

**EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING  
BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**

by

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# DECLARATION

## Declaration

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I Justinah...Ntloyalefu...Palime declare that the dissertation

**EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS** submitted for the qualification of Master...of Education (M. Ed) at the University of Free State in my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me to another University or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

*H.J. Palime*

*06/05/2021*

SIGNED

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation to my entire family, my supportive colleagues and friends. My special feeling of gratitude to my mother Mankeletseng Palime who sincerely supported me spiritually and praying for my success. My little girls Matlalane and Relebohile who were always by my side and very special. I highly acknowledge all the support they provided.

I also dedicate this work and give special thanks to my critical reader Dr Peace Nwokedi for being there for my work and as my master leader.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to explore the understanding of Universal Design for learning (UDL) by the Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners. English language is one of the legislated subjects in Lesotho, even though it provides challenges to Deaf learners as they are included in the mainstream in the schools. These learners experience poor academic challenges and have lagged behind their counterparts. This, prevailing situation prohibited Deaf learners to become successful participating citizens. This qualitative study sought to explore the understanding of UDL by the Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners, and how UDL can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in the context of the English classroom. Ten participants, who were purposefully selected, were interviewed. The researcher analysed the data thematically through Braun and Clarke's (2006) and (2013) six phases' framework. The findings emerged revealed that some participants did not understand the term 'Universal Design for Learning', since this was the first time they came across such a term. However, the participants revealed that improving English teaching to Deaf learners needs some further skills and strategies, as well as to employ some new approaches, such as UDL that can bring change to their performance and therefore mediate the dropout. They further illustrated that this does not concern only English teachers, but involve both collaboration of the views by Deaf learners and the understanding of UDL by English teachers, curriculum designers, the examination council of Lesotho, as well as the Ministry of Education and Training. The participants admitted that since they experience limited knowledge about UDL, they recommend the in-service training, conferences and workshops by UDL experts, professionals and researchers to equip them to understand it better and its principles in practice. The study therefore concludes that improving the English performance to DLs will be the result of understanding of UDL and its usage through the practice of representation, action and expression, as well as engagement by collaboration and interrelationship of all stakeholders through interacting and being involved in the deaf education. Additionally, the study concludes that English teachers working with DLs through their daily interaction with learners, experience, skills and capabilities have the potential to bring change to the English performance. Therefore, the study recommends the awareness of UDL and its practical usage through training of teachers, workshops, conferences and different medias. The study also recommends considering identifying the English teachers as agents of change, hence they need to be updated with upcoming approaches like UDL.

**KEYWORDS:** Universal Design for Learning, English teachers, Asset-based approach, Deaf learners, Schools, Lesotho

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## EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
CAD	Canadian Association of the Deaf
CAST	Centre of Applied Special Technologies
CSR	Centre of Strategy Research Boston
CRPD	Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DLs	Deaf Learners
ECOL	Examination Council of Lesotho
EFA	Education for All
FPE	Free Primary Education
MoET	Ministry of education and Training
NADL	National Association of the Deaf Lesotho
UN	United Nations
USC	University of California Research
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UK essays	United Kingdom Essays
UNESCO	United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nation International Children Emergency fund
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The English language is essential in order to become a successful participant in educational settings, and subsequently in acquiring professional and employment opportunities (Hrastinski & Wilbur, 2016). Takahashi, Isaka, Yamamoto, and Nakamura (2017) state that the English language plays a vital role in an individual's participation in contemporary industrialised society. However, some studies indicated the concern on the academic challenges of Deaf learners, which has been an upsetting concern in the African context, especially in Lesotho, as described in various studies (Adigun, 2015; MoET, 2012; Mosia, 2014). These studies further asserted that Deaf learners significantly had poorer reading comprehension, literacy skills, and overall depressed academic achievement (Adigun, 2015; Mosia, 2014).

Inclusive education practice has been introduced, based on a regulation of the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) and Conventions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), of which Lesotho is a signatory. The practice indicated that everyone, irrespective of a disability, socioeconomic background, and / or cultural origins, should be included in supportive mainstream schools (CRPD, 2006). Drawing from the researcher's personal and professional dimension, as a primary school teacher for over seven years and as a sign language interpreter in the only high school that admits deaf learners for eight years in the context of Lesotho, the researcher discovered and recognised the poor academic performance of Deaf learners, which was associated with poor English performance, which is the medium of instruction. Therefore, this prohibited them to participate subsequently in professional and employment opportunities. This prevailing condition imposed the researcher to conduct this study, which explores the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by English language teachers, working with Deaf learners to mediate the English language competency to Deaf learners, and to improve their academic performance.

However, Mosia (2017) affirmed that this is arguably true for individuals with impairments as well. Amongst this category of impaired learners, some are deaf, who also seem to struggle with the English language. Despite all the efforts by the Lesotho government, through the Ministry of Education, to improve the successful inclusion of Deaf learners in mainstream

classrooms (MoET, 2012), the results are not yet encouraging in some contexts, and for varied reasons (Mosia, 2017).

According to Landsburg, Kruger and Swart (2011), a tremendous key challenge that is experienced by Deaf learners internationally is the issue of English writing and reading comprehension, which is highly influenced by poor the English vocabulary. While, Horeja (2012) from Ethiopia, in his work, recognises the division of the language cultures of oral pedagogy against “Sign language” and therefore calls for a collaboration inquiry to elevate English issues within Deaf education. Furthermore, studies undertaken indicate that globally Deaf learners experience poor academic challenges, because they are lagging behind their counterparts, experiencing the poorest reading comprehension, literacy skills and therefore depressed academic achievement. Adigun (2016), Landsburg, Kruger and Swart (2011) and Mosia (2014), believe that low and poor academic achievement is due to a limited vocabulary. However, results from numerous studies, such as Mosia (2014) and Mwanyuma (2016) have indicated that language seemed to be the barrier, for example, Landsburg *et al* (2011) asserts that low and poor academic achievement of Deaf learners are due to failure to meet English demands that are being influenced by a limited vocabulary

The academic achievement of Deaf learners in Africa, including Lesotho, is compounded by issues, such as lack of resources, as well as a lack of adequate skills to meet English demands of Deaf learners that still hinder their academic achievement (ECOL, 2016; Mosia, 2014). Hence, the study seeks to engage to explore how Lesotho teachers understand and the use of UDL to improve English demands of Deaf learners in Lesotho.

Though the Examination Council of Lesotho (ECOL) (2016), has made specific provisions for Deaf learners, for example provision of Sign languages interpreters, as well as extra time during the examination. However, contextual factors, such as a lack of resources, as well as teachers’ lack of adequate skills to meet the vocabulary demands for Deaf learners still hinder the academic achievement of Deaf learners, as compared to their hearing peers in Lesotho (ECOL, 2016).

A body of literature shows that inclusive education does not only intend to identify barriers to learning, but it is also an opportunity for teachers to learn, innovate and discover new ways of addressing barriers to learning and development (UK Essays, 2018). One critical priority set forth by the inclusive education agenda was that:

*“Classroom educators will be our primary resource for achieving our goal of an inclusive education and training system. This means that educators will need to improve their skills and knowledge, and develop new ones. Staff development at the school and district level will be critical to putting in place successful integrated educational practices”* (DoE, 2001:18).

It is therefore against this background that the present study seeks to explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by the Lesotho English teachers, working with deaf learners.

The present study is underpinned within Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Landsburg *et al* (2011), defines UDL as an approach wherein educators use adaptive learning programs to ensure access for all and equal opportunities to succeed. Similarly, Dalton, McKenzie and Kahonde (2012) state that UDL is a simple and comprehensive approach for curriculum differentiation. It can be achieved by using a variety of teaching methods, values diversity through productive designs, provides learners with alternative materials and tools to monitor their learning progress (Ralabate, 2011; Thomas, Van Garderen, Scheuermann & Lee, 2015).

UDL as an approach to addressing barriers to learning and exclusion, is consistent with a systematic and developmental approach to understanding problems and planning action (Morin, 2018). It is also consistent with new international approaches that focus on differentiated teaching approaches that give all learners, including Deaf learners an equal opportunity to succeed (Morin, 2018). The use of UDL and its principles, namely multiple means of representation, a variety of expression, and action and engagements (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012) have also been shown to be effective in other fields, such as mathematics teaching (Thomas *et al.*, 2015). The research by Thomas *et al.* (2015) asserts that with UDL, variations of methods, multiple tools, and strategies, teachers were able to build conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and positive attitudes towards mathematics teaching. Since there is limited research on the understanding and the use of UDL in special schools, especially in the context of Lesotho, the present study intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing the views of Lesotho English teachers by exploring how they understand UDL and how it can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in the context of English language practice.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

On the backdrop of the discussions in the introduction, it is evident that mainstream schools in Lesotho have not been to the benefit of the Deaf learners. This negates the principles of inclusive education. These Deaf learners will therefore not achieve their full potential as contributing citizens. These challenges require teachers to be creative and use multiple approaches to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners. The UDL seems to possess the potential that might bring about improvement, but only if administered meaningfully. The present study focuses on exploring whether the English language teachers who work with Deaf learners in Lesotho do have an understanding of this phenomenon. The study will also explore how UDL, if implemented in a meaningful way, could provide possible suggestions for improvement through the teachers' voices.

## **1.3. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1 Aim of the study**

- To explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners.

### **1.3.2 Objectives of the study**

- To examine how the Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lesson.
- To explore how the understanding of UDL could be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho.

## **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.4.1 Main research question:**

- What are the Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners' understanding of Universal Design for Learning?

### **1.4.2 Subsidiary questions**

- How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons?
- How can the understanding of Universal Design for Learning be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho?

## **1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

The present study will be informed by an interpretative paradigm, wherein the participants will provide their understanding of the Universal Design for Learning (Creswell, 2014). The emphasis of the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed and subjective (Maree, 2016). The researcher adopted this paradigm to enable the participants to share their views regarding their understanding and use of UDL to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in their natural setting (Hannes, 2018). Therefore, the researcher shall gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon, rather than imposing the interpretations made by others about the phenomenon being studied.

In line with the interpretive paradigm, the present study will be situated within a qualitative research approach. McMillan and Schumacher (2014), view qualitative research as a description and interpretation of social groups where the focus is on learned patterns of actions, language, beliefs, and ways of life. The qualitative approach allows non-numerical data; participants speak in their voice about their experiences and perceptions and interpret the reality of their natural setting (Harling, 2012). Furthermore, the qualitative approach employs various research methodologies and methods of data production (Yin, 2016, 2018). The researcher adopted a qualitative approach in this study as she will gain an understanding of teachers' interpretation of UDL, as well as their perceptions on the use of UDL in their classroom. This is the natural setting in which UDL could be used to improve the academic achievement of Deaf English learners. The qualitative approach in this study will be used in the form of a case study in which an instrumental case study will be applied (Yin, 2016).

In line with the qualitative research, the instrumental case study is employed for its ability to capture the reality of the participants' perceptions and their decisions about their understanding of Universal Design for Learning. (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The researcher opted for an instrumental case study, because it provides a framework for exploratory research in real-life settings (Yin, 2018). It will enable the participating teachers to share their views concerning their understanding of UDL to teach and improve the teaching of English language to Deaf learners in Lesotho special schools.

### **1.5.2 Population and Sampling**

The population is the total group to conform the specific criteria, intending to generalize the results of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The current study targets the population of ten (10) English teachers working with Deaf learners in two inclusive primary schools in Leribe District as the research side for the study.

The sample will comprise of five teachers from each participating school that make the total of 10 teachers. The participants will be selected purposively (Creswell, 2014) to ensure that only English language teachers, working with Deaf learners and who are also trained in basic Sign language, are selected from grades three to grade seven levels. The emphasis is not a large number of teachers, because the study is not quantitative.

The research is within a qualitative approach, hence teachers will be selected, because they are considered to provide a detailed description, as well as rich information concerning the phenomena under research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Besides this, the teachers were chosen based on their regular interaction with Deaf learners (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014), concerning the perceived understanding and usefulness of UDL to the teaching of English to Deaf learners to improve their academic performance.

### **1.5.3 Data Generation Methods**

The data generation methods that will be used in this study are the telephonic interviews. One of the advantages of a telephonic interview is that the telephone provides a greater perceived level of anonymity and privacy than face-to-face interviews, since the researcher promises to ensure data confidentiality. This interview encourages and gives the researcher and participants much more flexibility to talk freely and openly (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). The researcher can follow up on particular interesting avenues that emerge in the interview, and the participant can give a fuller picture (Greeff, 2016). The interview enabled the English teachers working with Deaf learners to share their experiences, express their view on how they understand UDL and how they can use it to improve Deaf learners' performance. In the course of the interview the researcher probed the participants to gain more, deeper understanding and yielding rich data (Yin, 2016).

#### **1.5.4 Data analysis**

Once data have been generated through telephonic interviews, it was transcribed to allow analysis to take place. The themes were then pre-allocated, according to the research questions. The thematic analysis guidelines, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), were used to help the researcher to identify sub-themes in the present study. The following illustrates the phases of the analysis process: familiarising with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes, reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the report (McLeod, 2017).

#### **1.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), ethics are principles that define acceptable and unacceptable human behaviour. In the context of this present study, the participants were assured that the research is confidential, and that their participation is voluntary and anonymous. First the researcher asked and obtained permission from the Ethical Clearance Committee of the University of Free State and Leribe Education Office, before conducting the research. Thereafter, permission was sought and attained from the principals of the participating schools and teachers. The participants were issued informed consent forms (letters) that explained in detail, the objectives of the study and the duration of the study. The researcher considered and explained the issue of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Pseudonyms were also used to refer to the participating schools and participants to ensure the protection of their identities.

#### **1.7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by the English language teachers working with Deaf learners in Leribe, selected and inclusive schools in Lesotho. This is where the findings of the study might be of great help to the participating English teachers to improve the performance of Deaf learners.

Classrooms today are incredibly diverse. Teachers embrace equality and inclusion by becoming increasingly responsible for providing instruction in a way that reduces barriers and meets the needs of a growing diversity of learners. As a result, they have to change the way they do their traditional practices (Ullman, 2018).

Therefore, Morin (2018) suggests that understanding UDL, empowers teachers to design lessons for the broadest possible range of learners and gradually familiarizing themselves with UDL's three key principles and their key guiding questions, but not changing all practices at

that time. With UDL, Harper (2018) stipulates that the teachers serve as agents of change, only when they recognize the importance of their role and these learners become assets by assisting their teachers on how to be better.

UDL is based on three main principles aimed at helping teachers improve how they present information in a way that reaches all learners, engage learners in their class, and how they can create purposeful optional inclusive assessments and evaluation. The principles being representation. Action and expression and engagement (Morin, 2018). CAST (2018) indicated that the bottom line of UDL is that teachers should be more flexible and more adaptable for the needs of their learners, thus it is different from a traditional approach. Harper (2018) asserts that UDL differs from traditional learning in several ways, such as various ways of presenting information, including text, audio, hands-on format and others. Harper (2018) also added that it provides learners with multiple ways to interact with material, either visually, auditory and tactile, to give them flexibility to show their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use different testing formats (including oral presentations and group projects) to assist learners to get an accurate picture of what learners know, and increase the motivation of learners, because of these varying methods of instruction (Morin, 2018).

Although what matters most in UDL is helping teachers meet the needs of all learners through facilitating learning, rather than retrofitting a one-size-fit-all curriculum and teachers need to acknowledge and plan for pathways that learners need to take to get there (Ralabate, 2011). Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2012) postulate that understanding and implementing UDL by English teachers, can be of great interest to teachers, administrators, and education support professionals around the world. Hence, through UDL, whenever an English teacher plans the lesson he or she should reflect on the different ways that it can be done to deliver and present this information by thinking about all learners, including DLs in mind from the onset. The teacher should also consider learners' diversity and create inclusive design at the forefront (Ralabate, 2011). Thus, this implies that this is the core factor that enables the use of UDL.

The participating teachers and schools had access to the findings, suggestions, and recommendations of the study, which are intended to help them improve their understanding of UDL and its usefulness. The teachers, including the researcher, will gain insight into the basic principles and steps followed, when using UDL in English language classrooms, which include Deaf learners. Furthermore, the findings will contribute to the existing literature on how to mobilise and harness resources that could enable the use of UDL to help and improve

Deaf learners in their English classroom. Moreover, other education stakeholders, in particular, Lesotho's Ministry of Education and Training, and Curriculum Designers, will be aware of the usefulness of UDL and improve their policies in such a way that pre-service and in-service teachers could be trained adequately to understand and use UDL as an approach towards the effective teaching of all learners, including Deaf learners.

## **1.8 RATIONAL**

Since inclusive education practice has been materialised based on a regulation of the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO 1990) and Conventions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006), of which Lesotho is a signatory. The study seeks to engage in to explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by the Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners, and how UDL can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in the context of the English classroom.

The study believes UDL possess the potential that might bring about the improvement in the academic performance of DLs, the findings of this study also might of great significance to the participating teachers, Deaf learner and the researcher as well. Furthermore, the Lesotho Universities, Lesotho college of Education curriculum designers and ministry of Education and training at large will recognise the helpfulness and significance of UDL. Therefore, they will improve their policies and training strategies to include the UDL as another procedure and or approach to towards the effective teaching of all learners including DLs.

## **1.9 CLARIFICATION OF THE KEY CONCEPTS OF TERMS**

In this section, the researcher clarified the key concepts used in this study namely, Universal Design for Learning, Deaf learners, English teaches, Deaf versus deaf, school, Lesotho and Asset-based approach.

### **1.9.1 Universal Design for learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL, thereafter) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed (Morin, 2018). UDL enables learners to make a choice and then participate in self-assessment (Morin, 2018; Ullman, 2018). This study explores the understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by English language teachers as a differentiated teaching approach to address English barriers and exclusion (Morin, 2018)

## **1.9.2 English teachers**

According to Gnutzman (2008) English is a common language used for communication between different groups of people from different languages backgrounds. While English teacher is defined as someone who helps students understands English, speaks it and be able to write and read it. The current study is concern about the poor academic performance experienced by the DLs which is related to English. The study believes the English teachers has potential to address that problem.

## **1.9.3 Deaf learners**

Deaf learners are students, who are partially or wholly deprived of a sense of hearing (WFD, 2018). Deafness occurs when a person cannot understand speech through hearing even when sound is amplified, therefore they communicate through Sign language (Nordquist, 2018). This study will use the concept Deaf to refer to learners who wholly are deprived of a sense of hearing and use Sign language for their learning.

### **1.9.3.1 Deaf versus deaf**

Deaf with the capital letter 'D' refers to people who have been deaf all their lives even before they acquired their first language (Matheson, 2017). Styler (2019) added that the capital letter 'D' indicates cultural identity and they are engaged with the Deaf community. They are pre-lingual deaf and communicate in Sign language as their first language (Matheson, 2017). Styler (2019) concurs that deaf means belonging to the Deaf community and are is active participant in the Deaf culture. Deaf means an audio logical deficiency Styler (2019). Matheson (2017) explains deaf as a medical condition of having hearing loss. Deaf people most likely do not use Sign language, preferring to communicate orally. In the case of this study the Deaf will be used as learners who are active participants of the Deaf culture.

## **1.9.4 Asset-based**

In the account of what asset-based is, Rodin (2014) points out that each individual within the community has gifts, abilities, and capabilities and when these skills are used, people will live and thrive. However, in the essence of the current study, asset-based is used to place English teachers working with Deaf learners at the position of utilising their capabilities, skills, and experiences to respond to the challenges of English learning to Deaf learners. Therefore, since the teachers will manage to use their own assets, the learners will have the alternative to choose

the materials, content, tools, and the support they need from their teachers, thus improving their performance.

### **1.9.5 Schools**

School is defined as the learning organisation, that has capacity to change and adopt routinely to new environment and circumstances. It is where the members and or learners learn in support of its objectives to successful implementation of its curriculum, (Kools, Stoll, George, Bert & Steijn 2020). In the essence of this study DLs are learning English in school.

### **1.9.6 Lesotho**

Lesotho is a high –altitude landlocked mountainous country. Its official languages are Sesotho and English (Ministry of Education & Training Lesotho (MoET) 2012). The study is taking place at Lesotho country.

## **1.10 DELINIATING THE STUDY**

The research study is explicitly situated in the positive educational psychology, which focused mainly on exploring the Lesotho English teachers' understanding of UDL to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners. It also encompasses applied linguistics. The study also focused on mobilising teachers as available assets through their flexibility and variation of methods to address the English deficiency of Deaf learners. Based on the viewpoint of this discipline the study explored improvement in the academic performance of Deaf learners, through the use of Universal Design for Learning in the selected schools. The study is delimited in two selected primary schools in Leribe district, Lesotho, because they are considered to offer inclusive education to Deaf learners.

## **1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This section provides the outline of chapters in this study. The chapters are as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Orientation to the study**

This chapter provides the background to the research interest/problem, significance of the study. Moreover, this chapter presents the research questions that guide this study, aims, and objectives, as well as the overview of the theoretical framework and research design and methodology of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Review of related literatures**

This chapter gives a detailed account of the phenomenon discussed, wherein various international and national existing works of literature are explored, in relation to the use of UDL and its usefulness for English demands of Deaf learners.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

This third chapter presents theoretical frameworks guiding this study, which is the asset-based theory. This theory is discussed in this chapter with the aim of exploring the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners to improve their academic performance. The relevance of the asset-based theory to the study is discussed in detail.

## **Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

The fourth chapter discusses the research paradigm employed in the study and the qualitative approach. It also contains the outline of the research design, the data generation method and the data analysis undertaken in the present study. Lastly, it also discusses the issues of trustworthiness ensured and the ethical consideration of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Data presentation**

The fifth chapter presents the findings of the participating English teachers. The verbatim quotes are used to ensure that the participants' voices were not missed from the presentation.

