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**EXPLORING THE MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF DEAF LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS  
LESOTHO**

**by**

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**JULY 2023**

## DECLARATION

I Ntloyalefu Justinah Palime declare that this thesis titled **“Exploring the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho’s inclusive schools”** is my original work. It has not been submitted for assessment at any other institution. The other people’s work that were used in this thesis were acknowledged and referenced accordingly in the “Reference” section.

..M.J. Palime

..12/10/2023..

SIGNED

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my loving father, Ts'eliso Palime, a proud and hardworking Mosotho gentleman, with the vision of seeing his daughter educated throughout his entire life. I also dedicate this study to my mother, Mankeletseng Palime, who sincerely supported me spiritually as she prayed for my success. Her support was boundless.

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## ABSTRACT

Increasing the academic performance of learners with disabilities in inclusive schools is currently a global concern. Lesotho is therefore not an exception. Numerous contemporary research studies have contributed to support service initiatives, and engagement of various teaching approaches, including universal design for learning, launching inclusive policies, and the involvement parents. These series of commitments, nationally and internationally, stress the issue of equality and equity in education for all learners, including Deaf learners. Nevertheless, the academic performance of Deaf Learners is still a major challenge. There is a dearth of literature on the multisectoral strategies that strengthen partnership among stakeholders, such as the school personnel, parents, and the learners. The researcher believes that the learners' voice, particularly the voice of the Deaf Learners as the major stakeholder in this case, is essentially missing. This negates the view of the Ministry of Education in Lesotho that learners form the third leg in the metaphorical legged pot. Thus, in order to address these underlying challenges, the following objectives were espoused in this study: (1) To determine the multisectoral strategies and practices that can support the academic performances of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. (2) To identify the challenges of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools that affect their academic performance. (3) To explore the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

This study adopted a qualitative approach to describe and analyse the quality of human experiences within a transformative paradigm. The paradigm acknowledges the roles of privilege, power, inclusion, and culture in working with Deaf learners to overcome challenges in their academic performance. It employed participatory design to enable openness and equity in sharing knowledge and experiences and close collaboration among stakeholders. The data were generated through focus group discussions and a collage with 34 participants that allowed the exploration of how multisectoral strategies involving multiple stakeholders contribute to the academic performance of Deaf Learners. The participants comprised twelve hearing learners, twelve Deaf Learners and teachers (two heads of department, three interpreters, and five teachers), who were purposefully selected. The data were analysed through thematic analysis, a highly flexible method that can be modified and generates rich, detailed, and complex information.

The theoretical framework of Kretzmann and McKnight informed the study. The theory acknowledges gifts, abilities and capabilities, and that people live and thrive using their skills. The center of this asset-based theory is mobilising and harnessing local assets, skills, and insights to solve the existing problem.

The research findings have revealed that strengthening partnership and listening to the voices of the various stakeholders, including the voice of Deaf Learners , is critical in improving academic performance. The research findings have also revealed that multisectoral strategies are support structures constructed collectively, which enhance networking of personal and rational assets within and outside the inclusive school. The findings certainly demonstrated the possibility of sharing information with concerned stakeholders, including the voice of Deaf Learners, as a factor that enhances multisectoral strategies. Hence, each exercises their potential, shares their experiences and challenges, and decides on appropriate measures for assistance. The findings have also indicated that the power of interaction among stakeholders develops a sense of networking and relationship, thus enabling multisectoral strategies to support Deaf Learners academically.

The study opines that the current support provided to Deaf Learners is subjective and is, therefore, generated abstractly without identifying and using the learners' experiences and strengths. Thus, through multisectoral strategies, the learners' voice, ideas, and expertise are all essential in addressing their academic issues.

***'Deaf' is the genetic term, which is widely used in Africa, and Lesotho is not exempted. Therefore, it is used in this thesis for the whole study.***

**KEYWORDS**

Academic performance, academic support, asset-based, hearing-impaired learners, able-bodied learners, inclusive education, Lesotho, multisectoral strategies, stakeholders

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	xvi
CHAPTER ONE GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the study .....	1
1.1 Problem statement .....	3
1.2 Research questions.....	4
1.2.1 Primary research question .....	4
1.3 Research aim and objectives of the study .....	5
1.3.1 Research aim .....	5
1.3.2 Research objectives .....	5
1.4 Rationale of the study .....	5
1.5 Significance of the study .....	6
1.5.1 Empirical significance.....	7
1.5.2 Methodological significance .....	7
1.5.3 Practical significance .....	8
1.6 Clarification of the key concepts.....	8
1.7 Overview of research design and methodology.....	12
1.7.1 Research approach.....	12
1.7.2 Research paradigm .....	12
1.7.3 Participatory design.....	13
1.7.4 Data generation methods.....	13
1.7.5 Participants, sample and sampling.....	14
1.7.6 Data analysis.....	14
1.8 Trustworthiness of the study.....	15
1.9 Ethical considerations.....	15
1.10 Delimitation of the study .....	15
1.11 Chapter summary .....	17

<b>CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2 Conceptualising inclusive schools in Lesotho .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2.1 Perceived benefits for Deaf Learners of learning in inclusive schools .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.2.2 Academic performance of Deaf Learners versus inclusion.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.3 Background of Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.3.1 Categories of Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.3.2 Sign Language .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.4 Conceptualisation of supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.4.1 Current support practiced for Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.4.2 Influence of academic performance on Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.4.2.1 Peer learners’ influence.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.4.2.2 Parents’ influence.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.4.2.3 Teachers’ attitude influence.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.4.2.4 Teaching and learning methods influence .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.5 CHALLENGES THAT AFFECT DLS’ ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LESOTHO’S INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.5.1 Social .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.5.2 Economic.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.5.3 Cultural.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.6 THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES AS A SUPPORT TO DEAF LEARNERS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.6.1 Definition of multisectoral strategies.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.6.2 Significance of multisectoral strategies .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.6.3 Construction of multisectoral strategies to support Deaf Learners’ academic performance.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.6.3.1 Teachers .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.6.3.2 Sign Language interpreters.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.6.3.3 Learners: Deaf and hearing .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.6.3.4 Parents .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.6.3.5 School Governing Bodies.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2.7 Factors enabling multisectoral strategies to support enhance Deaf Learners’ academic performance.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2.7.1 Social factors.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.7.2 Academic factors.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.7.3 Environmental factors .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.8 Chapter summary .....</b>	<b>39</b>

