed as administrators at the same time, one being the principal (A1) and the other, the deputy principal (A2). They both came to School for the Deaf-Primary without any knowledge concerning teaching Deaf students. They learned SSL from their students in class and outside the classroom environment.

They are now both Level 3 in SSL which means that they qualify to be interpreters. In fact, A1 is a highly skilled interpreter. She interprets not only at school level, but also at national level. Upon arrival at School for the Deaf-Primary, they both trained in Deaf education. One was trained in Uganda (A1) and the other was trained in England (A2). Today, they both hold Masters Degrees in Education, A1 majoring in Leadership and Management from the University of Swaziland (UNISWA), and A2 majoring in Leadership, Management and Policy from the University of KwaZulu - Natal (UKZN).

## **7.6 Data presentation on administrators' narratives**

### **7.6.1 Participant A1**

#### **7.6.1.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

Participant A1 introduced herself as a hearing administrator who is also a teacher and a school interpreter of Deaf students at primary level. She narrated that she had been teaching Deaf students for 14 years now. In terms of qualifications, she asserted that after five years of her teaching at School for the Deaf-Primary, she went for training in Deaf education in Malawi and that is where she gained vast experience in teaching Deaf students and she obtained a B.Ed. degree in inclusive education. She added that she also did her Master's degree in UNISWA (University of Swaziland) on Leadership and Management.

In her story, she narrated that after completing her training at college, she was posted straight to the School for the Deaf-Primary and did not know where the school was. When she finally found

the school, she was allocated a Grade 2 class. She pointed out that she felt lost and confused because she did not know any sign language but she had to go to class.

### **7.6.1.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

Participant A1 admitted that her first day in class was quite challenging for her. She was engulfed by communication barriers and frustration on her side as a teacher. She explained that she sat down and just looked at the students because she did not know where to start and what to say to them. She asserted that:

It was quite a challenge for me. I wish there was an orientation, but there was none. I was not even introduced to the students.

She articulated that for the first three months, very little teaching took place. Students were teaching her sign language. She further explained that she used to draw a lot on the chalk board and the children would give her the signs for what she had drawn on the board such as a tree, flower, dog etc. She remembered the time when she prayed to God saying:

I remember praying, saying ...God, if it is your will for me to be here, let your will be done...Amen!

She recalled that from then on, she decided that she was not going to quit and run away from the communication challenges. She decided that she was going to soldier on like other teachers whom she had found at school. She added that at home, she would look at herself in the mirror and practice some of the signs of the words which she had learned from the students. She recalled that sometimes she would remain behind after school and ask some of the Grade 6 and Grade 7 students to teach her more signs because Grade 2 vocabulary was still shallow and they were still in the process of learning sign language themselves.

She recalled that there were three students who were willing to teach her the signs and later on, she became comfortable with her signing skills. She elaborated that her passion to teach Deaf students grew and she enjoyed learning sign language to the extent that today she is an interpreter. She stated that:

Now I am a qualified interpreter because I saw that it was a special skill. I interpret not only at school, but also in public places for the Deaf community at large. I now have confidence in my signing skills.

In addition, participant A1 acknowledged that she was quite aware of the fact that the special examination which was done at primary level did not yield good results for Deaf students in terms of reading and writing. She confirmed that Deaf students at primary level were doing special examination because in the past, primary teachers once attempted to follow the regular curriculum but Deaf students were failing. She explained that teachers found it hard to teach some of the concepts that were too difficult for Deaf students and the regular curriculum was too long and demanding for Deaf students. She added that she taught the three Deaf students who wrote Grade 12 examination and they were brilliant in their nature.

She further submitted that Deaf students who wrote Grade 10 examination were not familiar with the curriculum they were doing at high school level. She felt that the mainstream curriculum should be implemented at primary level first so that Deaf students can go to high school with the same curriculum structure. She pointed out that:

Since the examination board was adamant that they were not issuing any certificates should Deaf students write special examination, both teachers and students had no choice but to write the mainstream examination. We did not know what was going to happen, but we kept on praying for the best as administrators.

She further elaborated that after the students had failed to do well in their Grade 10 examination, most of the people's comments, showed that they had low expectations of Deaf students. People advocated that they should not even attempt to write again because they would fail. As an administrator, she explained that it was a horrific experience for both teachers and Deaf students. She asserted that she was scared for the teachers since they were blamed for the fact that students failed. She highlighted that the issues of the curriculum were ignored completely. Even the parents were scared for their children because they did not know what was going to happen to their children thereafter.

Proudly, participant A1 exclaimed that the students sat for the same examination the following year and three of them passed. Nothing was going to deter them from achieving their educational dreams. She further asserted that engagement of the Ministry of Education and the examination board by the school, yielded positive results for both teachers and Deaf students. She narrated that both parties showed willingness to do what was best for Deaf students. The examination board members committed themselves to effect reasonable accommodations for the students. She stated:

The following year, there was additional time and the papers were modified by the examination board. All the parties were committed to see these students pass. The following year, our students passed and we were all happy. We gained confidence that we would continue working with relevant stake holders to look into the education of Deaf students.

However, participant A1 mentioned that there was a positive turning point for the primary students as well during the discussions with the Ministry of Education and Training although she was skeptical about it. She narrated that during the meeting, it was resolved that the primary school should also follow the regular curriculum if they want their students to receive the same certificate as others. She explained that as administrators, it was not easy to convince the parents and the teachers that the students should change and follow the mainstream curriculum and mainstream examination. Both parents and teachers wanted to know whether the curriculum was going to be modified for Deaf students or not because they felt that the regular curriculum was inaccessible for Deaf students. He stated:

As for me, I was not sure which route was best for our students at that juncture. Since the examination board members had resolved that they were not going to issue certificates to Deaf students at primary level if they continued with special examination, the school then embarked on the implementation of mainstream curriculum.

Moreover, participant A1 narrated that Deaf students were struggling with reading and writing at primary level but she was happy for the three Deaf students who were able to compete with their hearing peers. She explained that they wrote the same examination as their hearing peers and made it. She further explained that at primary level they had abandoned the special examination because there was no proper curriculum to follow. Each teacher taught what he or she thought was

appropriate in that subject and then examined the students but now teachers are guided by the mainstream curriculum although it is difficult. She narrated that:

Another challenge with Grade 7 is the issue of language barrier. It makes it difficult for them to pass the external examination. Some years back, we used to set our own examination which we called 'special examination'. Deaf students used to pass because the examination which was set by teachers and was based on what the students had learned and on what teachers had covered in class. But now, they write the same examination as mainstream schools so that they get the same certificate as their hearing peers.

In her story, participant A1 expressed that Deaf students are very brilliant in nature but they have the tendency of writing in the manner in which they sign. She pointed out that there was a need to strengthen reading and writing programs in both Schools for the Deaf. She asserted that even if the students know the answers to the questions asked, when it comes to expressing themselves in written English, or writing down the answers, they experience challenges. She added that mostly they enjoy Math and Science and other practical subjects where they do not have to answer essay questions. She explained that their lack of English writing skills, somehow, hinders their progress in the education system. She also pointed out that what caused challenges in the education of Deaf learners is the policy which stipulates that English Language is a passing subject in the country. Once the students fail English, they have failed the whole examination. For that reason, even if Deaf students can pass other subjects, they are considered as failures by the examination system.

Participant A1 also explained that the positive experience which she encountered when teaching Deaf students who wrote Grade 12 examination at high school level, was that the students were very ingenious. She added that they were able to understand the concepts that were being taught even though some of these concepts did not have signs. She mentioned that these students were able to develop some of the signs and for that reason, the teaching and learning process was fascinating although it was slow.

Another experience that is so discouraging for her, is that it is not easy to cover all the content in the syllabus before the students sit for the examination because it takes time. She explained that even today at primary level, teachers are still struggling with that challenge of not being able to

complete the syllabus before the students sit for their external examination. She narrated that teachers have since resorted to adding one more year for Grade 7 students so that when they reach high school level, they spend less years and have covered a lot of information that needs to be covered. Participant A1 boldly asserted that the students who completed their Grade 12 at high school level made her proud by being the first to sit for the Grade 12 examination and also by being the first to obtain Grade 12 certificates. She added that they made history in Deaf education in the country and had become heroes. She pointed out that:

I am happy to see our students at university level. I never thought that they would be able to travel on their own as far as Johannesburg and study like other students. I can see that they now have courage to do more and they are exceeding my expectations. It's amazing.

She also pointed out that as an administrator at primary level, she felt encouraged, grateful and proud when Deaf students shone in their performances at high school level.

### **7.6.1.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

In relation to the involvement and encouragement of family members in the education of their Deaf children, participant A1 mentioned that parents of most Deaf students at primary level are not supportive when it comes to the education of their children. She also elaborated that parents do not seem to be grateful about what schools for the Deaf do for their children. She said:

I must say that parents of most Deaf students in our school are not supportive at all when it comes to the education of their children. I don't even think that they are grateful about what schools for the Deaf do for their children. Three of these students were the responsibility of the school and the government. The government gave them food, paid for electricity bills and water. But the parents were unable to provide them with toiletries.

She further pointed out that these three students were the responsibility of their grandparents who later passed on. Their real parents did not partake in the education of these children. She added

that even during the school meetings, it was the students' siblings who attended on behalf of their grandparents. For that reason, she felt that the three students were neglected by their own parents. She stated that:

As an administrator, I have never seen their parents in my office and that makes me feel that they were often neglected.

Moreover, participant A1 explained that teachers actually took care of the three students who did their primary education at School for the Deaf-Primary. She stated that the students were actually clothed by their teachers and one of the boys became the responsibility of one of the teachers who supported him with everything he needed for school including pocket money. She added that the boy had absolutely nothing and amazingly, he was the smartest of them all and a well behaved boy. She stated that it was actually a loss on his mother's side who deprived herself of experiencing all these good tributes of her child. She added that the child is also very talented in sports and his mother missed all of that.

#### **7.6.1.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf Education**

In relation to improving Deaf education in the country, participant A1 lamented on the issue of having no sign language curriculum. She stated that in order to improve Deaf education in the country, it is essential to begin by recognizing what makes Deaf culture and what makes it fundamental in the education of Deaf children. She pointed out that Deaf students do not even have a sign language curriculum and it's not even taught and examined as a subject in schools for the Deaf. She asserted that:

Curriculum issues are still a thorn in the flesh. Our students do not even have a sign language curriculum and it is not even taught and examined as a subject yet it so crucial in the lives of these students. It is their mother tongue and their medium of instruction in class so it deserves a lot of attention. I believe we have to start there.

She further pointed out that another issue which needs to be addressed, is the adaptation of the regular curriculum to suit the needs of Deaf students. She elaborated that Deaf students and their

teachers are facing a lot of challenges when it comes to curriculum adaptations. She added that the curriculum is inaccessible to Deaf learners in many ways and there are also words which do not have signs which is another challenge teachers and students face. She narrated that Deaf students are not accommodated the way they should be in the regular curriculum and such a situation does not enhance Deaf student' performance at all.

In addition, participant A1 suggested that new teachers who come to schools for the Deaf, must come with the knowledge of sign language. Otherwise, it takes a long time for the students to learn effectively whilst they are teaching their teachers sign language in class. She also added that teachers should take it upon their shoulders to learn sign language through sign language colleges or in teachers' sign language classes in the school and continue to practice it. She also highlighted that, reading and writing programs have to be developed for Deaf students as early as preschool level. She stated that:

As I mentioned before, our students tend to write in the manner in which they sign, so, it is important that they are taught how to read and write as early as possible. Whilst they can sign their answers, they should also learn to put them down in writing since writing is a strength of a Deaf child when it comes to communicating with the outside world.

She also pointed that she was happy that School for the Deaf-High has already initiated the training of teachers in a Red Star program in conjunction with Deaf net Africa. She added that she applauded that initiative and further explained that such a program would be a breakthrough in the improvement of Deaf education in the country.

She summed up her story by stating that she was looking forward to seeing more Deaf students who would go to various universities and be trained as Deaf teachers of the Deaf. She asserted that she felt proud and happy for the teachers and for herself as a school administrator. She mentioned that having Deaf students who have been awarded Grade 12 certificate, was a great achievement for both schools for the Deaf and their teachers in the country.

## **7.6.2 Participant A2**

### **7.6.2.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

Participant A2 introduced herself as a hearing teacher and a school administrator at School for the Deaf-Primary. She pointed out that she had been teaching Deaf students for 24 years and had been a Deputy Principal for 3 years. She explained that after 6 years of her teaching experience, she was awarded a scholarship and she went to England to learn more about Deaf education for one year and when she came back, she still found it difficult to teach Deaf students because the students used to fail external examination dismally. She further pointed out that one of the problems in this regard was that teachers did not have a curriculum to guide them. For that reason, they used to select topics which they thought students would enjoy and then teach them.

### **7.6.2.1 Thematic Category 2: School and communication**

In her story, participant A2 narrated that her first day at School for the Deaf-Primary was terrifying. She stated that not knowing sign language became a barrier between her and her students in class because they could not access each other. She explained that she could not communicate with her students effectively and the students began to teach her sign language every day after school. She further narrated that she used to join sign language classes for teachers every morning at school and she was taught by Deaf adults who worked as assistant teachers in the school. She explained that the sign language morning classes helped her a lot because she eventually gained confidence in herself and she was able to have a better relationship with her students. She added that she loved her students:

I used to pray every day, asking God to give me love for these students.

They were very eager to learn and they were very loving children. So, I wanted to love them more.

In terms of teaching strategies, she explained that she used sign language all of the time and she enjoyed it a lot. She also stated that she used to compliment some of the signed words with speech, because some of the learners were able to lip read. She pointed out that some of the students were not totally D/deaf, they were Hard of Hearing (HoH) so they benefitted a lot from lip reading. She

also added that she had observed that, it was not always easy to measure the improvement of Deaf students, especially at primary level because they achieve certain educational goals at a very slow pace. She added that:

I now feel that I belong to the School for the Deaf and I do not see myself joining mainstream school. I enjoy signing and spending time with my Deaf students, especially the little ones when they first come to school. I enjoy mothering them.

In addition, participant A2 explained that it gives her a sense of victory when she sees Deaf students passing even at high school level even though they still have that language barrier. She explained that the language barrier is the major problem for Deaf learners and if Schools for the Deaf can overcome that barrier, it would be a victory for everyone who teaches Deaf children. She further suggested that School for the Deaf-Primary needs to have a very clear language policy so that Deaf children can differentiate between Swazi Sign Language and Academic Sign language. She added that Deaf students should understand that sign language is different from written languages because most of the time, they write the way they sign which is not appropriate for written English. She submitted that she believed that a clear language policy can help both teachers and students to actually overcome the language barrier.

In her story, participant A2 dwelt on the issues of using the mainstream curriculum in Schools for the Deaf. She narrated that Deaf students are not ready to write the mainstream curriculum. She explained that at primary level, teachers devised their own strategies for examinations whereby they set and marked the examination on their own and then submitted the marks to the examination board. She further elaborated that, later, when Deaf students moved to high school level, it transpired that their reading and writing skills were far behind their age. For that reason, the examination board decided that the special examination should be scrapped if Deaf students were to receive the same certificate as their hearing peers. She stated that it was not easy for teachers to adjust and go back to the mainstream curriculum which is so difficult for their students. She said:

I still do not think that our students are ready to write the mainstream curriculum. Our Deaf students and teachers are struggling with this curriculum. I don't know where it is taking us. I wish the examination papers for Deaf students could be modified with simple English Language

and more time be added in their examination session. I am scared for them.

She further elaborated that if the mainstream curriculum is not adapted to suit the needs of Deaf learners, Deaf students would always fail and teachers would always be disappointed. She also explained that her students complained about a lot of difficult words which had no signs in the books they were using. She stated that she eventually used pictures and videos where possible and the students eventually developed signs for some of the difficult words after she had explained their meanings to them.

In terms of teaching strategies, participant A2 revealed that at primary level, they had been using the language key to help the learners, but they realized that the language key was lacking, especially when it comes to learners being able to identify parts of speech in sentences. She elucidated that the language key doesn't help the students to apply the parts of speech in their own writing, yet their success in learning depends on how well they are able to apply what they have learned individually. She stated:

So, I think that we have to find new ways to help our children to move from mastering language keys to being able to construct correct sentences on their own. It's something that we still have to do research on. I have heard about the Red Star program, but it's something that we, as a school, need to explore further and see if we can implement it after receiving proper training.

However, participant A2 showed a positive attitude towards teachers and students, claiming that they were actually doing a great job in teaching Deaf students even though they are using the mainstream curriculum. She exclaimed that she was amazed to see the results of Grade 12 students who passed their external examinations and was very impressed that they were the first group to ever reach that level of learning. She pointed out that although they kept on repeating classes, it paid off for them. She said that she was so happy for them and their teachers.

You know what...if you are a teacher and your students keep on failing, you lose confidence in yourself and your students tend to have low self-esteem. But now, our students want to go to high school so that they can

pass and go on to training institutions like one of our Deaf students who is at the university now.

She also voiced out that, in her teaching experience, she has observed that Deaf students at primary level are struggling with written English and that is their main challenge right now. She stated that the learning actually begins at a very, very tender age, considering the fact that most of the students are born from hearing parents. For that reason, students have problems receiving any form of language from home, so they only start getting language when they arrive at school. She posited that it is the teachers' responsibility at the primary school to ensure that they help the Deaf learners acquire as much language as they possibly can when they start preschool. She added that she has also learned that it is important for teachers to help Deaf students to move from sign language acquisition to linking sign language with English language so that by the time they get to Grade 1 and are expected to start writing, they are confident with themselves and they have better mastery of both languages. She mentioned that as teachers and administrators of the school, they should see to it that students' literacy is improved as early as possible.

In relation to the syllabus, participant A2 proposed that the school needs to develop more signs for the words that are found in the text books so that the understanding of the concepts can be enhanced for both learners and their teachers. She explained that words without signs are slowing down the process of reading and learning for Deaf students. She also explained that her experience had taught her that she needs to give herself time when teaching her students. She explained that it takes time for her to cover at least one topic thoroughly with her Deaf students. She also pointed out that most of the time, her students move to high school level without covering all that needs to be covered. She narrated that Deaf students need more time to cover the syllabus in preparation for external examination now that they are doing the regular curriculum and they have to compete with their hearing peers.

Moreover, participant A2 narrated that the most positive and inspiring experience in her life was when she learned that one of the Deaf students had been able to be admitted by one of the universities in South Africa. She asserted that it is the goal of every teacher and every administrator to produce learners who will become successful in life. As an administrator, she stated that when the children finish primary school, she wants to see them pass at high school and it gives her joy to see Deaf students joining different colleges and universities. However, she

pointed out that it is important also to note that not all of them are cut out for university or college. She pointed out that as administrators and teachers, they continue to encourage those who have skills. She explained that those who have vocational skills and are always encouraged to go for vocational training. It still enables them to become successful in life. She added that she was happy to see all of them doing well at school, at vocational college or at university. She had this to say:

I feel very proud... I feel like a hero myself. The Bible states clearly that children are like arrows in the hands of a warrior (Psalm 127:3-5) so... these are my children and I feel like a warrior and a hero if they are successful in their academic lives. I am also inspired, of course, to continue to be a better teacher because I want to see more and more of them yielding best results by going to colleges.

She also stated that she felt encouraged to do her best as a teacher and an administrator in terms of adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of Deaf learners. She clarified that if both schools for the Deaf can keep on having meetings with the examination board and subject panel member, things will end up changing for the best for everyone. She also added that as an administrator, she needs to take the lead in changing the education of Deaf learners. She stated that Rome was not built on one day and before she goes for retirement, she wants to be able to point to the changes and the contributions she had made in the curriculum for Deaf learners in order for Deaf learners to be able to continue to achieve their educational dreams.

### **7.6.2.3 Thematic Category 3: Family involvement and encouragement**

In her story, participant A2 raised the issue of parents who abandon their Deaf children and the children becoming the responsibility of the school and the government. She stated that the family members of the Deaf learners who have received Grade 12 certificates, did not involve themselves in the education of their children. She added that, when the administration attempted to make a follow up on the students' background, they discovered that the students were staying with their grandparents who were not able even to attend school meetings. She said:

It's a pity that family members at primary level did not involve themselves in the education of these learners. Two of these learners were mostly cared for by teachers at the school.

She further explained that teachers bought the students toiletries and fetched them from their homes when school were opening. She added that the students were very brilliant and responsible at school and teachers liked them a lot. She explained that the only positive thing about the situation of these Deaf learners was that their grandparents wanted them to be at school.

On another note, participant A2 explained that when these Deaf students began school at primary level, the Catholics used to provide them with clothing, food and toiletries and such a practice was embraced by the parents before the school was handed over to the government. She added that from that practice, the school became a place where Deaf children were abandoned by their parents and they would only pick them up at the end of the term. She explained that some of the students would remain at school until the school administration made arrangements to drive them to their various homes. She narrated that:

The parents would pretend as if they were not aware that schools were closing. Even today, we still struggle with that bad habit at primary school. Although some parents do fetch their children every end of term, others do not. Children stay at school until schools are closed without seeing their parents.

She also stated that some of the parents consider the education of their Deaf children as the responsibility of the school and the government not theirs. They only care about their hearing children.

#### **7.6.2.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf Education**

When it comes to improving Deaf education, participant A2 recommended that both primary and high school for the Deaf, need to work together. She pointed out that there is a great need to resolve curriculum issues at primary level first since Deaf students are now sitting for the same examination as their hearing peers. She stated that curriculum adaptations have to take place in

terms of simplified language, added time, developing signs for words which do not have signs and so on. She further explained that it is crucial to come up with signs for the words which are used in the text books so that Deaf students can read on their own in order to improve their level of reading and writing. She also highlighted that SSL is not even taught as a subject at schools for the Deaf and it is not even examined as their first language although it is used as a medium of instructions in schools. She explained that there is a need to develop a sign language curriculum so that it is taught as a subject in schools for the Deaf. She added that other students are taught siSwati as their mother tongue and first language in the mainstream schools but in schools for the Deaf, students are only taught English Language. She added that language policy in the Ministry of Education and Training needs to be adjusted in order to accommodate the educational needs of all the students in the country without discriminating others.

Teachers' fluency in SSL is another issue which participant A2 raised pertaining to the improvement of Deaf education in the country. She stressed that it is very crucial for teachers of Deaf students to know sign language even before they are posted to schools for the Deaf. She added that teachers have to be fluent in sign language and be Deaf culture aware for effective learning to take place in the classroom. She asserted that when teachers come to the school for the Deaf straight from colleges, they first struggle with the understanding of the syllabus they are expected to teach to Deaf students, whilst also struggling with learning sign language. She pointed out that:

It takes time for these teachers to adjust. Sign language should be taught to all the colleges and universities in a preparation for teachers to teach Deaf students effectively if they choose to come to schools for the Deaf.

There is no easy way out.

She concluded her story by pointing out that reading and writing challenges for Deaf students need to be addressed as soon as possible since it is the major barrier in attaining their educational goals. She stated that she was happy that the high school principal has taken the initiative to work with DeafNet Africa in addressing the issue and she hoped that a Red Star reading and writing method would be implemented soon. She added that she felt victorious about the achievement of these four Deaf learners but she felt that the schools could still do more. She stated that she wanted to see

more and more students going to universities and colleges in Swaziland and out of the country and being able to get into the job market just like all other students.

### **7.7 Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented data from teachers and school administrators. Their background information has been presented and discussed in this chapter. The next chapter presents data analysis and the discussion of the findings of this study.

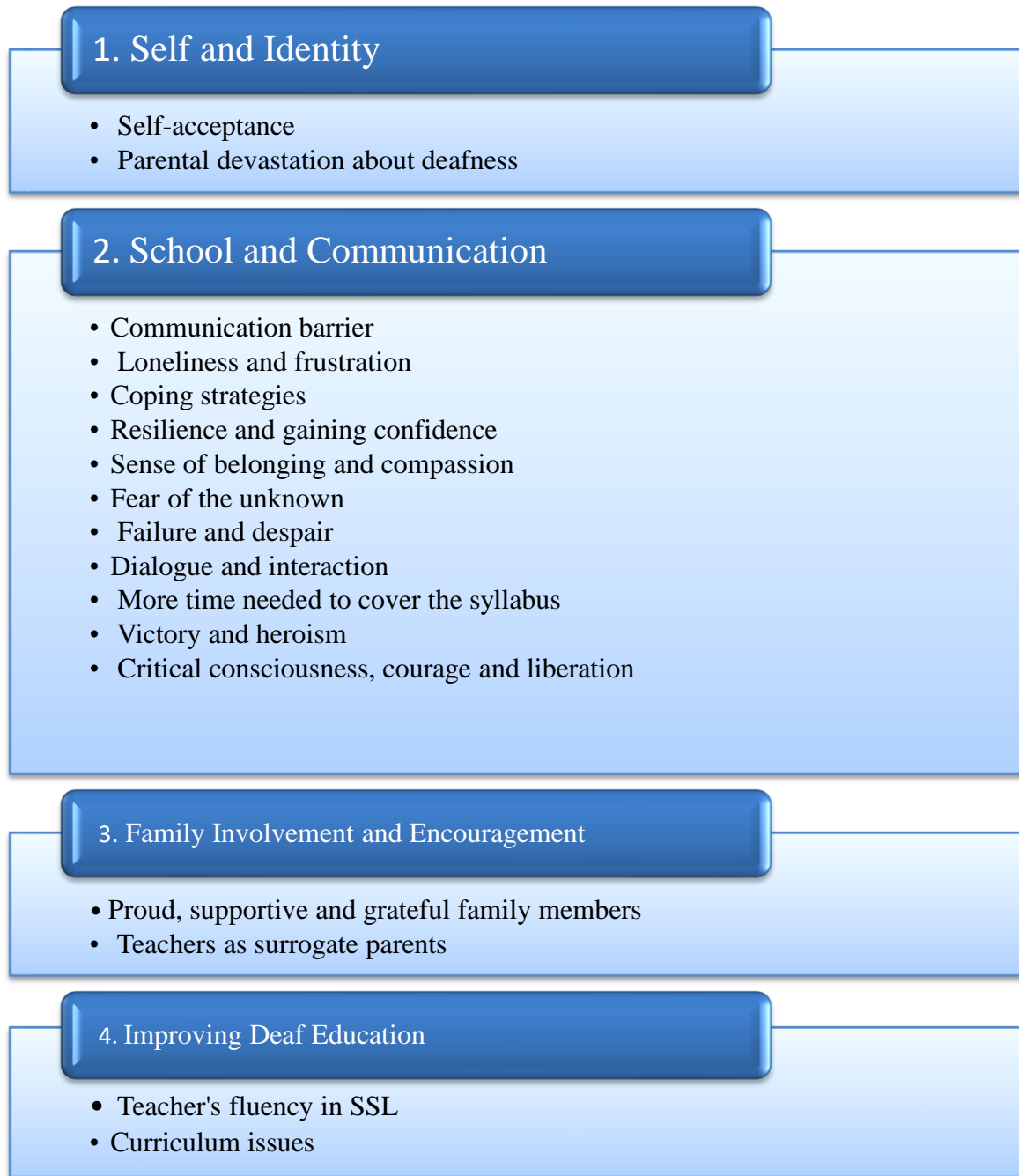
## CHAPTER 8

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 8.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and the discussion of the findings under the themes that emerged from data presented in Chapter 6 and 7. The data that is being analyzed and discussed was collected from the first four Deaf students who sat for their Grade 12 final examination in 2015, 6 teachers who taught these students at the high school level and two primary school administrators, that is, the principal and the deputy principal who taught these students at the primary level.

All of the participants shared their educational experiences and they are discussed and analyzed in this chapter under the prevailing thematic categories and sub-themes that emanated from the participants' narratives. When investigating the educational experiences of the participants, I discovered that on the educational journey of both students and their teachers, some of the experiences had a 'positive' and/or 'negative' effect in their lives. These different effects were established through listening to the tones and observing the words/signs and facial expressions used by the participants when telling their stories. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 54) posits that IPA has a theoretical commitment of assuming a chain of connection between participants' stories and their thinking, attitude and emotional state. Therefore, the experiences of the participants in this study were considered 'positive' where participants experienced a 'sense of belonging', 'courage' and 'liberation'. However, the experiences were considered 'negative' where participants experienced 'devastation', 'failure', 'despair' and 'frustration' about certain circumstances that related to their educational experiences. Figure 10 below, presents themes and sub-themes that emanated from data under the four thematic categories which are 'Self and Identity', 'School and Communication', 'Family Involvement' and 'Improvement of Deaf Education'.