## **Chapter 6: Data analysis, and discussion**

The analyses and the discussion of the findings of the study, which is on Lesotho English teachers understanding of UDL and how UDL could be used to improve Deaf learners' academic performances. This chapter presents how the data are interpreted, analysed and discussed, concerning the existing literature and theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 7: Findings Presentation of summary of the findings, recommendations and implication of the future research**

This chapter presents the summary of the findings in relation to the Lesotho English teachers' understanding of the Universal Design for Learning and how it can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners. This chapter provides the conclusion and relevant recommendations for the study

## **1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter introduced the background of the study, provided the problem statement, research design, and methodology of the study. The chapter also provided the research questions, as well as the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher also showed how the trustworthiness and ethical consideration of the study was ensured. Therefore, the next chapter will review the relevant literature adopted to conduct this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter one, the researcher briefly outlined the introductory background of this current study, and looked and highlighted the purpose and the rationale of undertaking this research, which is based on exploring the understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners. Therefore, this chapter provides the explication and review of relevant literature, related to the problem of Deaf learners learning English language in selected inclusive schools in Leribe district, Lesotho.

First, it examines the current literatures on the status of Deaf learners in the context of inclusive education in which the opportunities created for Deaf learners internationally and in Lesotho was explored, as well as the definition of the concepts 'Deaf learners'. Secondly, the chapter also explored the Deaf learners' access to English language and the challenges experienced by them with regard to English language, as well as the impact of English language on their learning. Furthermore, this chapter also explored the use of UDL as a response to teaching English language to Deaf learners, by defining the concept of UDL, its benefits and the teachers' understanding of UDL. In addition, studies pertaining to the factors enabling the use of UDL in English classrooms for Deaf learners and factors constraining teachers' use of UDL in English classroom with Deaf learners, were also discussed and finally the chapter concluded with a succinct summary.

#### **2.2 THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Historically, the efforts of providing education for learners with disabilities, based on special education, is drawn from special school practises and resource centres, in order to meet the needs of learners with learning disabilities, even though numerous studies identified some fragments in the children's learning (Gallagher, 2006). This implies that inclusive education was introduced and included in the education system, in order to address the challenges and the gaps identified, as well as contextual factors, such as teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities (Mahlo, 2017). Mosia (2017), asserted another factor as teachers' lack of

training towards inclusive teaching, which in turn leave many learners out of school or dropping out of schools.

According to Kirschner (2015), the term 'inclusive education' refers to an education system, designed to ensure access for all groups that have been marginalized in society and in schools. Studies about inclusive education, undertaken in India and Germany, perceive inclusive education as a process of enabling all students, including previously excluded groups to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems (Baar, 2016; Singh, 2016). In this, perspective inclusive education concerns equality, and acceptance of every learner with his or her unique capabilities. Baar (2016) and Singh (2016) further indicated that to advance inclusive education the concerned government should ensure the training of educators, flexibility and resources, to teach students with diverse needs and learning styles.

Furthermore, the report from article 24 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), as well as the Ministry of Education and Training Lesotho's inclusive education policy (2018) recognise inclusive education as process of addressing and responding to diverse needs of all learners through increasing their participation in their learning, cultures, communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. In addition, the policy also ensures that every learner receives quality education with their peers, regardless of their disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006).

The international Convent on Civil and Political Rights, recognises the significance of education by responding to the call for inclusive quality education for all with respect to the economic, social and cultural rights for the development of countries (ICCPR, 2007). The framework of an inclusive education system is laid down to recognise and respond to diverse need of their learners, their accommodation and ensuring quality education to all, through appropriate curricula, teaching strategies and use of resources (Landsburg, et al 2011). The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD, 2018) also defined inclusion as the right of the learner to participate and reach their potential in public institutions, such as schools.

Lesotho as a signatory to inclusive education, has to respond to the constitutional rights in the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (7 of 2011) and the Inclusive Education Act (3 of 2010). These acts seek to provide for education for all, free and compulsory. Meanwhile, the mandate of the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (MoET, 2008) reveals the assurance of a holistic inclusion system to all learners, including Deaf learners at all levels and lifelong learning.

However, Cawthon (2001) in her study, which investigated the teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms with Deaf students, revealed that inclusive philosophies focused more on an individualized approach to teaching, attention to deaf culture, advocacy, and openness to diversity in the classroom. This implies that an inclusive practice seemed to be fruitful to the majority of learners, including Deaf learners globally and in the Lesotho context, thus it is plausible that Deaf learners could also attain some opportunities through everyday interaction in an inclusive classroom (Cawthon, 2001). However, in this case the benefits to include Deaf learners (DL) globally and in Lesotho involve opportunities to develop relationships among learners and their teachers as well (Singh, 2016). In this regard, in relation to the literature from above, the inclusion of DL in this study is crucial, because English teachers working with DL need to realize the value of accepting each learner as unique, thus gaining an understanding of UDL.

### **2.2.1 The perceived benefits of inclusive education in Lesotho**

The definition of inclusive education discussed above, implies that it (inclusive education) may bring positive aspects to Deaf learners and to the educational system at large, as it increases participation of all learners, such as learning opportunities, access to academic opportunities, social benefits of interaction and opportunities to establish friendship (Sheeya, 2018).

Other literatures, like Milon and Peter (2014), emphasise three principle benefits of inclusive education with Deaf learners and hard of hearing as: social interaction and contact with children with normal hearing, naturalistic access to typical linguistic and behavioural models of hearing peers, and children's social acceptance by hearing peers. Nevertheless, the government of Lesotho also pledges to provide access to inclusive education of which Deaf learners are part of, hence they enjoy the opportunities attained. This is an indication that Deaf learners (DL) in Lesotho, despite their poor academic challenge, in an effective inclusion their English teachers' understanding of UDL practices, to include their diversity and individual different goals, can provide a better way to assist their successes. This aligns with Singh's (2016) study, which alludes to the importance of inclusion, as he points out that inclusion sees every learner as capable of participating and succeeding academically and in the society as well.

In the context of Lesotho, there has not been an exception where many Deaf learners and hard-of-hearing learners are now part of the mainstream education, in response to the regulation of the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) and Conventions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006). Mosia (2017) concurs that mainstream is

effective because it provides creative opportunities for special needs learners to learn and develop skills of discovering knowledge. Although there are some benefits identified in the inclusive setting, however a number of studies (Adigun, 2015, Mahlo, 2017; Mosia, 2014) revealed the academic challenge faced by Deaf learners as another unfavourable opportunity, which is a global concern, most especially in Lesotho. Some of these studies, such as Adigun (2015) and Mosia (2014) further asserted that Deaf learners have significantly poorer reading comprehension, literacy skills, and overall depressed academic achievement. All these struggling situations of Deaf learners in Africa are compounded by issues, such as a lack of resources, as well as teachers' lack of adequate academic skills to meet English demands of Deaf learners, which hinder their academic achievement (Adigun, 2015; ECOL, 2016 Mosia, 2014).

The Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy (2008), under the section of language policy in the Lesotho Constitution, states that Sesotho and English will be the two official languages used for teaching and learning in schools. The policy also recognises the fact that Sign language and its usage in teaching and learning shall be accessible to Deaf learners as a means of medium of instruction, in order to ensure access to information and effective communication. This, however has accommodated Deaf learners to the access of education, and to develop knowledge.

The Lesotho Inclusive Policy (2018) further affirmed that learners with special educational needs have been enrolled in regular schools and the policy aimed to ensure and to instil acceptance among all learners, including Deaf learners to access opportunities, which can enable them to function independently. The National Association of the Deaf Lesotho (NADL, 1994) expressly affirms English as a compulsory medium of instruction through which all learning areas can be effectively delivered, together with Sign language. These two modes of communication are useful and will enrich and complement the use of written English (The Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy, 2008).

World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) positioned a paper on inclusive education, most especially on the inclusion of Deaf learners, indicated that it is an exposure to high quality education with direct instruction in Sign language, access to deaf teachers and a bilingual curriculum that include the study of Sign language (WFD, 2018). WFD (2018:4) further asserts that the inclusion of Deaf learners is an experience, not a placement and it is an opportunity for Deaf learners to participate with their peer groups through assistance and guidance of flexible

educators who “have awareness of Sign language milestone and assessment, must pay special attention to the need and support.” This, therefore enables Deaf learners to participate with peer groups and teachers with Sign language and cultural identity.

Furthermore, inclusive education provided Deaf learners an opportunity to advocate and have access for a Sign language curriculum, as well as a spoken language curriculum, in addition to a mainstream curriculum (WFD, 2018). This implies that aligning with the benefits of inclusive education the study believes that DLs have access to compete for further education opportunities that are equal to their hearing peers.

### **2.2.2 The definition of Deaf learners and classification of Deaf learners**

Deaf learners refer to the total or partial inability of a learner to hear and understand speech, even when sound is amplified (Bigger, 2018). The Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD, 2014) also refers to a Deaf learner as a learner who is medically deaf when he or she has little functional hearing and depends on visual rather than auditory communication. The WHO (2018) also describes Deaf learners as learners, who are partially or wholly deprived of sense of hearing. Deaf learners are seen to lack hearing and are subsequently deficient in inter alia, their communication ability (Landsburg, Kruger & Swart, 2011). Meanwhile, Moravkova (2011) contends that the term ‘deafness’ can be defined from several point of views, such as the time when deafness occurred, the part of the body which affects the ability to hear and the degree of deafness in the focus of time. Moravkova (2011) further emphasised that the best classification on deafness is considered in terms of whether it has developed pre-lingual or post-lingual. On the other hand, the Lesotho Inclusive Policy (2019) explains that a Deaf learner could be seen as a person whose hearing level is below what is considered to be normal and that includes hard of hearing or partial deafness. However, in the context of this study, which is conducted with the purpose of exploring the understanding of UDL by Lesotho teachers working with Deaf Learners in inclusive schools in Leribe district, a learner is seen as deaf, based on the classification on deafness, which is considered in terms of whether it has developed pre-lingual or post-lingual.

There are various classifications of deafness. Nordquist (2018) and Moravkova (2011) in their study, categorise Deaf learners through the defined classes. For instance, congenital deafness is referred to as a hearing loss present at birth, which can include hereditary hearing loss, due to other factors present either in-utero (prenatal) or at time of birth. Nordquist (2018) and Moravkova (2011) classified pre-lingual deafness as a deaf person who was either born deaf or

lost their hearing before the age of one - that is before their first language acquisition. Lastly, the post-lingual deafness is typically acquiring spoken language before their hearing loss was diminished. Landsburg *et al.* (2011) added that Sign language is a core for the Deaf culture as to complement oral communication as another medium of instruction. Amongst all these differences regarding the categories of deafness, this suggests that they all learn differently, hence require flexible teaching strategies and understanding of UDL by English teachers to meet their differences.

### **2.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND DEAF LEARNERS: ACCESS WITH SUCCESS**

According to research, English language will provide all learners, including Deaf learners, with appropriate access to the education curriculum through language, and sustain a barrier-free education (Hrastinki and Wilbur, 2016; Khairuddin, Miles and McCracken, 2018). Deaf learners will also benefit from various strategies engaged by teachers to improve the writing of languages, such as English language, so as to access the important social interaction benefits (Long, Vignare, Rappold & Mallory, 2007). Whereas Moravkova (2011) emphasised that since Deaf learners are part of society, they experience the globalisation and the growth of communication all over the world, and it is therefore a need for them to learn English language as it enables one to communicate easily with his/her peers and to become global citizens. Moravkova (2011) further asserted that this will also be essential to access the world of entertainment by enjoying favourite books, songs, films and television shows, and have easy accessibility to the internet. In essence, the exposure of learners to English language will provide accessibility and success of all learners, as well as Deaf learners to become successful independent English language learners.

In spite of any difficulty in English learning, this language is considered nowadays a key tool to an educational and occupation career. In other words, it is a language of education, politics, art, engineering, business and leisure (Asche, 2019). Yuliani (2017) posits that it is worthwhile for Deaf learners to study English language, as it is an international language and it plays an important role in every field of life. Alasim (2019) points out that the social interaction and participation of Deaf learners in English are tremendously crucial in their lives as they will be able to build environmental access to information. Their participation will also put them in the position to cover half of the content of the internet, thus the development of their reading skills at large.

Despite the increase in the number of Deaf learners admitted in schools, due to the implementation of inclusive education and therefore willing to be successful in personal and professional dimension, they need to be proficient in English language, which is usually in the form of reading and writing (Asche, 2019). The need for English is globally felt by all, in the academic world for both Deaf and hearing alike, however it is the duty and responsibility of teachers and professionals to explore, recognise and finally respond to the unique special needs. This implies that Deaf learners have the right to access knowledge and information, which entails equal opportunities with their hearing peers (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). However, the literature above put more emphasis on learner's exposure to English language to provide accessibility and success. This contribute more on improving the opportunities of Deaf learners as well to become successful independent English language learners.

### **2.3.1 Challenges experienced by Deaf learners with regard to English language**

Although Landsburg, Kruger and Swart (2011) viewed inclusive education as a response to ensure quality education to all, including Deaf learners, the growing body of knowledge is still reporting the challenges encountered by DLs globally, as irritating. This section, therefore intent to explore the challenges faced by DLs and how these challenges impact negatively in their academic performance, specifically in the inclusive schools in the context of Lesotho.

Since the majority of the world is able to hear, there are many aspects of life in society, such as academic (curriculum content) and world practises at large that put great emphasis on sound, hence causing a major issue that make the Deaf community struggle with their academic work (Gruetzner, 2016). A recent study conducted in Nigeria showed that many factors show that learning is centred upon a hearing activity and is seen as an intriguing and a daily experience. Therefore, this constitutes a great threat and challenge to the learning of Deaf learners and their social and emotional development, thus their hearing is defective (Adigun, 2015). Packer (2018), however maintained that since a hearing ability is one of the aspects of a daily experience that enables an individual to appreciate and respond to sound stimulus, the learning outcomes are precisely centred on spoken language skills, and hearing abilities among others. Hence, this results in poor academic performance suffered by Deaf Learners that hinders their progress.

#### ***2.3.1.1 Academic challenge***

English learning has been found as one of the prevalent and common areas of difficulty for Deaf learners (Ama, 2012). The findings from Nordquist (2018) presumably reflect emphasis

of difficulty on reading and writing English in schools, regardless of a Deaf learner's primary mode of interpersonal communication. Kodiango and Syomwane (2016) indicates that the poor performance of Deaf learners is affected by a lack of a well-developed language for reading, communication and concept formation. Mwanyuma (2016) in Kenya, further asserts that teachers for the Deaf lack adequate resources to design classroom experiences that can help Deaf learners understand the content being taught, and Deaf learners therefore perform below average in national examinations when compared with their hearing peers. This negatively affects their abilities to respond effectively to written English tests.

In the context of Lesotho, the curriculum reveals that the comprehension reading skills are mainly used in examinations to test reading and understanding capacity and also to check learners' logical abilities. In this essence all learners are expected to read to understand the passage, then answer the related questions appropriately. Based on the researcher's experience as a teacher, she noticed that the pass rate of learners in grade 7 from 2016 to 2019, was low in English. The results showed that the English pass rate amongst Deaf learners range only between an E symbol and G consecutively, as compared to their hearing peers who performed well on the scale of symbols A to G.

According to Kodiango and Syomwane (2016), Deaf learners are unable to use required skills to effectively tackle and answer comprehension questions, due to their lack of an adequate vocabulary, reading fluency and speech, as well as language development. Kodiango and Syomwane (2016) further emphasised that there are skills involved in reading with understanding, identifying facts, then responding to questions, accurate spelling, punctuation and good sentence structure.

Numerous studies conducted by Adigun (2015), Landsburg, *et al* (2011), as well as the World Federation of the Deaf on Language Rights (2016) concurred that due to various barriers to education faced by Deaf learners, their education level attainment is low, and this low level of achievement in the learning outcome among Deaf learners is prejudiced to language deprivation, as well as linguistics comprehension and production, which manifest most obviously in written work. In addition, this poor achievement is blamed on various reasons, such as the way English is taught in schools, a lack of trained teachers (including Deaf teachers), and the lack of teachers who are fluent in Sign language (Adigun, 2015, Landsburg, *et al* 2011). These challenges are however seen as another barrier to effective education of Deaf learners.

Another factor identified is that most Deaf learners do not reach conversation proficiency in English language, due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary size, sentence formation skills and the word knowledge, that their hearing counterparts already possess in their school age (Hrastinski & Wilbur, 2016). Magrath (2017) showed that writing English more proficiently is influenced by good reading skills, however Deaf learners experience frustrations while reading English, due to poor English comprehension. The situation denies them access to the world-wide treasure of knowledge, in which the key is hidden in the ability to use English (Domagała-Zyśk & Kontra, 2017).

Nevertheless, Domagała-Zyśk and Kontra (2017) also argue that, “it is not the ability to hear that causes persistent problem to Deaf learners, but enormous constraints of the inability put upon the learning and use of societal language.” Hrastinski and Wilbur (2016) concurred there are deaf individuals who achieve excellent mastery of reading English language and have extensive knowledge of written English. The study confirmed that they are fluent in Sign language. Kuntz (2010) further justifies that if Deaf learners are given access to language acquisition fully and a rich language environment (Sign language), they would read and write as fluently as hearing people.

More importantly, a composition writing skill is used to examine the learners’ critical thinking, to be logically organised and to be creative in thinking. Haider (2016) and Kodiango and Syomwane (2016) define writing as an advanced expressive language skill that requires learners to communicate ideas effectively. It is however a great challenge for Deaf learners to grasp all expected skills and write good compositions, because they are not fluent in reading, therefore experience a limited vocabulary. They also have spelling problems, due to phonemic awareness and therefore rely on visually similar words. ECOL (2016) and Kodiango and Syomwane (2016) added that the relevance of choice of vocabulary is crucial in composition writing of Deaf Learners who are experiencing difficulty, because their composition is highly influenced by Sign language structure and therefore are penalized for poor composition and disorganization, as compared to their hearing peers.

Mudaly and Singh (2018) emphasised that the challenge of English language to DL does not impact only on the language barrier, but also overcoming low expectation and lagging behind academically in various subjects, thus their performance and continued matriculation failure rate. Eventually this challenge hinders and denies DL the opportunity to meet their potential, hence their failure lowers their morale and confidence (Konojiva, 2017)

Basically, all these challenging situations experienced by Deaf learners (reading and writing) are typically compounded by issues, such as a lack of resources, teachers' lack of adequate academic skills to meet the unique demands of Deaf learners and a lack of teachers who are fluent in Sign language (Adigun, 2015; Mosia, 2014). Therefore, in the context of the current study, the fact DLs perform below average actually affects their chances of success, personal development and their social interaction with other people. Hence, the exploration of the understanding of UDL by the concerned teachers to consider their experiences, skills and knowledge as assets in the improvement of the academic performance of DLs, holistically.

### ***2.3.1.2 Social challenges***

Communication is regarded as the exchange of interaction between people, including the Deaf. It also involves sharing their ideas, opinions and expressing their feelings. It is either done orally or in a written form. It is however obvious and important for the DL to convey and easily communicate with non-signers through written communication, such as typing, sending and receiving messages between people through phone conversation, depending on the education background and personal preference. When using writing as a form of communication with DL, it is crucial to take into consideration their English reading and writing skills. Goldmann and Mallory (2008) concurred that writing information is one of the best ways to get messages across to a deaf person, especially when communicating with a hearing person who cannot sign and does not seem to be conveying the desired message. The writing information is particularly helpful when the message is detailed, hence each word used, have a specific purpose, and otherwise it can lead to misunderstandings (Prabavathi & Nagasubramani, 2018).

In a recent study conducted by Volpato, Krammer, Chan and Hilzensauer (2018) in Europe, the study reveals that during the period for DL to leave the compulsory school years, many of them often have large gaps in their national writing and language knowledge, and this reduce their chances in the labour market, as well as lead them to develop low self-esteem.

Some researchers, like Brokop and Persall (2010) posit that since DL have limited English proficiency, they may have much to say or write about, and the ideas they want to communicate are restricted by the limited vocabulary they know. Brokop and Persall (2010) also added that spelling is another critical challenge experienced by DL, as phonemic awareness has limited application for them, as they rely on their visual memory for both word identification in reading comprehension and for spelling. Packer (2018) concurs that communication is vital and healthy for social interaction and peer relationship. However, DLs experiences challenges, due to the

inability to communicate effectively with non-signers through written communication and this causes them to develop a feeling of isolation and unhappiness. The current study is therefore intended to contribute to the improvement of English writing to DLs to promote effective communication through the exploration of UDL by English teachers working with DLs.

### **2.3.2 The impact of English language on Deaf learners**

According Mudaly and Singh (2018), language is the chief means of gaining knowledge and is regarded as the most important factor for successful learning. English language is also seen as the medium of instruction in schools. However, there has been a concern globally to develop and come up with some strategies, methods and approaches to respond to accessible exposure to English so that Deaf learners become successful and independent English language learners (Yuliani, 2017)

The literature from Kim and Mattila (2011) has shown the impact of English language on the lives of DL's on educational domains, career trajectories, their living and development in general. Findings revealed that education and work areas, influenced by English are access to knowledge and new ways of thinking, as well as social contacts and leisure activities (Kim & Mattila, 2011). Hann, Trimmis and Alkhaldi (2002) point out that the issue of the English language barrier is very critical, since it generates negative emotional and cognitive responses to DL, as they express their emotions, share feelings, tell stories and convey messages and knowledge through their language of education.