<b>CHAPTER THREE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.2 Theoretical context.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.3 Background and origins of the asset-based theory .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.4 Significance of asset-based theory .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>3.4.1 Personal assets.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.4.1.1 Gifts and talents of Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>3.4.1.2 Experiences of Deaf Learners .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.4.1.3 Capabilities and Skills of Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.4.2 Relational assets .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.4.2.1 Relationships oriented with Deaf Learners .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.4.2.2 Partnership with Deaf Learners .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3.4.2.3 Group ties with Deaf Learners .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3.4.3 Networking personal and relational assets .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.5 Relevancy of asset-based theory to the current study.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.5.1 Mobilising assets in an inclusive school.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.5.2 Mapping assets in an inclusive school .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.5.3 Building relationships in an inclusive school.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>3.6 Chapter summary .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>4.2 Qualitative approach .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>4.3 Transformative paradigm .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>4.3.1 Transformative ontological assumption.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.3.2 Transformative epistemological assumption .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>4.4 Participatory design.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>4.5 Research context .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>4.6 Research setting .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>4.6.1 School .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>4.7 Selection of the school and participants.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4.8 Procedures .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Having gained permission from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the research in the selected schools ( Appendix A), I The researcher further applied for ethical clearance from University of Free State and was granted approval to start data generation (Appendix B). In preparing to start data generation, the researcher visited the school principal and submit the letter that request for permission to meet the participants (Appendix C) , describes the study, , set up the appointments and agree on the dates to commence data collection. ....	<b>63</b>

4.8.1	Access to participants .....	63
4.9	Data collection methods.....	64
4.9.1	Focus group discussions.....	64
4.9.1.1	<i>Facets and uses of focus group discussion</i> .....	65
4.9.1.2	<i>Processes of focus group discussion in this study</i> .....	65
4.9.1.3	<i>Focus group discussion 1</i> .....	66
4.9.1.4	<i>Focus group discussion 2</i> .....	66
4.9.1.5	<i>Focus group discussion 3</i> .....	67
4.9.2	Collage.....	67
4.9.2.1	<i>Facets and uses of collage</i> .....	68
4.9.2.2	<i>Process of creating a collage in this study</i> .....	68
4.9.2.3	<i>Collages 1 and 2</i> .....	69
4.9.2.4	<i>Construction of the collage</i> .....	69
4.9.2.5	<i>Collage 3</i> .....	70
4.9.2.6	<i>Reflection on the collage process</i> .....	70
4.9.3	Field notes .....	70
4.9.3.1	<i>Field note in processes</i> .....	71
4.9.4	Triangulation.....	71
4.10	Data analysis.....	72
4.11	Trustworthiness of the study.....	73
4.11.1	Credibility.....	73
4.11.2	Validity.....	74
4.11.3	Transferability.....	74
4.12	Ethical considerations.....	75
4.13	Chapter summary .....	76
<b>CHAPTER FIVE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....</b>		<b>77</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	77
5.2	Participants' demographic data .....	77
5.2.1	Participants for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 1 .....	78
5.2.2	Learner 1: This Participants for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 2.....	81
5.2.3	Focus group discussions for teachers (FGD 3 & Collage group 3).....	83
5.3	<b>THEMATIC FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>84</b>
5.3.1	<b>Multisectoral strategies that support the DLs' academic performance at an inclusive school in Lesotho</b> .....	<b>85</b>
5.4	Practices within the school: interior practices.....	86
5.4.1	Personal support .....	86

5.4.2	Self-support .....	88
5.4.3	Environmental cohesion support.....	89
5.5	Practices from outside the school: exterior support .....	91
5.5.1	Governmental support through the Ministry of Education.....	92
5.5.2	Non-Governmental support .....	93
5.5.2.1	Providing additional training skills .....	94
5.5.3	Neighbouring school support .....	94
5.5.4	Institutions of higher learning support .....	95
5.5.5	Health support.....	95
5.6	Deficiency/Inadequacy of multisectoral practices.....	96
5.6.1	Ignorance of the mode of communication.....	97
5.6.2	Segregation .....	97
5.7	DLS' challenges affect their academic performance at inclusive schools.....	98
5.7.1	Sign Language as a barrier to learning.....	99
5.8	Teachers' misunderstanding of deaf culture .....	99
5.9	One-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment .....	100
5.10	Discrimination .....	101
5.11	Factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs	101
5.12	Enabling factors .....	104
5.13	Sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs.....	105
5.13.1	Breaking language barrier .....	106
5.13.2	Peer learning.....	107
5.13.3	Varying teaching approaches and assessment tools.....	108
5.14	Facilitating factors .....	109
5.14.1	Workshop training for teachers.....	109
5.14.2	Counselling sessions for Sign Language interpreters .....	110
5.14.3	Deaf Learners' counselling therapy.....	111
5.15	Chapter summary .....	111
<b>CHAPTER SIX DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS, REFLECTIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>		<b>113</b>
6.1	Introduction.....	113
6.2	Research questions of the study.....	114
6.3	Discussions of the findings.....	114
6.3.1	Multisectoral strategies to support DLs' academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools .....	115
6.3.1.1	Practices within the school: interior practices.....	115

6.3.1.2	Deficiency of multisectoral practices .....	120
6.3.2	DLs' challenges affecting their academic performance.....	123
6.3.2.1	Sign Language as a barrier to learning.....	123
6.3.2.2	Teachers' misunderstanding of the deaf culture .....	124
6.3.2.3	One-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment .....	125
6.3.2.4	Discrimination .....	125
6.3.3	Factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs .....	126
6.3.3.1	Enabling factors .....	127
6.3.3.2	Facilitating factors .....	130
6.4	Reflections on the study.....	131
6.5	Contributions of the study.....	133
6.5.1	Theoretical contribution voice of Deaf Learners .....	133
6.5.2	Methodological contribution .....	134
6.6	Limitations of the study.....	134
6.6.1	Research context .....	135
6.6.2	Number of participants .....	135
6.6.3	Use of language.....	135
6.7	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	135
6.8	Chapter summary .....	137
	REFERENCES.....	138
	APPENDICES.....	158
	APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE .....	158
	APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING .....	159
	APPENDIX C: THE LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH .....	160
	APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM PARENTS/ GUARDIAN IN SESOTHO LANGUAGE .....	162
	APPENDIX E: CONSENT TO TEACHERS' INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY .....	164
	APPENDIX F: ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING LEARNERS .....	165
	APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH LEARNERS .....	167
	APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS.....	171
	APPENDIX I: SAMPLE FOR PARTICIPANTS COLLAGE .....	174
	APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR .....	175
	APPENDIX K: TURN IT IN REPORT .....	176