*Figure 1:0 Broad themes and sub-themes which emanated from the data*

Looking at Figure 10, as a researcher, I find it very interesting and encouraging to note that at some point, every participant struggled in his or her own educational journey and experienced failure and despair, but that did not deter them from achieving their educational goals. At one point, students sat for their Grade 10 first external examination and they all failed in their class. Not even a single student passed that year and both students and teachers experienced failure and

they were miserable. Duarte, et al. (2016, p. 5) observe that failure can have a lifelong consequence in the life of an individual student. It has a negative impact on measures of social adjustment, behavior, self-competence and negative attitudes towards school and can cause considerable stress for students (Duarte, et al. 2016, p. 9). In addition, teachers were mostly blamed for students' failure on the basis that they were not knowledgeable in sign language. Musonda and Phiri (2017, p. 10) also reiterate that teachers of the Deaf are often blamed for the failure of their Deaf students because the majority of teachers are not conversant with sign language.

Although the experiences are different in each participant, most of the experiences highlight victory, sense of belonging, love and courage, coping strategies, improved confidence, high self-esteem, liberation and victory of individual participants in their process of learning as students and of teaching as teachers. The mentioned admirable qualities in this context refer to a situation whereby participants found themselves succeeding in achieving their educational goals and being recognized as achievers by significant others despite the challenges which they encountered along their educational journey.

During the data analysis and discussion of the findings of this chapter, the IPA method required that each theme be described and exemplified with extracts from interviews, followed by analytic comments from the author and a brief discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature (Smith, 2012, p. 369). Using participants' own words to describe themes "enables the reader to assess the pertinence of the interpretations; it retains the voice of the participants' personal experience and gives a chance to present the emic perspective" (Smith, 2012, p. 369). Hence, in every excerpt, symbol S1 to S4 are used for students, symbol T1 to T6 for teachers and symbol A1 and A2 for administrators in order to protect identities of the participants and to maintain confidentiality.

### **8.1 Analysis of the findings based on participants' narratives**

The analysis and the findings in this chapter are presented in two sections. First to be presented in Section 8.1 are findings based on the four Deaf students' narratives, followed by teachers' and school administrators' findings in each thematic category. Students' analysis and findings are presented first in this section in each thematic category since students are the focus of this study. Students' findings are also presented first in order to achieve the first objective of the study which

was ‘to investigate educational experiences of deaf students through their personal narratives’. Findings based on teachers’ and administrators’ narratives are also presented in order to explore their educational experiences in teaching the four Deaf students who are the focus of this study.

Section 8.2 presents the overall discussion of the findings of the study. Therefore, the following, is the analysis of the findings based on students’ narratives. The findings are discussed under the four thematic categories of this study which as shown in Figure 10.

### **8.1.1 Thematic Category 1: Self and Identity**

First to be discussed in this section, are findings based on participants’ narratives on their educational experiences under the thematic category of ‘Self and Identity’ which serves as an introduction to a story telling sequence of events, answering the question, ‘who are you?’. The thematic category of ‘Self and Identity’ is the first category which addresses the focal point of the study which gives background information about each participant and about each participant’s status (see Table 7 for students’ profile in Chapter 6, Table 8 for teachers’ profile and Table 9 for administrators’ profile, both in Chapter 7). Analysis begins with students’ narratives under each thematic category.

#### ***Students***

This thematic category revealed how students identified themselves by sharing their thoughts, memories and feelings that stand out about who they are, not what other people say about them (Swaan, 2010, p. 59). Hence, it is interesting to note that the four students who told stories about themselves in this study acknowledged that they were Deaf. It is worth noting that they also identified themselves as either a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ probably because within the school environment, students are often addressed as either a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ regardless of their ages. The following excerpts highlight the findings made about the students’ identity of who they are and how they became Deaf:

S1: I am a boy who is Deaf.’ I am bilaterally profoundly Deaf. I was born Deaf like my uncle James from my mother’s family. I have never heard a sound before...so...I am Deaf [signing ‘D’]!!!

S2: I am a Deaf girl [signing 'D'] ...I was born profoundly Deaf in my right ear and severe in my left ear. I could not hear much of what was being said to me. My right ear is completely deaf but my left ear could hear a little sound. I was given hearing aids to wear and they helped me a lot, especially in my left ear.

All the students signed deaf with big 'D', which means that they understand and acknowledge that they are culturally Deaf and they are members of the Deaf community. This is an indication that the students understand that they do not belong to the hearing community even though they are born to hearing parents and grew up in the hearing community. It is also an indication that when students join residential schools for the Deaf, they meet other D/deaf students who use sign language as the mode of communication and the medium of instruction inside and outside the classroom. It also means that schools for the Deaf are good in orienting D/deaf students to an environment which is rich with Deaf culture. This finding resonates with that of Chen (2014, p. 2) who found that attendance at a residential school for the Deaf is a strong self-identification as being culturally Deaf. Chen also points out that educational experiences of D/deaf students are in fact a crucial factor in developing Deaf identity because of the type of school, the academic and social experiences which Deaf students share with their teachers and their peers within the school (Chen, 2014, p. 2). Mcilroy (2008) also observed that, for D/deaf persons, Deaf identity is a crucial concept which emphasizes the Deaf community which has characteristic ways that are separate from the hearing community and have given rise to a separate cultural and linguistic identity of D/deaf persons. This means that Deaf students in this study are proud of being culturally Deaf and they have a strong Deaf identity even though they are born to hearing parents and grew up within the hearing community.

In addition, the above excerpts reveal that the degree of deafness is not the same for all the Deaf students. Some of the students are 'bilaterally profoundly Deaf' which means that they are experiencing hearing loss in both ears. Others are profoundly Deaf in one ear and severe in the other ear. This indicates that Deaf students have various degrees of deafness, which means that some Deaf students are not totally D/deaf but they can hear some sounds at different levels and at different pitches. This finding resonates with The National Deaf Children's Society (2015, p. 10) which stipulates that there are different degrees of deafness which are classified as mild, moderate, severe and profound. This means that teachers of the Deaf should be aware of the fact that even though students are D/deaf, they may not be classified under the same category of deafness because they each experience sound differently.

Students' narratives also revealed that some of the students were born D/deaf, which means that they experienced deafness before they have acquired any language and that is what Horn and Sakano (2016, p. 1) call 'pre-lingual' deafness, which means that they are diagnosed with deafness before the development of speech. However, some students were born hearing and they acquired deafness after they had developed some language and Horn and Sakano (2016, p. 1) call that 'post lingual' deafness. Chen (2014) also adds that when it comes to the status of hearing loss, pre-lingual D/deaf students are more culturally Deaf in that the onset and severity of hearing loss seems to be related to one's Deaf identity development and these students are introduced to sign language as soon as they join schools for the Deaf.

The significant similarities among the four students is that they all attended School for the Deaf-High even though one of them, S2, joined School for the -High after having completed primary at a mainstream school. This means that their Deaf identity has been greatly influenced by the use of Swazi Sign Language. Chapman and Dammeyer (2017, p. 192) testify to the fact that the use of sign language in schools for the Deaf has a powerful role in promoting Deaf culture and in sustaining Deaf identity. He adds that sign language plays a vital role in unifying the group with a collective identity of shared Deaf cultural values and experiences, which are related to educational experiences and marginalized status as well as breaking down the communication barrier which effectively disables Deaf persons (Chapman and Dammeyer 2017, p. 192). This means that the more students are exposed to the use of sign language as means of communication at school, the more they develop awareness of Deaf culture and Deaf identity since sign language plays an important role in unifying the Deaf students in schools.

Narratives from Deaf students also revealed that deafness can be caused by various sicknesses. The following excerpts illuminate that some of the Deaf students were born speaking and hearing but they became Deaf at a later stage after experiencing some sickness:

S3: I was born speaking but got sick when I was seven years old. I am suffering from moderate to severe hearing loss in my right ear and severe hearing loss in my left ear.

S4: I was born hearing. When I was six years old, I got sick...very sick. I had a severe headache and I could not open my eyes because of pain [frowning...]. I was admitted in hospital but when I was discharged, I had lost my hearing in both ears. I could not hear what other people were saying to me.

The above excerpts are an indication that some of the students experience deafness due to various illnesses at a later stage of their lives. In this case, students experience frustration, emotional pain and difficulty in their lives when they suddenly find themselves not being able to hear what other people are saying having been used to hearing every conversation. They suddenly find themselves cut off from conversations which they used to enjoy with others both at home and in society at large. Some of the students used assistive devices such as hearing aids so that they could continue to participate in the hearing community as well as in the classroom. However, most of the students who attend residential schools for the Deaf discontinue the use of hearing devices such as hearing aids after joining such schools. This means that the continuous use of hearing aids in an environment where everybody uses sign language compels the student to stop using hearing aids to avoid being discriminated against. Students had this to say:

S2: I used hearing aids and lip reading when communicating with teachers and students in the mainstream school but I stopped when joining School for the Deaf.

S3: I grew up using hearing aids. But I stopped using them when I went to School for the Deaf and I began to use sign language.

These excerpts indicate that the students identified with Deaf culture after being exposed to sign language and they moved away from hearing culture. In that way, students were able to find their way and “construct identity in a different context” (Chapman and Dammeyer, 2017, p. 192) as they moved from hearing culture towards Deaf culture. From the narratives, it is clear that the students had a sense pride in identifying and aligning themselves with Deaf culture. Using sign language enabled them to not be discriminated against but to be easily associated with other students. Chapman and Dammeyer (2017, p. 192) posit that the ability to construct a positive identity might be helpful in resisting the experience of feeling discriminated against. Mugeere, et al. (2015, p. 12) point out that perceptions and construction of Deaf identity by Deaf people depends on the surroundings within which they grow up and are socialized. Thus, surroundings play a significant role, and therefore, the two Schools for the Deaf play a very important role in this regard, compared to the families they came from. A positive attitude towards their condition means that Deaf people do not consider deafness as a disability but as a human experience, and in that way, they subscribe to the social model of deafness as opposed to the medical model of deafness.

Another significant similarity in all the students' narratives is that they were all born to hearing parents and hearing families. Hence, a sub-theme of 'Parental Devastation about Deafness' emerged early within the thematic category of 'Self and Identity'. All four students highlighted that their parents could not accept the fact that they were Deaf or had become Deaf after being assessed by the audiologists in different hospitals. Student S1 narrated that he became distressed because his mother cried all the way back home from hospital after discovering that he was Deaf like his uncle. Students S2 and S3 narrated that they were taken to traditional healers and to church pastors to be prayed for so that they could hear again but this did not work. The students narrated that they were also stressed by the situation of being prayed for because nothing was happening. Student S4 remembered his grandmother putting some concoction in his ears every night but all in vain. Students had this to say:

S1: After being diagnosed with deafness, I observed that my mother was crying all the way back home from hospital. I also got distressed because I understood that she cried because she had a Deaf child just like her brother and there was nothing she could do about it.

S2: My grandmother got so distressed about my deafness. I was also prayed for by various priests but it did not get any better. I wish I could just hear...I was stressed by the situation of being prayed for because nothing was happening.

S3: My grandmother was so devastated. I could see her crying most of the time...checking my ears...and...trying to talk to me. I was also devastated by the situation. I wish I could hear what she was saying. She eventually took me to traditional healers but it did not work.

S4: It was not easy to my parents at all. They could not accept that I had become Deaf. My grandmother was given some concoctions to pour in my ears every night by some traditional healers but it did not work. It was also not easy for me.

From the above excerpts, I deduced that when D/deaf children were being diagnosed with deafness, they also were devastated and distressed by the situation. Their parents were crying and grieving a lot after diagnosis and they found it very difficult to that accept their children were D/deaf, consequently, students were prayed for and taken to traditional healers so that they could be healed from deafness but it did not work. This means that there was a lack of acceptance of D/deaf children by their parents at the time of diagnosis because parents were hearing and they had no experience of deafness in their families. Ross (2016) attests to the fact that Deaf students are often taken to priests and to traditional healers by their parents for a variety of health, social and emotional reasons. After a failure to understand the cause of deafness, D/deaf children are taken to priests

and traditional healers to seek advice (Ross, 2016, p. 36). Most students described the time of diagnosis and the process of being accepted by family members as a turbulent time (Ross, 2016, p. 36), especially if there was no history of deafness in their families. In addition, Gilliver, et al. (2014, p. 15) point out that D/deaf children born to hearing parents find that their hearing parents often receive the news of deafness with shock, confusion, grief and denial. This is an indication of the fact that deafness has a great impact to hearing parents, especially if there is no history of deafness in their families. Szarkowski significant and Brice (2016, p. 249) also highlight that D/deaf children often experience communication barriers at home and parents are often stressed by issues such as means of communication and education of their D/deaf children. They stress about how they are going to communicate with their child and whether the child will be able to attend school and progress like other children or siblings hence they become emotionally stressed about deafness. The narratives revealed that D/deaf students experienced distress when they witnessed their parents struggling about accepting them as their D/deaf children. They were also stressed by the situation of being prayed for because they were not healed. Let us now explore teachers' findings under the category of 'Self and Identity'.

### ***Teachers***

When it comes to 'self and identity', teachers' narratives in this thematic category revealed that all the teachers and administrators identified themselves as 'hearing teachers' who were qualified teachers in their various disciplines. They were all trained in different institutions of higher learning in the country, however, they had not been exposed or received any form of training in Deaf Education before being posted to School for the Deaf-High. Teachers had this to say:

T1: I am a hearing teacher of the Deaf students at high school level. After completing my B.A. Degree in Humanities, I was posted at School for the Deaf and I did not even know where it was. I had no training whatsoever in Deaf education. Later, I received training at Witwatersrand in Deaf education.

T2: I am a hearing teacher who is passionate about teaching Deaf learners. I moved from a mainstream school to School for the Deaf. I was sent to Malawi to be trained in Deaf education before I began to teach D/deaf students. I was trained in oralism.

From the above excerpts, teachers narrated that even though they had a passion for Deaf education, they lacked the special skills and knowledge of how to teach and meet the educational needs of Deaf students when they joined School for the Deaf-High. Even though they had B.A. Degrees from various institutions in the country, they had not been exposed to Deaf education and to Swazi Sign Language. They had no training in Deaf Education at all. Only one teacher, T2, had received training in Deaf education before joining School for the Deaf -High but he also had to learn SSL from his students in class like other teachers and after school since he had received training using oralism, not sign language. Even participant T6 who was trained in Augmentative and Alternative Communication, struggled when it came to understanding Deaf culture. She had never taught D/deaf students before.

It is significant that the journey of becoming a teacher of Deaf students is not an easy one without proficiency in sign language. The above excerpts reveal that if teachers of the Deaf have not been exposed to Deaf culture and received training in sign language, they are not able to meet the educational needs of Deaf students which are unique because they require the use of sign language as the medium of instruction. This finding is consistent with the literature, where Naidoo (2008) states that it is necessary for teachers of the Deaf to be empowered with knowledge of Deaf culture and proficiency in sign language skills before they are posted to Schools for the Deaf so that they can be in a position to meet all the educational needs of Deaf students from day one. Naidoo also adds that there is a need for in service training and support from the Department of Education for teachers of the Deaf which should include formal training in sign language since no such training had been implemented in schools for the Deaf at that time. Moreover, it is not a formal requirement for teachers to have training in Deaf Education before they enter Schools for the Deaf.

Another significant concern from teachers is that learning sign language from students seems to be time consuming, challenging and hinders the teaching and learning progress for both students and teachers. Musengi, et al. (2015) state that it takes more time for teachers to understand Deaf students and to meet their educational expectations and to learn and understand their culture and their behavior if teachers are not proficient in sign language. Musengi, et al. (2015) also point out that hearing teachers of the Deaf who are not familiar with Deaf culture are also incapable of catering for educational, physical and emotional needs of their students and to establish rapport with parents of Deaf students (Musengi, et al. 2015). This implies that it takes time for the teacher

to determine the kind of educational services and programs which are needed to cater for Deaf students' education if they are not familiar with Deaf culture.

Some of the teachers came from mainstream schools with vast teaching experience and knowledge of the contents of the syllabus in their various disciplines. However, when they joined School for the Deaf-High, they were not able to maximize their potential expertise because they lacked training in sign language. The following excerpts highlight what teachers T2 and T5 said:

T2: I taught 12 years in different mainstream schools before I came to School for the Deaf. I had no experience in teaching D/deaf students...I had passion for teaching Deaf students.

T5: I have been teaching in a mainstream school for 13 years before coming to School for the Deaf. I experienced difficulty in teaching Deaf students because I did not know sign language.

The above excerpts highlight that some of the teachers of the Deaf came from mainstream schools and they had vast amounts of teaching experience and knowledge of the contents of the syllabus in their various disciplines. However, they experienced difficulty in teaching Deaf students because they had not received training in sign language. Even though they have passion for teaching Deaf students, their lack of expertise in sign language was a barrier between those teachers and their students regarding to teaching and learning. Findings showed that moving teachers from mainstream schools to schools for the Deaf caused frustration to both teachers and students because they are not able to understand each other in class until the teachers had learned sign language. Teachers are not able to make the most of their potential knowledge in an effective way if they are not knowledgeable about the effects of hearing loss on the language development of a Deaf child.

The fact is that so far teacher education programs in the institutions of higher learning in the country have not incorporated programs that can effectively train teachers to teach Deaf students. Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) insist that a school for the Deaf needs teachers who are knowledgeable about the effects of deafness on language when it comes to teaching and learning of Deaf students. The authors add that the school should provide of the appropriate support for teachers of the Deaf to promote the use of sign language (Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham, 2013).

On the same note, Naidoo, (2008) suggests that even though teachers come to Schools for the Deaf without any form of training, teachers need to empower themselves with sign language skills.

Naidoo, (2008) adds that such can be done with the help and support from the Ministry of Education and Training through in-service training in Deaf education and in sign language skills so that teachers and students are not frustrated in the process of their teaching and learning. It is interesting to note that teachers who were participants in this study were determined to empower themselves with sign language skills and with Deaf education programs to the point that they became competent in their communication and in their teaching skills and were able to access their students and to facilitate their teaching and learning in class.

On the contrary, T4 was an exception to the above scenario because he joined School for the Deaf-High with a vast knowledge of sign language skills because he is a child of a Deaf adult (CODA). Whilst other teachers acquired Swazi Sign Language from their students, he acquired it from his family members and he is currently serving as a school interpreter for both teachers and students. This teacher had this to say:

T4: I am a hearing teacher and a CODA. My father is hearing and my mother and her siblings were all Deaf. My grandmother was also Deaf. My mother would sign to me whilst I was a child. We could chat about anything that was there to talk about through sign language.

What is significant about this teacher is that he was born to a Deaf family and he grew up within the Deaf community. He identified himself as a CODA and he pointed out that his first language was Swazi Sign Language. He came from a family which had a history of deafness. The history of deafness in this family is traced back to his maternal grandmother who is culturally Deaf but his grandfather was hearing. Her grandmother gave birth to his mother who was Deaf and to his two uncles who were also Deaf. Therefore, T4 acquired and was exposed to Swazi Sign Language mainly from his mother and other family members who enjoyed signing with him whilst he was still a baby. Later on, he became close to his mother and they could chat about anything. He grew up to not only be a teacher of Deaf students, but also a national interpreter. He interpreted for Deaf adults in church and in other public events. He also serves as school interpreter at School for the Deaf- High.

What is also significant about this teacher is that he shares a unique 'CODA space' between the Deaf and the Hearing world (Mudgett-DcCaro, 2011, p. 2). This means that he is bicultural and he serves as an interpreter and a link between the hearing world and the Deaf community. He actually enjoys the riches associated with the knowledge of languages and cultures of the two worlds

(Mudgett-DeCaro (2011, p. 2). He has an exceptional role in the education setting by interpreting and being able to identify with both worlds. Berge and Ytterhus (2015, p. 11) add that the CODA space is constructed in the intersection between the national sign language and the national spoken language. It is also worth mentioning that since this CODA is not only an interpreter, but a teacher by profession, the gap between the concepts which are used by the teachers in the classroom and his signing skills is often minimized because he uses the same signs which are used academically in various subjects. For that reason, he is able to provide equal access to information based on sign language among teachers and students. Berge and Ytterhus (2015, p. 22) add that CODAs who serve as educational interpreters are in a position to obtain first-hand information about cultural and linguistic differences. They also provide linguistic explanations and can coordinate actions to improve Deaf students' capacity to participate effectively in the dialogue in class (Berge and Ytterhus, 2015, p. 22). Let us now hear from school administrators.

### *Administrators*

The school administrators also narrated that they were hearing administrators who came to school for the Deaf as teachers without any experience in teaching Deaf students. Administrator A1 narrated that on her first day in class she was very frustrated and confused because she could not communicate with the students. Administrator A2 also expressed that she came to school for the Deaf as at teacher without any form of training and she was frustrated. The administrators had this to say:

A1: I was posted to School for the Deaf as a teacher but now I am a school administrator. On my first day of school, I was allocated a Grade 2 class. I just went there and I did not know any sign language...I was so frustrated and confused because I could not communicate with my students.

A2: I am a hearing teacher and a school administrator. I arrived at School for the Deaf-Primary as a teacher without any form of training in sign language and I was so frustrated. I could not communicate with my students on my first day of school... I was just confused.

The above excerpts reveal that administrators identified themselves as audiological and culturally 'hearing' when it comes to their identity. They came to School for the Deaf-Primary as teachers of the Deaf but today they are school administrators. In their narratives there is a sense of confusion

and frustration which they experienced in the school because of lack of training in Deaf education. Naidoo (2008, p. 105) also points out that if teachers of the Deaf are not exposed to sign language before they are entrusted with the responsibility of teaching Deaf students, they experience frustration and confusion in class which in turn affects Deaf students because both teachers and the learners, fail to access the curriculum. As a result, the pace of teaching and learning becomes slower and more laborious. Thus, teachers who come to School for the Deaf without any form of training and knowledge of sign language are actually barriers to the education of Deaf students.

Lastly, as a hearing principal and a participant in the study, I also came to School for the Deaf-High with full knowledge of Inclusive Curriculum Studies but I had to learn Swazi Sign Language from my Deaf students. Even though I had knowledge in curriculum studies and had taught in different mainstream schools, I had to learn sign language from students and Deaf adults, much to their excitement and amusement of teaching sign language to their principal. I was determined to learn Deaf culture so as to facilitate my duties and effective communication with students, teachers and Deaf adults. Naidoo (2013, p. 5) also states that school administrators need to be aware of the fact that quick adaptation to the institutional culture can be a powerful tool for building and creating an effective organization. This means that the principal and school administrators have to be open to continual learning in order to develop a shared set of cultural values and beliefs within the school which then enables effective communication and commitment by all the staff members (Naidoo, 2013, p. 5). Antia, et al. (2002, p. 217) add that administrators are responsible for creating a culture whereby Deaf students and members of Deaf community can be involved in the life of the school through effective communication and in understanding of Deaf culture.

Deaf culture is defined by Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (2019, p. 1) as a set of social beliefs, values, behavior, art, literary traditions of communities that are influenced by deafness and which uses sign languages as the main means of communication. Values of Deaf people include the importance of clear language and communication for everyone in the residential Schools for the Deaf (Canadian Hearing Services, 2013, p. 2). It is therefore incumbent on the school administrators to learn more about Deaf culture and to promote it in residential Schools for the Deaf. They need to empower themselves with Deaf culture, especially sign language skills, as soon as they are tasked with the responsibility of being teachers and administrators of Deaf students so

that they are able to communicate with Deaf students and all the staff members (both hearing and Deaf) effectively. The next thematic category to be analyzed is ‘School and Communication’.

### **8.1.2 Thematic Category 2: School and Communication**

Most of the experiences which were narrated by the participants in this category were directly linked with communication, teaching and learning strategies and academic performance of students. Participants were responding to the following question from the interview guide: ‘Tell me about your first day of school, that is, how you communicated with students/teachers, teaching/ learning strategies that you used... teaching and learning positive experiences...’ (see Appendix, A). There are various sub-themes which emerged under this thematic category (see Figure 10). The first sub-themes to be analyzed are ‘communication barrier’ and loneliness and frustration’. All of the participants, students, teachers and administrators narrated how frustrated and stressed they were because of the communication barriers which they encountered in their teaching and learning, especially on their first day of school at the residential School for the Deaf-High, with the exception of one teacher who felt comfortable because he was ‘good’ in sign language. Let us hear from the experiences of students.

#### ***Students***

For students, the sub-themes of ‘communication barrier’ and ‘loneliness and frustration’, emerged when they narrated that they were crying most of the time because they were not able to communicate with other students and their parents/grandparents were leaving them behind. The students felt abandoned by their parents and there was no one to talk to. This implies that finding themselves in the midst of people who did not know how they communicate with their parents/grandparents at home because of their deafness, was a traumatic experience for them and they had never been to boarding school before. For that reason, they felt lonely and frustrated. Students described their first day of school as follows:

S1: I cried a lot when my grandmother left me. I felt abandoned and I wanted to go home. I felt so lonely. There was no one to talk to. I could not communicate with other students.

S3: I got so frustrated because I could not do what other students were doing. I could not sign and I could not write. I could not understand what the teachers were saying. I felt so lonely and lost. I just wanted to go home.

S4: I felt abandoned and lonely. I could not communicate with others and I did not know where I was going to sleep that night.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that Deaf students faced many challenges and a traumatic experience on their first day of school. Students felt ‘abandoned and lonely’ after their parents/grandparents had left them at school and they had never been to a boarding school before they joined the residential School for the Deaf, hence they did not know where they were going to sleep. It was a traumatic experience for them, thinking that their parents were getting rid of them because they (the parents/grandparents) did not know what to do with them. It is also evident that they did not even know about sign language as means of communication at that time, so they felt lonely because they could not communicate with others. They felt ‘lost’ because they could not communicate with their teachers and their peers hence, they could not understand what teachers were saying to them. Staten (2011, p. 23) paints a similar picture, of students sitting in a classroom where everyone else is signing, using a language they have never seen before. They wonder how they are going to follow and understand what is being taught, socialize with their peers and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Staten (2011, p. 23) concurs that these are challenges faced by students who are Deaf when they first join residential schools for the Deaf since most of the students are born to hearing parents. They are not familiar with the use of sign language until such a time when they develop a sense of unity and a cultural identity which is associated with deafness. Schick, et al. (2005, p. 358) add that the engagement pattern which Deaf students experience can be characterized as disconnected and chaotic since students look at the teachers signing and then look at the paper or text book in front of them. By the time they look up again, the teacher may already be in the middle of the sentence and the students have missed critical information until such time as the student’s visual attentional co-ordination and engagement has improved (Schick, et al. 2005, p. 358). Teachers also experienced communication barriers when they first joined School for the Deaf-High.

## ***Teachers***

Teachers also narrated that when they arrived at the School for the Deaf, they experienced communication barriers and they received no orientation whatsoever. Teachers T1 and T3 expressed that there was no orientation whatsoever and there was frustration because the communication barrier was overwhelming since they did not know sign language. Teacher T2 narrated that he had received training in Deaf education before joining School for the Deaf, but he could not communicate with the students because he had been trained in oralism, not in Swazi Sign Language. Teachers T1, T2 and T3 said:

T1: There was no orientation...whatsoever...I did not know any sign language and it was quite a challenge for me to communicate with the students...Actually, there was a communication barrier and frustration on my side.

T2: I experienced challenges and frustrations because I received training in oralism. Even the signs that we were using in Malawi were different from the signs which the students were using here.

T3: The communication barrier was overwhelming such that I thought of quitting and looking for another school. I did not get any orientation.