As English plays a potential significance role in education, Lesotho like many other countries of Africa, considers English language as having economic benefits, as well as one of the legislated subject, even though the performance of English language's position on Deaf learners is at basic level and below basic in mainstream schools, as compared to their hearing counterparts.

### **2.3.3 The various strategies used to improve English in the DLs classrooms.**

The section will discuss the various strategies that can be used to improve the English in DLs classroom. Swanwick (2016) identified the use of fingerspelling to present a visual representation of written graphemes as an alternative and beneficial strategy that supports DLs' developing reading skills. In this strategy the DLs practice reading aloud where the learner signs and fingerspells all the function words and articles and verbs with no transferable equivalent. The strategy is aimed to provide a phonological bridge towards the decoding

components of reading processes. The process strategy is another suggested strategy that demonstrate some measures of independence in the learners' handling of the language task and the ability to use the cues and resources available. This is where the learner uses signs in context and sometimes provides Sign language equivalents.

According to Wu-yang (2013) in UK, English teachers can use information transfer as a process of collecting information, processing, conversion and transfer. In this case the DLs are asked to process what they read, classify and convert the information and then put it into tables or charts for better presentation. Landsburg, *et al* (2011) encourages the manual methods, which are the use of and exposure to Sign language from as early an age as possible. He further emphasised that the full development and fluency in Sign language as first language base, enable the teaching and learning of DLs to develop bi and multilingualism through Sign language.

Technology is also considered to play an increasing role in the education of Deaf learners, in order to facilitate communication, for instructions and for development of literacy and online learning, hence English will be used as a medium of instruction (Canadian Hearing Society, 2015). Despite the strategies contributed from the literature above this study still believes that exploration of the understanding of UDL is also appropriate as an additional approach, hence the performance of English to DLs is still a problem.

## **2.4 DEFINITION OF UDL**

The phenomenon underlying this present study is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose and Jackson at the Centre of Applied Special Technologies (CAST, 2013). CAST view UDL as an approach to designing educational environments and products so they can be used by the widest range of students, without adaptation. According to Thomas (2015), this is the Westernised approach that has been an ideal tool for creating an inclusive learning environment that was advocated by many educators in the western world. Ralabate (2011) identified UDL as a conceptual and practical model for the education community, providing a framework and guidelines to change the way teachers teach, the way learners learn, and the way barriers to education for all learners can be overcome. Ralabate (2011) also postulated that UDL is a new model for designing all aspects of the learning environment to address the wide-ranging variation that learners need, which exist in an inclusive educational system. Meanwhile Scott and Hoffmeister (2017) also defined UDL as a framework that helps with ensuring access to the general education curriculum by offering options to all learners,

including those with disabilities. According to Hall, Meyer and Rose (2012), UDL was well established to create a flexible and accessible curriculum for all learners, thus providing learners with choice and alternative in materials, content, tools, context and the support they need.

Furthermore, Dalton *et al.* (2012) revealed that UDL is based in the fields of cognitive science and neuroscience that address the understanding of how learners learn through memory, language processing, perception, problem-solving, and thinking. They further emphasised that the UDL framework, within educational planning, starts with recognising and anticipating diversity in the classroom. Similarly, Morin (2018) highlights the importance of UDL as building flexibility that can be adjusted for every learner's strengths and needs, hence benefits all learners, including DL in an English classroom. Landsburg *et al* (2011) concurs that UDL is an approach that enables educators to use adaptive learning programmes to ensure access for all and equal opportunities to succeed.

Thomas *et al.* (2015) affirm that the UDL framework consists of instrumental approaches that provide learners with choice and alternatives in the materials, content, tools, and the support they need (CAST, 2016). Campbell, Wilson and Braithwaite, (2016) and Rose and Strangeman (2007) indicated that UDL emerged from the universal design movement in architecture that plans physical structure and accessibility of space to a diverse range of users. This suggests that UDL is applied to the educational curriculum. It accounts for the learners' variability and learning difference aiming to enhance inclusivity by emphasizing the importance between the environment, the learners and focus on individuals' strength and capability.

Morin (2018) further concurred that UDL is a way of thinking about teaching and learning. Its goal is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning, and it builds conceptual flexibility that can be adjusted for every learner's strength and need. This means that a teacher designs learning experiences in flexible ways to meet the needs of individual learners (Morin, 2018). UDL applies the flexibility of teaching methods in the classroom through application of its principles. The underlying principles of UDL offer powerful applications of how learning can most be a success for all learners, namely multiple means of representation, a variety of expression and action and engagements (Dalton *et al.*, 2012). This principle of UDL is outlined and discussed in the following section below.

### **2.4.1 Representation (what to learn)**

According to Morin (2018), representation is the first principle of UDL that recommends offering information in more than one format. By applying the representation principle, teachers effectively instruct a diverse group of learners. It gives learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge. CAST (2018) view representation as building and offering flexibility in the ways knowledgeable learners can have a choice to present information and content in the different ways. For example, providing text, audio, video and hands-on learning that gives all learners a chance to access the material. With this principle Deaf learners will have the freedom of choice and access to material in whichever way is best suited to their learning strengths and capacities (CAST, 2018; Morin, 2018). Based on the researcher's experience as a teacher, this might work in Lesotho, because teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in a variety of teaching methods, since they are already practising inclusion and interacting with a diverse group of learners.

### **2.4.2 Action and expression (how to learn)**

David and Meyer (2018) define action and expression as the second principle of UDL that suggests giving a learner more than one way to interact with material, so as to demonstrate or express what they know and have learned. These principles also provide learners with a choice between taking a pencil-and-paper test, giving an oral presentation or doing a group project to express their knowledge (CAST, 2018; David & Meyer, 2018). In the case of Deaf learners interacting with different materials and methods to test their knowledge, it will beneficially provide an opportunity for them to directly share reality and offer them a chance to access multiple materials in whichever way is best suited to their learning strength, in other words this principle could help DLs to review their situation and identify what is best expected in their learning. Their English teacher too will have a choice to assess them through oral presentation, (Sign language), a pencil-and-paper test or doing group projects to express their knowledge. This encourages skill-building to improve their English as to ensure comprehensive and guide instruction for all, hence understanding of UDL (Harper, 2018; Ralabate, 2011). However, drawing from the researcher's professional dimension in the context of Lesotho, in respect of the curriculum, the assessment is rigid, particularly in an examination where learners demonstrate their knowledge only through pen and paper. The principle, therefore can be practiced during teaching and learning of English, but becomes a challenge in an examination.

### **2.4.3 Engagement (why is it essential to learn)**

James (2018) points out engagement as a very important principle that involves creating interesting learning opportunities that motivate and stimulate learners, according to their personal backgrounds and interests. It is regarded as the third principle of UDL. This principle is aimed at all learners, including Deaf learners to have access to their learning and be able to reason for their learning efforts. Engagement has the potential to enable learners to make choices on the assignments that they feel are relevant to their lives, and this acts purposefully as a motivation to learners to sustain their interest to learning. It is therefore in line with the asset-based theory that lies more emphasize on resources in the community. However, based on the researcher's experience, the teachers can practice this principle, thus the DLs learners can have opportunity to use the available resources on the choice of their assignment, as well as become motivated in their learning.

### **2.5 BENEFITS OF UDL**

The report by the Alberta Government (2018) illustrates that the UDL approach increases student engagement and academic success, and helps teachers better support every learner in their classroom. Morin (2018) affirms the flexibility of UDL as beneficial to all learners, at all grade levels. Furthermore, Morin (2018) also contends that UDL assists teachers to design learning experiences in flexible ways to meet the needs of individual learners, because there are multiple pathways to learning and some work better for individual learners than others. Additionally, UDL can also be beneficial for English language learners, as it helps the teacher to reach more learners in their classroom and create an inclusive classroom where all students benefit (Morin, 2018).

However, Schreffler, Vasquez III, Chini and James (2019) revealed that UDL has access to participation and progress for all learners, including Deaf learners, which challenges the traditional idea of a "one size-fits-all" way of learning. They further asserted that the UDL approach is likely to address the academic and social needs of all learners in inclusive classrooms, to facilitate access, participation and progress of all learners, including Deaf learners. According to Dalton *et al.* (2012), UDL as a framework holds great potential to establish a true accessible learning environment for all students, hence its effectiveness has been disseminated in other fields, such as mathematics-teaching, as described by Newman and Thomas (2015). In other words, with the use of UDL, teachers are able to make the various

learning environments become flexible, which will allow them to better address and meet the needs of English language to Deaf learners (Morin; 2018).

Additionally, Dalton *et al.* (2012) believes that the use of the UDL approach and its principles, namely multiple means of representation, variety of expression and action and engagements have the potential significance to respond and to addresses a wide range of learning needs in a single classroom, including the teaching of English language to DL. Because with UDL the teacher has the potential to design goals that develop the expected deaf learner, the teacher is flexible to vary methods, based on the learner's variability, and to use more multiple materials and strategies for conveying conceptual English knowledge. The provision of strategies and English assessment tools are accessible for all learners, including DL to demonstrate their learning is also crucial (NCUDL, 2012; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Ralabate (2011) suggests that teachers should identify potential barriers to English language learning and plan to remove and diminish them, through reflecting on the different ways they can present this information to build DL understanding.

Therefore, the use of UDL will enable DL to see and understand the English content presented in multiple ways, which will increase their ability to absorb the material, since all students learn in multiple ways (Harper, 2018). Moreover, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), assists English teachers to meet the educational needs of increasingly diverse learners in schools by creating a more nurturing, equitable and inclusive space through the use of its three principles (Harper, 2018). It also offers options for how English information is presented, how DL respond or demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and how they are engaged in learning Dalton *et al.* (2012) and Ralabate (2011) further posit that English teachers need effective models that integrate variations for learning and teaching in the goals, methods, materials, and assessments of instruction.

Since there is limited research on the use of UDL in inclusive schools, especially on the Lesotho English teachers, the present study intends to contribute to the existing literature by providing the views of Lesotho English teachers, which focus on exploring their understanding of UDL and how effectively it can be implemented to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in the context of English language practice. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss teachers 'understanding of UDL in the next section.

## **2.6 FACTORS ENABLING THE USE OF UDL IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM FOR DEAF LEARNERS**

This section discusses the diverse factors that enable the use of UDL in the English classroom for Deaf learners. These factors can be identified as flexibility in use factor, inclusive factor, accessibility factor, assessment factor and curriculum, which will be explored in the next section.

### **2.6.1 Flexibility in use factor**

The key factor that enables UDL framework is flexibility. UDL focuses on a curriculum that is flexible in their teaching methods, classroom environment and assessment methods without losing accuracy. Rao, Rubin and Logli (2016) revealed that offering a flexibility option makes learning opportunities more inclusive in various ways, namely on how to access knowledge through choice of textbook, printed work, audio, oral or digital format.

Furthermore, Rao *et al.*'s (2016) findings indicated that the majority of teachers are familiar with the concepts that are related to core practices within UDL, which is using flexible methods, materials and assessments, while some are highly proficient in using various inclusive instructional strategies that align with UDL. Therefore, UDL puts the burden of change on the curriculum itself, by facilitating the design and implementation of a flexible, responsive curriculum (Ralabate, 2011). The engagement of the flexibility factor enables English teaching and learning to become more inclusive and effective for all learners within the range of their abilities, interests and backgrounds, including DL. This suggests that the factors that enable the use of UDL in English classrooms for DL makes it virtually possible to predict the academic success of learners. The factor helps to improve the DL's ability to progress and succeed in future (Rao *et al.*, 2016).

### **2.6.2 Inclusive factor**

An inclusive learning environment that is universally designed caters for relevant dimensions of difference (Campbell *et al.*, 2016). In other words, UDL also ensures inclusion of learners' variability and learning differences. This extends to the possibilities for effectively including all learners, including DL in the general curriculum, and reducing the impact of English language barriers to learning in the educational environment (Dalton, Lyner-Cleophas, Ferguson & McKenzie, 2019). These also captures the practices of including learners of varying abilities in the mainstream environment without segregation.

### **2.6.3 Accessibility factor**

Learners with differing needs have the right to equal opportunities to learn and equal access to the general curriculum and these can be accomplished through UDL approaches to education (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012). CAST (2013) views accessibility as the ability to make use of the environment. Instructional material for easy accessibility to English learners is considered a major area in an UDL classroom (Dalton *et al.*, 2019). Accessibility and UDL work together in creating an inclusive educational environment for all learners to thrive. Accessibility applies to ensure equal access to physical space, course and material (Ave, 2019). According to the researcher's personal experience this means Deaf learners need visual access. The best arrangement the classroom where DLs are included is to design the setting arrangement of U shape that allows learners to have access to the speaker and Sign language interpreter to participate fully in the lesson. The curriculum should design course content that includes Sign language as another official language to enable alternative assessment to DLs. The curriculum should also design visual support that enhances the communication, such as symbols, illustrations, photographs, visual texts, as well as human resources, such as enough interpreters in classrooms and the alert system, such as vibrating system should be available to ensure equal access to material.

### **2.6.4 Assessment factor**

According to the Lesotho Inclusive Policy (2018), the curriculum does not cater for individual educational needs in terms of instructional material and assessment strategies. Hence, there is a need to modify assessment criteria to meet individual learners' needs. However, with UDL Deaf learners can assess their own learning needs, monitor their own progress, regulate and sustain their interest, effort, and persistence during the English learning task (Harper, 2018). The practical use of UDL assessments provide Deaf learners a fair opportunity to show and express their skills and knowledge, as well as provide an accurate way to measure what they have learned in an English lesson (Ralabate, 2011). The assessments are meant to increase accessibility to a greater number of learners and be more responsive to learners' differences by reducing distracting elements that interfere with the assessment's validity (National Centre for Learning Disabilities, 2008). Ralabate (2011) affirms that all learners have strengths, weaknesses, and preferred areas of interest within the context of the learning environment.

### **2.6.5 Curriculum**

UDL emphasises the desperate need to adjust the curriculum to make learning universal in nature, hence the challenge experienced is based on primarily curriculum. This scientific based framework (UDL) refines the approach of teachers in the way they set their goals, methods, materials and assessments, in order to successfully implement UDL (Hall *et al.*, 2012). Hence, utilizing a curriculum design that will be of benefit to both the learners and the teachers is important. In contrast, CAST (2011) reports that teachers should learn to appreciate the difference each learner brings to the learning process, as they are unable to provide guidance for a retroactive curriculum that is not accessible, adaptable, nor fully inclusive. According to CAST, designing a curriculum that is guided by the UDL principles and practices is effective in reducing poor reading comprehension, learning barriers and building on all learners' strengths (Meo, 2010). Drawing from the related literature above, the factors listed contribute to the success of UDL since they apply and benefits both the learners and teachers. Therefore, in relation to the current study the exploration of the understanding of UDL is applicable in the content of English teachers to improve the performance of DLs.

### **2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter discussed the relevant literature on the context of inclusion, as well as the access and success in English language with Deaf learners. The literature also reviewed challenges experienced by DLs with the teaching of English language, and its impact on DLs. The various strategies used to improve English in the DLs classroom, was also discussed. The UDL definition and its benefits are part of the discussion in this chapter. It also explored the various factors that can enable the teachers' use of UDL in English lessons and classrooms with Deaf learners. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework adopted as the lens to frame this study.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF UDL BY LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two reviewed and discussed relevant works of literature, related to the concept of Deaf learners and the learning of English in inclusive schools. Therefore, this chapter three presents and explores the theoretical framework guiding this study. Adam (2015) explains that the theoretical framework is a guideline for the researcher, which introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. Also, it connects the researcher to the existing knowledge guided by relevant theory (USC, 2020). The theoretical framework guiding this study is the asset-based theory, developed by Kretzmann and McNight (1993).

The researcher is initiated by exploring the definition of the asset-based theory, discuss and review its origin, explore the principles of asset-based theory and its merits. The discussion will be alighted with the understanding of UDL and how the asset-based theory influences the teaching of English language to Deaf Learners (DL, thereafter) in the context of this study. Lastly, the researcher will identify and then discuss the demerits of the theory and give a succinct summary of the chapter.

### **3.2 ASSET-BASED THEORY**

In their account of what asset-based theory means, Kretzmann and McNight (1993), highlight the development and empowerment of communities from the inside out using the assets, resources and abilities of the individual and the community. This theory is drawn to embrace psychological theories, which form ideas about individual assets and the social theories, which inform ideas about collective assets. Similarly, Raish and Rimland (2019) concurs with the above view and asserts that the philosophy of asset-based theory values the positives and strengths that learners bring into the classroom. Raish and Rimland (2019) further emphasized that asset-based theory approaches each learner as a whole person, including their culture, home life, prior experiences, and knowledge, with the perspective that all of these areas can be brought into the classroom environment. In other words, within the asset-based approach, every community is valuable; every community has strengths, potentials and capability.

The asset-based theory also emphasises that each person has gifts, abilities and capabilities and when these skills are used, people will live and thrive (Rodin, 2014). Mapping and harnessing resources are emphasised as the result of effective teaching, because of the interaction and collaboration (Joy, 2017). Therefore, the term ‘asset-based community development’ (ABCD) could be used interchangeably with asset-based approach, which contrasts with the more common deficit-based style (McKnight, 2017). The deficit-based approach highlights the learners’ inadequacies, problems and needs in the community (McKnight, 2017).

This study adopted the asset-based theory, because it positions teachers as assets and people who are capable of mobilising and harnessing other resources (human and non-human) to improve their teaching and thereby improve the learning, in this case, improve the teaching of English language to DL and therefore their achievement. In line with literature, for example, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006), assert that the asset-based approach is viewed as the strength that can be identified, accessed, mobilized and sustained to address problems or challenges and shall bring the local people at the centre of problem-solving and draw from their ideas. This suggests the necessity to mobilize and identify teachers as assets to draw from their experiences to address the English language challenge facing DL. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the origin of asset-based theory in the next section.

### **3.3 THE BENEFITS OF ASSET-BASED THEORY**

The asset-based approach has been used considerably and fits appropriately in many studies in different contexts. Blickem, Dawson, Kirk, Vassilev, Matheson, Harrison and Lamb, (2017) in their article, focus on how the Asset-Based Community Development approach (ABCD, thereafter) might improve the health of people with long-term conditions. In the study undertaken in the North West of England, Blickem *et al.* (2018) gave an insight of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as the most effective in supporting vulnerable people where building trust is mirrored by an institutional and relational environment that is trustworthy and facilitative of developing people’s capabilities.

In the context of Africa, Myende (2017) confirmed that the asset-based approach and its contribution could be used to address bottlenecks in the delivery of quality education and its value has gained currency in South Africa.

Myende (2017) further added that the asset-based theory has many advantages and possibilities, such as creating a platform in which the community becomes aware of individuals’ gifts, skills, and capabilities that are available in their context for them to draw on for improvement of the

schools. In essence, the asset-based theory further stresses the need to identify and position English teachers working with DL as gifted, potential, and skilful assets in the school context and to incorporate their understanding of UDL for better performance.

Kenny (2007) posits that the asset-based approach is the key principle of empowerment, human right, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective actions. Thus it has the potential of identifying assets in a community, focusing on local strength to empower people and allow authentic power relationships. The study by Mathie and Cunningham (2003), adopted the key fundamental principle drawn by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), which focuses on the community assets and strengths, as well as identifies and mobilises individuals, and is community-driven and relationship-driven. In a similar vein, Ennis and West (2010), guided by Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), outlined and summarised assets as three sets of building blocks, such as personal assets that are considered primary building blocks; collective assets as a secondary building block and potential building blocks, which are assets controlled by an outsider. Meanwhile, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) concur with Kretzmann and McKnight, as they identified in their study that rural schools are exposed to three tiers of assets, which are referred to as primary, secondary, and tertiary tiers.

### **3.3.1 Primary block**

Ennis and West (2010) refer to the primary block as personal assets within an individual that realises the potentials, talents, capacities, and gifts within themselves, while Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) refer to primary tiers where they similarly indicated the recognising of individual existing assets such as strengths, skills as well as capacities. In relation to this study, they considered the potentials, experiences, skills and capacities of English teachers as primary blocks, hence realizing them as assets to be aware of and used to improve the English language teaching to DLs.

### **3.3.2 Secondary block**

Within the secondary block, these are assets that are located in the community, such as in the schools, hospitals and social services (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). Likewise, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) identified it as secondary tiers that consist of assets located within the schools and neighbourhood. However, the current study considers the English teachers themselves as available assets that can be used to understand the UDL and its usefulness to improve the teaching and learning of English language to DLs.

### **3.3.3 Potential building block**

Ennis and West (2010) view potential blocks as assets that are controlled outside the community, and in the same way, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) describe the third tie as tertiary ties that are outside the community, such as non-governmental organisations. In this case, they are the universities, the colleges, as well as the research professionals that can train and equip English teachers with UDL approach strategies and skills to understand it better, therefore put it into practice to improve the teaching and the learning of English language to DLs.

Based on the importance of UDL as disseminated by the scholar's cross-reference (c.f. 2.4.2 in the previous chapter) (Landsburg *et al* 2011; Dalton, McKenzie & Kahonde, 2012), the researcher believes and acknowledges that UDL has the potential of assisting teachers to be able to use variety and flexible approaches that could resolve challenges of Deaf learners in an English classroom. Therefore, this is in line with the asset-based theory, which emphasises and recognises that in every community, such as the school the potential of teachers is seen as resources and assets with flexible skills that could be used for individual and English language improvement in Lesotho inclusive selected schools. However, the current study decides to opt for four fundamental elements of the asset-based approach, adopted from Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), with Mathie and Cunningham (2003) to support that this is sometimes called a bottom-up way of working with communities, which focuses on its strength, capacities, and assets. The fundamentals are discussed and outlined in the next section.