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1: Focus group discussions for deaf and hearing learners (FGD 1 & Collage group 1) .....	77
Table 5.2: Focus group discussions for deaf and hearing learners (FGD 2 & Collage group 2) .....	79
Table 5.3: Focus group discussions for teachers (FGD 3 & Collage group 3) .....	82
Table 5.4: Thematic findings .....	84

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Model for utilising Deaf Learners as assets.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 3.2: Relevancy of an asset-based theory with Deaf Learners in inclusive schools.....	53
Figure 5.1: Multisectoral strategies to support DLs academic performance at an inclusive school .....	86
Figure 5.2: Represents the exterior practices to support to DLs in inclusive school .....	92
Figure 5.3: Collage 1.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 5.4: Collage 2.....	103
Figure 5.5: Collage 3.....	104
Figure 5.6: Factors enabling multisectoral strategies.....	105
Figure 6.1: Diagram format for Chapter 6 .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABCD</b>	Assesed-Based Community Development
<b>ADCET</b>	Australian Disability Clearing House on Education Training
<b>ADSE</b>	Advanced Diploma in Special Education
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>Bed</b>	Bachelor of Education
<b>C.F</b>	Cross Reference
<b>DeafSA</b>	Deaf Association of South Africa
<b>DiP Sed</b>	Diploma in secondary Education
<b>DLs</b>	Deaf Learners
<b>ECCD</b>	Early Childhood Community Development
<b>ESLIAN</b>	Education Sign Language Interpreters Association of Nigeria
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immune Virus
<b>HL</b>	Hearing Learners
<b>HODs</b>	Heads of Departments
<b>Hons Ed</b>	Honours in education
<b>LSEN</b>	Lesotho Special Educational Needs
<b>MOET</b>	Ministry of Education and Training
<b>NADL</b>	National Association of the Deaf Lesotho
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SGBs</b>	School Governing Bodies
<b>TP</b>	Transformative Paradigm

<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>USC</b>	University of Southern California Libraries
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The academic performance of Deaf Learners is a concern internationally, in Africa countries including Lesotho. It negatively put Deaf Learners among the most disadvantaged minority group when it comes to educational experiences in South Africa (Kelly, McKinney and Swift, 2020). While Kim, Byrne and Parish (2018), in their findings about the Deaf and their economic well-being, qualified that the Deaf with a capital 'D' represent the culture and linguistic identity and membership within this community. For that matter the current study used the 'D' all throughout the study to explore multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners (DLs) in inclusive schools Lesotho. Consequently this chapter focuses on the background of the study, including the formulation of the problem, aims and objectives of the study that are directly align with the research questions. Furthermore the rationale and the significance of the study are explained and the overview of the research design and methodology are provided. Finally the ethical aspects and the definition of key concepts are addressed.

### 1.2 Background of the study

Strengthening the partnership among multisector stakeholders is one of the fundamental strategies to transform, prepare, respond, and recover from addressing a particular issue (LuZhang & Ganapiti, 2020). Studies conducted in Canada revealed that multisectoral strategies are collaborative approaches that can assist relevant stakeholders and other groups in addressing a particular issue (Amri, Chatur & O'Campo, 2022). Similarly, In India, Salunke (2017) and the Health Policy Project (2014), also observed that strengthening the linkage among stakeholders has the overall objective of improving education services. Through engaging multiple sectors, partners can leverage knowledge, expertise, and resources, and can benefit from their combined and varied strengths as they work towards the shared goal of producing better support.

The use of multisectoral strategies has shown its effectiveness in the health field at the Global Conference on Primary Health Care that was co-hosted by the Kazakhstan Government in Asia. This is where the multisectoral approach was initiated primarily as a response to health and well-being challenges that health sectors could not address alone (World Health Organization

[WHO], 2018). WHO (2018) asserted that the multisectoral actions and its variation of skills, combined strengths, and shared experiences in primary health care were able to strengthen partnerships, through public policy changes across sectors, local strategic partnership agreements and collaborations, encouraging health-promoting environments, inspectorate functions, and joint commissioning.

Salunke's (2017) study in India, on the multisectoral approach used to promote public health, revealed that such an approach is a necessary measure for effective and improved health. Furthermore, the approach involves multiple sectors and encourages participation and other inclusive approaches. The results revealed that promoting multisectoral strategies in other ministries is important for effective implementation and strengthening of communication to ensure multisectoral coordination (Salunke, 2017).

Moreover, contemporary research has further shown that the multisectoral collaboration approach in education is effective in empowering the African marginalised learners (Balisi et al., 2019). Hence, with the participation of multiple stakeholders, the strategy is one of the critical measures employed to achieve social inclusion and empowerment in education (Balisi et al., 2019). Corpuz's (2021) studies in South Africa revealed that multisectoral approaches combine varied strengths as stakeholders work towards producing better outcomes.

Previous researchers in Britain emphasised that poor academic performance has become the global crisis that faces Deaf Learners, which exposes and deepens issues of more exclusion of Deaf Learners and provokes what inclusion means (Swanwick et al. 2020). Kelly, McKinney and Swift's (2020) studies in South Africa concurred with Swanwick et al.'s (2020) observation that learners with disabilities, including Deaf Learners, are among the most disadvantaged groups with regards to educational experiences. Kelly et al. (2020) reported that related factors contributing to these unsatisfied experiences are the educational needs of Deaf Learners, and the teacher education and support required to meet these needs, which are not properly understood. Hence, many countries jump to the conclusion too quickly that inclusive education means education at mainstream schools (Sanagi, 2016).

However, Basili et al. (2019) consider multisectoral strategies as a suitable approach in education for equity, social inclusion and empowerment of learners with disabilities in inclusive schools. They highlighted that inclusive education addresses the learning needs of all children, youths, and adults, specifically focusing on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion (Balisi et al., 2019). Hence, inclusive education implies all

stakeholders' provisional and community educational settings with an appropriate network to support service (Balisi et al., 2019).