From the above extracts, it is apparent that teachers were posted to Schools for the Deaf straight from the higher teacher training institutions without any training in Deaf education and sign language. Such a situation led to teachers being frustrated because of the communication barriers which were overwhelming. They found themselves in a situation whereby they were expected to teach Deaf students but they did not know how to communicate with them. If teachers who are posted to Schools for the Deaf are not being prepared to teach Deaf learners effectively, there is bound to be frustration on the part of both students and teachers, made worse by the fact that they did not receive any orientation in sign language when they arrived at the school. In such a situation, teachers and their students cannot access each other in class and that lead to frustration and failure on both teachers and students. It is interesting to read that one of the inclusive education policy objectives in The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (2011, p. 16) is to ensure that no child shall be denied access to education at any level on the basis of disability yet Deaf students are denied access to education because of the communication barriers which they experience in class.

Ntinda, et al. (2019, p. 86) point out that lack of teachers' professional competencies to teach Deaf students has significant implications for the educational success and experiences of Deaf students. There is a need for curriculum developers to ensure that all teacher training institutions, develop Deaf education programs as part of the teacher training curriculum. This would allow for adequate preparation of teachers to handle teaching and learning of Deaf students in special schools. DePew (2015, p. 70) also argues that placing teachers who are knowledgeable and competent in sign language to schools for the Deaf, would serve to foster the Deaf children's first experiences in language. It could also result in Deaf students being more knowledgeable of their first language which will improve their degree of learning in a second language. Thus, placing teachers who have not received any training in deaf education in schools for the Deaf, not only frustrates the teachers but is also detrimental to the education of Deaf learners. Administrators also experienced communication barriers when they first joined the school.

### *Administrators*

The school administrators also experienced communication barriers when they first arrived at the School for the Deaf. Not knowing sign language and Deaf culture became a challenge to them as well. They also received no orientation when they first arrived at the School for the Deaf. Administrator A2 had this to say:

A2: I received no orientation in sign language. Not knowing sign language became a barrier for me and my students in class. I could not communicate with them effectively.

From the above extract, I deduced that the school administrators also experienced communication barriers in class because they too, did not know sign language when they were posted to the School for the Deaf-Primary. They could not communicate with Deaf students effectively in class because they had not received training in Deaf education prior to teaching Deaf students. This means that it became part of the school culture to allow teachers who did not know sign language to go to class by themselves without taking into consideration whether there would be effective teaching and learning in class. Administrators, as people who had been directly affected by this teaching system, need to see to it that other teachers who come to school without the knowledge of sign language need sign language orientation before they go to class for effective teaching and learning

to take place. Ngobeni (2017, p. 67) adds that teachers of the Deaf students need in-service training and orientation so that they become familiar with sign language and Deaf culture before going to class, otherwise the performance of Deaf learners will continue to be affected and lead to most Deaf students diverting to vocational programs. School administrators too, should be well versed with Deaf culture and sign language before joining residential schools for the Deaf in order to support and guide teachers and facilitate effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

On a positive note, one of the administrators, A1, narrated that she was determined to teach Deaf students even though she was frustrated. She said:

A1: I could not communicate with my students in sign language. I had to try and introduce myself to my Grade 2 class. I was determined to teach my students even though I felt frustrated. I then decided to take sign language lessons from my students and I began to enjoy communicating with them.

From the above excerpt, it is evident that even though school administrators were frustrated about not being able to communicate with their students, at least one of them was determined to teach the students. She was positive about learning sign language so that she could effectively communicate with her students. However, Mann (2016, p. 14) stipulates that no matter how much determination hearing teachers have in teaching Deaf students, if they come to school lacking skills in using sign language for instruction, such causes difficulties in reading and language abilities for this special population of students. In addition, Ntinda, et al. (2019, p. 86) state that hearing teachers of Deaf students have a critical role to play in the education of Deaf students in communication, teaching, learning and in general well-being of Deaf students. Considering such a crucial role, it is important that when these teachers are posted to residential schools for the Deaf, they have received training in Deaf education and proficiency in sign language. This implies that it is essential for hearing teachers of the Deaf to come to residential schools for the Deaf well equipped with sign language skills so that the education of Deaf students is not affected by teachers' lack of sign language skills. The next sub-themes to be discussed are sub-themes of 'coping strategies' and 'resilience and gaining confidence'.

## *Students*

The sub-themes of ‘coping strategies’ and ‘resilience and gaining confidence’ also emerged as the narratives unfolded under the thematic category of School and Communication. Students S1 and S4 narrated that their coping strategy was always ‘copying from friends’ whatever it was that they were writing until such a time that they mastered sign language skills. Even though students went through a struggle when it comes to communication barrier in the classroom, they did not give up on their educational dreams. They became resilient until they gained confidence in doing their classwork on their own. They were able to get some answers correctly on their own without copying from their friends. This is what the students said pertaining to their coping strategies and gaining confidence in what they were doing:

S1: I would always rely on my friends and copy whatever it was that they were doing or writing. After few months, I mastered sign language and I began to enjoy school... I gained confidence in myself.

S4: My strategy was copying from my friends so that I could pass my tests. When I passed my tests without copying from my friends, my confidence grew.

The above extracts indicate that, Deaf students used quite a number of coping strategies in order to cope with their everyday school lives and to counteract the communication barriers which they encountered in class. In spite of the challenges which Deaf students faced at school, they continued to thrive and find ways to cope with the situation. On the same note, one student, S2, who came from a mainstream school, pointed out she mostly relied on lip reading since most teachers would speak and sign at the same time. However, she pointed out that she encountered challenges when teachers spoke whilst facing the chalk board. For that reason, she could not get all the information but relied mostly on the students sitting next to her. She gained confidence when she was able to get correct answers by herself. The following excerpt highlight what students S2 said:

S2: I relied mostly on lip reading because most teachers were speaking and signing at the same time...but some teachers would speak whilst facing the board, and I would then copy from my friends. I gained confidence when getting some of the answers correctly.

In order for the educational dreams of students to be realized, it is evident that Deaf students had to come up with coping strategies in order to reduce the amount of stress in their lives which was associated with communication barriers in class. They always found a way of alleviating struggles which they faced pertaining to their school work so that they could protect their self-esteem and

became confident in what they were doing. Elliot (2005, p. 64) explains that coping strategies represent attempts on the part of the D/deaf individual to lessen the physical or psychological pain that is associated with ongoing stress in his or her life. This means that Deaf students often sought to find friends in class who could assist them to alleviate the struggles which they faced in class pertaining to their school work. Young, et al. (2008, p. 42) explain that coping strategies are a form of <sup>15</sup>resilience which enables an individual to deal with stress so that s/he can thrive and become successful in whatever s/he is doing. In addition, Jambor and Elliot (2005, p. 64) add that Deaf individuals employ various coping mechanisms to protect and enhance their sense of self-worth in schools. It is essential that they find ways of counteracting the hassles they face every day in a school environment (Jambor and Elliot, 2005, p. 67). David and Barry (2014) also add that Deaf students become confident when they are able to use sign language as their first sign language and when they gain the ability to communicate effectively with others. This means that the various coping strategies which Deaf students use in the school environment positively influences their self-esteem and their sense of self-worth. They bring about confidence and courage in everything they do in class. Teachers also used certain coping strategies when teaching Deaf students as discussed below.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers narrated that they too had to employ some coping strategies when teaching Deaf students. Strategies which teachers used included: modifying the syllabus for students so that it becomes accessible to them, developing new signs for the new words with the help of students as teachers introduce new concepts to the students, signing words together with the students and using pictures and visual diagrams to create stories. The following extracts highlight what teachers said in relation to their different coping strategies:

T2: At some point I had to develop some signs for certain academic words which had no signs with the help of the students...words that were new to them.

T3: I had to break the curriculum into small portions of information...trying to simplify it as much as I could.

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<sup>15</sup> Resilience in this study refers to not giving up but to be able to withstand the situation that is prevailing at the time

T5: My coping strategy was writing on the board. We would sign the notes together and engage them on group discussions.

From the above extracts, I deduced that teachers of the Deaf are dedicated in teaching their Deaf students. They employed various strategies which enabled them to teach Deaf students successfully. It was very interesting to find out the variety of teaching strategies devised by the teachers to assist Deaf students to access the curriculum. The strategies such as signing notes together with the students, developing signs for new words with the help of the students and group discussions, are proof that the students were engaged in a dialogue. These teaching strategies are favored by Freire (1998, p. 30) in his notion of critical pedagogy where he argues that education should not become an act of ‘depositing’ in which students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor of knowledge. He points out that, instead of communicating with students, teachers often just make deposits of information which students patiently receive, memorize and repeat and he calls this a ‘banking concept of education’ (Freire, 1998, p. 30). However, Musyoka, (2016, p. 94) points out that the kind of compassion and patience teachers exhibited for their students “was a sustaining and nourishing force in their professional journey.” The struggles teachers faced in the classroom did not deter them from doing their best in teaching Deaf learners. They were self-driven and committed in educating their students. School administrators also employed some strategies which enabled them to be productive in class.

### *Administrators*

The sub-themes of ‘coping strategies’ and ‘resilience and gaining confidence’ also emerged from the administrators’ narratives. The following excerpt highlights what administrator A1 said about ‘coping strategies’ and ‘resilience and gaining confidence’:

A1: At home, I had to practice signs...looking at myself in the mirror and signing most of the words which I had learned from the students and from Deaf adults who were working at school. I used to have at least two or three students who were willing to teach me the signs after school. Later on, I became comfortable with my signing skills and I gained confidence in myself and in teaching my students.

It is interesting to note that administrator A1 devised a strategy of learning sign language from her students and from Deaf adults who were working at the school. She spent most of the time learning

sign language even after school from her students. She would always practice signing at home, looking at herself in the mirror whilst signing. After gaining sign language skills, A1 gained confidence in her teaching skills, in herself as a teacher of Deaf students and as a school administrator. Administrator A1 was able to engage her students fully in classroom activities and to facilitate her lessons efficiently because she could communicate with her students effectively. What administrator A1 did, is fully recommended by Freire in his notion of critical pedagogy when he stipulates that classroom experiences, through the facilitation of teachers, should become situations in which students are encouraged to engage as active participants in their own education and develop critical awareness to assess fairness within their education and living situations (Breuning, 2009, p. 247; Freire, 1998, p. 30).

However, DePew (2015, p. 23) points out that it is often a challenge to find teachers of the Deaf who are good sign language role models in sign language. Instead, most teachers of the Deaf students learn sign language from their Deaf students. DePew (2015) emphasizes that the teachers' traditional way of learning sign language from their students which they are expected to teach is a "backward approach of learning sign language" (DePew, 2015, p. 23). This means that schools for the Deaf need to be provided with teachers who are qualified and fully trained in sign language so that Deaf students are provided with the opportunity to perform well in their academic work from day one. Students should not assume the responsibility of teaching sign language to their teachers because their sign language also needs to grow and not be limited. Hence, confident and committed sign language role models are needed in schools for the Deaf to facilitate teaching of sign language as the first language for Deaf students.

After students, teachers and school administrators had gained sign language skills, they were able to experience a sense of belonging and compassion. Hence, the next sub-theme to be discussed is 'sense of belonging and compassion.'

### ***Students***

Although the participants had experienced communication barriers and frustration when they first joined the School for the Deaf, students highlighted that they experienced a sense of belonging and compassion after they had learned sign language and were able to communicate freely with

each other and with their teachers. Students accepted themselves as being Deaf, that is, they accepted that they belong to the Deaf community. Student S2 who had done her primary education in the mainstream school, communicated this sub theme in a very moving way:

S2: When I arrived at School for the Deaf-High, my friends taught me that I was Deaf and I was expected to use sign language all the time, even in class. I was not supposed to talk to teachers but to sign all the time. So... that was amazing and eye opening to me. I began to sign with interest. I continued to sign and to adapt to my new school. I had friends who loved me. No one was laughing at me anymore. No one told me that I was talking badly and funny anymore. I felt loved and accepted. I was not lonely anymore.

The above quote shows that some of the D/deaf students who go through mainstream schools are sometimes lonely and laughed at when they attempt to speak in their 'deaf voice'. They are often labelled as speaking badly and funny and they become a laughing stock. They are also deprived of the sense of belonging, of their culture and of the opportunity of using sign language until they are moved to schools for the Deaf. Mcilroy and Störbeck (2011) also express that D/deaf students experience alienation and feelings of frustration and loneliness while trying to survive in the mainstream schools. However, when they are moved to schools for the Deaf, they experience a profound change of identity and find a sense of belonging and love within the Deaf community as valued learners. No one tells them that they are speaking badly or funny and they feel loved and accepted as S2 puts it. This means that mainstream schools follow the medical model of deafness which "is premised on the view that D/deaf people are not only different from hearing people, but they are also inferior to hearing people" (Reagan, 2010, p. 1) hence Deaf students are laughed at and are regarded as requiring treatment or care to fix their hearing so that they can be considered 'normal' (Goering, 2015, p. 134; Moyne, 2012, p. 1; Finkelstein, 2007, p. 2). Thus, when Deaf students join schools for the Deaf, they discover their full capabilities and they are not laughed at, but feel accepted by other students who are like them.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers also experienced a sense of belonging and compassion after spending time with their students inside and outside the class. Teacher T2 expressed that he felt a sense of belonging after learning to communicate with his students. Teacher T3 narrated that she enjoyed not only learning

sign language from her students, but also teaching them through sign language. She also got a sign name from her students and she loved it. Teachers T2 and T3 said:

T2: I felt at home and I began to enjoy signing. I felt a sense of belonging after learning to communicate with my students.

T3: I felt a sense of belonging and compassion after learning sign language and began not only to enjoy learning sign language from my students but also teaching them through sign language...They gave me my sign name and I loved it.

From the above excerpts, I deduced that teachers felt comfortable in teaching their Deaf students and gained a sense of belonging and compassion after they had learned sign language. They became exposed to a lot of signs which enabled them to improve their signing skills and to communicate freely with their students. They also got sign names from their students which is a sign of belonging and compassion. In this regard, Musengi (2014) submitted that many teachers of the Deaf students are very dedicated to their work. The author writes that teachers are committed to teaching D/deaf learners although they first struggle to communicate with them (Musengi, 2014). After a few months, they feel a sense of belonging and pride after their sign language skills have improved and they are able to remove the language barrier and access their D/deaf learners easily (Musengi, 2014). On the same note, Adair (2017, p. 1) adds that a sense of belonging is a sense of unity, a connection with others with whom you share some cultural values and who belong to a group of society. A sense of belonging that comes from a group that shares the same experiences, challenges, values and language is very beneficial in the lives of Deaf students (Adair, 2017, p. 1). Day and Sutton-Spence (2010) also explain that the use of sign names by Deaf students is an indication of unity in school because sign names are not acquired from family members because Deaf students have hearing parents who have no knowledge of Deaf customs; instead, sign names are acquired from other Deaf students upon entering school (Day and Sutton-Spence, 2010). Deaf students have developed their own sign names and those of their teachers and those sign names have become part of the school community life (Day and Sutton-Spence, 2010). This means that teachers are given sign names by their students which helps to generate a sense of belonging and unity in the school. It is therefore essential for teachers to commit themselves to learning sign language when joining schools for the Deaf in order to show that they value Deaf customs and culture and that they are ready to embrace it as teachers of Deaf students.

On the contrary, one teacher, T4, narrated a different story from that of other teachers. Although he is hearing, he was a CODA and was already exposed to Deaf culture by the time he arrived at the school. He narrated that:

T4: The minute I stepped in class; I fell in love with my students because they were so willing to learn. The sense of belonging was there for me even before I went to School for the Deaf-High. Most of the students knew me and I belonged to the Deaf community. I enjoyed interpreting for other teachers in class each time they needed me to do so.

It is worth noting that teacher T4 came to School for the Deaf-High with a vast knowledge of SSL already. He had a unique role at school, that of being an interpreter for both teachers and students because of his cultural background as a CODA. His interpretation skills made him closer to the students and the sense of belonging and compassion was already there when he became their teacher because most of the students knew him. CODAs are powerful members of the Deaf community, in that they are native signers who are socialized in Deaf culture (Pizer, et al. 2013, p. 76). That is why participant T4 easily identifies with Deaf students. Hadjidakou and Nikolarazi (2007, p. 486) add that children of Deaf adults usually develop a bicultural identity and they undertake the interpreter role in their families and in their work places. This means that participant T4 enjoyed interpreting for Deaf students and teachers because he had the role of bridging communication barriers that existed between the hearing teachers and Deaf students in the school (Pizer, et al. 2013, p. 76). For that reason, participant T4 executed his duties of being the school interpreter each time he was needed because he felt that he belonged to the Deaf community hence he experienced a sense of belonging in the residential School for the Deaf-High as well.

### ***Administrators***

Administrators also felt a sense of belonging after they had learned sign language and they enjoyed spending time with students and mothering the young ones because they were able to communicate with them. Administrator A2 expressed that she enjoyed spending time with her Deaf students, especially the little ones because she was able to communicate with them. Administrator A2 narrated that:

A2: I now enjoy signing and I enjoy spending time with my Deaf students, especially the little one... I enjoy mothering them and I am able to communicate with them.

It is interesting to see that administrators finally felt at home at residential School for the Deaf-Primary after learning sign language. Administrators also enjoy mothering them, that is, taking care of the little ones when they first come to school because they are able to communicate with them. Callis (2017, p. 2) stresses that if Deaf students are taught by teachers who are knowledgeable about sign language, they are likely to have their emotional, social and educational needs met. They connect with their teachers and are able to share their experiences of deafness. This means that Deaf children need to be welcomed with compassion and be immersed in the Deaf cultural environment which has been created by their teachers and their school administrators so that their environment becomes comfortable and easy to adapt to. If teachers and administrators come to school with the knowledge of sign language, it could be highly beneficial to both students and teachers. Everyone would feel welcomed and accepted and the Deaf environment would be more nurtured.

Moreover, during the investigation of the educational journey of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators, participants narrated that at some point in their journey, they experienced a situation whereby they found themselves experiencing ‘fear for the unknown’, particularly after the students had written their Grade 10 examination. Hence the sub-theme ‘fear of the unknown’ also emerged under the thematic category of School and Communication whereby participants anxiously waited for their first Grade 10 external examination results. Let us hear what the students said:

### *Students*

For students S3 and S4, the sub-theme of ‘fear of the unknown’ surfaced when they were expressing their experiences of writing their first examination in Grade 10. They had written the special examination at primary level and they had passed their Grade 7 with good grades. They were now anxiously waiting for their Grade 10 examination results. They had this to say:

S3: In 2011, we sat for Junior Certificate examination. We were all waiting for the results to come but we did not know what we were waiting for. No one

prepared us for the worst that was coming. To my surprise, we all failed. I did not know what was going to happen to me. I had to wait and hear from the teachers.

S4: I was eagerly waiting for the results like all other students. When the time of the results came, our names were not in the local newspaper and I did not know what was happening. The next thing was, I saw the headlines that we had all failed. I thought that was the end for me. I did not know what was going to happen to me. We ended up repeating the same grade.

From the above quotations, it can be deduced that the journey of these Deaf students comprised fear after they had experienced failure and did not know what to do about such a situation. Their names were not listed in the local newspaper like all other students who had passed Grade 10 examination. At this point in time, these students were engulfed by the ‘fear of the unknown’ because they did not know what was going to happen to them. They ended up repeating the same grade. This means that Deaf students sat for the same examination as their hearing peers and they did not expect that they were all going to fail. Deaf students found themselves stressed and confused about that situation. Duarte, et al. (2016, p. 2) point out that external examination in Grade 10 is intended to assess the students’ level of achievement through the use of national evaluation. However, students do fail and failure in school can have many lifelong consequences. Duarte, et al. (2016, p. 9) stress that students’ failure and grade retention reduce self-esteem and alters peer group formation. Failure has a negative impact on measures of social adjustment, behavior, self-competence and negative attitudes towards school and can cause considerable stress for students (Duarte, et al. 2016, p. 9). On the same note, Luft (2017, p. 31) highlights that students’ failure has more immediate impact on Deaf students because they become ineligible for post-secondary education options thereby limiting potential employment. Teachers also narrated that they experienced ‘fear of the unknown’ in their educational journey.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers and administrators were also caught up in the same situation. In their experiences, the sub-theme of ‘fear of the unknown’ also emerged. Teachers narrated that they too, were scared for the students when the results were about to be published because the students had written special examination at primary which was set and marked by their primary teaches. They added that students had difficulty in understanding the concepts which were being taught in class hence they

were not able to cover all the content before sitting for external examination. Whilst T4 was afraid when the results were about to be published because students were used to special examination, T5 anticipated that students were not going to make it because they were not able to cover all the needed content before sitting for their external examination. The following excerpts highlight what T4 and T5 said in their narratives:

T4: Whilst I was waiting for the results to be published, I was afraid because students were used to special examination which was set and marked by their teachers at primary level. They also had difficulty in understanding the concepts that were being taught in class.

T5: I could tell that they were not going to make it because our students did not cover all the content that needed to be covered in two years. The content was full of abstract concepts that were difficult for our students to understand. But we had to let them write and we did not know what the outcome was going to be.

From the above excerpts, I deduce that students did not make it in their external examination because they had difficulty in understanding the concepts which were being taught in class. For that reason, they were not able to cover all the needed content because it was full of abstract concepts which students struggled to understand. Hence the outcome was a dismal failure for all the students that year. On that note, Luft (2017, p. 30) warns that beyond primary years, Deaf students face challenges because academic content increasingly utilizes abstract symbols and concepts which require higher-order thinking to examine relationships between principles and constructs. Deaf students often struggle with acquiring content because the language of the classroom is often years above their linguistic fluency (Luft, 2017, p. 30). The cognitive constructs necessary to comprehend, manipulate and respond to curriculum content also depends upon linguistic abilities to describe comparisons, sequences and causation which are expressed using compound and complex sentence structures in English (Luft, 2017, p. 30). Maina et al. (2011) also state that teachers of Deaf students are not able to cover the curriculum content easily because of the abstract nature of topics that students find difficult to understand. It is difficult for teachers to teach without using a modified curriculum that has been adapted by curriculum designers to suit the needs of Deaf students.

However, one of the teachers, T3, blamed the examination board for refusing teachers permission to prepare special examination for students in the same way they did at primary level and also for

allowing students to write external examination papers without any modifications. The following extract exemplifies what the teacher T3 said:

T3: Before the results came out, I was scared to death because the examination board had refused teachers a permission to prepare a special examination like they had done at primary level. The mainstream curriculum is difficult for Deaf students because it is not easy to teach and both teachers and students end up being frustrated by the difficult concepts which need to be taught. Students were given examination papers without any modifications what so ever. So, it was a wait and see situation.

From the above extract, I deduced that teachers find the mainstream curriculum difficult to access and it frustrates both teachers and students. This also means that the mainstream curriculum is inaccessible and rigid for Deaf students hence both teachers and students end up being frustrated in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers' expectations were that the mainstream examination papers were going to be modified in order to suit the needs of Deaf students but that did not happen. Mwenda (2010) and Van Dinther et al. (2011) add that the mainstream curriculum conflicts with Deaf students' educational needs because the stories from the curriculum are irrelevant to Deaf students since they miss 60-70% of the vocabulary that is used in these stories. This means that mainstream curriculum needs to be adapted so that it accommodates the educational needs of Deaf students.

### *Administrators*

Administrators also commented that although these students had written the special examination at primary level, it was not good for them because it did not help them to improve their reading and writing skills. However, they pointed out that they were not happy that Deaf students were following the mainstream curriculum. They complained that Deaf students were not familiar with the mainstream curriculum which they were exposed to at high school level. Therefore, the sub-theme 'fear of the unknown' also emerged in their data. This is what A1 highlighted:

A1: I knew that Deaf students and their teachers were going to experience challenges when the results come out since the examination board stressed that Deaf students should sit for the same examination as their hearing peers but there was no exam modification. We did not know what was going to happen but we kept on waiting and hoping for the best. Teachers had not covered the content

and the special curriculum which students used at primary level did not yield good results in terms of reading and writing.

From the above quotation, it is evident that administrators also feared for these Deaf students and their teachers after students had written external examination. One of the administrators pointed out that the mainstream curriculum seemed to be challenging for Deaf students. Administrator A1 maintained that a special curriculum which was set and marked by teachers at primary level was the best for Deaf students even though it did not yield good results in terms of reading and writing. Duarte et al. (2016, p. 2) state that even though Deaf students take the same external examination as other students, there is a need for modification and adaptation of their examination. Current legislation provides for special assessment allowances such as extra time, use of sign language interpreter for the examination and alternative means of communication that may benefit Deaf students (Duarte, 2016, p. 2). Van Dinther (2011) reiterates that in most cases, teachers of Deaf students are left with no curriculum guidelines and the mainstream curriculum which they are following is far above the level of the Deaf students' linguistic and academic capabilities, hence the sub-theme of 'failure and despair' also emerged in the narratives of the participants.

### *Students*

Students narrated that at some point in their educational journey, they experienced 'failure and despair'. After students had failed Grade 10 examination, teachers and students were perplexed since they did not know what to do next after the announcement that all the students had failed. Student S1 pointed out that after receiving the news that all students had failed Grade 10 examination; he was stunned and did not know what was going to happen next. He also highlighted that there were so many negatives comments about their performance in the local newspapers to an extent that he felt like it was the end of the road for him. On the same note, students S4 was disappointed by the fact that some of their teachers recommended that they (students) should be transferred to vocational programs. Such comments from the teachers meant that teachers had low expectations of their students. This was an indication that teachers did not believe that their students were capable of doing better in their academic work. Such comments implied that teachers did not look into other factors that might have contributed to the poor performance of their

students, but simply suggested that they should leave school and be enrolled into vocational programs. Students S1 and S4 said:

S1: To my surprise, we all failed. I was stunned...I did not know what was going to happen next... I read about it in the newspapers. There were so many negative comments about our performance to an extent that I felt it was the end of the road for us.

S4: I was so distressed...I had failed... some of the teachers did not believe in us. They told us to leave school and go for vocational programs.

From the above extracts, I deduced that students were distressed when they discovered that they did not do well in their Grade 10 examination. I also deduced that low academic expectations from teachers and negative comments from people had a negative impact on the students' self-beliefs as well as their capabilities. They did not believe that their students were capable of doing better in their academic work. They also did not look into other factors that might have contributed to the poor performance of their students but simply suggested that they should leave school and be enrolled into vocational programs. In this regard, Musengi (2014) submits that most hearing teachers have low expectations of D/deaf students and hearing attitudes towards deafness. The negative comments about Deaf students' academic performance, reflect attitudes and beliefs about the superiority of hearing and speaking which informed teachers' beliefs that D/deaf children are deficient learners with language and experiential deficits which require remedial, therapeutic and vocational teaching (Musengi, 2014). Musengi (2014) adds that in most cases, poor performance of D/deaf students and challenges that teachers face in the classroom are largely attributed to the learners' deficiencies and unreasonable policies in Deaf education as well as to the curriculum which Deaf learners do not understand. Teachers' incompetency in sign language is often not reflected on by teachers (Musengi, 2014). Smith (2013) points out that teachers with low academic expectations of their Deaf students usually exhibit differentiation behaviors towards perceived low achievement such as exposing students to an impoverished curriculum such as vocational programs. However, Smith (2013, p. 20) advises that, teachers of the Deaf do not only need to have higher expectations of Deaf students, but they also need support and evidence on how to work with this population from trained professionals such as itinerant teachers. This means that low academic expectations from teachers is more likely to be a reflection of the fact that they are not coping academically. They need support from trained professionals so that their teaching skills can yield good academic performance from Deaf students.

## ***Teachers***

Teachers narrated that they were disappointed by the fact that their students had failed and that they were blamed for the failure of the students. Teacher T1 stated that he also felt like a failure mostly because the public blamed teachers for the students' failure. Teachers T2 and T3 narrated that they were disappointed because other contributing factors such as the issue of Deaf students following the mainstream curriculum which the students were not familiar with, were not mentioned at all. Teachers said:

T1: The headlines ran all over the local newspaper. Mostly, the public blamed us as teachers. I felt like a failure.

T2: What disappointed me the most, was the fact that we were blamed for the failure of the students. Other contributing factors such as the use of mainstream curriculum was not mentioned.