### **3.4 THE ORIGIN OF ASSET-BASED THEORY**

This section addresses the origin of the asset-based theory, namely where it originated in 'funds of knowledge' and pioneered by Kretzmann and McKnight in 1993 (Raish & Rimland, 2019). It was originally conceived as an approach to support community development in deprived inner-city populations in the United States (Raish & Rimland, 2019). Blickem *et al.* (2018) added that the focus of this theory is to empower the community to identify and address their problem through the local assets available to them.

There is evidence that this theory was originally prevalent in the healthcare and wellbeing of an individuals. Kretzmann and McNight (1993) added that this process involves not an expert, but a person who brings knowledge and experience, rather than a facilitator.

However, there is another set of evidence indicating that the theory is being used and applied extensively in their various descriptions and areas, such as community development, business

education, mathematics education, curriculum development, and child development (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthinyane, 2015; Dolezal & Burns, 2015; Johnson Butterfield, Yeneabat, & Moxley, 2016; Missingham, 2017; Tracey, O’Sulliva, Lane, Guy & Courtemanche, 2017).

### **3.4.1 Assed-based theory and education**

Although the concepts differ, nevertheless they all commonly recognise that individual gifts and capacities are powerful when they are connected. For instance, looking at the basis of asset-based approach within the faculty of education, teachers and learners alike are valued as assets and for what they bring (knowledge and experience) to the classroom, rather than being characterised by their needs or what they lack (Steinhardt, 2018). While in the context of community development, the focus is on the assets available within the community and connecting these, rather than focusing on the shortcoming and deficits (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In the case of this study, English teachers are valued by their knowledge and experiences of their daily interaction with Deaf learners. The DL are also valued as active learners and capable of learning the English language, rather than their inability to hear and become passive.

However, in another study by Myende (2014), he affirms that the asset-based approach is more possessed by local communities, which includes school boundaries and transcends more to an outside asset in developing the school. In this regard, this study recognises the assets-based approach as a more effective approach to address school challenges, such as the English challenge, as it needs more generated strengths, abilities, and potentials of teachers to improve teaching and learning in schools. Pretorius and Nel (2012) affirm with the above view and assert that within the community each individual has strengths and capacities and the approach is designed to recognise the assets and capacities of all, irrespective of status and show where opportunities for collaboration exist for mutual gain in communities. This approach places emphasises on the strengths and capacities of DL and teachers, despite the challenges experienced by DL in their Deaf communities, concerning their English language acquisition and in the school community, which is based on their poor reading and writing of English language. DL is seen as assets in these their communities (Deaf and School), because of the strengths and capacities they have, which need to be explored and recognised, as well as enhanced to be the best in the community. The study supports the learning of DL, which should be underpinned by the asset-based approach that involves the identifying of existing resources available to the school boundaries and then use them at their best to address the problem therein

(Chikoko & Khanare, 2012). Hence, the next section discusses the virtues of the asset-based theory and its relevance to the current study.

### ***3.4.1.1 The fundamentals of asset-based approach***

The underlying principle of the asset-based approach is that individuals and groups in the community, regardless of their context, have capabilities, skills, talents, and strengths to address societal challenges (Blickem *et al.*, 2019). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and Kretzmann (2010) with Mathie and Cunningham (2003) state that asset-based approach is a community-led approach that is originally developed and built on four foundation elements, namely focuses on community-based assets and strengths, identifies and mobilises individual and community assets, skills and passion, consist of community driven-building communities from the inside out and is relationship-driven.

Nurture Development (2018) concurs that Asset-Based Community Development's (ABCD) claims are that a community can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognised assets, to respond to their challenges and by creating local social improvement and economic development.

### ***3.4.1.2 Community asset strengths***

Within the assets-based approach, we need to know "what a community is?" Bumiller (2018) describes a community as people who share the same interests, share the same passion, could share the same practices, action and or share the same circumstances. Bumiller (2018) added further that a community's asset strength is a bottom-up way of working with communities that focuses on a community's strength-based rather than deficit approach. As Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and Kretzmann (2010) with Mathie and Cunningham (2003) argue that the strengths, the assets and the essence of the community that makes it unique and strong, recognise that everyone in a community (including individual and voluntary groups) has skills, interest, and experience that can help strengthen their community through the use of its resources.

In essence, this identity is often absorbed by teachers within the selected school community as they share the same interest, passion, and practices. In other words, the theory recognised English teachers working with DL, as community assets and strengths in which, through their skills and experiences, can employ different teaching approaches to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners.

### ***3.4.1.3 Identifying assets***

The United Nations, Human Settlements Programme (2008) report shows that identifying assets is the first stage of the asset-based approach development process. Since the assets comprise of the community's unique characteristics, Bumiller (2018) further postulates that knowing the community refers to asset mapping, which just means identifying the assets. Identifying the assets helps to define the background and the history and to understand the community in which the researcher is working within. Chikoko and Khanare (2012) and Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) posit that with assets everyone has a strength that can be identified, accessed, mobilized, and sustained to address problems or challenges. This suggests that identifying assets simply implies strengths, abilities, capacities of individuals, and groups within context, to overcome the deficiencies.

Similarly, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) in their study, identified and classified the components of community assets as tiers. Whereby the assets within the school boundaries, which consist of the teachers and learners, are identified as the primary tiers, and whereas the local community who is involved in the decision-making towards improving the academic performance, are therefore referred to as secondary tiers and lastly, the outside community are identified as belonging to the layer of assets that are seen outside the community.

In this case, the assets within the school community are identified as the strengths, abilities, and capabilities of English teachers in the two selected inclusive schools in Leribe. They will also gain a sense of understanding of UDL to control and solve the English language problems in the school community. Deaf learners themselves, in connection with their English teachers, are also identified as assets and as active participants. These Deaf learners are seen as resources such knowledge and experiences, skills and gifts that can be identified, in order to respond to the challenge of English, since this has become a barrier in the academic performance. This suggests that the involvement of teachers working with Deaf Learners in a school community will provide the potential benefits that could be seen as assets that are accessible and mostly located within the school. Hence, these English teachers will become a centre for problem-solving and the community and school could draw from their ideas through their understanding and the use of UDL (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012).

#### ***3.4.1.4 Mobilising assets***

Bumiller (2018) states that mobilising assets helps the community to be engaged and have control in their community, by defining and solving its problems, through the use of its resources and connection to others networks for resources and exchange. In the context of this study, mobilisation of assets would canvass Lesotho English teachers, working with Deaf learners to learn, innovate and discover various techniques and methodologies through their understanding of UDL to address the problem of learning and development that concerns Deaf learners.

#### ***3.4.1.5 Community-driven***

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) point out that each community boasts a unique combination of an asset upon which to build its future. Cabe (2007) also emphasises that ABCD is driven by the community and that the fundamental community-building is about the relationship among people and bringing the various assets into a relationship. This will apply to all members of the community, including the minority in the community, such as building relationships among Deaf learners with their English language teachers to collaborate, mobilise and become part of the English language learning solution, as full contributors to the performance improvement process.

#### ***3.4.1.6 Relationship-driven***

Relationship-driven is concerned about the empowerment of people by their leaders, while the leaders are required to be more empathetic, patient, and tolerant, as well as taking each value or contribution as a guide and examining how those views contribute to solving their problem (Bobbie, 2011). Some researchers like Mathie and Cunningham (2003) review and emphasise that the asset-based approach is relationship-driven, which means building relationships between assets within the community, to enable the community to have access to resources and energy for the benefit of its members. Therefore, in the context of this study the English teachers working with Deaf learners should be empowered and actively involved in the decision-making in their schools as an opportunity to gain more experience and confidence as they execute their duties to improve the performance of Deaf learners through their understanding of UDL and the application of its principles.

### **3.5 APPLICABILITY AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING IN THE CURRENT STUDY**

This section discusses the application and the relationship between the asset-based approach and the Universal Design for Learning in this research study.

Considering evidence across relevant literature, this approach has received much attention in various fields and is used in many countries worldwide. The approach is popularised by identifying local assets as the primary building of sustainable community development and by acknowledging that local people have capacities required in identifying assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Recently the researcher has identified and witnessed an increase in literature that emphasises the poor academic performance influenced by the English language of DL among inclusive schools in the Leribe district. Therefore, the asset-based approach seeks to focus on finding a solution by working with existing strengths, assets and capacities, skills, and resources that can improve the English performance of DL (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). Hence, the relevance of applying an asset-based approach in Leribe's selected inclusive schools is evident.

The researcher has opted for the use of an asset-based approach in this study to signify the capacities, abilities, skills, strengths, and the flexibilities that should be fully recognised in teachers as assets. Chikoko and Khanare (2012) emphasised that these strengths, abilities and capacities of individuals and groups, are identified, accessed, mobilised and sustained to address the current challenge. With Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) the approach spends time identifying assets that are already present within the community, capacities of residents as individuals, and match them with people or groups that are interested in those strengths. Furthermore, they emphasised that all these involve mobilising individuals that are being seen as available assets in the community and connecting them in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness which is 'mapping'.

The asset-based approach has also become increasingly popular in the improvement of health inequalities by empowering people in more disadvantaged communities to use local assets and resources to increase and control their health and its determinants and tackle the social problem in Scotland (Cassetti, Powell, Barnes & Sanders, 2019). A similar study conducted in Ethiopia, showed that asset-based community development serves as a global tool that allows the vulnerable and marginalized group to drive their future (Stoltenberg Bruursema, 2015).

Literature supports the views of the asset-based theory as a school management strategy, which is employed to improve academic performance in South African rural schools (Myende, 2015). In regard to this current study, the researcher's concern is positioned on the key fundamental principle that guides the asset-based theory (Kretzmann, 2010; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This is concurred by Khanare (2009) and Mathie and Cunningham (2003) who claim that the asset-based theory seeks to identify the strengths, abilities, capabilities of individuals to overcome their deficiencies.

### **3.5.1 The asset-based approach and Universal Design for Learning**

Based on the importance of the UDL, this approach is disseminated by numerous scholars, such as Azawei and Lundqvist (2016), Morin (2018) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008). This implies that the UDL approach is characterised as a valid framework for guiding education practices. The researcher believes that the asset-based approach is suitable to assist teachers with various flexible ways of presenting their ideas and information to maintain high achievement expectations of all learners, including Deaf learners who are experiencing limited English proficiency. Teachers need not only to be able to identify and define, but also to ensure that they understand the three principles guiding UDL, which would enable them to integrate flexible ways to address goals, methods, materials, and assessment in a manner which makes teaching physically and intellectually more accessible (Meo, 2010). According to Morin (2018), the goal of UDL is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning and give all learners equal opportunities to succeed. However, this is achieved through the skills, capabilities, and experiences of a teacher within a school.

The asset-based approach recognises and emphasises the presence of positive factors, such as assets, capacities, talents, creativity, and available resources in every community. The factors could be used for individual and community development. This theoretical framework was adopted by the researcher from this study with the belief that teachers are potential resources, assets, skilful and capable with creative individualities within the school community to bring change to the Deaf education and community (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Eloff, 2006; Griessel-Roux, Ebersöhn, Smit & Eloff, 2005)

Based on the characteristics of UDL that emphasises that each learner attends class with a varied background, expectations, abilities and learning styles, hence a difference in teaching styles is needed (Lucente & D'Apice, 2015). Visser, McChlery and Vreken (2006) strengthen this by clarifying teaching styles as a combination of teaching methods and techniques used

during teaching, and the choice of the particular teaching style depends on the strength, flexibility and preference of the teacher. However, this is in line with the asset-based theory that recognises and explains that unlike the deficit approach, which initiates deficiencies and needs, the asset-based theory starts with strengths and the potential asset of individuals and the community (Rippon & Hopkins, 2015).

Additionally, the asset-based approach focuses on what is present and available to an individual that may be utilised when addressing challenges (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; 2006). In other words, it is within the strength and flexibility of the potential teacher to apply a variety of teaching methods inside the school community to accommodate all learners with varied backgrounds, expectations, abilities, including DL for the success of the lesson and therefore improve their academic performance. However, the study identified that the teachers are the present and available assets that can be utilised when addressing the challenges experienced by DL, regarding their acquisition of the English language in the selected inclusive schools in Leribe district, Lesotho. The teachers, through the variation of their strengths, teaching methods and techniques are assets within the school community. Within this research, the teachers' role is identified within their capabilities and experiences.

Kretzmann and McNight (1993) reveal that the asset-based theory develops the gifts, skills, knowledge, experience and passion of the local community. The researcher believes that it is through the skills and capabilities of the English teachers working with DLs that the UDL framework can assist them as assets to differentiate their goals through a carefully articulated goal and individualised materials, methods and assessment to address the English language challenge (David & Meyer, 2018). Moreover, considering the understanding and use of UDL and its principles, the study believes that it has the potential to enable teachers through their experience to build in and offer learners a chance to access the learning materials and have a choice to present information and English content in different ways, using flexible means to express their knowledge and options for engagement.

The asset based theory position the participating English teachers working with DLs as local experts about knowledge related to inclusion and English teaching. This brings weighty insight to understand the varied background, expectations, abilities and learning styles of all learners including DLs. Therefore, the role of teachers as assets for this study become crucial because their lived experiences, teaching experiences, knowledge, skills, capabilities and creativities

locate them as available assets at school community hence qualifies the uniqueness of the theory

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter presented the theoretical framework adopted in this study, which is the asset-based theory. It also discussed its origin and its various related aspects. The chapter further reviewed the asset-based theory as related to the understanding of UDL by English teachers, working with the DL to improve their academic performance. The researcher, using the asset-based theory, has identified English teachers as potential assets through their strength, knowledge, experience, gifts, and skills that can be utilised through different flexible means in teaching methods to ensure that the DL performance in the English language is improved. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodological procedures under this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodological procedures underpinning this study to address the understanding of UDL by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners in two selected special schools. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), research design is a plan of how the researcher will systematically collect and analysis the data that is needed to the answer research question. Sileyew (2019) defined research methodology as a path or strategies used by the researcher to select processes and analyse information about the topic. Sileyew (2019) added that its academic significance is to allow the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. These processes were aimed at answering the following research questions. What is the Lesotho English teachers' understanding of UDL when working with Deaf learners in their classroom? How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons? How can the understanding of UDL be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho?

In line with the above explanation, this chapter presents and discusses the research paradigm employed in this study, which is the interpretive paradigm. It also adopted the qualitative research approach, which is in line with the interpretive paradigm. In addition, the research design, which is the case study design, as well as the sampling procedures and the semi structured interview were explored. The thematic analysis, which was employed to analyse the data drawn from the guidelines, proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), in the present study was discussed. Lastly, this chapter also presents how the issues of trustworthiness were ensured, as well as the ethical consideration and ends with a succinct summary.

#### **4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

The philosophical setting of qualitative research is crucial to explain what one believes about the nature of reality or ontology and of knowledge or epistemology.

##### **4.2.1 Interpretive paradigm**

The concept paradigm was developed by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 and it is seen as not just a simple theory, but the entire worldview in which it exists and all the implications that come with it (Orman, 2016). Lombrozo (2016) is also of the view that a paradigm is a theoretical perspective that guides research in terms of the choice of facts to be studied, objects and

application of scientific research tools methodology. This study will be guided by the interpretivist paradigm, because the objective was to get the participants subjective view of their own world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The emphasis of this paradigm is placed on understanding the individuals and the interpretation of the world around them.

This study employed the interpretative paradigm, because the interpretive researchers have their roots in philosophy and in social sciences, particularly in history, which centres on the way human beings make sense of their subjective reality, provide their own understanding and attach meaning to it (Al Riyami, 2015).

The interpretivist researchers also believe in human experiences (Creswell, 2014). This is concurred by Maree (2016) that the emphasis of interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed and subjective. Moreover, this paradigm portrays the worldview through the knowledge, based on participants' experiences within their social and their natural settings. Therefore, through the interpretive paradigm the subjective interpretation from various participants is embedded within reality, rather than acquired or imposed from outside (Carcary, 2009; Hannes, 2018).

This current study therefore adopts the interpretive paradigm to enable the participants to express and share their views regarding their understanding of UDL, and how they perceive the use of UDL in English lessons as to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in their natural setting. Using the interpretive paradigm will enable the researcher to view the world through the perception and experiences of the participants. This is based on the core belief of interpretive paradigm, which is to explore how people understand and make sense of the particular context in which they live and work (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

In this regards, the English teachers working with Deaf learners from two selected inclusive primary schools in the Leribe district of Lesotho will be investigated and explored, in order to gain an in-depth understanding on their understandings of UDL, as it is embedded within in their English lesson, as they express and share their experience. This will enable the researcher to gain insight and in-depth understanding of the participants' knowledge, ideas, experiences, understanding and interpretation of UDL in English lesson. The next section discusses the research approach adopted to conduct this study.

### **4.2.2 Ontology**

According to Singh (2019), ontology is concerned with what is the nature of reality and being and what is there that can be known about reality. Therefore, this research study seeks to explore the nature of English teachers' understanding of UDL in their classroom. The researcher ontologically believes in this perspective of English, being a human language, hence teachers' construction of reality lies in their knowledge and experiences, in the classroom and school context and their interpretation of the world.

### **4.2.3 Epistemology**

According to Jackson (2013), epistemology is concerned with the philosophical study of knowledge. In other words, what counts as educational knowledge, the validity, scope and methods of acquiring knowledge. The researcher's ontological perspective supports the epistemological stand of understanding UDL through the experience, interpretative sense-making and meaning.

### **4.2.4 Qualitative research approach**

In line with the interpretive paradigm, as well as on the ontological and epistemological assumption, that knowledge is acquired through experiences, this study adopted the qualitative research approach that explores the English teachers' understanding of UDL in their classroom practices. Qualitative research is based on a philosophy that views reality and truth as subjective and a shared social experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). This approach will make it possible to explore, describe and interpret the personal experiences of the participating English teachers. (Kennedy & Montgomery, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

They added that the researcher studies things in their natural setting with the attempt to interpret the phenomenon with the meaning that participants bring (Kennedy & Montgomery, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Initially the qualitative approach was used in psychological studies to evaluate human behaviour, but since it generates data non-numerically, it is used in other fields, including clinical researches (Pathak, Jena & Kalra, 2013). Pathak *et al.* (2013) contend that the qualitative approach is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interaction. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) concur that qualitative research is the description and interpretation of a social group where the focus is on learned patterns of actions, language, beliefs and ways of life.

Additionally, Harling (2012) also alluded that a qualitative approach's main focus is in human experience, with the purpose of capturing the individual perspective and be closer to real life experiences. In the aspects of this study, the teachers' experiences will be explored as participants, which are their perceptions, knowledge and views, concerning their understanding of UDL and how UDL can be used to mediate the performance of Deaf learners in two selected schools in Leribe district, Lesotho. In this sense teachers are intended to express their role and interaction with Deaf learners, so as to allow the researcher to reconstruct reality from the standard point of their perspective on how they understand UDL (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The researcher will not only gain insight into teachers' interpretation of UDL, but also their perceptions through their experience on the use of UDL in their English classrooms, which implies the natural setting and on how UDL could be used to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners. Hence, the qualitative approach allows the use of a flexible variety of methods to gain information until deep understanding is achieved. Yin (2016, 2018) asserts that a qualitative approach employ various research methodologies and methods of data production to generate rich data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). It is however through this flexibility lens that the researcher sees the qualitative approach as most suitable to be adopted in this study.

#### **4.2.5 Research design**

The design of the study is intended to provide the framework and the direction of the study, based on the purpose of this study. Through the qualitative case study design, the telephonic interview is employed to gather data and to provide insight into the understanding of UDL so as to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners in mainstreams schools. According to Bertram and Christiansen, (2014), a case study is a systematic and in-depth study of one particular case in its context that is aimed to capture the reality of the participants' lived experiences and thoughts about a particular situation.

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) further asserted that a case study is often used by researchers in the interpretive paradigm. Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) viewed a case study as a naturalistic design that explores an event in its natural context, with its central tenet as to explore, describe and explain an event or phenomenon in the everyday context in which they occur in-depth. While McMillian and Schumacher (2014) defined a case study as qualitative research that examines a bounded system, over time and in detail. Mahajah

(2018) also explained that a case study is rooted in sociology and founded to be valuable in practical oriented fields, such as management, public administration, psychology, education and medicine. Harling (2012) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014) also added that case studies can either be single or multiple, hence the cases can differ, whether as an individual, group, activities, events or a process.

However, Bertram and Christiansen (2014), Harling (2012), and Yin (2018) categorised the single case study into an intrinsic and instrumental case study design. The intrinsic case study focuses on the unique phenomenon, whereas an instrumental case study provides insight into the general understanding of a phenomenon, using a particular issue (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, Harling, 2012; Yin, 2018). In a multiple case study, the general understanding focuses on a number of cases occurring in a multiple site. Though Yin (2018) claims a case study is time-consuming, the current research study chooses an instrumental case study over an intrinsic, for its interrelating characteristics. Thus, the data collection method, using the instrumental case study design is drawn from multiple sources, such as direct from participants' observation, interviews, archival records and audio-visual material.

The study adopted the instrumental case study, which is suitable and appropriate and within the qualitative research values for its ability to capture the reality of the participants' perceptions and their decisions about a particular situation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Therefore, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) define the instrumental case study as a design in which the focus is on an in-depth understanding of the theme, where it provides insight and elucidates into that specific theme. Crowe *et al.* (2011) concurred that an instrumental case study is typical, generalised and used to gain a broader appreciation of a phenomenon that enables a qualitative researcher to enrol in it, so as to provide the detailed specific account. The researcher opted for an instrumental case study, because it provides insight into the issue of the English language to DLs (Yin, 2018).