The focus on strategies acknowledges education for all, especially Deaf Learners. In this study, multisectoral strategies entails strengthening the partnership among stakeholders, such as the school personnel, parents, and learners. The researcher believes that the involvement of their voice and their varied experiences, encourage their collaborative participation and inclusiveness in addressing the issue of the learners' academic performance. Hence, the study explored the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Providing equitable education that addresses all learners' needs is a priority nationally and internationally. Therefore, is not an exception.

The Ministry of Education in Lesotho has the motto: "thuto ke pitsa e maoto a mararo", which literally means "learners form the third leg in the metaphorical three-legged pot". This implies that education is the responsibility of the school, parents, and the learners (Lekhetho, 2013). Nevertheless, the involvement of learners as part of the stakeholders, particularly Deaf Learners, is largely missing in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Their varied views, strength and lived experiences in an inclusive setting should support their academic performance through increased ownership of their education. Therefore, in light of this research gap, the current study recognised the necessity of engaging multiple sectors in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Thus, the study aimed to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

## **1.1 Problem statement**

Despite decades of conducting research in educational psychology in order to improve the academic performance of learners in inclusive schools, the academic performance of learners with disabilities across the world, especially Deaf Learners in inclusive schools, is still lagging behind (Hornby & Kauffman 2020; Ocampo, Razalli & Ahmad, 2019; Swanwick et al., 2020). The emphasis is that focusing on inclusion while depleting special education, jeopardises the principles of educational excellence and equity among Deaf Learners, leading to less-than-optimal educational performance.

Recent analyses of the Grade 12 results of Deaf Learners in South Africa and Lesotho have indicated a decline in the number of Deaf Learners who are academically competent to reach Grade 12 (DeafSA, 2019; Kelly, McKinney & Swift, 2020; National Association of Deaf

Lesotho: NADL, 2019). Contemporary research has shown that the initiatives and the support given the learners are insufficient, since the voice of Deaf Learners as the major stakeholders is missing. Thus, the research conducted in Lesotho and South Africa on the academic support of Deaf Learners in inclusive schools, clearly revealed the absence of the voice of Deaf Learners, and their lack of representation among the stakeholders, in decision making (Kelly et al., 2020; Makatse, 2012; Ndinisa, 2016).

On the other hand, Ndinisa's (2016) study on supporting learners who experience barriers to learning revealed a flawless description in the learners' education, and observed that Deaf Learners were not given a platform to voice out their experiences in an inclusive setting. Makatse's (2021) study also reviewed Deaf education theories and why the Deaf Learners dropped out of school in high numbers. Several studies have also evaluated government policies, teachers' views and teaching strategies, and the parents' views on inclusive education concerning learners' academic performance (Adigun & Ndwandwe 2022 ; Antia et al. 2009 ; Kelly et al. 2020). However, Kelly et al.'s (2020) study has revealed that the voice of Deaf Learners is lacking in inclusive schools and their academic performance is still lagging behind. The current support provided to Deaf Learners is subjective and is, therefore, generated abstractly without identifying and using the learners' experiences and strengths. This has prompted the researcher to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

## **1.2 Research questions**

### **1.2.1 Primary research question**

How can multisectoral strategies support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?

### **1.3.2 Secondary research questions**

1. What are the multisectoral strategies that can support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?
2. What are the challenges faced by Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools that affect their academic performance?

3. What are the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?

### **1.3 Research aim and objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1 Research aim**

To explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

#### **1.3.2 Research objectives**

1. To determine the multisectoral strategies and practices that can support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.
2. To identify the challenges faced by Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools that affect their academic performance.
3. To explore the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

Contemporary research shows that Deaf Learners are among the most disadvantaged groups in Lesotho's education sector (Kelly, McKinney & Swift, 2020; NADL, 2019). Hence, the academic performance of Deaf Learners is a matter of serious concern globally and nationally. Although the researcher's experience as a special teacher and educational sign language interpreter in one of the schools in Lesotho has revealed the positive benefits of inclusive education including psychosocial support, the academic performance of Deaf Learners is still lagging behind. Indeed, the researcher has observed that when Deaf Learners can socially interact with hearing learners in sports and cultural activities, they more often learn from each other, and even find it easier to make friends in the school setting.

Despite these critical merits of inclusive education, research has shown that Deaf Learners in inclusive settings across the world are academically challenged. Recent analyses of the Grade 12 results of Deaf Learners in South Africa and Lesotho have indicated a decline in the number of Deaf Learners who are academically competent to reach Grade 12 (DeafSA, 2019; Kelly, McKinney & Swift, 2020; National Association of Deaf Lesotho: NADL, 2019). This hinders them from being potential citizens. The Deaf Learners initiate their schooling, which is the

foundation phase from special school (Early Childhood Community Development: ECCD stage – Grade 3). Once they reach Grade 4, they move to an inclusive school throughout their intermediate phase until their secondary and high school levels.

Consequently, the academic performance of Deaf Learners becomes unsatisfactory under these conditions, leading to high failure rate among them and the resultant loss of financial support from their sponsorships. Some Deaf Learners finally drop out of school, while others repeat class several times. They tend to be older than the rest of their peers in the class and this causes them to drop out of school, or be removed from school by their parents or guardians. This unbearable condition faced by Deaf Learners in Lesotho makes them incompetent and unproductive citizens, particularly compared to their hearing counterparts.

In Lesotho, basic education is commonly referred to as a three-legged pot, implying that education is the responsibility of the government (the school personnel), parents, and the learners. However, numerous research studies have been conducted to evaluate government policies, to assess the teachers' opinions and their teaching strategies, and to assess the parents' views on inclusive education. Nevertheless, none of these research studies have sought to incorporate the contributions of Deaf Learners and their representatives in the decision-making process, in order to enhance the successful operation of inclusive schools (Akellot & Bangirana, 2019; Lekhetho, 2013).

However, in light of this research gap, the current study sought to engage other stakeholders' contributions in order to effectively support the academic performance of Deaf Learners. Therefore, the study aimed to explore the use of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Thus, the study recommends that all stakeholders, including the school personnel, parents, and the learners, particularly Deaf Learners, should work collaboratively in order to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The researcher's conviction is that addressing this gap with multisectoral strategies would enhance the successful operation of Lesotho's inclusive schools. Hence, partnership is critically needed in order to tackle the challenges of Deaf Learners in inclusive settings and achieve the targets and the requirements needed.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The value of this study is traced to its prospective empirical, methodological, and practical significance. This enhances not only transferability purposes but also the relevance of the study

in creating a worthy and supportive inclusive context for the education of Deaf Learners in Lesotho.