T3: They all failed and the blame was put on teachers not on the mainstream curriculum which the students were not familiar with.

From the above quotations, it is clear that teachers were blamed for the students' failure, and other factors such as the use of the mainstream curriculum were not mentioned at all. The issues of curriculum were completely ignored probably because most of the people were not aware of such issues. They were only interested in results. Musonda, (2017, p. 10) reiterates that teachers are often blamed for poor performance of Deaf students because the majority of teachers are not conversant with sign language. However, the United Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2017/8) reports that education is not a one man's show, but a shared responsibility among government, schools, teachers, parents and private actors. Accountability for the shared responsibilities defines the way teachers teach, students learn and government acts (UNESCO, 2017/8). UNESCO (2017/8) also warns that disproportionate blame on anyone actor for systematic educational problems can have serious negative side effects, widening inequality and damaging learning. This implies that any curriculum must be designed with care and with the principles of equality (UNESCO, 2017/8). Therefore, blaming teachers for poor academic performance is often unjust and unconstructive and teachers cannot be held solely accountable for outcomes that depend on the actions of others (UNESCO, 2017/8).

In addition, Musyoka, et al. (2015, p. 93) point out that teachers are always blamed for the failure of students yet it is often difficult and frustrating for teachers of the Deaf to adapt and modify the

regular curriculum so that it suits the needs of Deaf students. Musyoka, et al. (2015, p. 93) add that the curriculum is designed for regular students and the most frustrating part is the fact that at the end of the year, Deaf students are expected to take the same examination as their hearing peers and the modifications which teachers make for their Deaf students are not allowed in the external examinations. At the end of the year, when the results come out, teachers are blamed for the students' poor performance (Musyoka, et al. 2015, p. 93). This means that trying to meet the needs of Deaf students using the mainstream curriculum as is, is not beneficial when it comes to improving the performance of Deaf student not unless the curriculum designers adapt the curriculum in such a way that it accommodates the diverse learning needs of all the students. When it comes to critical pedagogy, Freire (1972) in his book entitled *'The Education of the Oppressed'* points out that curriculum issues have caused inequities in the education system which in turn have violated the rights of less privileged members of the community and it ends up in denying the basic rights of all citizens (Salehi and Mohammadkhani, 2013, p. 60). Freire avers that critical education is a reaction to these curriculum inequities (Salehi and Mohammadkhani, 2013, p. 60). This means that critical pedagogy questions the myth of equal opportunities and abilities that are expected to derive from the school curriculum. Issues of inequality in the curriculum defeats the overall goal of inclusive education and training policy which is "the development of an inclusive education and training system that will uncover and address barriers to learning and recognize and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs" (National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018, p. 13). This means that the curriculum as a playing field for all learners, needs to be levelled in order to accommodate learners with diverse learning needs.

### ***Administrators***

The sub-theme of 'failure and despair' also emerged from the administrators' stories. Administrators highlighted that the issues that affect the performance of Deaf students such as the use of the mainstream curriculum which is not adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students, need to be addressed. If not, teachers will always be blamed for the failure of Deaf students. One of the administrators, A2, related that:

A2: If the curriculum for Deaf students is not adapted to fit the needs of these learners, they will fail and teachers will always be blamed for the students' failure.

From the above extract, I deduced that teachers are often blamed for poor academic performance without considering other contributing factors such as curriculum issues. Ntinda, et al. (2019, p. 79) point out that the academic success and experiences of Deaf students are the result of a number of complex factors such as the characteristics of students and their family environments as well as experiences inside and outside school. Pena Garrido, et al. (2016, p. 3) also state that in order for teachers to respond effectively to the special educational needs of Deaf students and to improve their academic performance, it is essential for curriculum designers to implement a series of modifications and adjustments to the curriculum which is a process known as 'adaptation'. This means that curriculum adaptations should no longer focus exclusively on the examination or assessment procedures but should be extended to address the overall teaching and learning process of Deaf students (Pena Garrido, et al. 2016, p. 3). This also means that all the relevant education stakeholders need to interact and engage each other in a dialogue so that the mainstream curriculum can be designed with care and with the principles of equality in order to meet the unique educational needs of all students. Hence, the next sub-theme to be discussed is 'dialogue and interaction'.

The sub-theme 'dialogue and interaction' also emerged as participants disclosed how they were able to forge their way after they had experienced dismal failure and despair related to their performance. For students, the sub-theme 'dialogue and interaction' emerged when they elaborated on the discussions they had with their principal, teachers and parents in a bid to find a way forward in the education of Deaf students.

### ***Students***

Students S1 and S3 narrated that after they had failed, teachers, parents and the Ministry of Education and Training engaged in dialogue, discussing the issues of curriculum and other factors that might have led to students' failure. Student S1 expressed that there was a lot of interaction among stakeholders including subject panel members and examination board members. Students said:

S1: After we have failed, we got engaged in dialogues and discussions about the school curriculum and other social matters with our teachers and parents. There was a lot of interaction among relevant stakeholders...including subject panel members, the examination board and the Ministry of Education and Training.

S3: We spent most of the time with our teachers even after school. Teachers engaged us in discussions and in dialogues and we interacted a lot with them.

From the above quotations, the importance of dialogue, discussions and interaction is apparent. All the relevant stakeholders were involved in the meetings and discussions. Most importantly, was the involvement of students in these discussions as people who were directly affected by the regular curriculum which they were expected to follow. It is unusual to learn that Deaf students were also involved in the discussions of curriculum issues that affects their education. In this regard, Freires' critical pedagogy advocates that students should be engaged in dialogue in matters that pertain to their education. Freire points out that "passive banking education" (Freire et al., 2000, p. 73) can be eliminated in Deaf education if Deaf students can be frequently involved in discussions that pertain to their education. This means that dialogue has the power of enabling the students 'voices' to be heard. Giroux (2010, p. 3) posits that dialogue has the power of offering students "the conditions for self-reflection and self-managed life and to ask themselves what it means to be citizens". This means that teachers and school administrators should not act as people who know everything but should "be partners of students in their relations with them" (Freire et al. 2000, p. 75) through dialogue. Aliakbari and Faraji (2011, p. 78) also advocate that teachers should "engage students in dialogue by inviting them to name and narrate their own experiences and allow them to relate those experiences to what they are learning in class and create new forms of knowledge through problem posing education and questioning problematic issues in their lives." This means that engaging students in dialogue about curriculum issues that affect their performance was remarkable, confirming Freire's point that teachers and school administrators should not always serve as experts who know everything and think that students are empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 78). During the dialogues with their teachers and other stakeholders, students were able to share their experiences and it transpired that their teachers were more than willing to engage them so that they could write the examination again.

## *Teachers*

Teachers also revealed that all the stakeholders were involved in the discussions pertaining to the modifications of the examinations of the Deaf students after they had failed their Grade 10 examination. Even the examination board was willing to allow for modifications and reasonable accommodations in the examination of Deaf students since it had become a national concern. Teachers T1, T3 and T6 narrated that:

T1: There was a lot of dialogue among the stakeholders, including students and parents pertaining to the issue of assessment and curriculum adaptations.

T3: After that [students' failure] we had a series of meetings with students, parents and the subject panel members as well as the examination board. We needed assistance in modifying the curriculum and having reasonable accommodations for our students.

T6: Several meetings were held with the examination board members and they made it clear that they had to sit for the same examination like other students if they were to receive the same certificates at the end of the day.

Teacher also mentioned that the Minister for Education visited the school to deliberate on the curriculum issues of Deaf learners with teachers and the school administrators. This shows that at this juncture, the curriculum for Deaf students became a national issue. It is worth noting that the examination board made it clear that Deaf students had to sit for the same examination like other students if they were to receive the same certificates at the end of the day. This means that as long as Deaf students follow the regular curriculum, they are expected to sit for the same examination as other students. In addition, involving the Ministry of Education was a good move for the teachers and the school administrators since the curriculum is not very flexible and had not adapted not been adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students (Mwanyuma, 2016, p. 54). The curriculum did not provide adequate strategies for teaching Deaf students hence teachers struggled to deliver the curriculum content to Deaf learners (Mwanyuma, 2016, p. 54). The curriculum adaptations for Deaf students are essential and should not focus exclusively on the examination or assessment procedures but should be extended to address the overall teaching and learning process (Ntinda, et al. 2019, p. 3). This means that if the curriculum of Deaf students can be adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students, the academic performance of Deaf students could improve. The administrators also narrated on the sub-theme 'dialogue and interaction'.

## *Administrators*

Administrators pointed out that they also engaged in dialogue with the examination board and the Ministry of Education and Training, trying to convince them to effect some modifications in the examination of Deaf students. Administrators also engaged Deaf adults in a dialogue so that they could assist teachers and students with sign language training and teaching. Administrator A2 narrated that:

A2: Both schools had to engage Deaf adults at the school who were acting as assistant teachers to help in teaching sign language to both teachers and students in a bid to improve results for Deaf students. We often held meetings with the English department as well and discussed the way forward for improving English for our Deaf learners.

In the process of dialogue and interaction, administrators suggested that engaging Deaf adults can help in supporting Deaf students in their learning of the curriculum. They pointed out that Deaf adults can assist in training both teachers and students in sign language in order to improve the curriculum of Deaf students. Mapepa and Magano, (2018, p. 3) state that the availability of Deaf adults in a school setting is important for role modelling because they form a link between the teachers with normal hearing and the learners who are Deaf (Mapepa and Magano, 2018, p. 9). This means that curriculum support should involve everyone in the school environment hence Mapepa and Magano, (2018, p. 3) point out that “curriculum support is a whole school issue” and no one should be left out during the curriculum discussions. Mcilroy (2008) adds that Deaf adults play an important role in sign language training and in ensuring that the new learners who are Deaf are introduced to Deaf culture. When it comes to English Language teaching, Ting and Gilmore (2012) recommend that class sizes should be reduced in order to allow teachers to provide individualized attention to D/deaf students and that the number of D/deaf students in an English class should not be more than three to enable the teacher to monitor D/deaf students’ work effectively. Ting and Gilmore (2012) also submit that teachers should create an inclusive environment by means of pictures, posters and other visual materials so to maximize opportunities for D/deaf learners to use their visual perceptions when acquiring linguistic knowledge. This means that D/deaf students must be taught how to read and write English Language and teachers of the D/deaf should know sign language in order to facilitate literacy in D/deaf learners (Ting and Gilmore, 2012). During the process of dialogue and interaction, it also transpired that ‘more time

was needed to cover the syllabus. Hence, the next theme to be discussed is ‘more time needed to cover the syllabus.’

The sub-theme of ‘more time needed to cover the syllabus’ also emerged under the thematic category ‘School and Communication’. All the participants revealed that in order for the Deaf students to do well in their external examination, more time was needed to cover the content in various subjects.

### *Students*

Students narrated their experiences in relation to the time which they spend in covering the content. All the students narrated that they spent two years being prepared for the Grade 12 examination yet hearing students spend only one year. Students S1, S3 and S4 narrated that they did Grade 12 for two years because teachers had explained to them that there was a lot of work which had to be covered in preparation for the Grade 12 examination. One of the students, S2, narrated that she was puzzled because students in mainstream schools spend only one year doing Grade 12 but for them (Deaf students) it was a different case. The following excerpt highlight what student S2 said:

S2: I soon learnt that we were going to do Grade 12 in two years instead of one year like hearing students in the mainstream schools. I was not happy at all but teachers explained that we had a lot of work which we needed to be covered.

The above excerpt is an indication that Deaf students were upset about the extra time needed to cover the content before writing their Grade 12 external examination. The Deaf students were not happy they needed to spend more years in one grade than their hearing peers. This is an indication that the mainstream curriculum needs to be adapted so that it becomes friendly in meeting the needs of all the students, without discriminating against Deaf students. Musonda and Phiri (2017, p. 4) also reiterate that the rigidity of the general curriculum makes it impossible for Deaf students to complete the curriculum content in the stipulated time. Hence, Deaf students end up being examined on many topics that have not been covered due to the slow process involved in teaching and learning (Musonda and Phiri, 2017, p. 4).

### ***Teachers***

On the same note, all the teachers felt that an extra year had to be added so that students could be well prepared for the external examination. Their Deaf students needed more time to cover the syllabus and the amount of work to be done was overwhelming. The following extract exemplifies what T3 and T4 narrated:

T3: The following year, our students moved to the Grade 11 class. We needed more time to cover the syllabus and the amount of work was overwhelming.

T4: Whilst we were teaching these learners, we discovered that we were moving at a slow pace since we had to repeat some stuff and do it all over again. So...we needed more time to cover all the content before they wrote their Grade 12 examination.

The above excerpts indicate that teachers of Deaf students struggle to finish the curriculum content in a stipulated time and teachers need more time to prepare their students for the external examination. This means that it is essential for the curriculum of Deaf students to be adapted so that it becomes accessible to both teachers and Deaf students. Mwanyuma (2016, p. 54) also points out that the mainstream curriculum is not flexible for Deaf students. Teachers struggle to deliver the curriculum content to Deaf students within the stipulated timeline because the curriculum is actually designed for hearing learners (Mwanyuma, 2016, p. 54). However, Luft (2017, p. 30) maintains that the instructional challenge for teachers of the Deaf is to identify and develop strategies for activating and engaging the students' intact intellectual abilities in order to minimize the impact of inadequate language.

### ***Administrators***

Administrators pointed out that some of the Deaf students are struggling with reading and writing skills which makes it difficult to cover all the content in the syllabus before they sit for the examination because it takes more time. This is what administrator A1 said:

A1: Even at primary level, we are struggling with reading and writing skills. For that reason, it is not easy to cover all the content in the syllabus before they sit for the examination because it takes time. It takes time for me to at least cover one topic thoroughly with my Deaf students.

From the above excerpt, it is apparent that both Deaf students and their teachers need more time to cover the curriculum content before the students write their external examination. Administrators also narrated that they were moving at a very slow pace and it took time to cover one topic thoroughly with Deaf students. It is evident that the pace of learning for Deaf students is generally slower than that of their hearing peers as a result of the barriers in literacy (Naidoo, 2008, p. 83). Naidoo, (2008, p. 83) suggests that the time frame for teaching Deaf students needs to be increased so that Deaf learners can achieve their educational goals. However, it is worth noting that the practice of adding extra year for Deaf students in completing the Grade 12 syllabus whilst their hearing counterparts do it in one year, suggests that the mainstream curriculum is not well adapted to meet the needs of Deaf students. It is rigid and inflexible for both Deaf students and their teachers. Maina, et al. (2011) also attest to the fact that most teachers in schools for the Deaf are not able to cover the syllabus content in the stipulated time because of abstract topics that are difficult to teach and to learn hence those topics end up not being taught at all. This means that both teachers and students struggle to cover all the content that needs to be covered before they sit for external examination. Moreover, Freire cited in Allen (2011, p. 104) states that the manner in which schools are being managed, the type of curriculum which is followed in schools and the way in which the subject content is being delivered in the classroom can advantage or disadvantage students. This means that, although Deaf students have been provided with secondary education in the country, there is still a need for the regular curriculum to be adapted so that it is accessible to all students. Ashby (2011) adds that if the curriculum is not adapted, Deaf students are likely to be marginalized, silenced and considered incompetent by their hearing counterparts. Therefore, in order for the educational goals for Deaf students to be achieved, the regular curriculum has to be adapted in such a way that it becomes accessible to teachers of the Deaf and to Deaf students so that Deaf students are not marginalized in the education system.

Even though Deaf students and their teachers faced some challenges in their teaching and learning, the sub-theme ‘victory and heroism’ emerged from the thematic category of School and Communication. It is interesting to hear that Deaf students and their teachers became victorious at some point in their educational journey after experiencing a lot of setbacks in the bid to achieve their educational goals.

## *Students*

Students narrated that they were so proud of themselves when they received their Grade 12 certificates because some of the teachers had low expectations of them. They felt victorious because some of the teachers did not believe that they could write the Grade 12 examination like their hearing peers and pass. Student S3 narrated that he was very happy after receiving his certificate and that kind of victory left a positive mark on his life as a Deaf student. Students said:

S1: I also feel like a hero and victorious when I was admitted at Wits Language School. It is something that had never crossed my mind because some of the teachers had low expectations of us. I am so proud of myself.

S3: Since we were the first group to write Grade 12 external examination, I was so happy when I received my Grade 12 certificate. I felt like a hero. It felt so good to me. That victory left a positive mark on my life as a Deaf student.

The above excerpts reflect that being able to sit for Grade 12 external examination and get certificates was a victorious and heroic act for the students. Students expressed great joy for their achievement. DePew (2015) also highlights that some teachers of Deaf students have low academic expectations of their students irrespective of the school setting. However, it is interesting and encouraging to note that what the students narrated as captured in the above excerpts through their own voices, shows that they are able to explore their own educational journey and share information that would have otherwise remained unknown (Wang and Geale, 2015), the kind of information that enhances their sense of worthiness and victory regardless of what their teachers thought of them.

On the contrary, students S2 and S4 saw their victory and heroism in sporting activities where they conquered students from mainstream schools in national Futsal games. They beat the mainstream schools and obtained position one and became national champions. Most of them cherished those moments where they won quite a number of trophies and medals in sports. Boys were excelling in Futsal games and girls in Netball games. This is what students S2 and S4 said:

S2: I was very good in sporting activities (smiling). We competed with mainstream schools and we beat them all in Futsal games in 2013 at national level. We got position one and brought a trophy to school. I will always cherish those moments of my school life. Those were my victorious days for me.

S4: About my achievement, I enjoyed playing Futsal in sporting activities. I was so good such that I scored so many goals for my team to scoop position 1. I felt

like a hero when I lifted up the trophy and put a gold medal around my neck after beating our hearing opponents.

From the above extracts, it is evident that Deaf students were exposed to national sporting activities by their teachers and were able to demonstrate their talents in sporting activities. Defeating their mainstream counterparts brought confidence in them and heroism. It is also evident that Deaf students felt valued when their social interaction was prioritized and stimulated by their teachers, creating an inclusive environment for them in all possible aspects (Barboza, et al. 2019, p. 719). This means that sporting activities can be used to motivate and stimulate Deaf students' performance and interaction with their hearing peers (Barboza, et al. 2019, p. 719). On the contrary, Palmer (2018, p. 31) points out that Deaf students who attend general schools often lose their confidence in sporting activities because of a lack of communication because they are unable to understand what is going on or what is expected of them, hence, they are not able to perform well in sports. This means that lack of social interaction with other students increases the negative attitude Deaf students have towards sporting activities (Palmer, 2018, p. 31).

### ***Teachers***

Teachers also narrated that their students achieved greatly academically, beyond their teachers' expectations. This means that some of the teachers had low expectations of their Deaf students. Teachers showed pride in the achievement of their students and they even named their students 'Deaf Education Pioneers' since they were the first students to sit for the Grade 12 examination in the country. Teacher T1 highlighted that these students broke the chain of fear of this examination among Deaf students. On the same note, teachers T2 and T5 pointed out that these students received their Grade 12 examination and no one saw such an achievement coming. The teachers said:

T1: I still feel the victory when it comes to their educational achievement. They are my heroes, the first Deaf students to sit for Grade 12 examination. They are our 'Deaf Education Pioneers' since they broke the chain of fear of the examination among Deaf students.

T2: We nicknamed them, 'Deaf Education Pioneers,' since they were the first group to write Grade 12 external examination and to receive Grade 12 certificates. They are indeed our heroes.

T5: They received their Grade 12 certificates and we still call them our 'Deaf Education Pioneers.' One of my students is at the university level. No one saw it coming.

The above excerpts reveal that not only the students were thrilled about their achievements academically, but so were their teachers. Teachers also felt exhilarated when their students received their Grade 12 certificates. Teachers also experienced the sense of heroism since it was the first time in the country that Deaf students sat for the Grade 12 examination and on top of that, passed. This great achievement was attributed to the Deaf students and their teachers after they had experienced failure in Grade 10 in 2011. This shows that Deaf students can be successful both academically and socially if they are given an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Such a situation can enable teachers of the Deaf and their students to believe in themselves and to gain high self-esteem academically and in social activities. Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) also point out that teachers of the Deaf have favorable attitudes towards their Deaf students and they gain confidence in their ability to teach them each time their performance is enhanced. However, teachers need to be assisted in terms of adapting and modifying the curriculum by the people responsible for curriculum adaptation in the country. Hrastinski and Wilbur (2016) add that if teachers improve in their sign language proficiency, the probability of improving Deaf students' academic performance increases even though sign language is not the only factor that determines academic success in Deaf education. This suggests that the more teachers interact with their students, the more they gain proficiency in their sign language skills which enables them to access their students in terms of communication in class.

On the contrary, the administrators pointed out that the students who completed Grade 12 at high school level were the students who were brilliant by nature. They had sat for a special examination at primary school and passed with flying colours. For the administrators, it was not a surprise that these Deaf students passed Grade 12. Administrator A2 added that it was even more inspiring to see one of the students being enrolled in one of the universities in South Africa. They expressed their experiences as follows:

A1: The students who completed their Grade 12 at high school level were the students who were brilliant by nature. They made us all proud by being the first to sit for the Grade 12 examination and also by obtaining Grade 12 certificates. They made history in Deaf education in our country. They are our heroes.

A2: The fact that our students have been able to write Grade 12 external examination and one of them has been able to go to university in South Africa, is even more inspiring. I feel very proud...I feel like a hero myself.

From the above comments, it is apparent that the sub-theme of ‘victory and heroism’ was fuelled and brought on by the experiences of both students and their teachers and by the fact that some of the mainstream people had low expectations of Deaf students. Deaf students had discovered their capabilities and that they could do what other students were able to do and even more by excelling in sporting activities. Musengi (2014) also points out that teaching Deaf students is a great task and a process which involves commitment, struggle and eventually a measure of victory for both students and their teachers. This means that teachers who are committed to teaching D/deaf learners feel victorious when they see their D/deaf students achieving their educational goals. It is an achievement that makes both teachers and administrators feel proud. It is also worth noting that the administrators had high expectations for these Deaf students. It was no surprise to them that they had been able to sit for the Grade 12 examination and pass. This is an indication that Deaf students are capable of learning like all their hearing counterparts as long as the curriculum is well aligned with their educational needs and reasonable accommodations are well applied during their examination sessions. The next positive sub-theme to be discussed is ‘critical consciousness and courage.’

The positive sub-theme ‘critical consciousness and courage’ also surfaced under the thematic category of School and Communication. It is very interesting to hear Deaf students attributing their academic achievement to courage and the zeal to keep moving on and studying hard. Teachers and family members were also mentioned as being encouraging and telling the students that they should not give up their dreams of being Deaf teachers of the Deaf. Student S1 narrated that when he looked back, he saw his grandmother, his teachers and his principal who were always there, encouraging and supporting him all the way whilst student S2 reflected on her school life and acknowledged that she had conquered her fears of failing in anything she does. Students said:

S1: When I look back, I see my grandmother, my teachers and my principal who were always there, encouraging and supporting me all the way. Now that I am at the university, I am fully aware that my dream of being a Deaf teacher of the Deaf students is being fulfilled.

S2: Each time I think about what I have been through, I think about my school life and how it saved me from many things that could have gone wrong in my life... I think I have conquered my fears of failing in anything I do.

From the above excerpts, it is worth noting that Deaf students had a great opportunity in this study of pouring their hearts out through narrating their educational experiences. It is interesting to note that spending time at school saved them from many things and it allowed them to grow intellectually such that they gained confidence in themselves. The manner in which they narrated their experiences shows that the kind of education they received deepened their consciousness and each time they reflect back on their educational journey, this is increased. It enabled them to conquer their fears and all the negative comments that were said about them in the local newspapers after failing Grade 10. They were transformed to an extent that they felt in control of their own lives. Freire in the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' points out that students need to be taught in such a way that they develop critical consciousness about their own selves as transformers of the world (Freire, 1993, p. 73). This means that Deaf students have been able to develop critical consciousness and they feel encouraged to do what people think Deaf people cannot do. They have conquered their fears of failing in anything they wish to embark on.

### ***Teachers***

Most of the teachers also pointed out that these Deaf students had completely changed their way of thinking. They know what they want for themselves and they now have courage to apply for jobs and to institutions of higher learning since they are aware of their potential. Teacher T3 highlighted that it was encouraging to listen to their students talking about what they want to do in future, making decisions on their own. Teacher T5 also pointed out that these students now have courage to plunge into what they want to do without thinking negatively about themselves. Teachers said:

T2: Their way of thinking has completely changed. They have courage now to write letters even for job applications and college applications. They are quite aware of their potential.

T3: It is encouraging to listen to our students talking about what they want to do in future and making decisions on their own. They have grown up intellectually and they are highly knowledgeable about most of the things that pertain to their lives.

T5: They have courage now to plunge into what they want to do without thinking negatively about themselves.

The above excerpts reveal that Deaf students can do very well in their academic performance if they are fully supported by both teachers and family members. Students need to be encouraged and supported by both teachers and family members so that they believe in themselves and gain the courage to achieve their educational goals. Even if they find it difficult, if they have full support, they gradually achieve beyond their teachers' expectations. Deaf students, like their hearing peers, also need to make a transition from secondary school to tertiary level at some point and they need to be encouraged and given a voice to be empowered so that they can make their own choices in life (Macilroy and Störbeck, 2011). One way of increasing Deaf students' participation is by teaching them how to make decisions about their learning and participation in their transition experiences. In this way, they can be empowered to become active participants in advocating for and negotiating their own futures (Garay, 2002, p. 136). This means that it is essential to empower Deaf students to become critical conscious when it comes to matters that pertain their education goals.

### *Administrators*

Administrators also narrated that seeing their students going to tertiary institutions, gives them courage to keep on supporting students and teachers and this development can have a positive effect on everyone in the school. Administrator A2 acknowledged that these students have gained courage to do more and they were exceeding her expectations as a school administrator. She said:

A2: When I look back (shaking her head), I now believe that if we can keep on supporting our Deaf students and their teachers, things will end up changing for the best for all of us. Our students have gained courage to do more and they have exceeded my expectations.

From the above excerpt, I deduce that teachers and their students require full support from the school administrators in order to enhance their performance academically. In that way, many Deaf students can have the courage to do exceedingly well academically. Such a collaborative effort can lead to the best performance in both schools for the Deaf. School administrators should make efforts to involve both Deaf learners and their teachers in decision making pertaining to the future of Deaf students. In order for the school administrators to successfully give full support to their teachers and students, they need to be familiar with the unique needs of Deaf students since most of the teachers come to school without any training in Deaf education (Musyoka, et al. 2015). Al-

Al-Othman (2014) adds that some of the school principals lack knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of their Deaf students which is necessary for effective teaching for Deaf students. In addition, school administrators should encourage students to participate and to share their views to whatever degree possible in identifying their needs related to their education so that they can gain courage and confidence to do things on their own. Students can be a key source of information when it comes to implementation of successful programs and projects as well as monitoring their own educational success of Deaf students within the school system (Esera, 2008, p. 32; Giroux, 2010, p. 2). Listening to students' voices has the power and potential not only to change forms of discrimination, but also to increase students' understanding of life in general. Students are able to analyze their social existence and to become free individuals and instruments of positive change both in schools and in their communities (Gomez, 2010, p. 10). The opposite also holds true that the lack of support from school administrators, can greatly inhibit the performance of teachers and Deaf students.

The next sub-theme that emerged under the thematic category of School and Communication was 'critical thinking, achievement and endurance'. Students at some point thought very hard about their educational journey and about what they had been through. It was amazing and interesting to see how carefully they had thought about what they went through in order for them to achieve their educational dreams.

Student S1 recalled that at some point he failed and repeated classes and more years were added for him so that he could complete the syllabus, but all that did not deter him from achieving his educational goals. He did not give up on his dreams of going to college. Students S3 also narrated that his educational experiences taught him that nothing comes easily in life. The following extracts exemplify what the students said:

S1: I understand that mine was not an easy journey, but it was walkable. I failed and repeated and more years were added for me to complete the syllabus but I did not give up on my dreams of going to college. I am happy that my teachers and my family members believed in me.