The instrumental case study design was adopted as a suitable lens to be employed in this study, because it will give the researcher the opportunity to gain insight into the English language issue with Deaf learners. This will be achieved through positioning the concerned Deaf learners' teachers as participants, to explore and review their experiences, perceptions and decisions, in relation to their understanding on how the performance of the English language can be mediated through the use of UDL. This implies that it will enable the participating

teachers to share their views with regard to their understanding of UDL to teach and improve the teaching of English language to Deaf learners in Lesotho special schools.

In the context of this qualitative study, the case study is rooted in the use of UDL and the challenges faced by English teachers teaching Deaf learners in Leribe inclusive schools. Therefore, the instrumental case study design was used to explore the understanding of UDL by English language teachers working with Deaf learners through an instrumental case study.

### **4.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PARTICIPANTS**

The following section focuses on the discussion of population and the sampling of this research study.

McMillian and Schumacher (2014) define population as group of elements, whether individuals, objects and events that confirm to specific criteria. The population of this research study consisted of 10 English teachers working with Deaf learners in Leribe district, Lesotho. In Leribe district there are about 52 primary schools, but for this study, only two inclusive schools were selected as population sample. In these regards, two inclusive primary schools have been designated and described as a research context of this study, which is the school **A** and school **B** (pseudonym). The researcher believes the selected research sites are suitable to obtain the history, the social systems, activities and the useful information regarding the teachers' understanding of UDL, (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014). These two selected schools are the only schools that admit and are responsible for the teaching and learning of Deaf learners and also serve the whole Lesotho country.

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), sampling involves making decisions about which people, settings and events would most likely yield fruitful data about the evolving research questions. In other words, sampling is used to select the reach context, settings and people, because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the case. Within qualitative research, natural context is preferred and taken into account, which McMillian and Schumacher (2014) refer to as a site selection, determining the best site that will provide the researcher with in-depth information. They further ascertain that the researcher searches and gets rich information from key informants for the study to enhance data quality (McMillian & Schumacher, 2014).

Meanwhile, sampling involves making decisions about a group of participants from whom the data are collected (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The

research is within a qualitative approach, hence participants are selected, because they are considered to provide detailed descriptions and rich information and usually interact with Deaf learners to enhance their academic performance (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). There are different sampling methods used to select research participants and context.

For the purpose of this study, the purposive sampling method was used to select both the schools and the teachers, research context, as well as settings. The aim of using the purposive sampling technique is to ensure that the selected participants are experienced and can therefore provide the best information about the topic of interest (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the purposive sampling method was used to enable the researcher to select knowledgeable participants who provided her with an in-depth understanding of the study (Crossman & Hardetsy, 2018).

Furthermore, purposive sampling also enables the researcher to select participants that are schools and teachers who could be considered to be information-rich (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) with regard to the perceived understanding of UDL when teaching English to Deaf learners. In this study, School A and school B (Pseudonym) were purposively selected as the context of the study with the belief that they are in a conducive environment.

In this case English teachers who are working with Deaf learners were purposively selected, according to their experience of teaching Deaf learners, their daily interaction and their ability to communicate with Deaf learners through Sign language. The crucial concern is not a number of teachers, because the study is not quantitative, but rather that teachers will be selected because they are considered to provide a detailed description and rich information, because they usually interact with Deaf learners by means of Sign language. Therefore, the following section below provides the description of the research context and participants.

### ***School A:***

The school was established in 1981 in Leribe district, under the leadership of His Lordship, Bishop of Leribe Diocese. The school is a Catholic church-based organization. Its mission is to provide opportunities for holistic development of Deaf learners through appropriate learning, cooperative education and learning support. It is located in the urban northern part of Lesotho in Hlotse town. It was initiated by only two teachers with the handling roll of 11 Deaf learners. Gradually the school developed to 84 learners in 1995, with five teachers of which three were ordinary qualified teachers and two were qualified with special education.

School A is well fenced and secured and functions as a boarding school. It was initially built as a special education centre that admits only Deaf learners, with the aim of offering them the opportunity to learn Sign language, thus giving them an opportunity to learn in a general education environment. However, the school responded to the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET, 2008), which reveals that the assurance of holistic inclusion system to all learners at all levels and lifelong learning, is to ensure that every student receives quality education. The school admits learners who are deaf and have an intellectual disability from the ages of seven to 21 years and from grade 1 to grade 4.

These same learners are later transferred to mainstream schools and later to other local inclusive schools with their hearing peers from Grade 5 to 7 and with the guidance of Sign language interpreters. Since then the numbers of learners have increased rapidly from 84 learners to the maximum of 200 learners in 2018, and currently the enrolment have increased to 207. School A have seven teachers who are not trained in Sign language and two teachers with special education training. This school is located on the left side of the main road to Butha Buthe, about 2km next to the national hospital.

### ***School B:***

School B is currently an inclusive school in Leribe district, which is a study site as well. It is a comprehensive Catholic school that was established 72 years ago. This school currently enrolls learners from grade 1 to grade 7 whereby one quarter ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the school learners are Deaf learners. The school was established in 1947 by a Catholic church and was registered in the year 1952. The school initially began with a total enrolment of 200 learners from class 1 to 3. The church premises were used as classrooms for learning with only three teachers and four assisting Catholic nuns. The school was managed and supervised for many years by different parish priests.

However, in 1986, the Bishop of Leribe Diocese built six classes and the school office, which have been functioning till date. The grades are from grade 1 to grade 7. The school enrolment rate increased in 1990 by admitting 509 learners. That same year the Ministry of Education and Training adopted a policy of including children with special needs into the mainstream system.

By responding to the national inclusive education programme, school B was selected as one of the piloting project schools in Lesotho (UNICEF, 2000). The school began by admitting two Deaf learners into class 5 from special schools. Actually the admission of Deaf learners commenced after the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in the year 2000, as Lesotho 's prospects of achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals (Stubbs, 2000; UNICEF, 2000). This led to the rapid increase in the enrolment rate of Deaf learners, which currently stand at 63 (see table 4.1) from grade 5 to grade 7, as shown below.

**Table 4.1: Table representation of school B enrolment figure in grade 5, 6 and 7 from 2016 to 2019**

GRADES	2016		2017		2018		2019	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Grade 7</b>	2	6	13	4	3	1	11	16
<b>Grade 6</b>	16	10	7	3	16	10	7	3
<b>Grade 5</b>	3	1	11	16	7	3	16	10
<b>Total number of Deaf learners</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>63</b>	

The four consecutive years as shown in the table above, emerging from 2016 to 2019, reveal the increase in the enrolment of Deaf learners from 38 to 63 Deaf learners in 2019.

In addition, the school recently operated with six teachers who has no training in Sign language, one teacher trained as a special educator, one Sign language interpreter and one Sign language instructor, which make the total of nine teachers. Meanwhile, seven subjects are taught in this school, namely English, Sesotho, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Science, Life Skills and Art and Entrepreneurship. All the subjects are compulsory for all learners, including Deaf learners. The school is located along the right side of the road from Butha Buthe to Maseru, a kilometre away from the main road in the township site of Leribe.

Ten (10) English language teachers who are working with Deaf learners and also Sign language are from special schools and mainstream schools (school A and School B) and were

purposively selected to represent the population of all teachers. The participating teachers were selected with no limits to their gender or religious affinity. The teachers are in their working age of 30 to 50 years and have more than five years' experience of teaching Deaf learners. They were also selected, because they are responsible and competent teachers who know how to perform their school tasks and norms, such as being syllabus friendly, are able to scheme and record their work, and able to prepare a good lesson plan.

In addition, the five participating teachers from the mainstream school (School B) were selected, based on how they can communicate fluently with Deaf learners, are able to develop a positive attitude towards them, are self-motivated and ready to coordinate and learn new things. Lastly, the participants were purposively selected, because they are accountable and knowledgeable to compete with school tasks and therefore are Deaf aware.

#### **4.4 DATA GENERATION METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The methods that were used to generate data and procedures are discussed in this section to emphasize that the researcher arranges situations that produce rich and meaningful data for further analysis (Goldkuhl, 2019). One of the importance of qualitative research is that multiple forms of data generation can be gathered from the participants to represent their meaning in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014).

In a qualitative research, Sharma (2014) notes that interviews are a major source of generating qualitative data, hence the interview provides the researcher with the opportunity to investigate ideas and beliefs of the participants, in order to gather information. Therefore, this study intended to select and use an interview as a data generation method. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) defined interviews as the conversation between the researcher and the participants, hence the qualitative researchers want to have the information directly from the source. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014) there are two types of interviews, namely a structured interview and semi-structured interview. In a structured interview the questions require close responses; this is where participants have to choose answers from the particular possible answers (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher 2014). For the purpose of this study a semi-structured interview was used, because semi-structured questions are open-ended, but fairly specific in its intent and it offers a researcher a great deal of flexibility and an ability to probe and clarify.

Different from the types of interviews above, are another three listed interview techniques, each of which can be used according to the research study requirement and can reflect any of

the research interviews above, and they are face-to-face interviews, telephonic interviews and focus group interviews (Mather, Fox & Hunn, 2002)

#### **4.4.1 Semi-structured interview through telephone**

Although, semi-structured interviews through a telephone lacks visual cues to aid interpretation of speech, Block and Erskine (2012) as well as Carr and Worth (2001), claim it as the preferable and beneficial method to many qualitative researches, since it facilitates the collection of detailed personal data that provide a high degree of quality responses and relatively low refusal rates from participants. It also allows the researcher to access the freedom to vary resources and experiences without the need to endure the expense and time consumed by travel to different locales (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), rather than face-to-face interviews that ensure interaction where the researcher needs to travel or pay for the participant's fare to the interview sites (Anozie, 2017). Carr and Worth (2001) also suggested that telephonic interviews share many advantages of face-to-face interviews and eliminate travel cost for the interviewee. Fox (2009) views telephonic interviews as a very effective and economical way of collecting data where the sample to be contacted are all accessible via the telephone.

A telephonic interview is ideally suitable for this study, due to its appropriate and significant advantages, such as when the participants to be interviewed are widely geographically distributed. (Mather *et al.*, 2002). It also allows the researcher to inaccessible individuals, it is superior for contacting people in closed sites, and relevant in dealing with sensitive issues, where personal contacts are required (Anozie, 2017), rather than face-to-face interviews, which are physically limited to a single geographical region while the interviewers put the interviewee on the spot, as they require an immediate response (Anozie, 2017).

Furthermore, the study took place during a corona virus pandemic, which resulted in the need for this type of interview. It means in addition to everything else, the choice was informed with the need to protect the health of everybody involved.

The researcher then asked for their phone numbers, to set an appointment with the consent teachers (participants) about the time that will be comfortable and suitable and free from distraction, to phone them and conduct an interview session with them. The researcher sent the participating teachers some questions to practice on how to answer prior the interview day through emails and WhatsApp.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) indicates that the most important aspects to consider in an interview is that it is necessary for the interviewer to maintain a relaxed manner, ask clear questions, note-taking, appropriate use of follow-up questions or probes, establishing trust and keeping track of responses. Drawing from the guidelines of Burke and Miller (2001), the researcher first conducted the pilot study with the same list of interview questions with her colleagues (teachers). The purpose was to determine logic and the flow of questions, as well as to identify the wording that needed to be addressed. The pilot study also enlightened the researcher with the amount of time it will take to conduct the interview. The researcher then phoned the participating teachers to set up interview appointments, and agree upon the time that will be convenient to them. The researcher first introduced herself and ensured them that their participation is highly appreciated and important for the success of the research, for improving themselves and the learners as well. The researcher emailed them a consent letter to ensure professional credibility.

The interview took place with the purpose of exploring the English teachers working with Deaf learners' understandings, ideas, opinions, experiences and their perspectives about UDL and on how UDL could be used in their English classroom. The researcher employed an electronic recorder (audio recorder) to assist her (the interviewer) to concentrate on the interview, rather than on note-taking, which can act as distraction, as well as lead to a disjointed interview where key information can be overlooked, forgotten or missed (CSR-Centre for Strategy Research Boston, 2006).

However, during the process of the interview, in order for the researcher to acquire more in-depth answers that will indicate whether the components of UDL are considered, the researcher openly probed the participants and further pursued the participants' ideas more in-depth and received specific answers on how the teachers understand UDL in their English classroom. During the interview sessions, the researcher ensured that more detailed questions were used to build on the participants' previous answers, and to seek for clarification by using phrases, such as "What are your views on the use of UDL"?

#### **4.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) defined the analysis as the separation of a whole into parts, for the purpose of the study. Shamo and Resnik (2005) consider it as an application of a statistical and logical tool to better interpret data in a meaningful way. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) described data analysis as the most complex phase of qualitative research,

and one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature. In addition, they indicated that within a qualitative research approach there are specific techniques for conducting, documenting, and evaluating data analysis processes. Since the themes were pre-allocated according to the research questions, the thematic analysis helped to identify the sub-themes. In line with the qualitative approach, the thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, with the goal of identifying themes, i.e. patterns and use these themes to address the research or an issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis is widely recognised as a unique and valuable method, in its own right, besides other more established qualitative approaches, like the grounded theory narrative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

However, thematic analysis could also be regarded as the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data and is considered to be a very flexible method in the perspective of learning and teaching. Nowell *et al.* (2017) emphasized that thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data.

After the data have been generated through the semi-structured interviews, the thematic analysis guidelines, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), were used by the researcher to analyse the data in the present study, because it is accessible, flexible and increasingly a popular method of qualitative analysis. The following are the phases of analysis process, namely familiarising with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2012). On the other hand, its flexible benefit also enables and offers new qualitative researchers, who seemed conceptually challenged, a way that teaches them the mechanics of coding and analysing of qualitative data systematically, which can be linked to other broader theoretical or conceptual issues. (Braun & Clarke, 2012; McLeod, 2017).

The analysis of data followed the following six phases that are informed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012), namely *Familiarising with the data* - in this phase after the data have been generated, the researcher stores the raw data in a well-organized archive, where records of all data field notes, and transcripts are kept. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For *Generating initial codes*, the researcher starts with preliminary codes, which are considered meaningful, namely about what is in the data and what is interesting about it. (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). According to Braun

and Clarke (2006) when *searching for themes*, the theme refers to what will capture something important about the data, in relation to the research question.

Furthermore, the *reviewing of themes* involves refining and defining, modifying and developing the themes and subthemes within the data (Caulfield, 2019). *Defining and naming themes* - this involve coming up with an understandable name for each theme and interpreting exactly what each theme means (Caulfield, 2019). Finally, for the *Producing of the report*, the researcher is writing the final report by transforming analysis into an interpretable piece of writing in a manner that convinces the reader of the merits and validity of the analysis and that they make meaningful contributions to answer the research question, and how they relate to literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **4.5.1 Trustworthiness**

According to Polit and Beck (2014), trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. While in the study of Stone (2017) trustworthiness is concerned with the aspects of validity and reliability that are considered as the most important factors in qualitative study. However, the advantage of this qualitative study is based on its importance to ensure that the generated data are valid and reliable in terms of accuracy. Nieuwenhuis (2010) emphasizes on the outlined criteria proposed and developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), through the characteristics of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

##### **4.5.1.1 Credibility**

Probyn, Howarth and Maz (2016) view credibility as an extent to which the findings represent reality and the participants' viewpoints rather than the researcher's. They further clarify that credibility can be achieved by adopting well-established methods that are appropriate to answer research questions. Droumeva and Wakkary (2006) point out that credibility, establishes representations constructed through research, is indeed valid and believable, rather than true value. Additionally, Bertram and Christiansen, (2014) concurred that in interpretivist research, attention to credibility is essential to reflect the participants' reality.

Therefore, throughout this study credibility of the data gathered was ensured.

#### **4.5.1.2 Transferability**

According to Bertram and Christiansen, (2014) transferability is concerned with to what extent the research can be transferred to another context. They supplement this by indicating the validity of an instrumental case study, which the researcher carefully considers on how typical the case is and the particular cases to be transferred to other cases. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) consider it as an external validity with the extent to which the result of an experiment can be generalised to people and the environmental condition outside the context. However, in the aspect of this qualitative study, the goal is not to generalise, but rather to transfer the findings from one sample to another setting, because the participants are not representative of the entire population (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

They further added that unlike generalizability, transferability does not involve broad claims and by employing purposeful sampling, this enabled the researcher to avoid generalisation, but rather to ensure transferability.

#### **4.5.1.3 Confirmability**

The aspect of confirmability concerns neutrality and confirmability of the analysis or findings by others is the measure of quality (Droumeva & Wakkary, 2006). Furthermore, Bertram and Christiansen, (2014) assert that reliability may be used as an indication of an agreement between two people, analysing the same data. It pertains to the extent to which the results can be confirmed by others. The researcher therefore ensured that the interview questions answer the research questions as the researcher discusses them with the supervisor, the core supervisor and her colleagues as well and they gave their point of view on how to modify the questions. The researcher ensured confirmability by organising her last visit with the participants, in order to re-read and analyse the data to verify whether the interpretation concerning the shared data is appropriately correct.

#### **4.5.2 Member-checking and participants' review**

Member-checking involves seeking the feedback from the researcher to the participants for review and responding to the data and its interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). It allows the participants to correct the errors and provide additional information if necessary. After each interview the researcher verifies that everything is presented correctly by sending back the responses of the participants, being English teachers working with DLs to review information for accuracy, as well as participants' reviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

This was done through the permission of the participants throughout the interview session. Actually the participants were sent the copies through email and a WhatsApp of transcripts of the interview to confirm their correctness, rectify some errors and add information where important information is mistakenly omitted. The corrections were then sent back to the researcher via email.

#### **4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research ethics focus on the moral principles that the researcher must follow in their respective field of research (Hanekon, 2018). According to Resnik (2015), research ethics refer to the diverse set of values, norms and institutional regulations that help constitute and regulate scientific activities. This is required to ensure that the research is conducted in a responsible, ethical and accountable way. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) also emphasised that it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects who participate in the study, through the following outlined principles, such as confidentiality, non-maleficence and voluntary participation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

The researcher also considers ethics as important in this study. Therefore, she began by obtaining ethical clearance and permission from University of Free State upon the completion of the research proposal. The researcher also sought permission from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the study. After all this expected procedures, the University approved the ethical letter as an assurance that the study has followed and successfully encountered the ethical principles.

##### **4.6.1 Confidentiality**

During the course of this study, it is important to protect the participants through confidentiality measures, which included using pseudonyms and security measures for video files and transcripts (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The researcher did not use or record the real names of participants anywhere and no one was able to connect the participants to the answers they gave. However, the answers given were issued a fictitious code number or a pseudonym, as well as the names of the schools, which were referred as school A and school B.

#### **4.6.2 Voluntary participation**

The researcher also politely informed the participants that their participation was voluntary. If they did decide to take part, they were given an information sheet to keep and they were free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, hence the participation is voluntary. The participants were made aware that there is no loss, benefit or penalty for non-participation in this study, therefore they are under no obligation to consent to it (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

#### **4.6.3 Non-maleficence**

The researcher assured the participants that pseudonyms are used as a security measure to avoid any potential harm and whosoever felt inconvenient or discomfort during the course of the study were free to express their feelings during participation to the researcher, because they were under no influence of power (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

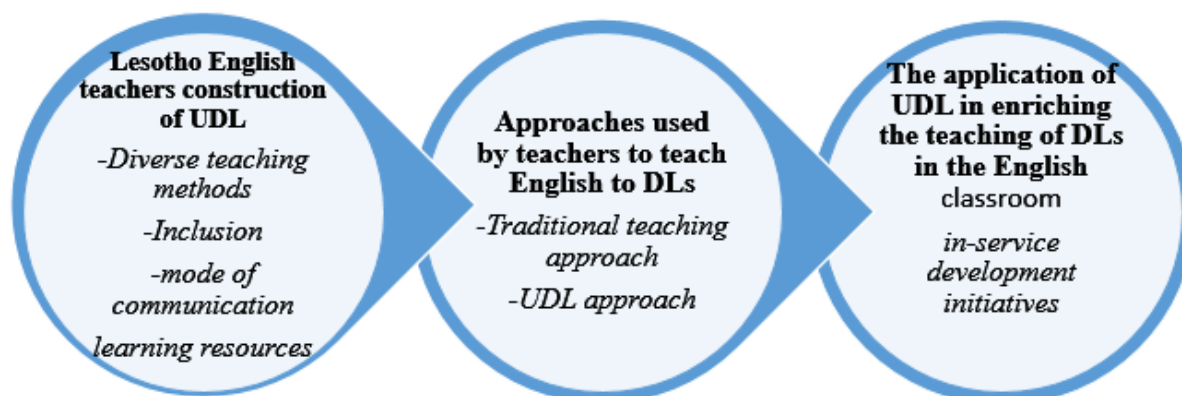
This chapter dealt with the research methodology and design employed to answer the research question used to guide this study and to address the understanding of UDL by English language teachers working with Deaf learners. This chapter also discussed the research paradigm, which is the interpretive paradigm, which is guided by the qualitative instrumental case study approach. It also described the sampling techniques adopted to select participants for this study and the data generation procedures, as well as the data analysis method. Lastly, this chapter discussed the essentials of trustworthiness and ethical consideration of the study. The next chapter presents the data analysis and discussion findings.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on presentation of the research findings that are generated through semi-structured interview. Ten participating English teachers conducted this current study from two selected schools at Leribe in Lesotho. The findings were generated so as to answer these research questions: What is the Lesotho English teachers' working with Deaf learners understanding of Universal Design for Learning? How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons? How can the understanding of Universal Design for Learning be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho? The diagram figure 5.1 below represent are themes and the sub-themes, emerged from the responses of English teachers.