### **1.5.1 Empirical significance**

Contemporary research has revealed in detail the factors affecting the academic performance of Deaf Learners and their support services in inclusive schools (Akellot & Bangirana, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020). In addition, some studies have revealed that parental involvement, and supervision and motivation by teachers, are greatly associated with academic skills attainment (Hlatywayo and Marando 2014; Akellot et al., 2019). Therefore, the involvement of parents, teachers, and learners, as they work collaboratively and share potential ideas, enhances the academic performance of Deaf Learners. The World Federation of the Deaf (2016) revealed that the enrolment rate and literacy achievement of Deaf Learners are far below the average as compared to their able-bodied peers. Thus, illiteracy and semi-literacy are serious problems among Deaf people. Without appropriate education, advancement in society as independent, employed, contributing citizens becomes problematic for Deaf people (DeafSA, 2018). Research has also shown that the learners and other multiple stakeholders concerned need to be a source of support services, by working collaboratively towards the common goal (DeafSA, 2018). The researcher's conviction is that the support would benefit all Deaf Learners in the country as a whole if their views as stakeholders are considered and included in decision making.

### **1.5.2 Methodological significance**

The study would donate invaluable information to existing literature that emphasise the need for inclusive methodologies in qualitative research, such as participatory methods (Taylor & Medina, 2013). In the studies conducted in Lesotho, there is limited literature on the participation of DLs in enhancing their academic performance in inclusive educational settings. Thus, this study is critical as it brings forth the voice of DLs in decision-making. Recent research on improving the well-being of learners with visual impairment emphasised that qualitative research involves inclusive, participatory methodologies and is valued for its ability to reveal rich data by incorporating the voices of multiple participants (Ramatea & Khanare, 2021). Therefore, this study is vital because it offers alternative techniques in which participants in various statuses and settings interact and represent their opinions and experiences (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Triangulation of collage and focus group discussions in this study enable the expression of ideas and expertise in greater and significant detail.

### **1.5.3 Practical significance**

This study helps attain the crucial goal of providing the type of support Deaf Learners need within the inclusive setting in Lesotho, through the sharing of the researcher's experiences regarding the role of a specialist teacher and a sign language interpreter in an inclusive setting.

The Deaf Learners educators, such as teachers and sign language interpreters, would also demonstrate their multisectoral strategies to improve the quality of education and, therefore, the performance of Deaf Learners in many ways. The study provides the opportunity for teamwork which creates thriving and compatible citizens who would contribute to the country's economy. Learners would consider an inclusive setting as a flexible environment that caters to everyone. The involvement of multiple stakeholders, including Deaf Learners, in their education, is important to encourage them to use and develop their strengths and take responsibility of their education.

Higher education institutions, such as teacher training colleges and universities, could benefit by learning from the collective work of various stakeholders and recognise multisectoral strategies as a good approach towards improving academic performance. The teachers and sign language interpreters would understand the other stakeholders' views and expertise and how DLs' academic performance can be supported through multisectoral strategies. The parents would also learn that strengthening the partnership among multisectoral stakeholders can be used to support the performance of DLs. LuZhang and Ganapiti (2020) regarded partnership as one of the major strategies for addressing the challenge faced by DLs. Moreover, education agencies would improve the policy and their practices in inclusive education, particularly for DLs.

### **1.6 Clarification of the key concepts**

In this section, the researcher clarified the key concepts used in the study. These include multisectoral strategies, support, Deaf Learners, academic performance, inclusive education in Lesotho.

#### ***Multisectoral strategies***

Multisectoral strategies refer to a deliberate collaboration among stakeholder sectors with a common vision and perspective to achieve a desired outcome jointly. The multisectoral strategy helps in addressing identified issues in a focused way (Salunke, 2017). Therefore, the study found that the academic performance of DLs is lagging behind in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

This stresses the need for teamwork among stakeholders in order to enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners cooperatively. This study finds collaboration of Stakeholders as necessary to address the issue of academic performance facing Deaf Learners in inclusive schools Lesotho.

### ***Academic support***

Support is a powerful tool in ensuring that learners succeed in life, while academic support is defined as programmes and strategies that schools use to increase the academic achievement of learners (Fluke et al., 2014). Adam (2002), defines academic support as credit bearing programmes designed to assist learners in succeeding in their required academic courses by providing additional time and learning strategies to learners who need extra assistance. Thus, the current study sought to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools hence academic support.

### ***Asset-based***

The asset-based concept advocates a positive approach to sustainable development within community building, with the collective process of identifying the assets within the community (Scott et al., 2020). Mclean (2021) stated that an asset-based concept involves assessing the collective resources, skills and experiences available to individuals, and organising the community and taking appropriate actions around issues that affect its members. According to this study Deaf Learners are identified as assets in inclusive schools with available skills and experiences that are valuable in transforming their academic performance hence form part of multisectoral strategy.

### ***Deaf Learners***

According to Amri, Chatur & O'Campo (2022), Deaf Learners are defined as learners who are impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without implications and mostly communicate using Sign Language and fingerspelling due to their deafness. In this study, the researcher believed listening to the voices and experiences of Deaf Learners, as part of shareholders and the participants in the study, would contribute to the sense of ownership of

their education, and feel that their education is centred on their strengths, thus improving their academic performance. It is also the believe of this current study that the contribution of Deaf Learners is necessary and form part of multisectoral strategies to enhance them academically

### ***Hearing learners***

According to Kekana & Goosen (2021), hearing learners refer to individuals who are learning new skills through listening and benefitting from hearing lectures. Kekana & Goosen (2021) further indicated that hearing learners desire verbal input and typically follow oral instructions. In contrast, Pritchard (2009) views hearing learners as an individual who gains knowledge through study, such as teaching, instructions or experiences. Pritchard (2009) emphasised that this learner can perceive sound through an organ, such as the ear. According this study hearing learners form the part of multisectoral strategies since they learn together with Deaf Learners in an inclusive school as a result their contribution could bring change in the academic performance

### ***Academic performance***

Academic performance refers to the level of knowledge, skill, and competencies a learner has acquired in education, evaluated by grades obtained (Feng et al., 2022). It is important to learners and the schools, as it measures the success of their education process (Lang, 2016). In this study, Deaf Learners are among the most disadvantaged groups in Lesotho's education sector. Thus, the study explored the contribution of multisectoral strategies in enhancing the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The study finds academic performance of Deaf Learners as an essential element in an inclusive school Lesotho hence necessary to be improved.