S3: For me to achieve what I have achieved in life, has not been easy... I had to endure and be patient and give it all I had. I had to roll up my sleeves and continue working hard even though more years were added for me...my educational experiences taught me that nothing comes easy in life.

What stands out in the above excerpts is that, when Deaf students get an opportunity to narrate their stories about their educational journey, they are able to deeply analyze their school life and voice how they struggled and what worked for them in order to achieve their educational goals. These narratives reveal that these students have reflected on what they had endured during their journey and what they had sacrificed in order to succeed at school. They needed their teachers and their parents to believe in them and have high expectations of them as Deaf students. With that kind of support, students had the courage to immerse themselves in their school work and work hard.

Thus, Deaf students' endurance led to their achievement and success and in turn dismissed the myth that Deaf people are uneducable. Gudyanga, et al. (2014, p. 446) draw attention to the fact that it is a misconception that D/deaf students are limited in cognitive development because language is not a necessary ingredient for complex cognitive processes. This means that deafness itself does not affect students' intellectual capacity to learn (Gudyanga, et al. 2014); but other contributing factors such as failure of teachers and the general public as well as their parents to understand and accept children who are D/deaf as they are (Adoyo, 2007) are more serious contributing factors to their failure or success. Hence the next thematic category to be discussed is 'Family involvement and Encouragement'.

### **8.1.3 Thematic Category 3: Family Involvement and Encouragement**

This thematic category addressed issues of family involvement of Deaf students in their education, answering the question: "Tell me about the role played by parents/families in the education of Deaf students." The following sub-themes emanated from this thematic category: 'proud, supportive and grateful family', 'teachers as surrogate parents', and 'liberation and victory'. Let us hear what students said in their narratives.

#### ***Students***

In the sub-theme of 'proud, supportive and grateful family members', students S1, S2 and S4 pointed out that their family members, especially their grandparents and siblings, were very supportive of them throughout their educational journey. However, student S3 mentioned that he

had no family members to support him after the demise of his grandmother and teachers supported him instead. Students said:

S1: My family members were so supportive of me. They were responsible for my education. I am grateful to my grandmother who always supported me financially until I got a scholarship. She always told me that I was a smart kid. She did not blame me for failing but encouraged me to go back to school.

S2: My family was very involved in my education. They were supportive and proud of me. I always felt that support and I am grateful for everything they did for me.

S4: My father was highly involved in my education. He paid school fees and bought me clothes that I needed. My elder brother did not miss even a single meeting at school.

The above statements confirm that family support is essential when it comes to the education of Deaf children. Where there is family involvement in the education of Deaf children, there is a positive attitude and courage in every child which leads to the zeal for achieving his or her educational goals. Such support leaves a positive mark on the lives of Deaf children and it shapes their lives as well as their thinking when it comes to their future plans. Family members become a shoulder to cry on when Deaf children face hard times in their lives, especially in their school journey. Szarkowski and Brice (2016, p. 255) submit that it is vital for each parent to know and understand his/her D/deaf child and also to increase their involvement with the child. In their study, parents reported that they were much more involved with their Deaf child than they would have been if their child had been born with typical hearing. Parents further stressed that although it was not an easy journey, they decided to spend more time learning and reading about deafness, talking to other parents and they making sure that their child had every possible opportunity to succeed. In addition, parents expressed amazement at the way in which their Deaf children learned and at the complex learning that had taken place in their children (Szarkowski and Brice, 2016, p. 256). This means that it is important for parents of D/deaf children to increase involvement with their children and understand that they cannot always protect their children from the world but need to let go and admire them as they handle their struggle and experience their personal growth. This also means that parents should not blame their children for failing but support and encourage them to do their best in appreciating everyday positives.

On the contrary, student S3 narrated that he did not have close family members after his grandmother had passed on. His uncle, whom he stayed with during the school holidays, had his

own children to look after. He voiced that even his school fees were paid by the school. In his story, he highlighted that:

S3: I did not have close family members since my grandmother had passed on. During school holidays, I would stay with my uncle who was only responsible for his own children. My fees were paid by the school.

The above excerpt shows that some of the students who are Deaf are often taken care of by their grandparents. When their grandparents have passed on, they become orphaned and vulnerable children such that the school intervenes by getting sponsorship for these children. Similarly, Taller-Azulay and Rusu, (2015, p. 8) draw attention to the fact that parents of D/deaf children often go through a grieving process after the birth of their child and fathers are less involved than mothers in the school education of their children. This is an indication that the responsibility of caring for a D/deaf child in the family usually becomes the responsibility of the child's mother or grandmother yet the child needs the support from all the family members. Rustin (2016) also points out that most of the Deaf children come from single-parent homes as men commonly leave their families when a child with a disability is born in a family. This means that sometimes the school administrators need to solicit school funds for vulnerable and orphaned D/deaf children so that they too can pursue their educational goals like other children.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers pointed out that almost all the family members of these students played a huge role when it came to encouraging them to stay at school because their parents did not know what to do with them. For that reason, there was dedication, commitment and support from the family members even though most of them grew under the care of their grandparents. Teachers T1, T2 and T3 said:

T1: All the family members of these students played a huge role when it came to encouraging them to stay at school. They did not know what to do with them when they were at home. They seemed like a burden to them.

T2: Family members of these students played a vital role in the education of these learners although most of them were taken care of by their grandmothers. The family members were very supportive and grateful to teachers and to the school administrators after the students had passed their Grade 12 examination.

T3: Most of the parents of these Deaf learners were very supportive even though most of them grew under the care of their grandmothers. Some parents take

advantage of the school provision and neglect their Deaf children. But they want to be part of their achievement at the end.

The above excerpts indicate that parents of Deaf students are willing to support their Deaf children educationally and they want to be part of their achievements. Parents are also grateful to teachers because of the great work they do during the teaching and learning of Deaf students. This means that parents have strong support for their Deaf children and have high expectations of their children's education and a desire for information regarding their individual child's needs and accomplishment (Gilliver, et al. 2014). Gilliver, et al. (2014, p. 7) further point out that parents also need support from professionals such as audiologists, educationalists and language therapists to assist them in making decisions for their children pertaining to their development and their education. Parents have challenges too regarding handling of hearing devices and not being able to tell whether the device is working, especially when the child is still young (Gilliver, et al, 2014, p. 7). This means that most parents of Deaf children do not intentionally neglect their children but their lack of prior experience related to deafness leaves them highly dependent on hearing professionals for information on how best to support their child (Gilliver, et al. 2014, p.1).

On the contrary, teachers T4 and T6 pointed out that the parents of the students in this study did not attend open days to look at the work of their children, instead they sent students' siblings. Most of the parents came up with the excuse of not being able to communicate with their children yet they did not show any interest in learning sign language. For that reason, the students ended up being the responsibility of the government and the school when it comes to school finances. Teachers said:

T4: Parents did not attend open days to look into the work and performance of their children...but most of the time they sent students' siblings. Students ended up being the responsibility of government and the school. It's like they were ashamed of them. They claimed that they cannot communicate with them. I don't even think that they are interested in learning sign language.

T6: I still feel that some parents were not very much supportive of their Deaf children. They sent siblings to attend meetings...they were not supportive at all. They claimed that they could not talk to their children when they exhibit behavioral problems and they did not show any interest in learning sign language.

From the above excerpts, it is apparent that Deaf students need full support from their family members. For the family members to be able to communicate with their children, they need to

learn sign language. However, Napoli, et al. (2015, p. 172) emphasize that it is important for family members to learn sign language since it benefits the child but “families need time and space to adjust and come to terms with everything that is happening to them and to the reality of being the parents of a D/deaf child”. They further add that families need to be given the support they need in learning sign language which includes “time and space to psychologically adjust to the new world in which they find themselves as well as practical and financial assistance” (Napoli, et al. 2015, p. 172). This means that as much as it is essential for family members of Deaf children to learn sign language, it should be understood that some of the parents might not be in a good space to do so because they have not reached a point where they embrace the deafness of their child. In addition, parents who are ready and willing to learn sign language may need support and encouragement to do so, most probably from the school.

### *Administrators*

Administrators also narrated that some of the parents of Deaf students are not supportive at all when it comes to the education of their children. At some point, some of the Deaf students become the responsibility of the school and the government because some of the parents of Deaf students do not involve themselves in the education of their Deaf children. Such a situation gives rise to the notion that some parents of Deaf children neglect their children. Administrators highlighted that:

A1: I must say that parents some of the parents of Deaf children are supportive when it comes to the education of their children but others are not. At least two of these students were the responsibility of the school and the government. They were taken care of by their grandmothers who could not attend parental meetings but only send siblings. As an administrator, I have never seen their parents in my office and that makes me feel that they were often neglected.

A2: Two of these students were mostly cared for by the government and teachers at the school...they were staying with their grandparents who were not even able to attend meetings or to attend open days.

From the above narratives, it is clear that parents are expected to play a major role in the education of their Deaf children. They are also expected to support their children financially and emotionally and work in coloration with the school administrators. If parents do not show up at school, Deaf children feel neglected and unwanted. Musengi (2014, p. 273) also points out that some parents have a negative attitude towards their D/deaf children and they do not want to be associated with

disability. As a result, the children are abandoned by their parents at school. He adds that, because of lack of love and interest in some extreme cases, some parents request that their children be kept at school over the school holidays as a way of hiding the child from the parents' friends as they feel ashamed of a D/deaf child. Even at home, Deaf children often become the responsibility of grandparents who are not usually able to attend meetings at the school and support these learners financially. Consequently, these Deaf children become the responsibility of the government and the school. Thus, some of the parents become overwhelmed by the responsibility of caring for a D/deaf child. Weaver and Starner (2010, p. 1) point out that caring for a D/deaf child is very demanding for parents because the time demands for caring for a D/deaf child is equivalent to caring for two to three children. This means that teachers and school administrators as professionals need to be aware of the fact that deafness has a great impact especially on hearing parents of D/deaf children with no history of deafness in their families Gilliver, et al. (2014). Parents may not be feeling ashamed of their children but they lack knowledge and information on how to handle these children. Gilliver, et al. (2014, p. 1) point out that parents' lack of prior experience related to deafness leaves them highly dependent on hearing professionals for information on how best to support their child educationally and emotionally. This means that parents need professionals such as audiologists, teachers of the Deaf and language therapists to assist them on how best to support their children regarding their educational path and their development as a whole. It is interesting though to note that most of the parents encourage their Deaf child to remain at school because they do not know what to do with them at home and such a situation gives Deaf children an opportunity to continue with their education and to finally be in a position to achieve their educational goals. The next sub-theme to be analyzed is 'teachers as surrogate parents.'

### *Students*

Students S1, S2 and S4 did not mention that they were assisted by teachers except for the scholarship which they received from the school. For that reason, the theme of 'teachers as surrogate parents' did not emerge in their narratives. However, student S3 narrated that he was mostly assisted by teachers financially and otherwise all the time. It is worth noting that teachers of the Deaf children do take care of their students and they are very supportive of them. As soon

as they join School for the Deaf, students are mostly welcomed by their teachers and school administrators. Student S3 said:

S3: I actually did not have parents after the passing away of my grandmother. I received no support from my uncle who had his own children to take care of. My fees were paid by the school and my school uniform was bought by one of the teachers...who somehow...adopted me. He was often referred to as 'my father' at school by both students and teachers.

From the above excerpt, it is apparent that some of the Deaf students are taken care of by their teachers who buy uniforms, toiletries and give them pocket money. It is also clear that at home, these children become the responsibility of their grandparents. Their parents find it hard to accept them as Deaf children and then pass them off to their grandparents. It is good that the school and the government do take care of these Deaf students, however, parents are needed in the education of their children. Parents of Deaf children need to celebrate the achievement of their children together with teachers and the students. Rustin (2016) also found that some of Deaf students are neglected by their parents such that they remain at the resident school throughout the holidays, relying on small grants from the government and the kindness of teachers. Rustin (2016) adds that many parents do not cater for their Deaf children financially and that they only look after their hearing children.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers also narrated that sometimes they become responsible for Deaf students who are neglected by their family members. Teachers T1, T2 and T4 narrated that one of the students actually became the responsibility of one of the teachers after his grandmother had passed on. Teacher T1 added that the student was needy but very brilliant in class. Teachers said:

T1: I remember that I ended up being responsible for one of the students after his grandmother died. His mother abandoned him and got married to a different man. She then neglected the child completely. The student was so needy but very brilliant in class.

T2: One student was fully catered by the school in terms of uniform and tuition fee. His mother had abandoned him and his grandmother had passed on. It was clear that his mother wanted nothing to do with him after discovering that he was Deaf.

T4: Parents often neglect their Deaf children and they become the responsibility of government and the school. In the process, teachers become surrogate parents to these students.

From the above extracts, I deduce that some of the parents of Deaf students neglect their children and leave them under the care of their grandparents, teachers and the government. Such a situation results in teachers becoming surrogate parents to some of the Deaf students who are neglected by their family members. However, Basquez (2018) expresses that it is worth noting that most of D/deaf children are born to hearing parents without D/deaf relatives and without a history of deafness. Therefore, when a child is diagnosed with hearing loss after birth or in the later stages of life, parents have mixed emotions and become stressed because they are often not sure of what to do. This means that some parents abandon their D/deaf children and leave them with their grandparents because of mixed emotions, denial, anger and guilt at having a D/deaf child in a family where deafness is not known (Flaherty, 2015). They want their children to hear like other 'normal' children. This means that hearing parents of D/deaf children often find themselves dealing with emotional issues and negotiating a world previously unknown to them (Hyde, et al. 2010, p. 163). Hence, some parents resort to escaping from the situation by leaving these children in the hands of teachers and grandmothers.

### *Administrators*

Administrators also echoed that teachers took care of the Deaf students and actually clothed one of the boys and gave him pocket money because he had absolutely nothing. Administrator A1 narrated that the boy was abandoned by his mother who could not accept that she had given birth to a Deaf child. The woman left the child under the care of his grandmother who later passed on and the child was completely neglected. Administrator A2 pointed out that when these Deaf students began school at primary level, the Catholics used to provide them with clothing, food and toiletries and this practice was embraced by the parents before the school was handed over to the government. The government continues to cater for boarding facilities which include, food, water and electricity. Administrator A2 added that since the government catered for the boarding facilities, the school became a place where Deaf children were abandoned by their parents and they would only pick them up at the end of the term. She explained that some of the students would

remain at school until the school administration made arrangements to drive them to their various homes. She pointed out that:

A2: The parents would pretend as if they were not aware that schools were closing... Even today, we still struggle with that bad habit of neglecting their children at primary school. The government continued to cater for boarding facilities which include food, water and electricity in residential schools for the Deaf. Although some parents do fetch their children every end of term, others do not. Some of the students stay at school until schools are closed without seeing their parents.

From the above excerpt, I deduce that it became a habit for some of the parents to leave their Deaf children under the care of school because Catholics used to provide them with clothing, food and toiletries. Deaf education in Swaziland began as a charitable initiative by Roman Catholic Missionaries from Ireland (School for the Deaf Policy, 2008) who provided Deaf students with clothing, food and shelter before handing over the school to the government. The government continues to cater for boarding facilities which includes food, water and electricity. Musengi, (2014, p. 4) adds that special schools were established by churches and a humanitarian organization specifically to cater for the needs of D/deaf children. The Schools for the Deaf were established on the basis of charity and parents sent their D/deaf children to school to relieve themselves from having a child with whom they could not communicate (Musengi, 2014, p. 196). Musengi, (2014, p. 197) further explains that some parents are not poor but they pretend to be poor. When they bring D/deaf children to school, they want government and donors to pay the fees because the child is D/deaf yet they can afford to send two or three other non-disabled children to expensive schools. Consequently, teachers blame parents for not being able to fulfill their roles and such a situation leaves the teachers as surrogate parents to the D/deaf learners (Musengi, 2014, p. 198).

The sub-theme 'liberation and victory' also emerged under the thematic category of Family involvement and encouragement under students' narratives. This sub-theme did not emerge from teachers' and school administrators' narratives. Students narrated that they felt liberated and open-minded now that they have received their Grade 12 certificates. Their future was no longer bleak anymore. They narrated that they were free to do things on their own and make their own decisions now. Students said:

S1: Today I can see far into the future. It is no longer bleak anymore. I feel liberated and free to do most of the things by myself. I feel free and victorious now that I have my Grade 12 certificate.

S3: I am working in one of the supermarkets, I am free to use my own money and to make decisions about my life.

S4: After receiving my Grade 12 certificate, I felt so good and free from being labelled as someone who cannot be educated because I am Deaf. I am open minded now about myself and about what I want to do... Passing Grade 12 made me realize that I can do anything I want to do as long as I work hard for it.

It is interesting to watch Deaf students proclaiming that they feel free, liberated and victorious after they had finished their Grade 12 and received their certificates. These students felt free and liberated from the people who always judge them, proclaiming that Deaf children are uneducable and they are not supposed to do Grade 12. Students felt confident and openminded after receiving their Grade 12 certificates and they now believe that they can do anything as long as they work hard and have full support from their teachers and from their family members. It is also significant to note that teachers and the school administrators have been able to bring about liberated Deaf children who are now an asset in their Deaf community, to society and to their own families. They are indeed 'Deaf Education Pioneers' in our country. On the same note, Freire, (1972, p. 2) identifies education as the key tool in achieving liberation. Freire points out that "the key to awakening awareness and liberation among the oppressed is critical and liberating dialogue" (Freire, 1972, p. 4). McLaren (2003, p. 187) adds that schools are places of social transformation and liberation, places where students are educated not only to be critical thinkers, but also to view the world as a place where their actions might make a difference. This means that when students are engaged in a dialogue, they feel free and liberated to express themselves and they obtain a form of liberation and freedom of communication in telling their own stories. It also means that critical thinking and liberating dialogue among teachers and students, allow students to develop their own ideas and dreams without being oppressed by teachers as experts, by what people think about them or by the world judging them whilst they remain passive (Allen, 2012, p. 2; Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 78; Giroux, 2010, p. 1; Hudson, 1999). This suggests that schools are important institutions through which Deaf students can be enriched with meaningful dialogues which can enable them to be liberated and become confident about themselves. The next and the last thematic category to be analyzed is 'Improving Deaf Education'.

#### **8.1.4 Thematic Category 4: Improving Deaf Education**

The fourth thematic category to be discussed in this study is ‘Improving Deaf education.’ This is the last thematic category which addresses issues of improving Deaf education in the country. Participants responded to the following question from the interview guide: ‘Tell me what needs to be improved in Deaf education in the country.’

It was thought-provoking and amazing to listen to the voices of the participants, especially the voices of students and their views on how to improve Deaf education in the country. The two sub-themes which emanated from the thematic category Improving Deaf education are ‘Teachers’ fluency in Swazi Sign Language’ and ‘Curriculum issues.’ All the participants mentioned that in order to improve Deaf education in the country, teachers of the Deaf should be fluent in Swazi Sign Language and both schools should follow the same curriculum. Let us read from what the students said.

##### ***Students***

Deaf students, as the people who are directly affected by the Deaf education system that we currently have in our country, narrated that it is time consuming on their side to spend time teaching sign language to their teachers because they miss a lot in class. All the students (S1, S2, S3 and S4) pointed out that teachers should be fluent in Swazi Sign Language and that Deaf adults should be employed by Schools for the Deaf so that new teachers can be trained in sign language and in Deaf culture upon their arrival at the school. They further suggested that Deaf adults can also assist new teachers in class as teacher assistants. This is what students said:

S1: ...to improve Deaf education... teachers should be fluent in Swazi Sign Language (SSL) and Deaf adults should be employed by the schools so that new teachers can be trained by Deaf adults in sign language and also assist them in class as teacher assistants.

S2: Teachers need to be equipped thoroughly with Swazi Sign Language skills so that they are able to explain information clearly to their Deaf students.

S3: Deaf education can improve if teachers can join schools for the Deaf already knowing SSL. It takes some time for new teachers to learn SSL. Whilst they are still learning how to sign, time flies and we struggle with information which we do not understand.

S4: The education of all Deaf learners can improve if all the teachers can receive training in sign language even before they join Schools for the Deaf.

From the above excerpts, it is apparent that teachers' lack of sign language skills is the barrier to Deaf education. Students lamented about the time that is spent by teachers learning sign language whilst they struggle with information which they do not understand in class. Students also illuminated that their reading and writing skills can improve greatly if both students and teachers have strong sign language skills since sign language is the medium of instruction in class. Staten, (2011, p. 3) warns that it is important for the teachers to know and understand the language and the culture of D/deaf students as people who are being served in residential schools for the Deaf. Reilly and Khan (2004, p. 56) add that teachers have a great role of being the principal sources of new knowledge, dialogues, skills and aspirations for Deaf students and they are expected to know sign language and also to teach it to Deaf students. DePew (2015, p. 70) also states that in order to curb the language barrier for D/deaf students, teachers who can properly teach D/deaf students by being role models of the sign language are needed in residential schools for the Deaf. He adds that "the trend of having teachers learning sign language from their students is a backward approach and must end" (DePew, 2015, p. 70). On the same note, Doherty (2012) encourages that in Schools for the Deaf where sign language is used as a medium of instruction in class, a Deaf cultural environment should be inculcated by teachers and administrators whereby both teachers and students can enjoy using sign language for instruction and social interaction throughout the school. Doherty adds that teachers who are not fluent in sign language should make use of classroom assistants and interpreters in order to effectively facilitate full comprehension of the subject matter between teachers and D/deaf students.

This means that it is the responsibility of school administrators to make sure that school interpreters are available to assist new teachers in class and that Deaf adults are employed so that they can develop sign language training programs for teachers such that schools for the Deaf can become a deaf friendly zone for students. Deaf students should not be stripped off their culture since that is the sign of suppression of Deaf culture by the hearing populace. In addition, Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014) point out that hearing teachers tend to use oral methods when teaching D/deaf students because of a lack of sign language skills. They also add that hearing teachers do not know sign language because they are not compelled to learn it, consequently, most of D/deaf students' time is spent in speech reading sessions which are very difficult and ineffective, leading to the inability

to grasp concepts that are being taught. This means that lack of sign language skills in the instruction of Deaf students poses a lot of challenges and barriers when it comes to teaching and learning in class.

### *Teachers*

On the same note, teachers also stressed the importance of teachers' fluency in Swazi Sign Language by pointing out that if teachers are not fluent in sign language, there will always be a communication breakdown between teachers and students in class. Teachers T4, T5 and T6 said:

T4: Teachers need to be fluent in sign language so that there is no communication barrier in class. They should have sign language certificates at level two so that they do not struggle in class.

T5: It is important for teachers to be well equipped in sign language since it is the medium of instructions for our students. If teachers do not know sign language, there will be a communication breakdown in class.

T6: I believe that everyone has to be fluent in Swazi Sign Language, most importantly, teachers. If teachers are not fluent in sign language, there will always be a communication breakdown between teachers and students in class.

From the above excerpts, I deduce that teachers' proficiency in sign language is essential in residential schools for the Deaf since sign language is the medium of instruction inside and outside class. If teachers come to Schools for the Deaf without any training in sign language, Deaf education will continue to suffer because of a communication breakdown between teachers and their students. Muiti (2010, p. 56) emphasizes that teachers who are not proficient in sign language can pose hindrance to effective progress of Deaf students and limit them in their academic progression. Muiti (2010, p. 56) adds that a major outcome of lack of a proper and effective mode of instruction is that many learners who are Deaf may have low educational achievements and low aspiration for secondary and tertiary education. Therefore, for Deaf education to improve in this country, institutions of higher learning need to equip teachers with Deaf culture and sign language skills to enhance effective teaching of Deaf students.

On the contrary, teachers expressed their concern about teachers being posted to schools for the Deaf without receiving any sign language training from the institutions of higher learning in the country. They pointed out that it actually takes time for teachers to learn sign language from their

students whilst they are expected to teach the very same students who now serve as sign language teachers. They further elaborated that such a situation has a great negative effect on the education of Deaf students who suffer a lot in the process. Participants T1, T2 and T3 narrated that Deaf education and Swazi Sign Language programs need to be introduced to all institutions of higher learning so that teachers who are interested in teaching Deaf students can learn about Deaf culture even before they join schools for the Deaf. Teacher T2 stressed that it takes time for teachers to learn sign language and Deaf education suffers in the process. Teachers said:

T1: I think that Swazi Sign Language programs should be introduced in all the institutions of higher learning in the country. Teachers who are interested in teaching Deaf students should learn sign language even before they start teaching Deaf students.

T2: Teachers should come from tertiary institutions with the understanding of Deaf culture and sign language. It takes time for some teachers to learn sign language, in that way Deaf education suffer a lot.

T3: Teachers should receive training in sign language in various training colleges and universities in the country before they go to schools for the Deaf.

The above extracts from teachers indicate that institutions of higher learning in the country should develop Deaf education programs in order to fully equip teachers with sign language skills and Deaf culture. Störbeck (1997) reiterates that Deaf education suffers immensely and has been discriminated against because of lack of specialized teacher training which can prepare teachers for the task of teaching Deaf students. This means that teacher training programs in higher institutions of learning and teacher qualifications should become a prerequisite for teachers who are interested in teaching Deaf students, especially in residential schools for the Deaf where sign language is the medium of instruction inside and outside the classroom. Staten (2011, p. 3) also states that the “immersive nature of residential schools for the Deaf experiences lead to unfettered communication and comfort through sign language, thus making their educational experiences more comfortable, increased personal and social Deaf cultural identification and perceived readiness for life after graduation”. Thus, it is essential for teachers to know and understand the language and culture of the students whom they teach so that they contribute positive effects in Deaf students’ lives which will impact them beyond school life.

### *Administrators*

Speaking from their own experiences, administrators A1 and A2 suggested that it is best that teachers come to schools for the Deaf with knowledge of sign language because it takes a very long time for teachers to learn sign language whilst students are struggling to grasp information in the class. They both highlighted that:

A1: It takes a very long time for teachers to learn sign language whilst students are struggling to learn in class.

A2: I think it is best that teachers come to school for the Deaf with knowledge of sign language for effective teaching and learning in class.

From the above extracts, it is apparent that prior knowledge of sign language and Deaf culture is essential for teachers even before they are posted to schools for the Deaf because lack of sign language skills contributes immensely to communication breakdown in class and this becomes a barrier to the teaching and learning of Deaf students. Humphries and Allen (2008, p. 165) reiterate that teachers who are not fluent in sign language upon entering schools for the Deaf, have difficulty in achieving fluency. Sign language fluency is a requirement for teachers of the Deaf because teachers must be able to help Deaf children develop fluency in sign language where necessary (Humphries and Allen, 2008, p. 165). Teachers who go into classrooms to teach Deaf children need to understand Deaf students so that they may create curricular and learning environments that are strategically compatible with Deaf students' specific learning needs (Humphries and Allen, 2008, p. 166). Hence, the next sub-theme to be analyzed is 'curriculum issues.'

### *Students*

Students suggested that both schools for the Deaf should follow the regular curriculum so that when Deaf students move to the high school level, they should not spend extra years trying to catch up on the content which they should have covered at primary level. This illustrated by the following excerpts:

S1: I believe that both schools for the Deaf should use the same curriculum. At primary they used special curriculum of their own with a special examination and we learned very little of everything. When we moved to high school, we had to spend more years trying to learn some of the things which we should have learned at primary level.

S2: I think Deaf students should follow the right curriculum from primary to high school level... the curriculum which can benefit them all at the end like other mainstream students.

From the above extracts, I deduce that students realized that the special curriculum which they used at primary level was inadequate in terms of covering the subject content which needed to be covered before they moved to secondary level. For that reason, students found themselves adding more years at secondary level. The study that was conducted by Störbeck (1997) also found that Deaf people complained about the quality of education they received at school in South Africa, alluding that the curriculum that was followed by Deaf students in South Africa was inadequate. The Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 3) also stipulates that all the schools in the country from primary to secondary level should follow the outlined inclusive curriculum structure. The policy further stipulates that its purpose is to make the general curriculum flexible and responsive to the needs of all the learners requiring special needs education in Swaziland's special and mainstream schools and resource centres (The Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018. p. 3).