*Figure 5.1: The three main themes that emerge from the participants' responses*

#### 5.2 THEME ONE: ENGLISH TEACHERS' WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS CONSTRUCTION OF UDL

The theme highlighted the participants' understanding of Universal Design for Learning. The presentation of this theme addressed the first main research question that focuses on exploring the understanding of UDL by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf. They are discussed in the following sections.

### 5.2.1 Diverse teaching methods

The examples below illustrate the English teachers' understanding of UDL, as the use of diverse teaching methods. Though the comments from below emanated from two participants from the two schools, the majority of the other participants during the interview sessions concurred with the view.

Teacher 3 from school A indicated:

*“According to my understanding, UDL is an approach of teaching, which includes various methods to teach a lesson like games, role-play, dancing, music etc.”*

Similarly, teacher 6 from school B also commented that:

*“Hmm! UDL accommodates the different learning abilities, where lessons should be presented with multiple methodologies with the use of learning materials that are user friendly.”*

Even though the teachers use different methods, they do not always succeed, as this is indicated by,

Teacher 2 from School A:

*“... we sometimes take field trips for them to get deeper understanding during the English lessons, thinking we vary methods, but they still experience poor performance in English.”*

### 5.2.2 Inclusion

In this sub-theme the comments from some of the participants are presented below.

Teacher 7 from school B:

*“UDL cater for all learners with disabilities to learn harmoniously with other learners.”*

Teacher 3 from school A

*“Yes! In the Universal Design for Learning classroom, all learners with different disabilities are accommodated.”*

To Teacher 8 agreed with teacher 7 in school B:

*“Learners with different disabilities are provided with opportunities to learn in harmony using UDL.”*

### **5.2.3 Use of diverse learning resources**

The interview further revealed that the participants associate UDL with the use of learning resources in the English lessons, in order to broaden the learners understanding.

According to Teacher 7 from school B:

*“...learning material should be diverse and user-friendly to all learners, because unlike majority of hearing learners who can learn many things by recalling from language background, Deaf learners only learn by seeing and manipulation of materials to match them with their signs.”*

Teacher 4 from school A emphasised:

*“...the use of different teaching materials is very important, hence the DLs are visual learners.”*

Whilst Teacher 6 from school B added:

*“...the use of diverse teaching material is encouraged for the learning of DLs to associate and match the names of materials with the appropriate language signs and also to improve their vocabulary.”*

*According to teacher 8 school B*

*“UDL is the flexible way of thinking about teaching and learning during preparation that gives all learners equal opportunities to learn. This includes the use of teaching aids and appropriate mode of communication.”*

Teacher 9 from school B:

*“The use of variety of teaching materials is essential as visual learners, but we are only using the available material in our school. No more resources other than that.”*

Similarly, Teacher 5 from School A added a comment:

*“Using different material offers learners an opportunity to make a choice, but we only use drawn chart no another alternative.”*

### **5.2.4 Mode of communication**

Another sub-theme that is identified from the data was regarded as the use of different modes of communication, which should be part of the English lesson, in order to accommodate the

diversity of Deaf learners in the English classroom.. Some of the comments made by the participants were as follow:

According to Teacher 4 from school A:

*“Since learners have different abilities and therefore different styles of learning, I suggest the mode of communication should be inclusive, e.g. sign language, lip-reading and finger-spelling in the classroom of DL.*

Teacher 6 in school B added:

*“All teachers here should be deaf aware and therefore use sign fluently, so that they can easily communicate with DLs”.*

*“Actually the lower grades are taught manual alphabet through Sign language, in order to prepare them for finger-spelling starting with self-introduction, such as the name and surname.”*

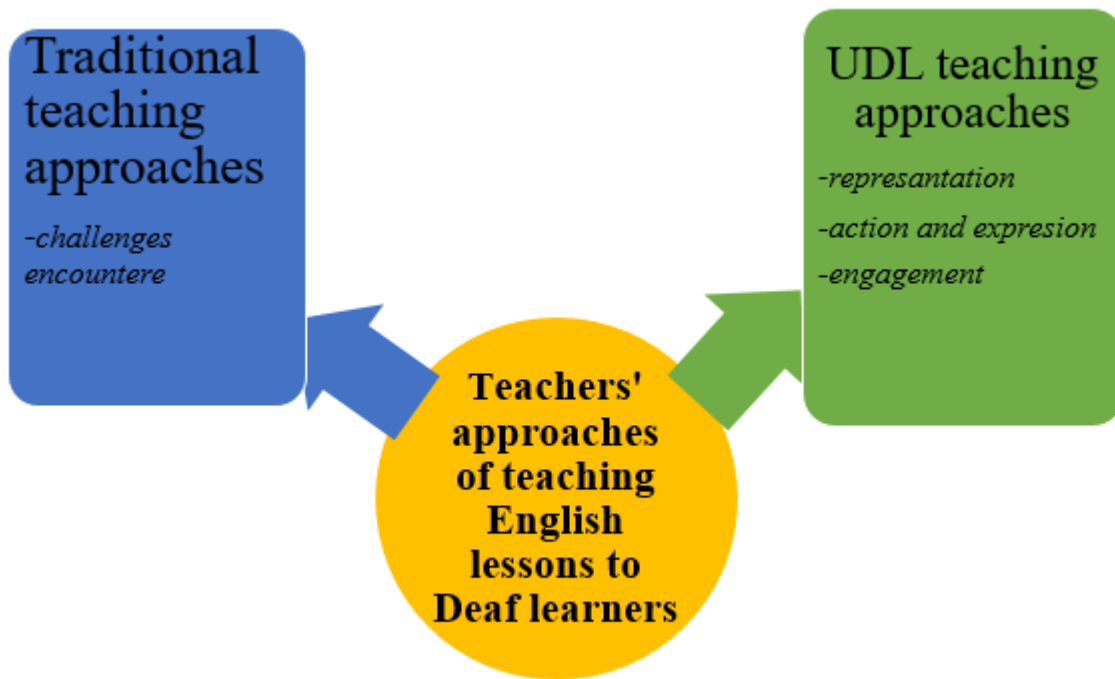
Teacher 1, school A supported the views of teacher 6 in school B.

Teacher 7 in school B also has this to say:

*“Almost all of DLs in this school can sing, it is therefore helpful to know Sign language as a teacher, in order to easily communicate with DLs”.*

### **5.3 THEME TWO: TEACHERS’ APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH LESSONS TO DEAF LEARNERS**

This presentation of findings addresses research question number two, which is: How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons? The responses of the English teachers are illustrated in the next section. Meanwhile, the themes and sub-themes are presented in figure 5.2 below:



*Figure 5.2: Teachers' approaches of teaching English lesson to DLs'.*

### 5.3.1 The traditional approach of teaching English and its challenges lesson

The sub-theme presents the teachers' use of the traditional approach in teaching English lessons. The discussion gives the participants' views in teaching English. Some participants gave the following utterances:

*"I only teach the English skills through lecturing and fieldtrip with the use of Sign language. Which is the traditional approach"* (Teacher 3 from school A).

Teacher 3 from school A also added:

*"To make the learning practical, I normally practice role-play as another traditional method to teach composition writing."*

Teacher 6 in school B agreed with teacher 3 in school A:

*"I use to read the stories, role-play some events, such as weddings and funeral events and others and also make fieldtrips to make my lesson practical and easier for DLs to compose the composition. The Sign language interpreter then interprets every action."*

Teacher 2 school A and teacher 7 school B both emphasised that:

*“Having used all these methods, the performance still has not improved”* (Teacher 2).

*“The learners enjoy listening to my stories, dramatizing but still their performances are discouraging me”* (Teacher 7).

### **5.3.2 Challenges encountered**

The quotations below emphasised more on some problems English teachers encounter in the teaching and learning of DLs

#### **5.3.2.1 Curriculum modification**

According to the participants the issue of curriculum modification is essential to increase access and flexibility to a variety of assessment during UDL practice. Some of the participants provided the following comments:

*“The problem lies with the assessment in the curriculum, which is one size fits all, we can use all different methods of teaching and assessment, but at the end of the year curriculum and assessment requires only pen and paper assessment”* (Teacher 8, school B).

Another participant Teacher 3 in school A inferred:

*“...the teachers apply different methods, thereafter the assessment is the same, learner fail the same way, what’s the use. Indeed, curriculum needs to be revisited.”*

Some of the participating teachers also criticised the way curriculum is specified in the mode of assessment:

*“However the assessment is a problem, it’s like curriculum can be re-examined, modified and allow flexible assessment, like oral assessment”* (Teacher 1 school A).

The quotation above are the views of the participants on the challenging curriculum among teachers and DLs as well, towards the teaching and learning of English.

#### **5.3.2.2 A lack of adequate skills**

Teachers experience challenges in implementing UDL due to insufficient resources and lack of professional development opportunities. The findings also suggested that most of the DLs experienced a lot of challenges while learning English language, due to the traditional approach used in teaching them by some teachers. Some of the participants gave the following utterances:

*“Deaf learners face a challenge with learning other spoken languages, such as English this is reflected by their poor results because of the way it is being taught by their teachers, especially*

*the teachers who still uses the old teaching methods. So maybe with the UDL approach and its flexibility it can make easy for DL to learn languages” (Teacher 8, school B.)*

Teacher 4 from School A also noted:

*“They do not hear sounds to help them learn words sound and therefore learning spoken language becomes a challenge, due to the way we teach them, which is not the UDL way of teaching. Although we are using different methods, we need to learn about UDL way of teaching.”*

*“Normally in reading skill lessons, learners read out loud, to test their ability to read, but it is challenging to Deaf learners because I do not know how to help them out” (Teacher 5 from school A).*

Teacher 6 from school B, clarified that:

*“DLs’ compositions are hard to understand, due to the Sign language grammar that dominates their writing and this is because we lack some skills to meet their needs.”*

Teacher 1 also supported teacher 6 from school B

*“DL are poor in reading, and am stuck, because I do not have the skill or know how to engage them in reading.”*

The findings suggest that majority of Lesotho English teachers believes that DLs learning of the English language is negatively influenced, due to their poor performances in the subject, which cause them to remain in the same class/level for years without getting promoted to the next class. So based on this issue, DLs’ tend to get frustrated and drop out of school. Some of the participants stipulated as follow:

*“Majority of Deaf learners’ experience excessive failure, which we often related it to incompetence to meet English language demands as compared to their hearing peers’ and resulted to their dropout” (Teaches 3).*

Another teacher inferred:

*“English is a leading subject, because all subjects are taught in English, so when the DLs fail to understand English, almost all the performance drops and they tend to get frustrated in learning” (Teacher 9).*

Teacher 7 also noted:

*“Reading a comprehension is seen as a problem for DLs, because of too much unfamiliar words, therefore when they are asked questions pertaining to the comprehension, they tend to fail to respond to the questions and the marks they obtain make them feel depressed and stop coming to school.”*

Teacher 1’s views:

*“Composition writing is another problem for them, and they mostly score below basic.”*

### **5.3.2.3 Age and drop-out**

The findings of this study highlight that DLs’ learning is influenced negatively by their age. This could be a link to the previous issues of low academic performances and the repeating of grades, which did not enable them to proceed to the next grade. Hence, by the time they finally get promoted to another grade they tend to be older than the rest of their peers in the class and this issue causes them to drop out of school or be removed from school by their families or guardians. The following are the responses of the participants showing age as one of the factors that influence DLs’ learning of English.

*“Majority of DLs commence their schooling at the age of 10 years or more and dropout as they are getting older, because they are still in lower grades” (Teacher 1 school A).*

Teacher 6 also stated:

*“Their guardians too get worried when they notice that DLs fail to proceed to the next class and take them out of school to take care of family chores.”*

However, some of the participants also indicated that some of the DLs drop out of school, due to their age and academic issues and they are also involved in so many social ills like crime, drugs, early marriage and getting pregnant. The following quotes show how the participants expressed their views on this issue.

Teacher 1 from school A:

*“...dropping from school have a negative impact on their lives, because they turn to become drugs abusers.”*

Another teacher indicated:

*“Joooo!!! ...after dropping out of school, they become very vulnerable that I normally feel hurt when I meet them” (Teacher 7).*

Some of the teachers mentioned that DLs who drop out of school need support as they indicated that one of the reasons they drop out could also be due to the lack of psychosocial support, which they need. However, they requested that the relevant authorities like schools, communities and educational departments should be involved and ensure they support these learners mentally, financially and socially, so that they will not be vulnerable and engage in different social ills.

Teacher 1 from school A had this to say:

*“I do think DLs opted to drop out of school, because they lack psychosocial support”*

Teacher 4 also indicated:

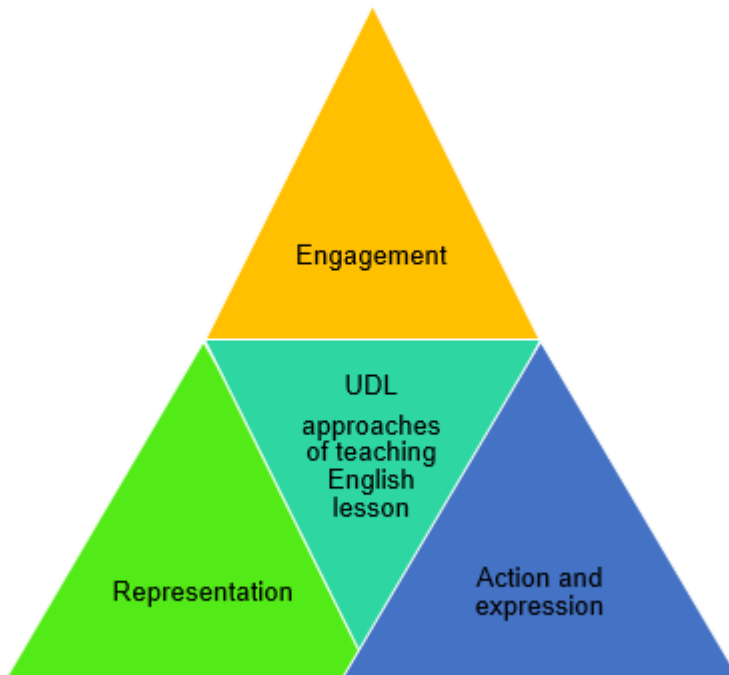
*“If those in authority can make follow up on their life, and support them financially, emotionally and even socially if possible.”*

Another participating teacher from school B indicated:

*“There should be follow up on DLs’ life after leaving school and support them emotionally even socially” (Teacher 7).*

### **5.3.3 UDL approach and teaching approach**

These are sub-themes that emerged when the participants were asked to describe how they use their understanding of UDL to approach their English lesson. The findings are illustrated in the diagram below.



**Figure 5.3: The UDL approaches of teaching and learning English language (adapted from Hitchcock et al., 2002:17)**

The diagram elucidates the three approaches of UDL namely engagement, representation and action and expression. The following excerpts were from the participants

### **5.3.3.1 Representation**

The participants showed that with representation approach learners become independent in their learning and is also helping them to make informed decisions on how they want to learn. The following participant’s quotation illustrate this:

Teacher 5, school A noted:

*“I think hmmm! the UDL approach gives learners the opportunity to make their learning decisions on the what to learn and on what kind of material to use, you see it is hard to provide and teach learners in a class of fifty-two learners, as well as to satisfy and meet their learning needs.”*

Teacher 9, school B indicated:

*“With the UDL approach of representation, the English lesson is presented in such a way that learners become independent in their learning and free to choose any learning style they want.”*

From the quotations above, teachers emphasised that since presentation of the lesson is done with the use of multiple materials, this allows DLs the choice of material and what to learn. However, the teacher-pupil ratio becomes an issue to satisfy the representation approach. Other teachers view representation as promoting DL’s independency and the choice of learning methods. However, teacher 3 from school A disagrees with the other two.

Teacher 3, school A:

*“Truly I do think that using the UDL approach of representation will help us teachers to communicate our lesson well and also help the DL learners understand and improve their academic performances.”*

### **5.3.3.2 Engagement**

The participants believe engagement approach can enable DLs to have the freedom of participation in the learning process and do their class tasks or assignments without challenges in the English classroom.

. The following responses are provided by the participating teachers.

Teacher 1, school A mentioned:

*“In order to improve my English teaching, more practice is encouraged that is the provision of class work, tests and assignments is essential, because it provide the learners the opportunity to do the class tasks and to practice at home and present it at school.”*

Teacher 6 from school B supported the idea of assignment:

*“The learners are engaged in the lesson through the developed assignment and presentation, using group discussion and classroom presentation for the learners to participate in the learning process yah!”*

Teacher 9, school B commented:

*“When teaching the learners, I ensure that engagement approach is in use, because I am preparing them for examination, therefore they write their assessment on their own and this is best for their practice, since they are all engaged.”*

The following responses are provided by the participating teacher.

### **5.3.3.3 Action and expression**

With action and expression some of the participants' views are as follow.

Teacher 9, school B noted that:

*“Using the action and expression approach of UDL enables me, the teacher, to assess the learners frequently and also give them challenging tasks for more practice.”*

Teacher 3 also asserted:

*“Well! With approach of action and expression, more exercises, more practice and tests will be employed to help learners show what they have learnt.”*

Teacher 4 also agreed with the views:

*“The approach itself encourage learners to express what they learnt in actions, such as through written work and presentations frequently.”*

*“Actually this is practiced through providing learners with more of classwork work, class presentation for lesson evaluation, weekly tests. The group work also is of great assistance, because it allows learners to discuss what they have learnt in class” (Teacher 6).*

## **5.4 THEME THREE: THE APPLICATION OF UDL IN ENRICHING TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

This theme presented the participants responses that addresses the research question three which says: How can the understanding of UDL be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho? The various activities were suggested by the teachers as an immediate alternative to providing English teachers with UDL skills and they are on a long term and short term basis. However, the findings are presented as sub-themes and shown below in figure 5.4



**Figure 5.4: the application of UDL to enriching or enhancing the teaching of DLs’ in the English classroom**

The above model provides an analysis of the different ways in which UDL could be applied to enhance teaching DLs in the English classroom.

### **5.4.1 Conferences**

The conversation here gives the relevance of attending conferences for teachers, in order to enhance their teaching abilities and skills. The participating teachers’ denotation of attending conferences were based on collaborating, meeting and sharing their experiences with other professionals in their field. The following quotes were highlighted by the participants on how conferences can enhance teaching DLs English.

*“Yah! Attending conferences for some days or weeks is very crucial for the improvement of our teachings” (Teacher 3, school A).*

*“...going for conferences as long as two weeks or more training for basically English teachers I think will helps us learn about UDL and improve our teachings” (Teacher 7, school B).*

*“I will suggest as teachers, we need to attend more conferences to meet professionals and stakeholder, in order to work with them. I think that these experience will help us improve in our teachings” (Teacher 5, school A).*

#### **5.4.2 Workshops**

The majority of the participating teachers also ascribed that providing regular workshops by the schools and department of education for them to attend and to be trained on UDL, will help to enhance their teachings of DLs in the English classroom.

*“We need regular workshops to improve the performance, because most of us have not done special education, the one to two days’ workshop can bring the difference maybe.”*

*“No, I still believe English teachers do not have deep understanding of the nature of DL, that is why it’s hard to use appropriate approach, we need regular workshops, to understand UDL, its application, maybe it can assist in the improvement of our English teaching” (Teacher 5, school A).*

Teacher 2 said:

*“Yah! Having regular workshop will assist us to have a deep understanding of the nature of Deaf learners.”*

Teacher 7, school B also responded that:

*“Maybe teachers sharing experiences in workshops on how they approach DLs can bring an improvement (cooperative learning) and becoming part of the English language learning solution as full contributors to the performance and improvement process”.*

Meanwhile, one of the participants also mentioned that she experienced some challenges while teaching DLs reading and writing skills, due to her lack of knowledge and understanding of UDL.

As Teacher 7 from school B indicated:

*“I encounter some problem in the teaching of reading and writing skills, especially to Deaf learners, I wish the professionals can assist us with the short term workshops, on how to approach DLs in relation to UDL.”*

Teacher 1 from school A noted:

*“Teachers do not have deep understanding of the nature of UDL. I think in-service training can play a vital role to lead to a new success.”*

Teacher 9 from school B stated:

*“It is hard to answer this question since I do not know UDL, but believe the intensive training course on UDL can be of significance.”*

Teacher 3 from school A concurred:

*“Teaching DLs is really challenging; maybe going for extensive trainings about UDL during the holidays by the professionals can assist us.”*

Some of the participants also identified that despite being familiar with the inclusive education policies, as well as working in an inclusive setting and using diverse teaching methods, as required by UDL, they still experienced challenges in the application of UDL, hence more re-training on UDL by professionals is needed, in order to improve DLs performances in English, as well as their teachings. According to the participants:

*“I believe majority of English teachers do not understand UDL if not all, but very familiar with inclusion since we are working in inclusive school we are therefore interested to have more training and hear more about UDL, so as to use it to improve English performance”*  
(Teacher 2).

Teacher 1 added that:

*“I use to vary methods of teaching, but this seemed not enough since the performance is still poor, the in service training is need, to better understand DL, as well as applying the UDL.”*

## **5.5 CHAPTER SUMMURY**

This chapter presented the findings from the data produced from the telephonic interview. The data was presented in themes and subthemes, which were generated from the study. More so, verbatim quotes were used to ensure that the participants’ voices were not missed from the presentation. The next chapter presents the data interpretation, analysis and discussion, concerning the existing literature and theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the data interpretation, analysis and discussion, concerning the existing literature and theoretical framework. The analysis of data was aimed at answering the following research questions: What is the Lesotho English teachers' working with Deaf learners understanding of Universal Design for Learning? How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons? How can the understanding of Universal Design for Learning be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho?