### ***Inclusive schools***

Every child has the right to education, which was the call of the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2018). Therefore, like other children, children with disabilities envision their future. Thus, Deaf Learners are not an exception; they require quality education to develop their skills and capabilities and realise their potential. Inclusion is crucial, since it

involves the unique contribution of everyone within the school, considers everyone responsible, and values each one's strength.

Inclusive education is a teaching model whereby all learners, regardless of their ability, learn together in one environment. It ensures that all learners are treated fairly and have equal opportunities (FutureLearn, 2021). Therefore, this study gave insight into the inclusive practises in Lesotho's education sector, particularly the inclusion of DLs and how multisectoral strategies can be used in inclusive schools to support and enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners..

### ***Lesotho***

Lesotho is a small country that is completely landlocked by South Africa (Kali, 2020). It is one of the smallest countries in the world. This mountainous country, which had been colonised by Britain from 1868-1965, is home to Basotho people, who speak Sesotho (Kali, 2020). The Ministry of Education and Training of Lesotho (2012) observed that the mountains cover about two-thirds of the country. Thus, the current study took place in Lesotho. Thus, the current study took place in Lesotho where the academic performance of Deaf Learners seemed a raising concern.

### ***Stakeholders***

Stakeholders are defined as persons, groups and organisations with a vested interest in the decision-making and activities of a project or an organisation (Barney, 2007). Laudau (2022) affirmed that stakeholders have a positive or negative influence on project decisions. Bryson (2004) explains a stakeholder as anybody who is affected by a strategy and an organisation, either internally or externally. In this study, Deaf Learners are among the internal stakeholders in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Deaf learners are as the results considered as the main stakeholders and responsible for their education.

## **1.7 Overview of research design and methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research approach**

The qualitative approach is an ideal method for applying participatory design, as it allows deliberation to explore how multisectoral strategies could support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho. Unlike the quantitative, numerically based approach, the qualitative approach is word-based data that allow participants to voice their perceptions and provide Deaf Learners and other stakeholders an opportunity to share in their wide range of experiences and knowledge in their natural setting (Harling, 2012). One of the advantages of qualitative research is that several methods of data collection could be used with the participants to talk about and represent their meaning in their day-to-day settings rather than experimental ones (Mays & Pope, 2019). Thus, multisectoral strategies allow the collaboration of combined strengths and voices among stakeholders working towards a common goal (Corpuz, 2021). This methodology is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4 of the current study.

### **1.7.2 Research paradigm**

This study was situated within the transformative paradigm to ensure that the current situation of the Deaf Learners' academic performance is enhanced and transformed in the context of inclusiveness. This paradigm is appropriate because it enables the deliberate efforts of the researcher to support human rights and increase social justice and reciprocity (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). With the transformative paradigm, the focus is on the strengths of Deaf Learners who experience exclusion, discrimination, and oppression based on their learning experiences and cultural values. Likewise, the transformative paradigm acknowledges the roles of privilege, power, inclusion, and culture in working with Deaf Learners to overcome the challenges in learning which they encounter (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The transformative paradigm highlights the transformative assumptions on ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, which are often ignored when developing interventions on disability issues (Matjila, & van der Merwe 2021). This refers to assistance in understanding the reality about the academic performance of Deaf Learners through their lenses as stakeholders (ontology), acquiring knowledge of the subjects and related literature (epistemology), and addressing the issues of the ethics to be considered for the said cohort of Deaf Learners (axiology). According to Mertens (2007), the transformative paradigm provides a framework that examines assumptions which explicitly address power issues, social justice, and cultural complexity throughout the research process. Omodoh (2020) further added that

the transformative paradigm exposes the participation of Deaf Learners in the research processes for transformation.

### **1.7.3 Participatory design**

This study employed the participatory design. As a research design, the participatory design places more value on a collaborative effort by engaging the researcher and the multiple stakeholders, including Deaf Learners, in finding solutions to a problem. It is concerned with using multiple methodologies organised in terms of the levels of participation (Hall, Gaved & Sargent, 2021). Participatory research design continues to gain popularity in qualitative research for its ability to encourage openness and equity in sharing knowledge and experiences and to nurture close collaboration in all things challenging within the current context (Hall et al., 2021). This study adopted a participatory design because the participants worked closely with the researcher in enhancing the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### **1.7.4 Data generation methods**

The data generation method used in this study is a focus group discussion and collage as an art-based method. A focus group discussion in qualitative research refers to the data collection method that focuses on discussing and exchanging opinions and experiences with the participants (Muijeen, Kongvattananon & Somprasert, 2020). Moreover, some scholars view a focus group discussion as a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a topic or issue in depth. The aim is to draw from the participants' complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes, facilitated by a professional, external moderator (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017).

Furthermore, according to Nyumba et al. (2018), the most compelling reason for using a focus group discussion is to generate discussion or debate about a research topic that requires a collection of views and the meaning behind those views. Therefore, the focus group discussion enabled the participants in this study to discuss what they perceive to be the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in inclusive schools in Lesotho. The second data generation method that was adopted in this present study is collage. The collage has become increasingly popular in art-based research (Gerstenblatt, 2013). Collage is the multiplicity of images, and they can generate new constellations of possibilities (Hanawalt, 2019). A collage is a form of visual art in which virtual elements are combined to

create a new image that conveys a message or idea. Collages are virtual artwork created by selecting magazine images, textured papers, or ephemera, cutting, altering, arranging, and attaching them to support such paper or cardboard (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Collage brings together disparate visual elements that reflect a commitment to a relationship, making the ordinary something special and bringing diversity into unity (Chilton & Scotti, 2014).

However, due to the special circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher followed all current COVID-19 protocols in place. All participants were requested to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing while participating in the study, in order to mitigate the potential risk of COVID-19. The participants were also divided into groups of 12 members each.