### ***Teachers***

On a different note, teachers suggested that Deaf education can improve in the country if regular curriculum can be adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students and if appropriate reasonable accommodations can be applied on the assessment system so that the external examination can be accessible to Deaf students as is the case with their hearing peers. Teachers T3, T4 and T5 said:

T3: I suggest... we need to continue to attend to curriculum issues by adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of Deaf students...and to apply reasonable accommodation in the examination of our students so that the exam is accessible to our students as well.

T4: We need to find a way of modifying the curriculum in all subjects, by breaking it down into small chewable pieces.

T5: The regular curriculum which they follow has a lot of aspects of hearing which are not friendly to our students. I believe that it needs to be modified and adapted to meet the needs of Deaf students.

It is apparent from the above excerpts that teachers struggle to use the general curriculum without any adaptations and the modifications of the external examination papers for Deaf students. In this

regard, Pena Garrido, et al. (2016, p. 3) state that the general curriculum is not very flexible in allowing teachers to adapt the content in order to suit the needs of D/deaf students. The curriculum has not been adapted for Deaf students hence it does not provide adequate strategies for teaching D/deaf students and is not suitable for Deaf students (Pena Garrido, et al. 2016, p. 3). Musonda and Phiri (2017, p. 4) reiterate that children with special needs are exposed to the general curriculum which tends to be inflexible and demanding. The rigidity of the curriculum makes it impossible for teachers to make the necessary adaptations hence and D/deaf students end up being examined on many uncovered topics due to the slow processes involved in teaching and learning (Musonda and Phiri, 2017, p. 4). On the contrary, De Klerk (2015, p. 91) point out that some of the teachers of D/deaf students are generally resourceful. They develop lessons and adapt mainstream curriculum and/or learning materials. However, De Klerk and Knoors (2015, p. 91) observe that those individual practices are, at the best, inefficient, and at worst, result in badly structured, maladaptive, curriculum materials. Designing and adapting curricula and materials requires a collaborative approach, involving both teachers of the Deaf and curriculum experts (De Klerk and Knoors, 2015, p. 91). In this way, expertise is pooled and shared and good teaching practices are developed (De Klerk and Knoors, 2015, p. 91) and the D/deaf education system is significantly improved.

Teachers T1, T2 and T6 also pointed out that sign language is very crucial in the education of Deaf students. For that reason, it has to be taught and examined as a subject in schools for the Deaf so that Deaf education can improve in this country. They suggested that sign language curriculum needs to be developed to guide both students and teachers during teaching and learnings sessions.

Teachers T1, T2 and T6 said:

T1: There is a lot that still needs to be done in terms of curriculum, assessment, and so on...I believe that we need to incorporating sign language as a subject in Schools for the Deaf in Swaziland. Deaf students do not have any indigenous language which is being taught at school.

T2: I believe that Deaf education can improve in our country if sign language can be taught as a subject from primary level and be assessed. It can give our students a good foundation in creative writing and in critical thinking.

T6: Sign language should be taught as a subject in order for them to cope with reading and writing skills... and schools for the Deaf should have sign language curriculum which will be used both at primary and at secondary level.

From the above quotations, it is clear that sign language, as the first language of Deaf students, needs to be taught and examined as a subject in order to give students a good language foundation from primary level onwards. This indicates that students also need a strong sign language foundation in order to develop good reading and writing skills. Matthew (2014, p. 5) points out that in Kenya, sign language is taught as a subject and it has been examined nationally in the special schools for hearing impaired students since 2010. Mathew (2014, p. 5) adds that Deaf students may not have acquired sign language at their homes due to lack of exposure, so the school environment remains the only source for learning both Kenyan Sign Language and English Language. DePew (2015, p. 70) reiterates that “sign language needs to become a reality for D/deaf students at an early age, and it needs to take place in the school setting”. Administrators also pointed out that curriculum issues are still a challenge when it comes to the education of Deaf students in the country.

### *Administrators*

Administrators A1 and A2 reiterated that sign language is crucial in the education of Deaf learners but it is neither taught nor examined as a subject in the two Schools for the Deaf yet it is considered as the mother tongue of these students. Administrators said:

A1: Curriculum issues are still a great challenge in Schools for the Deaf. Our students do not even have a sign language curriculum and it is not even taught and examined as a subject, yet it is crucial in the lives of these students. It is their mother tongue and their medium of instruction in class, so it deserves a lot of attention.

A2: It is important that sign language is introduced as a subject in Schools for the Deaf as their first language so that their external examination certificates can have sign language as their first language and English as a second language. As it is...they only learn English as a language yet their counterparts enjoy learning siSwati as their first language.

The above excerpts are an indication that there is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of improving Deaf education in the country. Sign language as a first language for Deaf students is neither taught nor examined in either of the Schools for the Deaf yet, even though the structure of the curriculum which is presented in the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 26) stipulates that SSL should be taught alongside with siSwati Language

(siSwati/Swazi Sign Language) in all the schools which have appropriate resources and qualified teachers from the middle primary phase to senior secondary phase. The curriculum structure further stipulates that Swazi Sign Language should be offered to profoundly D/deaf learners instead of siSwati throughout primary and secondary education (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 30). It is also worth noting that, currently, Deaf students are neither taught siSwati nor Swazi Sign Language. Their external examination certificates only recognize English language as the language that is being taught and examined in residential schools for the Deaf. Now that Swazi Sign Language is being recognized as the first language of D/deaf students at policy level, even though its curriculum is not yet fully developed, there is an anticipation that in the near future, Swazi Sign Language will be taught in schools for the Deaf and probably examined as the first language for Deaf students. This means that this dream of SSL being taught as a subject in schools is expected to soon be realized, by moving it from policy level to the implementation stage in order to enhance a strong language foundation and Deaf culture in schools for the Deaf in the country.

From what the participants have suggested, it is therefore clear that there are a lot of curriculum issues which need to be resolved in order to improve Deaf education in the country. In summary, the participants touched on the following issues: both Schools for the Deaf should work together and follow the same curriculum; teachers of the Deaf should also work together on mainstream curriculum adaptation and syllabi modification; introduction of SSL as a subject in Schools for the Deaf so that Deaf students are not deprived of their culture, sense of belonging and as the basis for improving Deaf learners' reading and writing skills. This means that if all these curriculum issues can be addressed, Deaf education in the country can improve.

## **8.2 Discussion of the findings**

This section seeks to discuss the findings of this study derived from the participants' narratives in relation to their educational experiences. The study sought to explore educational experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators at School for the Deaf-High in Swaziland. The findings of this study are discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 and the educational experiences which have been voiced by the participants in this study. The participants in this study are the four Deaf students who completed their Grade 12 in 2015, six

teachers who taught these students and two primary administrators who taught these students at primary level.

### **8.2.1 Findings: Deaf Identity and self-acceptance**

The findings of this study revealed that educational experiences of Deaf students are in fact a crucial factor in acquiring Deaf identity. All the students acknowledged that they were culturally Deaf by signing capital letter 'D'. All the students, S1, S2, S3 and S4 expressed that they were born to hearing parents and when they joined School for the Deaf and met other Deaf students, they felt accepted and welcomed and began to use sign language as their mode of communication. Student S2 narrated that she began her educational journey in a mainstream school where she was mocked and laughed at by her hearing counterparts because she could not hear and understand what was going on in that environment. However, when she joined School for the Deaf-High at secondary level, she met other Deaf students and received a warm welcome and from then on, she identified herself as 'Deaf'.

This finding resonates with that of Chen (2014, p. 2) who found that attendance at a residential school for the Deaf is a strong form of self-identification as culturally Deaf. The author also points out that educational experiences of D/deaf students are in fact a crucial factor in the formation of Deaf identity because of the type of school, the academic and social experiences which Deaf students share with their teachers and their peers within the school (Chen, 2014, p. 2). This means that their Deaf identity has been greatly influenced by the use of sign language. In addition, Chapman and Dammeyer (2017, p. 192) testify to the fact that the use of sign language in schools for the Deaf has a powerful role in promoting Deaf culture and in sustaining Deaf identity. Chapman and Dammeyer add that sign language plays a vital role in unifying the group with a collective identity of shared Deaf cultural values and experiences, which are related to educational experiences and marginalized status as well as breaking down the communication barrier which effectively disables Deaf persons (Chapman and Dammeyer, 2017, p. 192). This means that the more teachers expose Deaf students to Deaf culture and its values at school, the more they develop awareness and appreciation of Deaf culture and their Deaf identity.

The findings of the study also tally with those of Mcilroy and Störbeck (2011) in their study conducted in South Africa. Mcilroy and Störbeck (2011) attest to the fact that transition into Deaf identity occurs when D/deaf students move from mainstream schools to Schools for the Deaf since students who attend Schools for the Deaf have a common identity and a sense of belonging because they are all the same. Mcilroy and Störbeck (2011) add that Deaf identity is a quest which is bound up with the acceptance of being D/deaf. This means that it is important for the students to first accept themselves as D/deaf people although they were born to hearing families. It is interesting to note that all four students in this study accepted that they are D/deaf even though they were born to hearing parents and lived with hearing family members.

### **8.2.2 Findings: Parental devastation about deafness**

The findings of the study also revealed that hearing parents of D/deaf children find it difficult to accept that their child is D/deaf. Parents face challenges which include grief and anger after their child has been diagnosed with deafness. Participant S1 narrated that he observed that his mother was crying all the way back from the hospital after he was diagnosed with deafness whilst participants S2 and S4 expressed that their parents took them to various priests to be prayed for and to traditional healers after the diagnosis. Participant S4 added that his grandmother was given a concoction to pour in his ears every night but it did not work. This means that these parents wanted to see their children talking and hearing again. These findings are consonant with those of Gilliver, et al. (2014) who conducted a study on parents' recollections of and experiences with a child diagnosed with hearing loss soon after birth. The study revealed that the parents' initial reaction to diagnosis was of "shock" or of being "stunned", (Gilliver, et al. 2014, p. 4). The study was conducted in Australia. Forty parents of children aged between three to five years, who were diagnosed with hearing loss, were involved in the study. Most of the parents who were interviewed reported strong levels of grief including confusion, heartbrokenness and devastation. Consequently, parents were worried whether their children would be able to attend school like other children. Some of the parents indicated that they had feared that their children might never be able to walk and talk. The findings of this study are also supported by Basquez (2018) who conducted a study in Maine Educational Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing preschool in the United States of America, in a bid to identify various factors that had the greatest impact on the

educational decisions made by parents for their D/deaf children. All the children of the respondents had been diagnosed with bilateral hearing loss. The study revealed that most of the parents experienced mixed emotions including denial, anger and guilt as soon as the child was diagnosed with hearing loss. Parents had mixed emotions and became stressed because they were not sure of what to do (Basquez, 2018, p. 7). This is an indication that deafness has a great impact especially on hearing parents of D/deaf children with no history of deafness in their families. They worry about so many things such as language development and the educational placement of the child and they often do not know what to do until they send their children to schools for the Deaf. That is what Berke, (2017) calls the medical or pathological perspective, whereby deafness is viewed as a disability which needs to be cured and corrected through medical treatment so that the D/deaf person is normalized. This is an indication that hearing parents generally view deafness as a disability that needs to be cured, not as socially constructed.

### **8.2.3 Findings: Communication barriers and frustration**

The findings of this study revealed that teachers and school administrators experienced communication barriers and frustration when they joined Schools for the Deaf. All the teachers and school administrators, with an exception of teacher T4, explained that they experienced communication barriers and frustration in class because it was their first time to teach Deaf students and they did not know sign language. On a different note, teacher T4, narrated that he did not experience any communication barriers in class because he was proficient in sign language; he was a CODA whilst teacher T1, T3, and T5 narrated that they experienced communication barriers and frustration when teaching Deaf students because they had never been exposed to sign language and they had never received any training or orientation pertaining to Deaf education before going to class. Administrator A2 also expressed that she did not get any orientation on how to communicate with Deaf students and what made matters worse, was that sign language was the medium of instruction inside and outside of class.

The findings tally with those of Nyokabi, et al. (2011) which revealed that when teachers are not able to communicate effectively with D/deaf learners in class, such a situation results in the frustration of both teachers and students and it leads to poor academic performance on the side of students. The study was conducted in Kenya in a bid to find out curriculum factors influencing

performance of D/deaf students in Mathematics. Teachers and students were participants of the study. The study also reported that teachers' sign language limitations lead to teachers taking advantage of some students by using peer teaching method in class and teachers become reluctant in perfecting their sign skills.

These findings are also in line with those of Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014) who found that that lack of sign language in the instruction of Deaf students poses a lot of challenges when it comes to communication between students and their teachers. The study was conducted in Harare and was based on the educational experiences of Deaf adults. The study involved ten males and ten females who were Deaf, living in different parts of Harare. Participants echoed that teachers used the oral method when teaching them although they would have preferred the use of sign language which would ensure more effective learning. Educational experiences of Deaf adults in Harare confirmed that sign language was not used as a medium of instruction by teachers in their schools for the Deaf because most of the teachers were hearing and they were not compelled to use sign language. For that reason, that Deaf students were mostly taught orally because teachers did not know sign language and such became a hindrance to learning and communication between Deaf students and their teachers (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014).

Contrary to the findings of this study, are the expectations of critical pedagogy whereby Freire contends that classroom experiences, through the facilitation of teachers, should become situations in which students are encouraged to engage as active participants in their own education and develop critical awareness to assess fairness within their education and living situations (Breuning, 2009, p. 247; Freire, 1998, p. 30). This means that teachers should be posted at Schools for the Deaf after receiving proper training in sign language so that there are no communication barriers between teachers and their students in the classroom. Teachers should also be given an orientation and be provided with interpreters in class to facilitate effective teaching and learning in order to combat communication barriers in class.

#### **8.2.4 Findings: Coping strategies and resilience**

The findings of this study also revealed that although Deaf students and their teachers experienced many challenging in class such as communication barriers, they eventually found coping strategies

which made them resilient and eventually they gained confidence in their teaching and learning. Students S2, S3 and S4 narrated that they would sign their notes together with their teachers and ended up improving in their lip-reading skills, as well as their reading and writing skills. Teachers T1 and T2 and administrator A1 pointed out that they spent time with their students after school so that they could gain sign language skills whilst teacher T3 and T5 explained that they often wrote short and simplified notes on the board and signed them together with their students in class which brought about a great improvement in the reading and writing skills of Deaf students.

These findings tally with those of Musyoka, et al. (2015) who found that teachers for whom teaching D/deaf students was a new experience, faced many challenging experiences in class. The study was conducted at two Schools for the Deaf in the United States, investigating experiences of teachers of D/deaf students. The study revealed that teachers used various teaching strategies and they eventually learned to be patient and to understand how to communicate with their D/deaf students effectively. Teachers revealed that their teaching strategies were to focus on positive reinforcement, to give themselves time to understand the needs of their students and to learn their students' culture and behavior.

The findings of the current study are also in line with those of Naidoo (2008) whereby teachers expressed their willingness to learn and implement new teaching strategies in order to enhance the academic performance of their D/deaf learners. Their strategies mostly included a positive attitude towards assisting D/deaf learners to attain their educational goals. The study was conducted in South Africa. Garberoglio, et al. (2015) also reported that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy have been found to take challenging tasks willingly, show increased persistence and achieve high academic performance at work and greater academic success for their D/deaf students.

From the above findings, I have learnt that even though teachers of D/deaf students face challenging experiences in the field of Deaf education, they do not give up on their students. They implement certain strategies which enable them to teach D/deaf students effectively. They take it upon themselves to learn their students' culture and to understand their students' unique educational needs which leads to improved academic performance of their students.

### **8.2.5 Findings: Dialogue, interaction and commitment**

The findings of this study show that engaging Deaf students in dialogues in matters that pertain to their education, leads to student teacher interaction and commitment in achieving students' educational goals. Involving students in dialogues affords them the opportunity to fully comprehend their expectations and their roles when it comes to teaching and learning and in achieving their educational goals. Narratives of students, S1, S3 and S4 reveal that Deaf students were involved in meetings with parents and school administrators in relation to curriculum issues that affected their academic performances. Teachers T2, T3, and T4 also pointed out that several meetings were held with students, parents and other stakeholders. Important decisions and resolutions were made regarding students' progression, like doing Grade 10 in two years and Grade 12 in two years. In this process, students' voices were heard and appreciated. School administrators, A1 and A2, also expressed that there was a lot of interaction and commitment from various stakeholders, including students and examination board members in a bid to address curriculum issues of Deaf students.

The findings are consistent with those of DePew (2015) who revealed that when Deaf students are equipped with the ability to share their views and communicate their educational needs through dialogue, there are new insights into what Deaf students voice regarding their education. The study was conducted in the United States, investigating the perception of the educational experiences of Deaf students. DePew's study comprised five Deaf students educated in public schools and four Deaf students educated in residential schools for the Deaf. Similarly, Hudson (2016) found out that dialogue in a school setting are liberating because they allow students to develop their own ideas and dreams without being oppressed by teachers as experts who know it all or intellectuals who are presenting one particular world view with students just being passive.

These findings are in line with what is proposed by researchers like (Mayo, 2014, p. 2; Giroux, 2013, p. 7; Nikolakaki, 2012; Giroux, 2010, p. 1; Gor, 2004, p. 2). These researchers express the importance of involving students in a dialogue. They point out that when it comes to the relationship between education and power, the questions that arise from critical theorists among others, include: whose history, whose future, whose story and whose interests are represented by schooling and formal education? Freire's critical pedagogy, an approach to teaching and learning

that seeks to analyse and transform educational contexts by applying principles of critical theory, also promotes the notion of dialogue and liberation in the school setting (Wink, 2005, p. 167).

This means that involving Deaf students and their parents in discussions and dialogues with teachers and the school administrators regarding the educational needs of Deaf students, brings about positive and fruitful changes in the education of Deaf students. Dialogues allow Deaf students to 'voice' out their perceptions regarding to their education and such, leads to the development of students who are liberated and open minded. Students become committed to their education when they interact and dialogue with their teachers and school administrators in matters that pertain to their education.

#### **8.2.6 Findings: More time needed to cover the syllabus**

The findings of the study also revealed that both students and their teachers needed more time to cover all the contents of the syllabus before the students sat for the Grade 12 examination. All the participants reported that in order for the students to perform well in their external examinations, more time was needed to cover the contents of the syllabi in all the subjects. Students S1, S3 and S4 narrated that they did Grade 12 over two years because teachers had explained to them that there was a lot of work which had to be covered in preparation for the Grade 12 examination. One of the students, S2, narrated that she was puzzled because students in mainstream schools spend only one year doing Grade 12 but for them (Deaf students) it was a different case. On the same note, teachers T1, T4 and T5 also explained that an extra year had to be added so that students could be well prepared for the Grade 12 external examination. Administrator A2 also expressed that Deaf students needed more time to cover the syllabus because of the amount of work that need to be covered.

The findings of the study tally with those of Naidoo (2008) whereby teachers revealed that the pace of learning for Deaf students is generally slower than their hearing peers as a result of the barriers in literacy (Naidoo, 2008, p. 83). Naidoo, (2008, p. 83) stated that the time frame for teaching Deaf students needs to be increased so that Deaf learners can achieve their educational goals. The study was conducted in South Africa, based on the perceptions of Science educators who teach Science to Deaf students. Five teachers were involved in the study. Musyoka, et al.

(2015) who conducted their study in the United States also found that teachers teaching a general curriculum to D/deaf students needed to modify the curriculum and that took a longer time to teach it. Similar findings were reported in the study conducted by Maina, et al. (2011) in Kenya. Teachers in that study expressed that they were not able to cover the content because the abstract topics that students found difficult to understand were also difficult to teach. This was attributed to D/deaf students' deficiency in English language which was said to be hindering their understanding. Moreover, Freire cited in Allen (2011, p. 104) states that the manner in which schools are managed, the type of curriculum which is followed in schools and the way in which the subject content is delivered in the classroom can advantage or disadvantage students.

This means that, in as much as Deaf students have been provided with secondary education in the country, there is still a need for the regular curriculum to be adapted so that it becomes accessible for both teachers and students. Modifying the syllabus and finding signs that are suitable for the concepts that are being taught in each subject, is a huge amount of work. This means that teachers are moving at a very slow pace when teaching Deaf students. This calls for the curriculum to be adapted so that it suits the needs of all students. In that way, the required amount of work can be covered before the students sit for their external examination.

### **8.2.7 Findings: Victory and heroism**

The findings of this study also revealed that when Deaf students have achieved their academic goals, this is regarded as a huge accomplishment by students, teachers and school administrators. All the participants in this study expressed victory and heroism after Deaf students had received their Grade 12 certificates. Student S1 narrated that his greatest achievement was when he enrolled in one of the universities in South Africa after he had received his Grade 12 certificate. Student S3 narrated that he felt like a hero after receiving his certificate and that victory left a positive mark on his life as a Deaf student. On the same note, teachers T2, T4 and T6 highlighted that their students achieved beyond their teachers' expectations so these students were named 'Deaf Education Pioneers' since they were the first Deaf students to sit for Grade 12 examination in the country. Teacher T1 pointed out that these students had a great achievement which broke the chain of fear of the Grade 12 examination among Deaf students in the school. Administrator A2

expressed that it was even more inspiring to see one of the students being enrolled in one of the universities in South Africa.

The findings of the study match those of Musengi (2014) whereby teachers expressed their victory and heroism after their students had improved in their performance and also when teachers had become proficient in sign language skills. The study was conducted in Zimbabwe residential Schools for the Deaf and it was conducted through teachers' narratives. Teachers expressed that they were very dedicated and committed to their work even though they first struggled to communicate with Deaf learners. After a few months though, they felt victorious because their sign language skills had improved. They were able to remove the language barrier and managed to access their learners easily. This shows that when teachers of D/deaf students are committed and dedicated to teaching their students, they yield good results and students improve in their academic performance. Despite the challenges that both teachers and students faced in their process of teaching and learning, all parties committed themselves to achieving the educational goals of these learners. Both parties finally achieved their desired goals. The teaching and learning process involved endurance, resilience and commitment which gave birth to victory and heroism.

### **8.2.8 Findings: Critical consciousness, courage and liberation**

The study found that when students are involved in dialogues in the school setting, they gain critical consciousness and liberation. Students S2 and S4 narrated that through being involved in dialogues and through interaction with their teachers, they became open minded, gained courage and began to relate what was happening in the classroom to their own life circumstances by thinking of ways in which they could improve their own education and life in general for a better future. Student S1 expressed that he gained courage and the freedom to make his own decisions that pertain to his education journey such as applying to various institutions of higher learning inside and outside the country by himself.

The findings of this study match what Giroux (2013), in his article '*When Schools Become Dead Zones of the Imagination: A Critical Pedagogy Manifesto*' calls practice of liberation, whereby students gain critical consciousness and begin to think of ways in which they can improve their own lives. Freire (1998), in his book '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' also argues for education that

liberates students so that they are able to think freely and make informed decisions and choices for themselves and do what needs to be done in order to improve their own lives without being oppressed. This means that engaging students in meaningful dialogues and allowing them to have input on matters that concern their educational goals, develops critical consciousness, courage and liberation when it comes to believing in themselves and improving their own lives. They begin to relate what is happening in the classroom to their own life circumstances and they start to make their own decisions pertaining to their own lives. They gained courage and the ability to think for themselves and become liberated in making decisions about how to improve their own education and their own life in general for a better future.

### **8.2.9 Findings: Curriculum issues**

Another finding that emerged from the experiences of all the participants was curriculum issues in Deaf education. This finding appeared to be a major challenge among students, teachers and school administrators. The curriculum issues included: use of special curriculum and special examination, use of general curriculum and introducing sign language as a subject.

#### **8.2.9.1 Use of special curriculum and special examination**

Students expressed their concerns about the use of a special curriculum and special examination at primary level. The use of a special curriculum seems to be an indication of teachers' low expectations of their Deaf students. The quality of work which students received from their teachers was not challenging at all. It was set and marked by their teachers, not by external examiners. Students S1 and S3 pointed out that at primary level, teachers used their own special curriculum and special examination and as students, they learned very little content. Student S4 expressed that the special examination was set and marked by their teachers which made it easier for them to get high scores but the end result was that they did not cover a lot of primary content, therefore, had to spend more years at the high school level.

These findings also correlate with the experiences of Mbazima (2012) in his book *'Deaf but not Handicapped'* where he mentions that he was grateful that he did not attend a school for the Deaf

because “the education they get, I am not afraid to say it’s appalling, its below standard” (Mbazima 2012, p. 69). He pointed out that he was lucky that he received his education through the mainstream setting. On the same note, the study that was conducted by Smith (2016) revealed that teachers at residential schools for the Deaf expose Deaf students to an impoverished curriculum because they have a low expectation of their students. Students complained that the quality of work they received from their teachers which was repetitive and unchallenging. Students demanded more challenging school work from their teachers (Smith, 2016). The study was conducted in residential schools for the Deaf on the West Coast of the United States.

The study that was conducted by DePew (2015) also found that some of the Deaf adults in his study mentioned that many Deaf schools fall short of their social mission to educate children for college. Even though communication would have been easier in a school for the Deaf, some of the participants preferred public schools because of the quality of education and higher expectations of students and higher demands of the curriculum (DePew, 2015, p. 133). The findings also revealed that residential school participants described the education which they received as being boring, repetitive, not challenging and a low-level basic education (DePew, 2015, p. 140).

This means that Deaf students are willing to learn and they advocate for the use of the best possible curriculum which can meet their unique educational needs. The regular curriculum has higher demands for Deaf students which is a good thing, but it has to be modified and adapted so that it can accommodate the learning needs of Deaf students so that they do not spend more years in school than necessary.

#### **8.2.9.2 Findings: Use of general curriculum**

The findings of the study also revealed that Deaf students believed that if the general curriculum could be used at the primary level as well, this would yield better results in terms of knowledge enhancement and improvement of reading and writing skills. Students S1, S3 and S4 pointed out that as Deaf students, they reached secondary level without being able to read and write effectively hence teachers at secondary level spent more years trying to teach them things which they should have learned at primary level.

This finding correlates with that of Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014) who found that D/deaf education in Zimbabwe is far below standard. The findings revealed that the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe “acknowledges that the deaf have experienced poor educational outcomes and their reading ability is far below their hearing peers in the same level” (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 4). The findings also revealed that even though D/deaf students spend more years than their hearing counterparts in school, they leave school functionally illiterate with limited ability to read or write (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 9). The study was based on educational experiences of Deaf adults in Harare.

Teachers in this current study expressed their experiences and grievances regarding the use of the general curriculum. Teachers expressed their concerns regarding issues of curriculum adaptation and modification of the regular curriculum such that it suits the needs of the Deaf learners. Teachers T1, T2 and T4 expressed that they spent most of the time modifying the curriculum, breaking it down into small chewable amounts of information before they would deliver their lessons in class. Teachers T3 and T6 also complained that the regular curriculum which they follow has a lot of aspects of hearing which are not friendly to Deaf students and that the regular curriculum is too long and demanding for Deaf students and they (teachers) do not have signs for the abstract concepts that need to be taught.

Administrators A1 and A2 also pointed out that curriculum issues are still a ‘thorn in the flesh’. They explained that since both Schools for the Deaf are now expected to follow the regular curriculum, it has to be adapted and modified in terms of simplified English and added time so that it suits the educational needs of Deaf students.

These findings are in line with those of Musyoka, et al. (2015) whereby teachers reported that they were using a general curriculum to teach D/deaf students and modifying it was time consuming. The study was conducted in the United States and the data was collected from three teachers in two schools for the Deaf. The findings also tally with those of Van Dinther, et al. (2011) who conducted a study in San Francisco which revealed that the curriculum followed by teachers was far above the level of their students’ linguistic and academic capabilities. All four teachers felt that the curriculum conflicted with the needs of the D/deaf students. They added that stories from the curriculum were irrelevant to D/deaf students since they miss 60-70% of the vocabulary that is in there. Teachers also mentioned that they had to take their time to make adaptations and

modifications to the curriculum so that students could access it for literacy activities. Teachers also mentioned that curriculum adaptations and modifications should not be left entirely in the hands of the teachers, but curriculum designers should step in and take responsibility.