#### 6.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data were discussed according to the three main broad themes that are pre-established, as they are based on the research question from the semi-structured interview held with the participants. For this study, during the thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify the sub-themes as the headings to show the data in this study. **Theme one: Lesotho English teacher's construction of the Universal Design for Learning (thereafter, UDL); Theme two: The approaches used by English teachers to teach Deaf learners (thereafter, DLs'); and lastly Theme three: The application of UDL in enriching or enhancing the teaching of DLs' in the English classroom.**

#### 6.3 THEME ONE: ENGLISH TEACHERS' WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS CONSTRUCTION OF UDL

The theme highlighted the participants' understanding of Universal Design for Learning. The discussion of this theme addressed the first main research question that focuses on exploring the understanding of UDL by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners. This is where the researcher established a rapport with the participants, which enabled them to think and recall their understanding about the term 'UDL'.the findings were elicited from the participant's responses which made the researcher to categorise them into three sub themes

namely: the diverse method of teaching, inclusion, use of diverse learning resources and mode of communication they are discussed in the following section.

### **6.3.1 Diverse teaching methods**

From the discussion in the semi-structured interview, the participants revealed the use of diverse teaching methods as indication of their understanding of UDL and this consisted of the use of music, dance, games, role-play, simulations to teach Deaf learners, as well as the different ways of presenting information, including text, audio, hands-on format and others. In the English teachers' views, using these various teaching methods, was way to accommodate their learners' differences.

The verbatim quotes c.f chapter 5 5.1 from the participating teachers' views on the understanding of UDL, indicated a common definition. Most of the participating English teachers revealed that UDL enables the flexibility of using various teaching methods and it is regarded as an important aspect of teaching Deaf learners. The findings corroborate with the study by Harper (2018) who argues that UDL enables teachers to become more flexible, using non-conventional methods of teachings, so they can be more adaptable to the needs of their learners and not use the traditional teaching approach. These findings are supported by similar researches of Morin (2018) and Thomas *et al.* (2015), who defined UDL as instrumental approaches that provide learners with choice and alternatives in the materials, content, tools, and its goal is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning.

### **6.3.2 Inclusion**

However, the definition is also associated with inclusion and thus the participants discuss the relevance of their understanding of UDL in an inclusive classroom. They indicated that as inclusion caters for all diverse needs of learners, likewise the use of different approaches in UDL helps to accommodate learners with different disabilities, in order for them to learn harmoniously with other learners.

The discussion further shows how UDL in an English lesson brings coherence to practices that are inclusive, hence accommodates all learners including DLs. The findings are essential to the research study, therefore it similarly corroborate with Landsburg, Kruger and Swart (2011) point of view (c.f. Chapter 2) that emphasised the accommodation and assurances of quality education to all through inclusive education.

### **6.3.3 The use of diverse learning resources**

The participants further associate UDL with the use of diverse learning resources in the English lessons, in order to broaden the learners' understanding. This highlighted the belief in the value of learning materials when dealing with the DLs in an English lesson. What the participants are saying is good, because the findings are supported in the asset-based approach, indicated by Chikoko and Khanare (2012) (c.f. 3.2) where they suggested the involvement, identification and the use of existing and available resources at the school boundaries to address the problem therein. Moreover, the quotation discussed the value of the variety of teaching resources in the English lessons. The relevance of these findings to the current study is supported by Morin (2018) and Thomas *et al.* (2015) who value UDL as an approach that signifies freedom of choice and alternatives in the materials to remove any learning barrier (c.f. 2.4.1 in Chapter 2).

### **6.3.4 Mode of communication**

The discussion also emphasised Sign language as an appropriate mode of communication during the teaching and learning of DLs in an English classroom. The study revealed that the participants showed knowledge and experiences of communicating via the use of Sign language in their English classroom with their learners. These findings from the participating teachers are correct, since they are supported by McClellan (2005) and Mwanyuma (2016) who justified that Sign language, gestures and writing are the best modes of communication used to teach DLs. This also resonates with the Lesotho curriculum and assessment policy (2008), which emphasises that teachers should use Sign language in the teaching and learning process, in order to ensure access to information and effective communication. Adigun (2015) also stipulates that the use of Sign language as a means of communication, influences the writing skills of their users.

## **6.4 THEME TWO: TEACHERS' APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH LESSONS TO DEAF LEARNERS**

The theme outlined the approaches the participants use in their English classrooms. This discussion addresses research question number two, which is: How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons? The discussion revealed the following sub-themes: the traditional teaching approaches (field trip, use of sign language, lecturing etc.) and its challenges that they come across and UDL teaching approaches.

### **6.3.1 The traditional approach of teaching English and its challenges lessons**

The discussion emanating from the participants' responses in this theme sincerely acknowledge and believe that approaches like fieldtrips, question and answer, lecturing, discussion and dramatizing in the presence of a Sign language interpreter during English lessons to DLs, is the traditional approach. Nevertheless, in the study by Mapesos (2017), the traditional teaching approach is considered as a teacher-centred approach where learners are listener and remain passive for the whole lesson, which thus creates a lot of problems in the learning and the performance of learners. However, as much as there is emphasis on the value of how practical the lessons are, it seems like there are challenges relating to the traditional approach, since learners still experience poor performance in the subject. The challenges are discussed in the following section.

### ***6.4.2 Challenges encountered***

The discussion here revealed the participants' views on some problems they come across in relation to the teaching and learning of DLs. The participating teachers' representation on the challenges discussed are: **curriculum modification, lack of adequate skills and poor academic performance.**

#### ***Curriculum modification***

According to participants the issue of curriculum modification is essential to increase access and flexibility to variety of assessment during UDL practice. They complained that various methods of teaching that is encouraged by UDL, can be beneficial to them if the curriculum is flexible, because they have realised that using one method of assessment is not appropriate for all the Deaf learners. The findings are of good relevance to this study, hence UDL emphasises the desperate need to adjust the curriculum to make learning universal in nature (c.f. 2.4.5.2 in Chapter 2) (Meo, 2010).

#### ***Lack of adequate skills***

Evidence from the quotation in chapter 5, shows that DLs encounter problems in using the required skills to effectively tackle and respond to reading, answering comprehension questions and composition writing, due to their lack of adequate vocabulary and reading fluency. Views of the participants are significantly good for the study, and further supported by numerous studies like Kodiango and Syomwane (2016); Mwanyuma (2016), Nordquist (2018), and others in Chapter 2 (c.f. 2.3.2.) They emphasised the lack of adequate skills involved in reading

comprehension with understanding, the inability to identify facts, as well as hard to respond to questions. Hence they experience poor academic performance.

The findings suggest that although English language is a lingua franca, which is widely spoken, the majority of DLs experience challenges in learning it as a subject, because they fail to meet the required criterion for promotion to the next grade or class. The findings also revealed that the depressed overall academic achievement of DLs is influenced by their poor English performance that finally leads them to repeat a grade for several times and they end up getting frustrated and drop out of school. These findings are in line with Milon, Hossain and Alam (2018) who report that, due to the inability to get good results in the school examination, Deaf learners who are want to be productive and contribute to the family income, drop out from school.

#### *Age and drop-out*

However, some findings highlighted that DLs ‘some of the DLs dropout of school due to their age. The responses from the findings revealed that the Deaf learners’ learning is negatively influenced by their age, which cause them to drop out of school. According to the participating teachers, their responses revealed that DLs who drop out of school engage in crimes, drugs, alcoholism and early marriage. Berent (2015) report that the majority of DLs did not reach grade 12, hence some of them turned out to be drunkards and begged for money on the streets. The findings in this study also showed that DLs need support in order for them to be able to survive and navigate through the challenges of their lives. This support could come from authorities, schools or communities.

Meanwhile, in the assets-based theory communities, schools and English teachers working with DLs are identified and positioned as gifted, potential, and capable assets in the school context to incorporate with their learners for better performance (Myende, 2017).

Therefore, the findings in this theme, as shown in the verbatim quotations of the participants, clearly reveal the negative effects in the use of a traditional approach to the DLs’ learning of English. These influences, namely curriculum modification, poor academic achievement and age affected DLs in their learning and cause them to drop out of school. The asset-based approach enables us to understand that teachers, schools, communities, authorities and the department of education need to support and empower DLs, to develop their skills, confidence and capabilities (Turnbull, Turnbull, Soodak, Erwin & Shogren, 2015). According to the

participating teachers, they believe that through training their understanding and practice of UDL might minimise the drop-out situation.

Adigun (2015) also support these findings by indicating that Deaf and hard of hearing learners annually exit the schools, because they read at a very low level in most subjects in second to fourth grade. The report by UNESCO (2009) also found that the cause of these drop-outs' rate is linked to poor educational provision and low teaching and assessment standards that can be resolved by the teachers, the school, the community and the educational system. On the other hand, Snoddon (2018) attributed the poor performances of DLs in English language, as well as their drop out from to school to be caused by the lack of teaching materials, inaccessible formats, including Sign language and untrained teachers, which contribute to the frequent inferior education of Deaf learners. The participants further suggested that maybe their understanding with UDL through workshops can assist to minimize the rate of drop-out.

### **6.3.2 UDL approach and teaching approach**

Drawing from the diagram, in chapter 5 c.f 5.3.3 the *data* from the study revealed that there are three approaches of UDL namely engagement, representation and action and expression. The following section discussed the responses from the participants.

#### ***6.4.3.1 Representation***

CAST (2018) views representation as building in and offering flexibility in the ways knowledgeable learners can have a choice to present information and contend in different ways (c.f. 2.4.1 in Chapter 2). This is one of the approaches of UDL that teachers could adopt to make their teachings effective in the classroom. Meanwhile, most of the participating teachers argue that the UDL representation approach enables DLs to learn with diverse learning resources, becoming independent in their learning and also helping them to make informed decisions on how they want to learn

Emanating from the quotations in chapter 5 c.f 5.3.3 teachers emphasised that since presentation of the lesson is done with the use of multiple materials, this allows DLs the choice of material and what to learn. However, the teacher-pupil ratio becomes an issue to satisfy the representation approach. Other teachers view representation as promoting DL's independency and the choice of learning methods.

The responses from the participants showed that the representation approach enables learners to become autonomous in their learning, as well as able to make informed decisions of what to

learn and the materials they need to actively participate in the English lesson (Morin, 2018). The views are beneficial to the research study, as some literatures supported it, unlike the traditional approach, while the teachers provide the learners with alternative learning modalities to lead them, in order to decide on what best meet their learning style and strengths (Al-Azawei, Serenelli & Lundqvist, 2016). The study reveals that using the representation approach of UDL in the teaching English lessons can be helpful to improve the English performance.

#### ***6.4.3.2 Engagement***

According to James (2018) (c.f. 2.4.1 in Chapter 2), the engagement principle motivates and stimulates learners according to their personal backgrounds and interests. The participating teachers revealed that the engagement UDL approach enables DLs to have the freedom of participating in the learning process and do their class tasks or assignments without challenges in the English classroom

The quotations from participants simply emphasised the significance of enabling learners the opportunity of doing their schoolwork at home as to engage their personal background, such as parents' involvement in their children's education as motivation to their learning. The finding is valuable, because from the researcher's professional dimension experiences, as both the teacher and Sign language interpreter, assignments consolidate learning through independent practices in life, since DLs put into practice what they did in the classroom at home, then present it in the classroom.

The engagement approach in general, enables them to teach and engage learners in a practical way and it also enables DLs to develop the freedom of participating and engaging in classroom discussions in the learning process and do their assignments without challenges in the English classroom. This is supported by Helen, Dujur and Bair (2018) who assert that multiple means of engagement, connect with learners' interests and foster collaboration, since it allows the use of small group discussions, practising examination questions and presentations on a given assignment. The following responses are provided by the participating teacher.

#### ***6.4.3.3 Action and expression***

Morin (2018) views action and expression as giving learners more than one way to interact with the material and to show what they have learned. In this case it provides Deaf learners with a choice between taking a pencil-and-paper test, giving an oral presentation or doing a

group project to express their knowledge. The majority of the participants indicated that this approach is used to frequently assess learners and provide them with challenging tasks.

The findings from the above data imply the action and expression approaches of UDL are used by teachers to frequently assess learners and also to provide them with challenging tasks. In other words, learners are given class tests, more often for practice. The researcher considers what the teachers are practising correct, even though they reflect limited knowledge of the approach. Since this finding resonates with the study by Thomas *et al.* (2015), who report that through an action and expression approach of UDL, learners, including DLs will access various ways of acquiring information and knowledge and therefore build procedural confidence in the learning of English. Moreover, the findings suggest that the practical use of UDL assessments will provide Deaf learners a fair opportunity to show and express their skills and knowledge, as well as provide an accurate way to measure what they have learned in an English lesson (Ralabate, 2011).

#### **6.4: THEME THREE: THE APPLICATION OF UDL IN ENRICHING TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

This theme presents the analysis of the participants' responses on how UDL can be used to improve or enhance their teaching of English to DLs. It addresses the research question three that says: How can the understanding of UDL be used to improve the teaching of English to Deaf learners in selected schools in Lesotho? It revealed three different professional development activities that English teachers are required to embark on or engaged in, in order to enhance their UDL teaching abilities. In reference with the model in chapter 5 figure 5.4 revealed the key sub-theme, which is in-service development initiatives, through the attendance of conferences, workshops and re-training courses. These professional development initiatives or academic activities will be discussed in-depth in the following sections.

##### **6.4.1 Conferences**

In this theme the participating teachers clearly showed that they know that they have a limited understanding of UDL and also acknowledge the fact that they need to enhance their teaching skills by attending conferences and working in collaboration with other educational professionals who are aware of UDL principles, in order to share their knowledge of UDL. According to them, this will help to enhance the teaching of English to DLs, as well as improve DL's academic performances in English. Berent's (2015) study identified that English teachers working with DLs should share their experience; both their success and their failure with other

teachers and DLs, and their success can be facilitated through networking and collaboration among teachers and other professionals serving DLs. They believe that conference attendance has the potential to facilitate all these requirements.

Therefore, the findings in this theme have shown that applying UDL to teaching requires teachers to engage in collaboration with other English teachers and DLs involved, as well as curriculum developers, in order to improve their skills as experts in performance. Meanwhile, according to the asset-based theory, an asset-based community development (ABCD) is driven by the community and fundamental community-building is about the relationship among people and bringing the various assets into a relationship (Cabe, 2007). Therefore, this implies building relationships among DLs, English language teachers and teaching professionals to collaborate, mobilise and harness their knowledge, experiences, skill, and capabilities to improve the English teaching through UDL (Cabe, 2007).

### **6.5.2 Workshops**

The findings showed that providing regular workshops on a short term basis to train teachers, is crucial and will help in improving their teachings to DLs in the English classroom. To the participants, the regular workshops could be based on the provision of some sort of refresher courses for English teachers on a short term basis and would also help to enhance or enrich their teachings, gaining more knowledge and understanding of DLs, as well as improve DL's academic performances. In this case, attending workshops could also be identified as another way of using UDL to enhance their teachings and to understand DLs better, according to the participants. This is in line with Morin (2018) who reported that teachers need to be empowered through workshops in designing lessons for the broadest possible range of learners and also gradually familiarizing themselves with UDL's three key principles, namely representation, action and expression and engagement.

### **6.5.3 Re-training courses**

Training and workshops play a very important role to nurture the skill set and knowledge. According to de Grip and Pleijers (2019), workshop refers to the hands-on training where the participants contribute actively and exchange ideas, for duration of few hours or several days. Re-training is consisted in providing immediate support and training to employers that may require to learn new skills (Cavaco, Fougère & Pouget, 2009).

The participants indicated that the provision of re-training for them on a long-term basis by the school and educational department, is crucial for improving the quality of teachers in the teaching of English to DLs. In addition, they pointed out that there is a necessity for teachers to be given some re-training sessions, in order to upgrade their UDL knowledge, skills, and strategies. Some of the participants spoke about the importance of teachers having re-training to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills of the UDL approach. Other participants expressed that, despite working in an inclusive setting, they still need more re-training on UDL by professionals during the school holidays, in order to boost DLs' academic performances in English and also to improve their teachings.

The findings further revealed that the participants have limited knowledge and understanding of UDL, hence they need quality re-training, in order to be fully equipped with new teaching techniques and approaches, specifically for gaining UDL skills in the teaching of English to DLs, and to improve DLs' performances in English. The findings are valuable to the research study, because it aligns with Smith (2019) who argues that acquiring UDL skills and experiences by teachers will go a long way towards providing them with the knowledge and skill that they need in the training session and for teachers' professional development. Milon *et al.* (2018) also reports in his studies that English teachers need to be given more training, not only before entering service, but most importantly in-service for professional development.

This should be a continuous facilitative process that updates and upgrades teachers' knowledge to persist with education changes (Milon *et al.*, 2018). The discussed findings showed that the teachers desperately need more training, in order to enhance their teachings, improve learners' performance and comply with the constant educational changes. The participants' verbatim quotes show the relevance of providing teachers with quality in-service training for their professional development activities.

The findings in theme three showed the diverse professional development activities required by the teachers, through the application of UDL, to enhance their teachings, as well as improve DLs' academic performances in their English classroom. It was evident that the participating teachers requested to attend conferences, which will create an opportunity and space for them to collaborate with other professionals and stakeholders in the field of special education. According to them, participating in conferences will enable them to gain more knowledge, skills, as well as share ideas with others on how to teach DLs. Another interesting factor was

the insistence by the teachers for a regular workshop to be provided for them by their schools and the department of education on a short-term basis, so that they could improve on their UDL skills.

Lastly in theme three, another factor which was more eminent was the provision of in-service training for teachers to conform to the constant educational changes, develop more UDL knowledge and skills, as well as enhance DLs' academic performances and their English teachings. The participants indicated that schools and educational departments needs to provide in-service training for them on a long-term basis, so as to help them understand DLs and to develop professionally. Hence, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of (2008) and CAST (2018) have reinforced that is crucial for teacher candidates to learn how to design lessons, assessment, environment, materials and methods, using the UDL guideline as part of their in-service training. Literature shows that mobilising English teachers as assets helps the DLs to be engaged and have control in their community by defining and solving problems through the use of their resources and connections to other networks for assets and exchange (Bumiller, 2018). The next section discusses the influence of English language on DLs.

## **6.6 CHAPTER SUMMURY**

This chapter presented the data analysis and discussion of the findings from the data produced from the telephonic interview. The data was presented in themes and subthemes, which were generated from the study. During the discussion of the findings, references were made to significant literatures, which were immersed in the correct places. The next chapter presents the summary, recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

# CHAPTER 7

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters of the research study, the researcher provided the background of the study, relevant literature about the study, research theory, research design and methodology. The researcher then presented the data, interpreted, analysed and discussed the findings of this study. Meanwhile in this chapter, which is the final chapter of this study, the researcher concludes the implications of the findings, gives the summary of the findings, which answered the research questions, as well as the auto biographical reflection of the study and finally the recommendation from the results and the limitations are provided by the researcher. The recommendations for potential research are also highlighted.

All the discussions serve to answer the following 3 research questions:

What are the Lesotho English teachers' understandings of UDL when working with Deaf learners in their classroom?

How do teachers working with Deaf learners approach their English lessons?

How can UDL be used to improve teachers working with Deaf learners in their English classrooms?

The following table 6.1.2 indicates how each research question was addressed in this study:

**Table 6.1: Indicates of how each research question was addressed in this study**

Research question	Section/chapter	Topic/theme/sub-theme
1	2	What is UDL?
2	5	How do you approach your English lessons?
3	2	How can UDL be used to improve teachers working with Deaf learners in their English classrooms?

The responses of this study were presented in themes that emerged from this study.

## 1.7 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 7.1.1 Lesotho English teachers' understanding of UDL when working with deaf learner

The findings from this theme revealed the understanding of UDL by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners. The findings indicated that the participants' understanding of UDL was categorised into three subthemes, namely *Diverse teaching methods, use of diverse learning resources, inclusion and mode of communication*. The finding demonstrates a clear evidence that the majority of the English teachers view a variety of teaching methods as a value of UDL to accommodate all learners (c.f. Chapter 5). The responses also revealed that since the DLs use visual language, the variation of learning resources is of great assistance to broaden their exposure and understanding (c.f. Chapter 5.).

The findings from this theme also revealed that the different modes of communication were also valued and regarded as a possible way to enable and accommodate the diversity of learners in the English classroom, hence the participating teachers communicate via the use of Sign language in their English classroom with their Deaf learners (c.f. Chapter 5). The findings further showed that the practices of inclusion are another major concern within their understanding of UDL, as it ensures education for all learners, including marginalised groups, such as learners with disabilities through different teaching strategies (c.f. Chapter 5). This means that the findings clearly signify for the effective use of UDL for the better performance of English language by DLs.

#### Conclusions

The teachers seem to value the use of various teaching methods, and this is a good practice, because this strategy is suggested by some researchers like Rao *et al.* (2016), as highly proficient and promotes flexibility in teaching methods. The aim of the strategy is to meet the needs of individual learners, including learners with disabilities, hence aligning with inclusive instruction (c.f. Chapter 2). Likewise, inclusion is good for this study, as it increases participation for all learners, including DLs, in this case in the learning opportunities.

Meanwhile the participating teachers also considered the use of diverse learning resources very important in English classrooms, which is synonymous to using diverse teaching methods to address opportunity to all, thus associated to UDL. These findings also are good for the study, because they are highly supported by the asset-based theory as the theory of this research study that highlighted the significance of identifying the available resources or assets within the

community and its strengths that could resolve the challenge therein, (c.f. Chapter 3) (Kenny, 2007).