### **1.7.5 Participants, sample and sampling**

Participants were selected purposively from one inclusive school in the Leribe District in Lesotho. These participants comprised twelve Deaf Learners aged between 15 and 18 years, with an average age of 20 years, and 12 hearing learners of the same age. It involved five teachers, three sign language interpreters, and two heads of departments. Participants shared their experiences, knowledge, and expertise from their varied strengths as they worked towards supporting the academic performance as the identified problem. In this case, Deaf Learners, their able-bodied hearing peers, and other participants were experienced and knowledgeable on academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Participants showed their availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulated manner.

### **1.7.6 Data analysis**

Data analysis refers to cleaning, transforming, and processing raw data to discover useful information and help make informed decisions (Kelly et al., 2020). The data that were analysed included the data generated from focus group discussions and collage, collected from the learners (Deaf and hearing learners), their teachers, sign language interpreters and heads of departments, as the participants. However, the participants were categorised into learners and teachers in Chapter 5, the analysis chapter. Subsequently, thematic analysis was used to analyse the responses from focus group discussions and collages. Thematic analysis was the method principally concerned with identifying patterns, which are then reported as researchers' generated themes. It organised and described the themes found in the database (Hollad et al., 2021). The method is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.10.

## **1.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

Stumpfegger (2017) describes trustworthiness as transparency shown by qualitative research in the data analysis. A study's trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of the study (Conney & Nursing, 2016). Furthermore, Conney and Nursing (2016) stipulated that trustworthiness in qualitative study can be defined as the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative research instrument and output. Therefore, the dependability of this study is gained through consistency and detailed description that shows the transparency rooted in the development of research findings. The study also used two data generation methods, focus group discussions and collage, to ensure the participation's validation. In observing the ethical norms in presenting extracts about the participants' experiences, the study used pseudonyms. Also, to eliminate biases and enable confirmability, the study presented the findings using participants' verbatim quotes.

## **1.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (Bhandari, 2021). The principles of ethics ensure that participation in the study is voluntary, informed, and safe for the research subject (Bhandari, 2021). In line with the research ethics, the researcher requested ethical clearance from the University of Free State and Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training for permission to conduct research in the selected school. All research participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity by being given pseudonyms. They were issued informed consent forms to ensure that the participation is voluntary before the generation of data for the study.

## **1.10 Delimitation of the study**

The research study is explicitly located in positive educational psychology, which focuses mainly on deaf education, the development of their academic performance, and support in inclusive schools. The tenants of positive psychology enabled the study to view Deaf Learners as possessing the inner strength for taking charge and transforming their academic performance collectively with other stakeholders (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). It recognised that individuals have something to offer, regardless of their disability. Therefore, they must be identified as assets. In this instance, Deaf Learners are considered potential assets among the multisectoral strategies that support academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

The study was limited to only one inclusive school, because this is the only school in Lesotho that admitted and accommodated Deaf Learners countrywide. The participants comprised 34 learners, including Deaf Learners, teachers, Sign Language interpreters, and heads of department, since the study explored multisectoral strategies. Contemporary research has shown that the contribution of Deaf Learners has been largely ignored in decision making processes in Lesotho's inclusive schools. With the use of collage and focus groups, discussion enabled the participants to express their views differently and openly. It also revealed that multisectoral strategies enable the creative presentation of Deaf Learners' experiences, capabilities, skills, and strengths which enhance their academic performance.

### **Outline of the study**

This thesis consists of six chapters.

*Chapter 1:* This chapter focuses on the introduction of the research study, including the problem formulation, the research aim and objectives, and the research questions that directly align with the aims and objectives of the research. The chapter also includes the ethical considerations, the definition of the main key concepts, and the delimitation of the study.

*Chapter 2:* This chapter presents the literature review of multisectoral strategies and how they can enhance DLs' academic performance. This literature review concentrates on the role of stakeholders, including Deaf Learners, in supporting their academic performance, as well as the challenges experienced by DLs in an inclusive context. It also presents the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners.

*Chapter 3:* This chapter focuses on the theoretical lens of the study. The chapter discusses the reasons for utilising the asset-based theory instead of other theories. The history behind the theory, its principles and its suitability for this study are explained.

*Chapter 4:* This chapter addresses the research methodology and specifies the research paradigm design and approaches. The chapter also includes data generation tools, a description of the research population, and the sampling methods.

*Chapter 5:* This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative study. The chapter also outlines the analysis of the qualitative data and the presentation of the themes.

*Chapter 6:* This chapter presents the discussion of the research findings, reflection, contribution and recommendation of the study. The chapter discusses the findings in relation to each research question.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided the background of the study and outlined the participatory art-based methodology, as well as the problem statement, aim and objectives, and the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter included the theoretical framework of the study, research design, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study. The key concepts in the study were defined. Finally, the overview of chapters was given. The next chapter presents the review of literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Academic performance is invaluable to learners who strive for quality education. However, learners attribute their low academic performance to lack of adequate support and this is often the case with the learners with disabilities. Numerous studies on academic performance concerning learners with disabilities revealed that learning through teaching activities, academic advising, and interpreting are the most common support services (Lang, 2016; Leigh & Marschark, et al. 2015; Kaindu, et al. 2022). However, in this chapter, the researcher discussed Conceptualising inclusive schools in Lesotho, Background of Deaf Learners, conceptualising support for Deaf Learners, and challenges experienced by Deaf Learners in the inclusive schools, as well as the significance of multisectoral strategies as potential strategies to address the plight of Deaf Learners in inclusive schools. The study sought to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools, Factors enabling multisectoral strategies to support enhance Deaf Learners' academic performance and the chapter summary.

#### **Conceptualising inclusive schools in Lesotho**

Inclusive education is viewed worldwide as a holistic concept without an explicit definition. It has different meanings according to practices in different countries. Alshammari, Paula and Chris' (2019) study on Asian institutions defines inclusive education as a philosophy that brings stakeholders together to create a school environment based on acceptance and belonging within the school and the community. According to Ruppard and Li (2021), inclusive education aims to enhance access, participation, and outcomes for learners from all walks of life.