The study that was conducted by Sambu, et al. (2018, p. 47) also recommended that it is the responsibility of curriculum developers to modify the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of learners with hearing impairment, and make it easily understandable especially in subjects like Social Studies and Religion which have proven challenging to these learners. They pointed out that curriculum developers should develop signs for abstract concepts. They also recommended that the examination board should modify examination questions in all subjects to suit the abilities of Deaf students for easy understanding and in that way, performance of Deaf students can improve in all the subjects. The study was carried out in five selected special primary schools across five counties in Kenya.

### **8.2.9.3 Findings: Introducing Swazi Sign Language as a subject**

The findings of this study revealed another issue of the importance of incorporating sign language as an examinable subject in both Schools for the Deaf. Teachers and administrators revealed that Deaf students in the country do not have any indigenous language which is taught at school. They are only taught English as a second language whilst students in mainstream schools are exposed to various languages including siSwati. Teachers T3 and T4 exclaimed that such a situation disadvantages Deaf students a great deal because it literally means that they do not have a first language. Sign language is the medium of instruction at school but it is not recognized as a subject that needs to be taught. Teacher T1 expressed that Deaf education would improve in the country if SSL can be taught and assessed as a subject from a primary level.

The findings of this study are supported by Doherty (2012) who argues that a Deaf cultural environment where sign language is used by both students and staff members is very conducive for Deaf students. Sign language is a human and linguistic right for Deaf children. The study was conducted in Northern Ireland and in Sweden and was based on the educational experiences and opinions of Deaf pupils in schools for the Deaf. The study further revealed that sign language should be made a priority in Schools for the Deaf so that the schools will become rich in Deaf

culture because sign language is used as a medium of instruction both inside and outside the classroom. The study further suggests that if teachers are not fluent in sign language, they should make use of classroom assistants and interpreters in order to effectively facilitate full comprehension of the subject matter between teachers and D/deaf students. D/deaf adults who were interviewed by Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014, p. 8) in Zimbabwe, also expressed that there is a “need to develop sign language into an examinable language”. Stapleton (2015, p. 2) also points out that depriving Deaf students of their first language, “is often a common history of oppression and discrimination against Deaf community members who use sign language as their primary means of communication, particularly within the education system”. Clason, (2014, p. 1) reiterates that sign language as the language of Deaf people connects them to each other, a privilege which not everyone can enjoy.

The study that was conducted by Sambu, et al. (2018) also revealed that the use of Kenyan Sign Language to instruct learners with hearing impairment has led to an improvement in their academic performance. The study reported that head teachers and teachers felt that learners’ performance after the official introduction of Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) in 2004, was better compared to performance prior to that (Sambu, et al. 2018, p. 39). Namukoa (2012, p. 51) also agrees that strategies that support D/deaf children to learn sign language prior to the introduction of English Language are considered respectful to Deaf culture and foster ownership by helping students develop pride and identity in their deaf hood.

This means that when SSL is not taught as a subject in schools for the Deaf, the Deaf students are effectively stripped of their culture, their identity and their sense of belonging. This means that SSL is like a uniform which Deaf students don outside the classroom environment and when they get into class, they have to take it off even though it is the medium of instruction. It is a language that is expected to gain national status but it seems not to have any value in the education of Deaf students. Moreover, sign language is used as a base on which Deaf children acquire language, therefore, it needs a curriculum which has clear guidelines for both teachers and students.

### **8.2.10 Findings: Proud, supportive and grateful family members**

Students shared their experiences of receiving emotional support and encouragement from their family members from primary up to secondary level. Almost all the students, with the exception of S3, revealed that they were taken care of by their grandmothers, their sisters and brothers who encouraged them to remain at school no matter what. Participant S1 voiced that his grandmother was proud of him each time he brought a school report home. Participant S2 also mentioned that her family was very supportive and proud of her. They attended all the parents' meetings and open days and also provided her with everything she needed for school until she got a scholarship. Participant S4 echoed that his father was responsible for his education and his brother did not miss even a single school parents' meeting. However, S3 voiced out that after the demise of his grandmother, he did not have a close family member. So, the findings of supportive and grateful family members did not come up in his story.

These findings correlate with Szarkowski and Brice's (2016) findings that parents expressed the importance of supporting their Deaf children. Parents reported that they were much more involved with their child than they would have been if their child had been born typically hearing (Szarkowski and Brice, 2016, p. 255). The study was conducted in Washington D.C. and it investigated positive experiences of being a parent of a D/deaf child. Parents added that they were committed to making sure that their child had every opportunity possible to succeed. Morgan (2014) also found that parental involvement both at home and at school predicts growth in children's vocabulary, print skills and early writing skills as well as sign language skill development in parents.

On the contrary, Taller-Azulay and Rusu (2015, p. 5) found that the responsibility of caring for the D/deaf child falls mainly on a child's mother and both the child and the mother need support from all members of the family. The study was conducted in Israel in a bid to examine how Israel parents of hearing-impaired children deal with disability. Seventeen fathers and twenty-four mothers from three schools in the northern part of Israel, were involved in the study.

This means that it is important for the parents of D/deaf children to be supported by all family members so that D/deaf children can gain encouragement and emotional support from everyone at home. Both maternal and paternal involvement in the upbringing of the child is crucial in the education of the D/deaf child as well as creating an atmosphere of being accepted and loved by

family members. Such a family environment can enhance positive attitudes, positive thinking and high expectations of the child's development in its totality.

### **8.2.11 Findings: Teachers as surrogate parents**

The findings of the study revealed that the teachers of the Deaf students also served as surrogate parents to their students. All the participants in this study voiced that some of the students were supported by teachers and the school administration financially. Teachers bought toiletries, uniforms and clothes for students. Teachers attended meetings on behalf of the students as needed and the principal got them scholarships for paying their tuition fees. Participant S1 mentioned that his grandmother was too old so she could not attend parental meeting. So, teachers attended on his behalf and the principal got him a scholarship. Participant S3 voiced that he was mostly supported by teachers in terms of school uniform, toiletries and even transport when schools were opening because his mother had abandoned him.

These findings correlate with those of Musengi (2014) whereby teachers reported that some parents neglected and abandoned their D/deaf children in residential schools (Musengi, 2014, p. 288) because they had a negative attitude towards deafness as a disability. The study was conducted in Zimbabwe residential Schools for the Deaf. The results further reported that for some parents, bringing a D/deaf child to a residential school was a way of hiding the child from the parents' friends and visitors as they were ashamed of their D/deaf child. Teachers further reported that nearly every school holiday they had one or two D/deaf children who are not collected to go home by their parents and sometimes teachers ferried them to their respective homes (Musengi, 2014, p. 273) and teachers eventually became surrogate parents to those D/deaf students who were neglected and abandoned by their own parents (Musengi, 2014, p. 288).

These findings also correlate with those of Zaidman-Zait (2008) who conducted a study in Columbia on everyday problems and stress faced by parents of children with cochlear implants and found that parents who attempted to cope with various child-related problems, without adequate support and resources, may experience a threatened sense of competence in their parenting skills and an increased level of depression as well as feelings of isolation (Zaidman-Zait, 2008, p. 148).

On the same note, in the study that was conducted by Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014), Deaf adults in Harare reported that parents do not love their D/deaf children and they discriminate against them. They neglect their D/deaf child and leave them without any parental guidance (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 6). For that reason, teachers end up being entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of D/deaf children in residential schools because of parents' negative attitude towards D/deaf children.

This means that parents sometimes take advantage of the fact that the schools for the Deaf are under the Social Welfare Department which is responsible for paying fees for the orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in the country. So, their children are fed and looked after at school better than at their homes.

However, these findings contrast with those of Wanjiru (2014) who found that parents of D/deaf children face several challenges including financial constraints, rejection from society and difficulties when it comes to communicating with their D/deaf children but they still love their children in spite of all those challenges (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 83). Although parents faced many challenges, the study reported that they had positive beliefs, feelings and favorable behaviors towards their children. Parents did not neglect their children and never abandoned them in residential schools but they were able to overcome most of the challenges by finding comfort in God and by working hard to meet the educational needs of their children (Wanjiru, 2014, p. 85).

These frequent frustrations and misunderstandings which arise through communication difficulties and other related stressful challenges between a parent and a D/deaf child, lead to parents leaving their D/deaf children in the hands of the teachers most of the time because children communicate freely with their teachers and with their D/deaf peers. However, the responsibility of providing for D/deaf children should not be left solely in the hands of the teachers and school administrators. Teachers and school administrators may help by providing professional services such as getting scholarships where needed and assisting parents by offering professional advice that relates to the education and upbringing of a D/deaf child. Parental support is very crucial when it comes to the positive emotional growth of a child. When children are abandoned by their parents, they grow up with emotional scars which may not heal. Those emotional scars may end up affecting the students' entire life beyond school. At the same time, teachers and school administrators should understand that parents of D/deaf children, especially hearing parents, face different challenges which are both

financially and emotionally related. They need assistance from the school administrators and teachers in terms of early intervention and in sign language teaching so that they too can communicate with their children effectively.

### **8.2.12 Findings: Teachers' fluency in Swazi Sign Language**

Students pointed out that for Deaf education to improve in the country, it is important for teachers to be fully trained in Swazi Sign Language before they are posted at schools for the Deaf and Deaf adults should be employed by school administrators so that everyone could communicate in SSL. Students S1, S3 and S4 expressed that if all teachers are fluent in Swazi Sign Language, teachers will be in a position to explain information more clearly for Deaf students and they can have confidence in themselves when teaching Deaf students. Teachers T1, T3, T5 and administrator A1 also suggested that Swazi Sign Language should be introduced to all the institutions of higher learning so that Deaf education can improve in the country. Administrator A2 also pointed out that if SSL is introduced to teacher training institutions in the country, communication barriers in the classroom can be minimized and Deaf education would be greatly improved in the country.

The findings of this study match those of Maina, et al. (2011) who found that D/deaf students reported that they had poor performance in Mathematics in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination because their teachers lacked proficiency in sign language. Such a situation led to teachers taking advantage of some students by using a peer teaching method and they became reluctant to perfect their fluency in sign language. In the study that was conducted by Störbeck (1997), Deaf adults also expressed that teachers' lack of sign language use and being prohibited to sign amongst each other in class were barriers to their education (Störbeck, 1997, p. 12). The participants further stated that sign language has a big influence on Deaf education. Thus, Deaf students should not be prohibited from using sign language in schools for the Deaf and teachers of the Deaf should be fluent in sign language since it is the medium of instruction in most schools for the Deaf. These findings were presented in a paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago in 1997. Nyangairi and Nkomo (2014, p. 7) also found that there are few teachers who are proficient in sign language and most teachers teaching students who are D/deaf continue to use the oral approach which has not shown benefits for the Deaf. They further recommend that "if a new teacher comes to a school for the Deaf, it is wise for

the Deaf adults to teach the teacher sign language so that he/she will be able to teach the children in the language they understand” (Nyangairi and Nkomo, 2014, p. 7).

This is an indication that teachers need to have formal training in sign language skills even before they join schools for the Deaf. Such a situation can prevent communication barriers that exist in the classroom. It can also help to avoid frustration on the part of the D/deaf learners and teachers since sign language is the medium of instruction in most schools for the Deaf. Teachers who display a lack of competency in sign language skills, are not in a position to meet the educational needs of D/deaf learners effectively. There is therefore a need for the Ministry of Education and Training to find a way of enforcing a policy that will compel teachers of the Deaf to be equipped with sign language skills before they join schools for the Deaf.

### **8.3 Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented data analysis under the four broad thematic categories of Self and Identity, School and Communication, Family Involvement and Encouragement and Improving Deaf Education. Research findings connected to the educational experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators have also been discussed. From the narratives of the participants, the findings of the study established that involving students in dialogues in issues that pertain to their education results in critical consciousness, courage and liberation in decisions they make for themselves that have lifelong effects in their future. Students become liberated such that they are able to think freely about ways of improving their education and they gain the ability to make informed decisions and choices for themselves. Findings show that teachers of Deaf students join schools for the Deaf without any form of training in sign language which result in communication barriers in class and to students spending most of their time teaching sign language to their teachers instead of focusing on their lessons in class. This means that teaching and learning process is hindered. Findings also indicate that both schools for the Deaf should follow the same curriculum and sign language should be introduced as a subject in residential schools for the Deaf in order to improve students’ vocabulary and to facilitate reading and writing programs for Deaf students. Insights into these findings led me to realize that teachers’ sign language proficiency and curriculum issues need to be addressed in residential schools for the Deaf in order to improve Deaf

education in the country. The following chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from analysis of the data collected in the study.

## CHAPTER 9

### REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 9.0 Introduction

This study sought to conduct a narrative inquiry of the journey and educational experiences of Deaf learners and their teachers at a high school for the Deaf in Swaziland. As a school principal and a teacher of Deaf students, I had observed that the mainstream population has historically shaped the educational needs of the Deaf community without seeking their participation in the conversation about their needs (DePew, 2015, p. 6). Deaf students' experiences have been scrutinized, defined and dominated by the hearing population without giving the Deaf populace a 'voice' to communicate their educational needs as well as their educational experiences (Dalton, 2013, p. 127). What transpires from such a situation is that one population becomes dependent on the other and is silenced on the issues that relates to their education. Hence, Deaf students were the main focus of this study. The research questions of this study, therefore, were:

- What are the educational experiences of Deaf learners in a school for the Deaf in Swaziland?
- What experiences do hearing teachers of the Deaf encounter in teaching Deaf students in Swaziland?
- What experiences do the researcher as a teacher and a school principal encounter in teaching Deaf students?
- What experiences do School for the Deaf-Primary administrators encounter in teaching and learning of Deaf students?

In a bid to answer the above research questions, this study employed Freire's critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework so that Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators could have the opportunity to share their personal narratives in relation to their educational experiences through this study. Freire's critical pedagogy is premised on the notion of liberation, which is the key theme of this study. Critical pedagogy encourages that students, like Deaf students in this study, should be involved in dialogues and discussions on issues that pertain to their education within the school setting so that their voices can be heard through problem solving education and questioning. When students are involved in dialogues, which is the central concept in the education model put forward by Freire (Durakoğlu, 2013, p. 102), they become liberated, learn to think

critically and develop critical consciousness which help them to improve their life conditions (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77). Thus, Freire's critical pedagogy theory is concerned with transforming oppressive relations of power in a variety of domains that lead to human oppression (Johnson and Morris, 2010, p. 6) and it tries to humanize and to empower learners through problem posing education (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p. 77). The humanization process of Deaf students in this study, would have been hindered if students were sidelined in the discussion of issues that pertain to their education in the country (Durakoğlu, 2013, p. 103). Students would have missed the opportunity of being equipped with problem solving skills which lead to development of critical thinking and critical consciousness which in turn, can lead them to liberation.

In this study, therefore, Deaf students were involved in dialogues and in discussions on how to improve Deaf education in the country. Deaf students and their teachers had an opportunity to tell their first-person narratives of their educational experiences and also to participate in dialogue. Freire describes dialogue as the conquest of the world for liberation (DePew, 2015, p. 5). Dialogue in this study provided Deaf students with a platform where they presented their own personal narratives based on their educational experiences from their own perceptions. They did not only get an opportunity to tell their stories, but also to share their ideas on what was needed to improve Deaf education in the country. They were empowered with the skills of thinking critically so that they could voice their own views and contribute to the findings of this study. The findings of the study revealed that these Deaf students were empowered by their teachers and the school administrators who involved them continually in addressing curriculum issues which had engulfed the school at that time and which directly affected their academic performance. Therefore, this study enabled the students to participate and to gain liberation through dialogue which Freire considered to be one of the techniques that should be used in problem posing education (Durakoğlu, 2013, p. 102).

When it comes to the relationship between education and power, the questions that arise from critical theorists among others, include: whose history, whose future, whose story and whose interests are represented by schooling and formal education? (Mayo, 2014, p. 2; Giroux, 2013, p. 7; Nikolakaki, 2012; Giroux, 2010, p. 1; Gor, 2007, p. 2). This study, therefore, presented the stories of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators. These participants were selected because they had a direct interest in Deaf education and are directly affected by the education

system in the country. The use of critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework of this study, therefore, enabled me as a researcher to give Deaf students, who were the main focus of this study, a platform to share their personal education experiences through dialogue, something which had never happened before in the country. In actual fact, all the participants in this study got the opportunity to share their educational experiences on how they were affected positively and negatively.

As a qualitative researcher and a principal, I was privileged to listen to students' narratives and to gain insight into their educational experiences through their own narrations. My assumptions were that the participants, especially the students and teachers would withhold some of the information from me as their principal. Instead, it seemed as if they had been waiting to be afforded such an opportunity to pour out their hearts about their educational experiences. Since Deaf students who participated in this study knew what made them succeed and what had hindered their learning process whilst they were still students in the school, they were able to reflect back on their educational experiences without withholding any information because they were keen to see changes made in the education of Deaf students in the country.

Another assumption was that students in the mainstream schools were aware and have been sensitized by their teachers about D/deaf students who attend mainstream schools. However, I found that mainstream school students lack awareness and sensitivity to the 'Deaf voice' and the lack of deafness awareness among students and teachers results in the isolation of a D/deaf child because of lack of communication skills (Mofatt-Feidman, 2013, p. 12). Thus, D/deaf learners in the mainstream schools find themselves subjected to mockery, stigmatization and labelling and the communication issue becomes the tipping point causing the rest of the person to collapse under the weight of this discrimination (Petch-Hogan and Haggard, 1999:128). Petch-Hogan and Haggard (1999, p. 128) also point out that mocking students with disabilities in mainstream schools is equivalent to labelling which can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers need to be careful about words used to describe students because the same words answer questions like 'who am I' can shape learners' beliefs about 'whom I can become'. These findings do not support the policy of inclusive education in Swaziland whose main goal is to mainstream relevant, quality education for every learner, irrespective of gender, life circumstances, health status, disability, impairment, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial status, or any other limiting

circumstances (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 16). Therefore, the main objective of this study was to document educational experiences of Deaf students and their teachers by engaging them in a dialogue which enabled them to share their educational experiences and to communicate their educational needs through their individual narratives. I therefore hope that this research will be of great help to Deaf students, their teachers and to other relevant stakeholders who are involved in making decisions on the education of Deaf students. This chapter, therefore, seeks to present the reflections of the study, key findings of the study, implications of the study, limitations, recommendations and conclusion.

## **9.1 Reflections**

Reflection in research is ‘a turning back onto a self’ (Steier, 1995, p. 163 cited in Mortari, 2015, p. 1) after the researcher has collected and analyzed data from the participants. Reflection aims at understanding the forms of intelligibility by which the world is made meaningful in the heuristic context of the research work (Mortari, 2015, p. 1). This means that the researcher has to take time to reflect back and see if the study has been able to achieve its objectives and answer the research questions after data analysis and interpretation. Therefore, reflections of this study enabled me as a researcher to reflect back and make sense of the theories used in this study and to learn from the educational experiences of the participants who made an invaluable contribution to this study. Therefore, the following are theoretical reflections, methodological reflections, teachers’ and students’ reflections and my own personal reflections as a researcher and a principal.

### **9.1.1 Theoretical reflections**

One of the theoretical reflections of this study is that it employed critical pedagogy and narrative theory as a theoretical framework. Deaf students, teachers and school administrators were involved as participants of this study. Since Deaf students were the focus of this study, critical pedagogy was useful and appropriate in giving Deaf students an opportunity and a ‘voice’ to narrate their educational experiences. Therefore, this study benefitted from this theory since it enabled the Deaf students to be engaged in a dialogue which led to their liberation and to critical consciousness (Wink, 2005, p. 167). Critical pedagogy also enabled the development of students’ and teachers’ critical consciousness such that students and their teachers were empowered to make decisions and

suggestions on how best to improve Deaf education in the country through engaging them in a dialogue.

This study also reflected that when critical pedagogy is put into practice, it enables teachers and school administrators to work towards improving relationship with their students through dialogue such that students are no longer passive in a school setting. Therefore, as a teacher and a school principal, I encouraged and created opportunities for dialogue and free communication within the school environment whereby Deaf students could openly share and express their ideas as active participants in the school through the use of sign language. Such an opportunity gave students and their teachers an opportunity to contribute to the development of programs that were needed in order to improve Deaf education. Students were not passive but they were treated as active members of the institution. In addition, students' views and perspectives which they brought to this study, were acknowledged by me as their teacher and their principal (Beacom and Golder 2015, p. 7).

Opportunities of dialogue and free communication in this study were made possible through narrative inquiry which allowed students and teachers to narrate their stories easily without being subjected to writing their responses which is often a slow and laborious way of data collection especially when it comes to Deaf students (Bushwood and Granger, 2013). Allowing students to narrate their stories was an invaluable way for the researcher to gain insight into students' educational experiences without burdening them with literacy demands (Davis, 2007). This approach allowed them to enjoy telling their stories and to reflect back in their past educational experiences. It enabled the participants to feel free to reflect on their own life experiences in detail through their 'voices' without just giving 'yes' or 'no' responses. Huber, et al. (2013, p. 213) posit that educational experiences are interwoven with life experiences and with the possibility of retelling life stories through narrative inquiry. Therefore, narrative inquiry connected me as a researcher to the educational experiences of students and their teachers, and also facilitated the dialogue which is proposed by Freire to be central element of pedagogical communication in schools (Durakoğlu, 2013, p. 105).

### **9.1.2 Methodological reflection**

The use of IPA to collect, present and analyze data from the participants was also beneficial in this study. IPA as a qualitative methodology enabled the study to explore the educational experiences of the participants. It enabled me as a researcher to capture and provide detailed examination of personal lived educational experiences of the participants (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). It offered me the best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberation of the lived educational experiences of the research participants and it allowed the interviewees to express themselves and their 'lived experience' stories the way they saw it fit without any distortion or fear of prosecution (Alase, 2017, p. 10). The participants were able to offer a rich, detailed, reflective, first-person account of their lived experiences (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 56) through their own 'voices'.

### **9.1.3 Teachers' and students' reflections**

The study reflects and applauds the suggestions made by students, teachers and school administrators in relation to the improvement of education. These suggestions reflect that both students and their teachers are aware of the challenges that they face in the classroom as well as the possible means which can alleviate those challenges and barriers such that their teaching and learning becomes effective and fruitful and beneficial to both parties.

When it comes to policy and practice, this study reflects that there is still a wide gap when it comes to addressing curriculum issues. The study reflects that since the inception of the School for the Deaf-Primary in 1976, there have not been clear guidelines on the type of curriculum which Deaf students were supposed to follow in the country. Instead, teachers were using their own discretion on what and how to teach to the students in order to achieve academic goals. Such a situation led to teachers having low expectations of their students by making their own decisions on what needs to be taught and how it should be assessed.

The study also reflects that sign language as an official subject has never been taught to Deaf students but only English as a second language. Deaf students are still being taught and examined in one language (English) although their hearing counterparts enjoy learning their first language, siSwati. Even though the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018:30) stipulates that SSL should be offered to profoundly Deaf learners throughout primary and secondary education, sign language is still not being offered as an official subject in Schools

for the Deaf. Sign language curriculum and teaching materials for sign language have not yet been produced or developed. This means that there is a mismatch between policy and practice when it comes to meeting the educational needs of Deaf students.

#### **9.1.4 My personal reflection**

At a personal level, this study enabled me as a researcher and a school principal to encounter the experiences of students and teachers which I was not aware of, especially their coping strategies which made them to be resilient and the suggestions they made regarding improvement of Deaf education in the country. It helped me to realize that both students and their teachers are active participants and players in Deaf education and in residential schools for the Deaf. None of them are passive. I learnt that it is important to frequently consult them and seek their views and their input in their teaching and learning process for the smooth running of the school. When they are consulted, they would feel valued and appreciated when their contributions are welcomed. I also learnt that when students are offered an opportunity to tell their stories, they tell them willingly and effortlessly with the hope and expectations that if they have been engaged by the school principal, some positive changes might take place in their curriculum issues for the benefit of the future Deaf students. The study also reflected on the limitations of this study as presented below. Next, is the discussion of the key findings of the study.

#### **9.2 Discussion of the key findings of the study**

The study intended to investigate educational experiences of twelve participants in residential schools for the Deaf in Swaziland which were 4 Deaf students, 6 teachers and 2 school administrators. The four Deaf students were the main focus of this study since they were the first to sit for Grade 12 external examination in Schools for the Deaf-High. The key findings which are being discussed in this chapter are based on the sub-themes which emanated from the data collected.

### **9.2.1 Sense of belonging**

The study found that Deaf students who are attending residential schools for the Deaf feel valued in their schools including those that come from mainstream schools. Deaf students feel valued by other Deaf students and teachers because everybody in the school uses sign language as means of communication academically and socially. Students disclosed that they found a sense of belonging in residential schools for the Deaf, including participant S2 who did her primary education in a mainstream. She pointed out that there was no one who told her that she spoke badly (*'ukhuluma kabi'*) as they used to say in the mainstream school and she was exposed to sign language like everybody else. This means that educational experiences of Deaf students are in fact a crucial factor in acquiring Deaf identity (Chen, 2014).

### **9.2.2 Communication barrier**

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that Deaf students and their teachers experience overwhelming communication barriers in class because teachers who join schools for the Deaf come without any training in sign language. In this study, it was evident that teachers found it difficult to access their students in class even though they had high qualifications in their subject areas of specialization. Hence, teaching and learning of Deaf students suffered in the process. Teachers expressed that the communication barrier was overwhelming when they arrived at school for the Deaf since they had not received any form of training in Deaf education and in sign language before joining the school. Teacher stated that there was no orientation whatsoever on how to communicate with Deaf students. Teachers learned sign language from their students, and both teachers and their students found a way of coping with the situation by employing different coping strategies such as lip reading, signing notes together and using visuals to assist Deaf students to process information that was being taught.

The expectations concerning teachers' qualifications was that since teachers were highly qualified and specialized in their areas of academic subjects, they would know what to teach and how to deliver the subject content in class. However, teachers came from teacher training institutions without knowledge of sign language and without any specialization in Deaf education. For that reason, the communication barrier became overwhelming and teachers had to spend some time learning sign language from their students. In addition, they received no orientation whatsoever

from the school. Ntinda, et al. (2019, p. 86) point out that lack of teachers' professional competencies to teach Deaf students has a significant implication for the educational success and experiences of Deaf students. DePew (2015, p. 23) also asserts that the tendency of teachers to learn from the Deaf students they are supposed to be teaching is a backwards approach both to learning SSL and teaching Deaf students.

This means that there is a need for curriculum developers in the country to ensure that Deaf education programs are introduced in all tertiary institutions as part of teacher training curriculum in order to allow adequate preparation of teachers, not only to teach Deaf students in residential schools for the Deaf, but also to communicate with them effectively academically and socially. Teachers need to know about Deaf students' diversity of language learning needs, issues of literacy in Deaf education, different approaches on teaching Deaf students and about policies that guide the teaching and learning of Deaf students (Nover and Andrew, 2002). This means that when teachers are knowledgeable about Deaf education critical pedagogy, they can learn more than just sign language skills but also how to handle Deaf students and be in a position to contribute effectively in the development of programs that can enhance the education of Deaf students in the country.

### **9.2.3 Resilience, coping strategies and gaining confidence**

The findings of the study revealed that Deaf students used quite a number of coping strategies in a bid to manage the everyday school life challenges which they encountered in their classrooms during learning sessions. In their educational journey, they experienced failure and they were made to add more years in preparation for Grade 12 examination but such a situation could not deter them from continuing with their education. Students explained that they were so stunned and distressed about the results that they did not know what to do next. However, the negative comments from the hearing populace did not deter them from rewriting the Grade 10 examination. They continued to thrive and find some means which could enabled them to cope with the situation. They became resilient until they gained confidence by engaging various coping strategies such as copying from each other, signing notes on the board together with their teachers, taking extra lessons after school, developing new signs for abstract concepts with their teachers and engaging in group discussions by themselves and with their teachers. Jambor and Elliot (2005, p. 64) state

that Deaf individuals employ various coping mechanisms to protect and enhance their sense of self-worth in schools. This indicates that it is important for D/deaf students to find ways of dealing with hassles they face every day in a school environment (Jambor and Elliot, 2005, p. 67). Young, et al. (2008, p. 42) add that coping strategies are a form of resilience which enable an individual to deal with the stress of life so that s/he can thrive and become successful in whatever s/he is doing.