## Recommendations

The researcher therefore recommends that since the English teachers seemed to have faith in the UDL approach, all schools concerned should be assisted with an appropriate variety of teaching methods, and how best they can use them in improving their understanding of UDL and its usefulness. The need to employ or use more learners' centred approaches in their teachings, due to the learners' diverse learning abilities and barriers as another effective method, is also recommended.

The researcher would recommend that the use of more learning resources and materials to teach DLs by the school should be provided by education stakeholders. Teachers, most especially English teachers should be made aware of the available resources in their schools.

### **7.1.1 Teachers' approaches of teaching English lessons to deaf learners**

The findings in this theme revealed and showed the comparison of two teaching approaches that are used by the Lesotho English teachers, working with Deaf learners. The indicated approaches are the traditional teaching approach and its challenges in the teaching of English language, such as lecturing, and others (c.f. Chapter 5) and the UDL approach that is guided by the three core principles, namely representation, action and expression and engagement.

The participating teachers revealed that even though they often use the lecturing method, which is part of the traditional approach, it seemed not to be effectively productive in their English classroom, and this is because they still have limited knowledge on using the UDL approaches. The findings further showed that the participants lacked adequate skills in the teaching and learning of English to DLs, particularly in the act of reading and writing of English language, as they are taught using traditional approaches (c.f. Chapter 5). However, the little they understand and try to put in practice about UDL, such as multiple methods of teaching, variation of available teaching materials and different modes of communication are at some point restricted by the fixed curriculum and assessment that examines the knowledge of the learners through pen and paper assessment only. Hence, showing no improvement in the teaching and learning of English in the school.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that due to poor English performance, DLs repeat classes several times and are thus faced with some challenge of drop-out, which is also associated with some influencing factors, such as age. More importantly data showed that most of DLs are older than their colleagues /peers, therefore the slow academic progress means more years of age to them, which leads to their school drop-out and as a result they become vulnerable and state engaging in crime, drug abuse and unplanned pregnancies.

The participating teachers seem to acknowledge that even though they still dwell on traditional approaches, they encountered some challenges in this approach that is mostly revealed by the poor performance of DLs. This challenging traditional approach is commonly identified in numerous studies internationally, as well as in the context of Africa and particularly in Lesotho country (c.f. Chapter 1). Where they are compounded by issues, such as a lack of skills to meet the English demands of DLs (c.f. Chapter 1) and lack of resources particularly in African context (Landburg, *et al* 2011; Mosia, 2014; Mwanyuma, 2016).

However, the findings showed that the traditional teaching approach is mostly used by the teachers to teach their English lessons, due to their lack of adequate knowledge and skills in using the UDL approach. In contrast the asset-based theory recommends that the best way to address the challenge of any community is to accurately assess their available resources, as well as expose and expand the knowledge and skills existing within the community. This means English teacher should consider themselves as accurate assets and determine their capacities, abilities and skills, as resources to be utilised within the learning and teaching of English language to DLs, therefore contribute towards positive change (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012).

## Conclusions

According to this study the findings are good, because researchers like Ullman (2018) also indicated that the teachers have to change the way they do traditional practices, since they are responsible for providing instruction in a way that can reduce the barriers and meet the needs of a diversity of learners, including DLs.

The participants allude to the fact that it is essential for all teachers to gain adequate knowledge of some new skills, like UDL approaches so as to improve their teaching and for the benefit of better academic performance of DLs. The findings revealed the identified three principles of UDL, namely representation, action and expression and engagement that English teachers working with DLs should adopt in their classroom to enhance their teaching. This is good and flexible, because according to Donald, Butt and Foster (2017), UDL approaches of learning

transform one-size-fits all instruction into different multiple and accessible learning opportunities that embrace learners' variation through the practice of its principles and guidelines.

In relation to the asset-based approach, teachers who employ the UDL approaches in their teaching are driven by strengths, skills, as well as are opportunity focused (Renkly & Bertolini, 2018). McKnight (2017) also sees teachers as people who are responsible in looking at what works well, in order to eliminate deficit thinking and unhelpful biases that hold back DLs, through sustainable change in local leadership and its continuous development.

### Recommendations

The researcher's recommendation then is that the Ministry of Education and Training, the Department of Education and its stakeholders, teachers working with DLs and also the learners included, should collaborate, share experiences, identify some strengths and the weakness of traditional approaches. Therefore, provide a more intensive quality professional training for teachers working in inclusive schools and special schools to employ new skills. Also the need for financial, psychosocial, emotional, physical and mental support from DLs communities, schools support system, teachers, parents, as well as the Ministry of Education and training authorities.

The researcher recommends that the awareness of UDL principles by the Ministry of Education and Training and the National University of Lesotho, as well as other teachers' training colleges, in order for them to include it in their curriculum so that the pre-service and in-service teachers could be properly trained on how to apply it in their teachings effectively. The Department of Education needs to provide a more intensive quality professional development training for all teachers working in special schools.

#### **7.1.2 The application of UDL in enriching teachers' working with deaf learners in the English classroom**

The findings from the theme showed that since the participating teachers lack adequate skills to practice UDL, they resort to applying traditional approaches even though DLs struggle and experience poor academic performance. Therefore, this theme presented the professional development activities as an immediate alternative to providing English teachers with UDL skills and strategies. The English teachers working with DLs are required to embark or engaged

in re-training, attend conferences and workshops, in order to enhance their UDL-teaching abilities. This shows that the participants identify the necessity to apply the UDL approach in the teaching and learning of English to DLs. They also acknowledge the fact that their knowledge about UDL is limited, hence their willingness to work with education professionals, in order to enhance their knowledge and the academic performances of DLs.

The findings revealed that the participants believe that through conferences they will be able to interrelate with educational professionals who are knowledgeable about UDL concepts, share their experiences and their knowledge with them and therefore enhance the teaching and learning of English language on DLs. The findings also suggest regular workshops by the concerned department of languages to be attended by English teachers for UDL training, so as to enrich them with some UDL strategies and skills to teach their English lessons. They finally indicated in re-training courses as a long-term option that is significant to produce quality English teachers straight from the Lesotho teacher training colleges and Lesotho universities.

#### Conclusion:

Teachers acknowledged that even though they assume to be knowledgeable about the definition of UDL, they have limited practice of the approach, thus they need to be equipped with some techniques and skills to apply for enhancing the performance of their English teaching. The researcher therefore, was led to conclude that this is good, because this also resonates with Berent (2015) who reports that teachers of Deaf learners should participate in an ongoing professional development activity, such as conferences, workshops, and reading journals that familiarize them with the characteristics and the learning needs of DLs. Hence, harnessing English teachers as available assets can help the Deaf learners to be engaged and have control in their community, by defining and solving their problems through the use of its available resources and connection to other networks for resources and exchange (Bumiller, 2018).

#### Recommendations

Therefore, the researcher would recommend that there should be quarterly workshops, conferences, and collaboration provided for English teachers to meet, share ideas and knowledge, as well as look for solutions to address the issue of poor English performance among their DLs, using UDL practices and the application of its principles, provision of more learning resources and materials to teach DLs by the school authorities, teachers, most especially English teachers, who need to employ or use more learners-centred approaches in their teachings, due to the learners' diverse learning abilities and barriers.

## **7.2 IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study recommends for future studies to explore the use of Universal Design for Learning in other geographical areas for comparative studies. Further studies that involve a larger number of schools and learners (hearing and Deaf learners) in order to consider their point of view. Future studies in this field should not only be aimed at primary level for the exploration of the understanding of UDL and its concepts, but should cover as far as high school level. The study was specifically aimed at English teachers, and it would be crucial to explore UDL training to staff of the Ministry of Education, as well as policy developers on their understanding of UDL and the contribution of UDL in the improvement of the learners' academic performance, despite their diversities.

## **7.3 AUTO-BIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION**

This research study is the first endeavour experienced by the researcher and thus raises awareness to the nature of the qualitative procedures. This processes challenged the researcher for some time until she become comfortable with the entire process and as a result the journey of the research seemed tough because of the limitation of the study. Actually the learning of research procedures, selection of the best methods that best suited the research study design and paradigm have been a challenging stage. The reluctance of participating teachers to make themselves available for the interview was worrisome. The corona virus pandemic's lockdown terms and conditions, such as restrictions on traveling and closing of schools created an inconvenience in the flow of the research, hence forced the researcher to re-apply for the ethical clearance amendment. This challenging experience however significantly benefited the researcher to learn new sightings, to be independent and develop the technological skills, since it was the only and best way to do things and resolve the challenges encountered. The researcher therefore suggests the ongoing on-line learning that was influenced by the closing of schools so as to adjust to the prevailing situation and to encourage learning of technology skills.

#### **7.4 THE LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The qualitative research design was used to guide this study to explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners in two selected schools in Leribe district. The qualitative study had focused on only ten participants who were purposefully selected, because they are considered to provide detailed descriptions and rich information and usually interact with Deaf learners to enhance their academic performance (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

The restricted number of only two schools in Leribe district, limited the comparatives among other inclusive schools in Lesotho country, which was done to minimize the costs for the researcher. The research was designed to explore the understanding of English teachers' perspectives and live experiences. The absence of Deaf learners as participants in this study limited their chances to give their perspectives and opinion regarding how they learn English and their views on their performance. Furthermore, since the study employed semi-structured interviews, this was telephonically done to generate data. This was the forced measure, due to the pandemic of corona virus to protect the life of the participants. The researcher experienced a lot of limitation, due to the participants' postponement of the interview sessions several times. Most of them were busy due to their professions as teachers, which caused a delay, regarding data generation for this study.

#### **7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the summary of findings, recommendation and implication for future research. The findings were discussed in themes as the headings. Moreover, the study recommended what can be done better to improve the teaching and learning of DLs and the understanding of UDL. The recommendation for future research, as well as the auto biographical reflection, and finally the limitations of the study were also discussed.

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## APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

30-Jul-2020

Dear Mrs Palime, Ntloyalefu NJ

#### Amendment Approved

Research Project Title:

**EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2019/1933/2802**

We are pleased to inform you that your amendment application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for notifying the ethics committee of the changes/amendments that have been made to your study; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

*Adri du Plessis*  
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The chief education office Leribe

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH**

I am Justinah Ntloyalefu Palime, a sign language interpreter in Mount Royal High school and a student in the University of Free State. I am doing Masters in Education Psychology on the topic **EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVESAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**. I kindly request permission to conduct my research at Mount Royal Primary school in Leribe district.

I choose these school because it is an inclusive school in Lesotho and therefore responsible to admit Deaf learners. The school have experience of teaching Deaf learners. The aim of the research is to determine Lesotho English teachers' understanding of Universal Design for learning working with Deaf learners in their classroom. Furthermore, they will add the value in the following

- The participating teachers will gain insight into understanding UDL and its usefulness to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners.
- The participating teachers will be aware of components of UDL in their daily teaching and how it can be used to improve the teaching and learning of Deaf learners in the English classroom
- Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, and Curriculum Designers will be aware of the usefulness of UDL in order to improve their policies
- pre-service and in-service teachers could be trained adequately to understand and use UDL as an approach towards effective teaching all learners, including Deaf learners

The study will be conducted using Semi structured interview where by the researcher will probe , asking more questions as a way of seeking for the clarification in the participant provide the vague answer and is able follow up avenues that emerge in the interview and therefore participants will give a fuller picture(Greeff ; 2016) in 1 hour 30 minutes , and their

participation is voluntary and the research will be confidential Confidentiality of the data and the anonymity of the data will be ensured (Bertram ;2014)

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on my email; justinahpalime@gmail.com

Cell number; 57785913

Yours faithfully

N.J.Palime

#### REFERENCE

DR Fumane Khanare (Supervisor)

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department in the School of Education Studies

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za

Cell number; +27834321772

### APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



**LERIBE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OFFICE.**  
**P.O.BOX 12, LERIBE 300**

27 August 2019

**The Principal**  
Mout Royal Pr  
Leribe

Dear Principal

**Subject: Request to collect data in your school**

Ntloyalefu Justinah Palime wishes to collect data in your school for her research study.

This research is mainly on: EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL, DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS.

The research is aimed to assist teachers teaching deaf learners with necessary skills and techniques.

Please assist her with necessary assistance within the bounds of MOET policies.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Motlatsi'.

**Motlatsi Mosoang (Mr)**  
District Education Manager-Leribe



**TELEPHONE: 22400210/22401360**

**FAX: 22400022**

## **APPENDIX 4: PRINCIPAL INFORMED CONSENT**

MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL  
PO.BOX 641  
LERIBE 300

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

The Principal

Mount Royal Primary

Leribe 300

I am Justinah Ntloyalefu Palime, a Sign Language interpreter at Mount Royal High school and a student in the University of Free State. I am doing Masters in Education Psychology on the topic **EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVESAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**. I kindly request permission to conduct my research at your school which will involve participation of five (5) teachers in your school. The reason for choosing your school is that is one of mainstream school that admit Deaf learners, it is the school which have trained Sign Language teachers and therefore experienced in the teaching of Deaf learners.

The aim of the research problem is to determine Lesotho English teachers` understanding of Universal Design for learning (UDL) when working with Deaf learners in their classroom. Furthermore, it will add the value in the following manner;

- The participating teachers will gain insight into understanding UDL and its usefulness to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners.
- The participating teachers will be aware of components of UDL in their daily teaching and how it can be used to improve the teaching and learning of Deaf learners in the English classroom.
- Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, and Curriculum Designers will be aware of the usefulness of UDL in order to improve their policies.
- pre-service and in-service teachers could be trained adequately to understand and use UDL as an approach towards effective teaching of all learners, including Deaf learners

The study will be conducted using Semi structured interview where the participating teachers will be informed that their participation will be video- taped and will last for 1hour 30min. And that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used to avoid any potential harm

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on my email; [justinahpalime@gmail.com](mailto:justinahpalime@gmail.com)

Cell number; 57785913

Yours faithfully

Ntloyalefu Justinah Palime

#### REFERENCE

DR Fumane Khanare (Supervisor)

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## APPENDIX 5: TEACHERS INFORMED CONSENT

Mount Royal high school

P.O BOX 641

Leribe 300

The Teachers

Mount Royal Primary School

P.O BOX 93

Leribe 300

DEAR SIR/MADAM

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I Justinah N Palime, a specialist teacher and a Sign Language interpreter at Mt. Royal High school and a student in the University of Free State. I am doing Master's Degree in psychology of education on the **title EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS**, and kindly request your involvement in my research.

The reasons of being interested in your involvement is that you interact with Deaf learners daily and your experience of teaching them. The study therefore aimed to explore the understanding of Universal Design for Learning by the English teachers working with Deaf learners so as to improve their academic achievement. Furthermore, this study will add value in the following manner:

- The participating teachers will gain insight into understanding UDL and its usefulness to improve the academic achievement of Deaf learners.
- The participating teachers will be aware of components of UDL in their daily teaching and how it can be used to improve the teaching and learning of Deaf learners in the English classroom.

- Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training, and Curriculum Designers will be aware of the usefulness of UDL in order to improve their policies.
- pre-service and in-service teachers could be trained adequately to understand and use UDL as an approach towards effective teaching of all learners, including Deaf learners

The study will be conducted using phone interview where the participating teachers will be informed that their participation will be video- taped and will last for 10minutes each teacher. And that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used to avoid any potential harm

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on my email; [justinahpalime@gmail.com](mailto:justinahpalime@gmail.com)

Cell number; 57785913

Yours faithfully

N.J.Palime

#### REFERENCE

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DR Sekanse Ntsala (core supervisor)

Lecture: school of social science and language Education

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## **APPENDIX 6: PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)**

The purpose of this interview is intended to answer the main research of the study titled: **‘Exploring the understanding of universal design for learning by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf learners’**.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes include the following activities:

- Welcome and brief introductions
- Overview of the project and reminder of ethical considerations
- Responding to the interviews questions

### **(NOTE TO THE RESEARCHER: The following will guide the interview)**

1. First, I would like hear about your understanding of universal design for learning and why do you think is important.

- a. In your own words, what is your understanding of the term ‘universal design for learning? You can also give examples to support your answer.
- b. What are examples of universal design for learning that you are familiar with? Probe: Could from readings, policy documents, schools, teachers etc.
- c. Why do you think universal design for learning is important in relation to Deaf learners generally? Give clear reasons for your answer.

2. At this point, I would like to hear your understanding of universal design for learning in relation to teaching English to Deaf learners in your classroom.

- a. What would be your reasons for employing universal design for learning in the English classroom with Deaf learners?
- b. In what ways will the Deaf learners benefit from employing universal design for learning in the English classroom?

3. At this point, I would like to hear more about how can the universal design for learning be used to improve the teaching of English in relation to Deaf learners

- a. Do you think English teachers understand clearly the benefits of universal design for learning in relation to Deaf learners? Probe: Support your answer.

- b. What needs to be done to improve English teachers' understanding of universal design for learning in relation to Deaf learners? Probe: Give a clear example.
- c. In what ways can the use of universal design for learning be used to improve teachers working with Deaf learners in their English classroom?

4. Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to how the school can improve and reduce the number of Deaf learners dropping out of the school in the Berea district?

**Thank you very much for your time and participation.**

## APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

### THE TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION WITH ENGLISH TEACHER WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS IN SCHOOL A

I first called the English **teacher 2** to make appointment and schedule the time that the participant will have sufficient time to talk freely without any interruptions. I then ask for permission to record our conversation during the interview so that I can easily transcribe.

Secondly the researcher agreed with the participant to email her the interview questions to study them, think and recall about them before commencing of the interview.

To identify the participants, the researcher decided to name the participants certain numbers such as teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 3, teacher 4, teacher 5. In school A

Transcribing verbatim

Good morning 'M'e thank you for your time. The purpose of this interview is intended to answer the main research of the study titled: '**Exploring the understanding of universal design for learning by Lesotho English teachers working with Deaf Learners**' The universal design for learning is an approach and way of teaching the diversity of learners in a classroom.

#### Question 1

**Interviewer:** To start with, I would like to hear your understanding of Universal design for learning. You can give examples to support.

**Teacher 2:** Ok! (little pause) I think Universal design for learning in **about passing message to learners either in local or international way, or presenting a lesson using different ways since learners get information differently.** Some grasp the message quickly while others understanding maybe medium way and the slow learners, and universal de..... what do we call it please remind me (laughter) design for learning will cater for all of them.

Ehhhh! let me not leave out **the use of different mode of communication** that should be inclusive, e.g. **the use of Sign Language** since we have **Deaf learners** here.

I think also the **use of learning material** should be user friendly,

Example is of a lesson is about road signs: we take **fieldtrip** to the roadside to see the road sign, we draw the road signs, we all sign them **through Sign Language** in the class to accommodate Deaf learners.

**Interviewer:** where have you heard about this term earlier or are you familiar with this term universal design for learning?

**Teacher 2:** To tell you the truth No! the term is new to me, but I only figure out or think about the term the time you were introducing the topic to me. Also the word universal means all I think. Maybe the **learning that accommodates all**. Just thinking (laughter) and that shows its importance!

## Question 2

**Interviewer:** I would like to hear your understanding of Universal design for learning in relation to teaching of English in your class.

**Teacher 2:** No! no! no! **I have not yet practiced** Universal design for learning in my class, am still teaching in a normal way or I can say **the traditional way**. I teach a lesson once using maybe singing, and tomorrow I teach using another method maybe taking **a fieldtrip**. I only teach a lesson once unless I am doing remedial class for only slow learners during lunch time. Because I have to finish the syllabus.

(Pause) and **not sure if other teachers clearly understand about UDL**, but I do not think so, because I could have heard it in the **regional workshops**.

But, yah! I believe that by **using different way of approaches like the Universal design for learning can help a lot in the English classroom**. It is because Deaf learners have a challenge of learning English language that make them fail and **drop out of school in large numbers**, so with this approach maybe can make it easy to learn, provided we teachers are introduced and made aware of Universal design for learning.

Look! Deaf learners struggle to read English by themselves, the instructions need to be **interpreted into Sign Language** for them to understand. How can UDL help?

Hmmm! Maybe by repeated lessons!

## Question 3

**Interviewer:** How can the universal design for learning be used to improve the teaching of English in relation to Deaf learners?

**Teacher 2:** Ehhh! I think if ehhh! we can have or there **can be these workshops** for teachers, **conferences** like, these will help us or me to understand and get it better, the other one is if there can be written documents such as **newspapers, books, magazines** where one will read and get more knowledge about this universal design for learning. The other one is ehhh! I think on television there should be some programmes if I may say! To educate us about this new approach then we will take it from the television to apply in our English classroom, I think it will work.

But the workshops at our work place would be best, which are meant for this universal design to equip the teachers with more ways of imparting knowledge to learners.

#### Question 4

**Interviewer:** Thank you for the information. Anyway is there anything you can say about how the school can improve and reduce the number of DLs dropping out of school?

**Teacher 2:** counselling sessions for learners I think can change the situation since these learners are from different home backgrounds. They need psychosocial support, once or twice in a quarter should hear someone who encourages them not to lose hope, that what they are learning at school is important and are responsible to their learning, that they are strong and to believe in themselves. I think that can improve the situation at school.

Another thing I think if we can find a solution to solve this issue of English, their results will change, because really examination is the problem.

Thank you for your participation in this study hope for the best!

“Likhomo”

## APPENDIX 8: LANGUAGE EDITING

Michelle Woolley

WRITER EDITOR PROOFREADER TRANSLATOR

Associate Member of Professional EDITORS' Guild (PEG)

### **CERTIFICATE OF EDITING**

This letter certifies that I have edited the dissertation detailed below.

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EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING  
BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS

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Regards  
Michelle Woolley

Date: 25/11/2020

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## APPENDIX 9:TURN IT IN RECEIPT AND RESULTS

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## EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING BY THE LESOTHO ENGLISH TEACHERS WORKING WITH DEAF LEARNERS

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