In such a situation, the expectations were that students would drop out of school, go and search for jobs. But their reaction surprised me. When they were informed that there was a possibility of rewriting the examination, they decided to take that opportunity and make the best use of it. In the process of learning, they became committed to their school work and they began to engage various strategies which enabled them to cope with the situation of being labelled as failures at that time. This is an indication that Deaf students were able to draw on a range of strategies in their interaction with their school environment. Through resilience, they demonstrated the importance of interacting with their teachers and having group discussions by themselves. Such a resilience enabled the students to gain the ability to solve some of the problems on their own and to draw on a range of strategies to optimally manage situations (Young, et al. 2011).

#### **9.2.4 Teachers are blamed for the failure of the students**

The findings of the study also revealed that teachers were blamed by the public for the failure of students on the basis that they were not familiar with sign language which is the medium of instruction for Deaf students. Teachers narrated that the headlines of Deaf students' failure ran all over the local newspapers and the public reacted by blaming teachers and other contributing factors such as use of the mainstream curriculum was not mentioned at all. The reactions were only based on teachers' lack of sign language skills. This is because most people are not aware of curriculum issues that affect the education of Deaf students in the country. As a researcher and the school principal, I feel that blaming teachers for poor academic performance was unjust and unconstructive and teachers cannot be held accountable for outcomes that depend on the action of others (UNESCO, 2017/8). Education is a shared responsibility among government, schools, teachers, parents and private sectors (UNESCO, 2017/8). Accountability for the shared responsibilities defines the way in which teachers teach, students learn and government acts

(UNESCO, 2017/8). Musyoka, et al. (2015, p. 93) also found that teachers are always blamed for the failure of students yet it is often difficult and frustrating on the side of the teachers of the Deaf to adapt and modify the regular curriculum so that it suits the needs of Deaf students. The curriculum is designed for regular students and the most frustrating part is that at the end of the year, Deaf students are expected to take the same examination and the modifications which teachers make for their Deaf students are not allowed in the external examinations (Musyoka, et al. 2015, p. 93). This means that curriculum designers have to be engaged in adaptations of the curriculum in such a way that it accommodates the needs of Deaf students in residential schools.

### **9.2.5 Importance of dialogue and interaction with the students**

Another key finding of the study was that, exposing Deaf students to dialogues in the classroom and in discussions on the issues that pertain to their education, makes them be confident and to become liberated in their thoughts. As a researcher and the school principal, I have learnt that if students' 'voices' are heard and appreciated by their teachers and school administrators, students gain self-esteem, become committed in their school work and begin to believe in themselves. I also learnt that dialogues in the school settings enhance liberation and allow students to develop their own ideas and dreams without being oppressed by their teachers and school administrators as experts who know it all and students being passive. Students' academic achievement is enhanced and students are able to make informed decision about their education and about their lives in general. Students highlighted that after failing their Grade 10 examination, they engaged in dialogues and discussions with their teachers, school administrators and their parents in a bid to find a way forward. They also highlighted that there was a lot of interaction among students and their teachers. They spent most of the time with their teachers, discussing issues pertaining to the use of the regular curriculum. The involvement of students in dialogue is in line with Freires' critical pedagogy which advocates that students should be engaged in dialogue in matters that pertain to their education so that 'passive banking education' (Freire, 2010, p. 73) can be eradicated in Deaf education.

### **9.2.6 The use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level**

It was also amazing to find that the students were able to spot the short fall of the use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level as one of the issues that need to be addressed in schools for the Deaf so that the curriculum gap between primary and secondary level can be minimized. Three students highlighted that the special examination did not challenge them such that when they finally proceeded to secondary level, they realized that there was a lot of content that was not covered at primary school. The end result was that the students were not able to cover a lot of content and they ended up spending more years at secondary level, learning what they could have covered at primary level which is not good at all. The rest of the Deaf students were channeled to vocational programs such as sewing and carpentry. DePew (2015, p. 140) also adds that students in residential schools for the Deaf described the education they received as being repetitive and as a low-level basic education.

This is an indicator that there was no education policy in place to guide teachers on what to teach and how to teach it and at what level. Teachers found themselves doing what they thought was best for Deaf students and the scores were accepted by the examination board at that time. Therefore, teachers cannot be entirely blamed for creating their own curriculum and assessment system that worked for them. However, it is now essential for teachers of the Deaf in both schools to work collaboratively since all schools, including schools for the Deaf, are now mandated to follow the regular curriculum. Deaf students are also mandated to write external examination based on the regular curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Training (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018, p. 26). However, the regular curriculum poses major challenges to Deaf students and their teachers since it is not yet adapted and modified to suit the educational needs of Deaf students.

### **9.2.7 Introduction of Swazi Sign language as a subject**

This study found that sign language as the first language of Deaf students has yet to be introduced as an examinable subject in Schools for the Deaf. Teachers expressed that Deaf students do not have any home language that is being taught as a subject. They are only taught English as a second language. The expectation, according to the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 26), is that Deaf students should be taught their home language or

sign language as their first language alongside English language. Three teachers pointed out that such a situation disadvantages Deaf students because they are not able to meet the requirements of passing since SiSwati and Swazi Sign Languages are both compulsory subjects. Consequently, Deaf students receive certificates which are not complete because they only write English Language which is a second language for them. Namukoa (2012, p. 51) also points out that introducing sign language prior to English Language is considered respectful to Deaf culture and fosters ownership and develops pride and identity in Deaf students.

### **9.2.8 Sign language does not have signs for some of the concepts being taught**

Musengi (2014, p. 288) highlights that sign language has serious limitations when used for abstract scientific and religious concepts. The current study also found that students had challenges in reading text books on their own, especially at high school level because most of the words which they came across had no signs. This is an indication that sign language alone is not sufficient to be used as the medium of instruction. There are other programs which need to be implemented in order to facilitate literacy skills for Deaf students in schools for the Deaf. Two of the students narrated that it was hard for them to read comprehension passages because most of the words in the text had no signs. One of the teachers also pointed out that the subject he was teaching had its own jargon such that some of the words which they used in class had no signs. The expectation by examiners was that students at high school level, should be able to read texts on their own and understand comprehension passages. However, in this study, it transpired that sign language did not have all the signs for the concepts that were being taught in class and for words which were found in the students' text books and in comprehension passages. For that reason, it was difficult for them to understand what they were expected to read, especially in the examination.

### **9.2.9 Teachers as surrogate parents**

Musengi (2014, p. 197) also emphasizes that some parents of Deaf children pretend to be poor because they want the government and teachers to keep on caring for their Deaf children. The study also found that some of the parents of Deaf students are very supportive of the education of their children whilst others abandon their Deaf children such that they become the responsibility of government and the school. However, teachers and school administrators simply assumed the

responsibilities of being foster parents instead of empowering parents of Deaf students with knowledge and information that could enable them to improve their parenting skills. If teachers and school administrators show willingness in fostering Deaf students, parents are likely to remain in their comfort zone and shift their responsibilities to the hands of teachers and the government. One of the administrators lamented that although some parents do fetch their children every end of term, others do not. Some students stay at school until schools are closed without seeing their parents. It is expected of parents to be involved in the education of their children and be responsible for their child's education. This means that parents need to be educated on how to fulfil their roles as parents and work hand in hand with government and teachers in order to achieve the educational goals of their children. Next to be presented, are the implications of the findings of this study.

### **9.3 Implications of the findings of this study**

The following implications emerge from the discussion of the findings:

- 9.3.1 There is a recurring theme of the need to empower hearing teachers of the Deaf to be trained and equipped with necessary skills which can enable them to teach Deaf students effectively and successfully.
- 9.3.2 Every teacher training institution in the country should introduce Deaf education programs that can equip teachers of the Deaf with the necessary skills for them to be in the position to meet the educational needs of Deaf students from the day they arrive at the school.
- 9.3.3 Schools for the Deaf administrators should orientate and monitor teachers who come from mainstream schools so that Deaf students are not affected by that transition.
- 9.3.4 Schools should to involve students in dialogues because dialogues are liberating. They allow students to develop their own ideas and dreams without being oppressed by teachers as experts who know it all and students being passive. It is the responsibility of teachers to actively engage students in dialogues through sign language.

- 9.3.5 The Ministry of Education and Training must assign curriculum designers to adapt and modify the curriculum so that there is effective teaching and learning for Deaf students and less frustration on the part of teachers and students. Teachers should not spend most of their teaching time modifying the curriculum before they deliver their lessons in class.
- 9.3.6 Signs for the abstract concepts which are taught to Deaf students should be developed to enhance students' understanding of the content they are being taught so that their education is not disadvantaged by lack of signs.
- 9.3.7 School administrators and teachers should acknowledge the achievement of Deaf students each time they do well academically and socially so that their confidence and their self-esteem are enhanced.
- 9.3.8 Teachers need to have high expectations of their students and expose them to challenging tasks like their hearing counterparts since they write the same external examination.
- 9.3.9 Sign language should be introduced as a subject in Schools for the Deaf. Deaf students should not be deprived of learning their first language whilst their hearing counterparts enjoy learning their home languages.
- 9.3.10 Enhancing teachers' proficiency in sign language is imperative for the effective teaching and learning of Deaf students. It is not the responsibility of students to teach sign language to their teachers.
- 9.3.11 Teachers need to encourage parents of Deaf students to learn sign language and be involved in the education of their children so that they can communicate with their children in a meaningful way.
- 9.3.12 Parents should be encouraged by teachers and the school administrators to support their children by providing them with their educational needs and by attending parental meetings.

Next to be discussed are limitations of the study.

#### **9.4 Limitations of the study**

Although IPA studies require a small number of participants, the major limitation of this study was that there is only one high school for the Deaf in Swaziland hence the small number of participants. The study consisted of four senior Deaf students, six teachers and two administrators. For that reason, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. However, the strength of IPA as a research methodology is that it employs in depth qualitative analysis of each participant and it enables the researcher to explore in detail how the participants are making sense of their particular experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). The recommended number of participants must be few in order to allow in depth analysis of their lived experiences (Alase, 2017, p. 13).

Another limitation could be the presence of the school interpreter during the interview process. The presence of school interpreter as a mediator might have influenced the tone and responses given by the students, since they were familiar with him. The use of a qualified interpreter was one of the ethical considerations that needed to be taken care of. The students needed to understand clearly the procedures of the interview sessions and the interpreter was responsible for transposing between the two languages (Boness, 2016, p. 11) therefore, bridging the gap between the hearing principal and the Deaf signing students by allowing them to express themselves accurately and to minimize any communication breakdown. Participants were assured that whatever information they shared would remain confidential and their names would not be revealed.

Being both the researcher and the school principal could be another limitation of this study, leading to the participants presenting only what is best on their side. In order to combat this limitation of being the school principal, the researcher opted to interview ex-students who are adults and had completed school so that they were free to tell their experiences. All the participants were encouraged to give truthful individual narratives were assured that the information they had provided would remain confidential and that their real names would not be revealed in order to protect their identities. Next, are the recommendations from the study.

#### **9.5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the findings that emanated from the study and are presented in point form. These recommendations could contribute to the improvement of Deaf education in the country if they are implemented in residential schools for the Deaf. Some of the

recommendations were made by Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators who were the participants of this study. As presented in Chapter 1, there are government policies which have been developed in order to accommodate students with learning disabilities in the education system, including Deaf students. However, there is a mismatch the policy and what is found practice in regard to most policies.

- The Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 3) stipulates that “the purpose of the framework is to make the general curriculum flexible and more responsive to the needs of all learners requiring special needs education in Swaziland’s special and mainstream schools and resource centres”. It does not elaborate on how the general curriculum can be made flexible and more responsive to Deaf students and their teachers. It is therefore recommended that the policy should specify exactly how it can be flexible for Deaf students by mentioning the types of accommodation that are in place such that it meets the educational needs of Deaf students.
- There is a need for the general curriculum and teaching materials to be adapted such that they meet the educational needs of Deaf students. It is time consuming for teachers to modify the curriculum and also teach at the same time.
- The subjects are shown in the curriculum structure the way they are listed in the policy document known as Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 31). The structure portrays languages that are taught in Swaziland and it is clear that Swazi Sign Language<sup>16</sup> is now recognized as one of the core languages that need to be taught as compulsory subjects in Swaziland alongside SiSwati and English (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). However, the policy does not explain who should teach SSL and at what level of proficiency in the SSL is expected. If the policy is silent on such issues, this can lead to confusion and failure to introduce SSL as a subject in schools for the Deaf. It is therefore recommended that the policy should spell out who qualifies to teach SSL as a subject so that its implementation can be a smooth one.

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<sup>16</sup> Swazi Sign Language should be offered to profoundly D/deaf learners instead of siSwati throughout primary and secondary education (Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education, 2018:3)

- The study therefore calls for the SSL to be introduced as a taught subject in schools for the Deaf so that Deaf students can also enjoy learning and being examined in their first language like their hearing counterparts currently are.
- It is also recommended that if SSL is to be introduced in schools for the Deaf, a SSL curriculum should be put in place and teachers of the Deaf should first be trained on how to implement it effectively.
- This study calls for teachers and school administrators to involve their Deaf students in dialogues and in discussions on issues that pertain to their education so that they can become liberated, gain courage and believe in themselves such that they are able to make decisions and informed choices about their own education and their own lives in general.
- This study calls for both schools for the Deaf to follow the same curriculum so that students get acquainted with the concepts being taught in order to facilitate a smooth dovetailing process of the curriculum from primary to secondary level.
- There is a need for both schools for the Deaf to come up with language policies that will guide teachers on how to effectively use SSL and English language in the teaching and learning of Deaf students since SSL is the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf.
- The study calls for teacher training institutions of higher learning in the country to introduce Deaf education programs that can equip prospective teachers with necessary skills and knowledge which can qualify them to teach Deaf students in residential schools for the Deaf.
- This study can be expanded such that it involves more than four Deaf students in the country from primary to secondary level. A larger population of students could give a broader picture of the educational experiences of Deaf students.
- This research can also be expanded such that it includes hearing and Deaf teachers. This could provide insightful experiences into the teaching and learning of Deaf students regarding communication in class. Deaf teachers who joined school for the Deaf after losing their hearing can also bring in their mainstream experiences and vice versa. Further research can investigate an impact on the academic achievement of Deaf students when taught by fluent signers.

- This study can also be expanded to hearing and D/deaf parents of Deaf students. The population of the study can involve parents who are hearing as well as those that are D/deaf or have a history of deafness in their families.
- The study can also be extended and involve more teachers who are interpreters for the Deaf students. I believe that interpreters who are teachers could bring perceptions on the effects of communication during lesson delivery and academic achievement of Deaf students as people who are proficient in sign language.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

In relation to the experiences of Deaf students, their teachers and school administrators at a high school for the Deaf in Swaziland, the main findings are following: students and their teachers experience communication breakdown in class because of teachers' lack of sign language skills, teachers are often blamed for the failure of Deaf students by the public and students complained about the use of special curriculum and special examination at primary level. Teachers and school administrators expressed the need for introducing sign language as a subject in schools for the Deaf. It has also been established that sign language as a first language and the medium of instruction for Deaf students, is neither taught nor examined in schools for the Deaf. Teachers and students pointed out that sign language does not have signs for most of the words in which they find in their books and for abstract concepts that are taught in class. Some parents are also blamed for not taking responsibility for the education of their Deaf children. It was also revealed that some of the Deaf students end up being the responsibility of the school and the government because their parents are failing to assume their parental roles hence teachers become surrogate parents. Teachers also find themselves spending a lot of time trying to adapt and modify the general curriculum so that they are able to teach Deaf students.

When it comes to policies, the study established that the policies are quiet regarding the education of Deaf students. Although the Swaziland National Curriculum Framework for General Education (2018, p. 30) promotes the use of sign language in schools for the Deaf, however, that has not been implemented and it does not specify who should be teaching sign language since most of the teachers of the Deaf are hearing and they are not sign language natives. Again, the policy does not stipulate at what SSL proficiency the teacher should be to be able to teach sign language to Deaf

students even if the teacher is not a native signer. If such important aspects in the teaching of sign language are not specified, sign language may not be taught effectively or may end up not being taught at all. One of the inclusive education policy goals is to ensure that “no child shall be denied access to education at any level on the basis of disability” (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011, p. 16). However, Deaf students are being denied access to education because of the use of an inaccessible regular curriculum which is not adapted to suit the needs of Deaf students. Teachers and students are expected to find their way out in dealing with the adaptation of the curriculum so that they are able to teach Deaf students. Thus, curriculum issues that are faced by the Deaf students and their teachers in schools for the Deaf need to be addressed in order to overcome barriers to Deaf education which are caused by unclear educational policies in the country. It is therefore recommended that, in order to improve the educational experiences of Deaf students, teachers and school administrators in schools for the Deaf in the Swaziland, should be given the opportunity to tell their stories. The stories they tell reflect what actually goes on in teaching and learning in the classroom, especially the stories of Deaf students as people who are directly affected by the education system.

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## **List of Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview guide for Learners**

#### ***Theme: Self and Identity***

*1.1 Tell me about yourself.*

*Prompt: who you are, how and when you became deaf*

#### ***Theme: School and Communication***

*2.1 Tell me about your first day at school.*

*Prompt: How did you feel when you met other deaf students?*

*2.2 As a Deaf person in Swaziland, tell me about your school life from primary to high school level.*

*2.3 Tell me about an education experience that contributed positively in your life*

*2.4 Tell me how you communicated with your teachers in class*

*2.5 Which subjects did you like the most and why?*

*2.6 Tell me about your academic achievements and what contributed to it.*

#### ***Theme: Family Involvement and Encouragement***

*1. What role did your parents/family play in your education?*

*Prompt: in relation to their involvement in your education and encouragement*

#### ***Theme: Improving Deaf Education***

*4.1 As far as you are concerned, what needs to be improved in the education of Deaf learners in Swaziland?*

*4.2 Now that you have completed your Grade 12, where do you see yourself in the future?*

***Ending:*** *Thank you once again for doing this interview. The videotaped session will be transcribed into written English. After that it will be given back to you to read and check whether what you said had been all captured. You will be allowed to correct what needs to be corrected.*

## **Appendix B: Interview guide for teachers and administrators**

**Introduction:** *Good morning/afternoon and how are you?*

*Thank you for coming to this interview. I would like you tell me a story about yourself, your experience as teacher for 2015 Deaf students, the role played by their families in their academic achievement and where you want to see them in future. So...*

### **Theme 1: Self and Identity**

*1. As a teacher/administrator of a Deaf child, tell me about yourself.*

*Prompt: who you are, your qualifications and where you were trained*

### **Theme 2: School and Communication**

*2.1. Tell me about your first day at school for the Deaf, your experience and how long have you been teaching/administrating there.*

*2.1 Tell me how you communicated with 2015 Grade 12 learners.*

*2.2 Which subjects did the 2015 Grade 12 students liked the most?*

*2.3 What teaching strategies did you use to teach them?*

*2.4 Tell me about their achievements academically and what contributed to it.*

*2.5 Tell me about intervention strategies and support that led to their achievements.*

### **Theme 3: Family Involvement and Encouragement**

*3. What role did the parents/family of 2015 Grade 12 students play in their academic achievement?*

*Prompt: their involvement in the education of their children and their encouragement etc*

### **Theme 4: Improving Deaf Education**

*4.1 As a teacher/administrator, what do you think needs to be improved in the education of Deaf children in Swaziland?*

*4.2 Now that they have completed their Grade 12, where would you like to see them in the future?*

**Ending:** *Thank you once again for participating in this interview session. The videotaped session will be transcribed into written English. After that it will be given back to you to read and check whether what you said had been all captured. You will be allowed to correct what needs to be corrected.*

## **Appendix C: Invitation Letter to Students**

### **ATTENTION**

2015 Grade 12 School for the Deaf-High Students

Dear Student,

My name is Zodwa Shongwe and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on **‘Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland’**

I kindly invite you to take part in this research as one of the first four Deaf students who made history in Swaziland by sitting Grade 12 public examination and did very well.

The research involves interviews and videotaping your stories of success from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Videotaping is necessary for this research since it is fast and will record your signed story as it is. However, the researcher can write down your responses in a notebook if you do not wish to be videotaped. The interview session will not take more than 1 hour of your time. An interpreter will be provided for you so that you are able to express your views freely. After completion of the study, the findings of the study will be published in a thesis and in a journal article.

Remember, this is not a test and it is not for marks. It is voluntary and you do not have to do it. If you decide half way through that you prefer to stop, this is completely your choice and it will not affect you negatively in any way.

I will not be using your own name but I will make one up so that no one can identify you. All information about you will be kept confidential in all my writing about the study. Also, all collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project.

I look forward to working with you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you

Zodwa Shongwe

P.O. Box 4753, Manzini

Tel: (+268) 2505 3453 Cell: (+268) 7805 2629

Email: [zeeshong@yahoo.com](mailto:zeeshong@yahoo.com)

## Appendix D: Student's Consent Form

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: '**Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland**'

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

### Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and I don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

### Permission to be videotaped

I agree to be videotaped during the interview session. YES/NO

I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

### Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotaped
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of this project.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E: Invitation Letter to teachers**

### **ATTENTION:**

Grade 12 Teachers  
School for the Deaf-High

Dear teacher,

My name is Zodwa Shongwe and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on **‘Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland’**

I kindly invite you to take part in this research. I chose you because you are one of the teachers who taught the first four Deaf students who made history in Swaziland by sitting Grade 12 public examination in 2015 and did exceedingly well.

The research involves interviews and videotaping your stories of success and your experiences in teaching these Deaf students from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Videotaping is necessary for this research since it is fast and will record your story as it is. However, the researcher can write down your responses in a notebook if you do not wish to be videotaped. This will not take more than 1 hour of your time.

Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project. After completion of the study, the findings of the study will be published in a thesis and in a journal article.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Your participation is voluntary, so you can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and you will not be paid for this study. Please let me know if you require any further information. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Zodwa Shongwe  
P.O. Box 4753, Manzini  
Tel: (+268) 2505 3453 Cell: (+268) 7805 2629  
Email: [zeeshong@yahoo.com](mailto:zeeshong@yahoo.com)

## Appendix F: Teacher's Consent Form

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: **'Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland'**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give my consent for the following:

### Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and I don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

### Permission to be videotaped

I agree to be videotaped during the interview session. YES/NO

I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

### Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotaped
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of this project.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix G: Invitation Letter to School Administrators**

### **ATTENTION:**

The Administrators  
School for the Deaf Primary

Dear Principal,

My name is Zodwa Shongwe and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on **‘Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland’**

I kindly invite you to take part in this research. I chose you because you are one of the teachers, who are now administrators, who taught the first four Deaf students who made history in Swaziland by sitting Grade 12 public examination in 2015 and did exceedingly well from Grade 1 to Grade 7. The research involves interviews and videotaping your stories of success and your experiences in teaching these Deaf students from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Videotaping is necessary for this research since it is fast and will record your story as it is. However, the researcher can write down your responses in a notebook if you do not wish to be videotaped. This will not take more than 1 hour of your time.

Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project. After completion of the study, the findings of the study will be published in a thesis and in a journal article.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Your participation is voluntary, so you can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and you will not be paid for this study. Please let me know if you require any further information. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Zodwa Shongwe  
P.O. Box 4753, Manzini

Tel: (+268) 2505 3453 Cell: (+268) 7805 2629

Email: [zeeshong@yahoo.com](mailto:zeeshong@yahoo.com)

## Appendix H: Administrators' Consent Form

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: '**Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland**'

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give my consent for the following:

### Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and I don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

### Permission to be videotaped

I agree to be videotaped during the interview session. YES/NO

I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

### Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotaped
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of this project.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix I: Letter to School for the Deaf-High School Chairperson**

### **ATTENTION:**

The School Chairperson  
School for the Deaf -High

Dear School Chairperson,

My name is Zodwa Shongwe and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am doing research on **‘Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of High School for the Deaf students in Swaziland’**

I kindly invite your school to participate in this research. The reason why I chose your school is because it made history in Swaziland when the first four Deaf students sat Grade 12 public examination in 2015 and passed very well from Grade 8 to Grade 12. The research participants will be teachers who are teaching Grade 12 and the Deaf students who sat for grade 12 examination in 2015.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All research data will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project. After completion of the study, the findings of the study will be published in a thesis and in a journal article.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Zodwa Shongwe  
P.O. Box 4753, Manzini  
Tel: (+268) 2505 3453 Cell: (+268) 7805 2629

Email: [zeeshong@yahoo.com](mailto:zeeshong@yahoo.com)

## Appendix J: Letter from School for the Deaf-High School Chairperson



### HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

P. O. BOX 281

TEL: 2333 3461

SITEKI 1300

FAX: 2550 9248

Email: hsdswaziland@gmail.com

07 October, 2017

Zodwa Beatrice Shongwe

School for the Deaf-High

Through:

Regional Education Officer - Lubombo Region

Dear Madam

**RE: Permission to collect data from School for the Deaf -High**

The School Committee of the above mentioned school acknowledge receiving a letter from you, requesting to conduct research in the school. As a School Committee, we grant you permission to conduct your research in the school as part of fulfilment of the requirements of your PhD degree at the University of Witwatersrand.

Your research topic is interesting and relevant to the school. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best in your studies.

Sincerely

S. Maziva

School Committee – Chairperson



Cc: REO – Lubombo Region

## Appendix K: Letter from Ministry of Education and Training

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini



Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5  
Fax: (+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39  
Mbabane, Eswatini

Attention:

06 October, 2017

Head Teacher

School for the Deaf - High


THROUGH

Lubombo Regional Education Officer

Dear Colleague,

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR WITWATERSRAND  
UNIVERSITY STUDENT - ZODWA BEATRICE SHONGWE**

1. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Zodwa Beatrice Shongwe, a student at the Witwatersrand University, that in order for her to fulfil her academic requirements at the University of Witwatersrand, she has to collect data (conduct research) and her study or research topic is: *"A Narrative Inquiry of the Journey and Educational Experiences of Deaf Learners and their Teachers at a High School for the Deaf in Swaziland"*. The population of her study comprises of 4 Deaf students who completed Form V (Grade 12) in 2015, 6 teachers and 2 school administrators. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Ms. Shongwe begins her data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study.
2. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Ms Shongwe by allowing her to use the above mentioned school in the Lubombo region as her research site and also to assist her by giving all the support she needs in the process of her data collection. Data collection period is 3 months.

  
Dr S. M. Mtshali-Dlamini

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Cc: Regional Education Officer - Lubombo  
Chief Inspector - Secondary/High  
The School Chairperson of the above mentioned school



## Appendix L: Letter for Ethics Clearance

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits  
2050, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-  
mail: [enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za](mailto:enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za) Website: [www.wits.ac.za](http://www.wits.ac.za)

WITS  
UNIVERSITY



26-September -17

Student Number: 0415292N

Protocol Number: 2017ECE026D

Dear Zodwa Beatrice Shongwe

### **Application for Ethics Clearance: Doctor of Philosophy**

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

### **Narrative Investigation of the Journey and Educational Experiences of Deaf Learners and teachers at a High School for the Deaf in Swaziland**

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted**.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

*M Maseko*

Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

cc Supervisor - Prof. Claudine Störbeck and Dr Guy Mcilroy

## Appendix M: Editing Certificate

Anita Kromberg Editing Services

Freelance academic editor

Associate member of the Professional Editors' Guild of South Africa

P O Box 30043, Mayville, Durban 4058

kromberga@gmail.com

0824982357

### EDITING CERTIFICATE

10 September 2020

Zodwa Beatrice Shongwe

**Effect of Internal Auditing Practices on Performance of a Public Higher Education Institution**

I confirm that I have edited this doctoral dissertation and the references for clarity, language and layout. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents.

I returned the Word document to the student with track changes, so the correct implementation of the changes in the text and references is the responsibility of the student.

*Anita Kromberg*

Anita Kromberg

BA (Psychology and Sociology), University of Pretoria, 1977

Advanced University Diploma in Adult Education (AUDIS), University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1985

Advanced University Diploma in Information Science (AUDAE), University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1995