Lesotho, a high-altitude landlocked, mountainous country, is among many countries of the world that embraced inclusive education practices and still strive to provide all learners with equal access to education. However, there is deep-seated need to address the problems that are faced by learners with disabilities in inclusive settings. Learners with disabilities, particularly DLs, undergo some challenges related to their academic performance in inclusive schools. In Lesotho, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) chose ten primary schools and a few secondary schools to pilot inclusive education. Among the few selected inclusive schools, a

limited number of schools admitted DLs, although the intake was restricted due to lack of support services. However, with time the parents saw the logic of taking their children to school, since they could not afford the fees in available popular, private schools, and church schools which also demanded financial support (Lekhetho, 2013).

Today, DLs within an inclusive framework experience numerous challenges and in turn require high levels of support. They are not being recognised as active participants who could contribute to their education, and they are voiceless in decision making processes that concern their education, with no platform for the selection of subjects offered to them as compared to their hearing peers. This is due in part to lack of collaboration or Sign Language interpreters, and specialist training and knowledge among teachers (Kelly et al., 2020).

According to Nisser's (2017) study in Sweden, the challenges of inclusive education have been observed both internationally and nationally. Thus, inclusion rather is superficially viewed and understood only as placing learners needing special support in mainstream schools. On the contrary, Raish (2019) characterises inclusive education as the multiple assets and strengths of teaching that help learners feel welcomed, supported, and valued in schools. Learners are positioned as valuable assets who know that they are an important part of the class, with their teacher enjoying having them. Other studies view the philosophy of inclusive education as the presence of stakeholders with an appropriate network to support service opportunities ( Balisi et al., 2019; Sanagi, 2016).

In Lesotho, the schools admit a particular group of learners with disabilities, for instance DLs, so that they are taught together in the same class with the hearing learners. This would make the education for DLs to be on a par with that offered to able-bodied learners. Thus, half of the class comprises DLs, whilst the other half comprises able-bodied learners. However, Glass and Pletzen's (2012) study on special education law revealed that each learner with a disability represents the workload equivalent of anywhere from three to ten regular education learners. As a result, such conditions of inclusion practised in countries like Lesotho bring a crucial challenge to the performance of DLs as compared to their able-bodied counterparts (Glass & Pletzen, 2012).

### **2.1.1 Perceived benefits for Deaf Learners of learning in inclusive schools**

Although various studies have confirmed the crucial role of inclusive education (Ocampo et al., 2019), other studies revealed that the knowledge and understanding of practices on inclusive education are vital for it to be implemented successfully (Swanwick et al., 2020). As Ruppap et al. (2021) indicated earlier, inclusive education aims to enhance access, participation, and outcomes for diverse learner populations who were traditionally excluded from formal education. Hence, there is need to provide such learners with adequate additional help and attention in order to prioritise their educational needs and to ensure that they benefit from inclusive education (Ocampo et al., 2019). Andrews and Frankel (2010) observed that inclusive education is a system that supports and accommodates all learners' diverse needs and abilities, including DLs within a typical education setting.

In this study, the researcher's conviction is that DLs can benefit from inclusive education with an alternative approach. The DLs should constitute stakeholders, take part in the learning process, and thus exercise their potential. Contemporary research has also shown that the advocacy of DLs in an inclusive environment deserves everybody's consideration for promotion (Ocampo et al., 2019). Thus, the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho needs to be revamped for DLs to become successful independent learners, who in turn would be successful in personal and professional dimensions. The researcher's aspirations therefore align with the views expressed in reviewed literature, which sought to enhance the DLs' access and participation in inclusive schools. The study, therefore, views inclusive education as access to academic opportunities, social benefits of interaction, and the provision of opportunities to establish an appropriate network of support service. This would positively influence the academic performance of DLs when all stakeholders are involved.

### **2.1.2 Academic performance of Deaf Learners versus inclusion**

According to Lamas' (2015) study in South America, academic performance is the product which the learner obtains and is expressed through school grades. It involves the learner's cognition, personality motivation, skills, interests, study habits, and the teacher-learner relationship (Lamas, 2015). Academic performance is achieved as an educational goal through the process of learning (Lamas, 2015). As for Abaidoo's (2018) study in Germany, academic performance is learners' measurable and observable behaviour within a specific period. It consists of scores obtained by a learner in an assessment, such as class exercises, tests, and/or examinations. According to Fajar et al. (2019), academic performance plays a significant role

in quality education, producing a quality learner. However, the learner is the main source of the educational setup.

Scholars observe that academic performance as valuable to all learners, since it helps in personality building, enhances human beings, and enables learners to participate early in developing their community (Fajar et al., 2019). Some studies have revealed that learners with disabilities are more likely to attribute their academic failure to numerous factors, including personal ability and inadequate support (Liem, 2019). According to Lamas (2015), learners who undergo unsatisfactory academic performance are below the expected performance. Brew, Nketiah, and Koranteng's (2021) study revealed that academic performance can be affected drastically and sometimes even lead to dropout. Hence, the parents' level of education and income, availability and accessibility of textbooks, and teachers all have a tremendous effect on the academic performance of learners at school (Brew et al., 2021).

In order to ensure better academic performance and inclusive, equitable education, as well as to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all learners, including Deaf Learners, the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training [ADCET] (2020) recognises the rights of Deaf Learners as the right to have professional Sign Language interpreters; the right to participate fully in all aspects of life; the right to have equal access to information; and the right to receive reasonable accommodation when requested (ADCET, 2020). Thus, inclusion ensures equal access to education by removing barriers to learning, by facilitating choice and self-determination, and by providing inclusive educational environments that expand opportunities for all learners, including those who are deaf (ADCET, 2020).

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (2020) exhorted teachers to hold and enact the professional values of inclusion and inclusive practice as welcoming, and encouraging inclusive behaviours, which make a great deal of difference to the learners' outcomes. Hence, in doing so, teachers would align themselves with the expectations of the asset-based approach that emphasises asset-based teaching, which helps learners feel welcomed, supported, and valued because teachers would focus on the learners' strengths even when frustrated or challenged. Learners are not given punishments that align with deficit-focused teaching. Instead, they are brought in as partners in the discipline process and are given a voice (Raish, 2019).

Kainda, Simuyaba, Muleya and Simui (2020) conducted a study to explore the academic performance of DLs in Zambia. The findings indicated that the academic performance of DLs

at Munali Secondary School in Zambia is poor. Their performance is affected by a language deficit and delay, an unfriendly curriculum, and some teachers' incompetence in the language of instruction (Sign Language). Also, in their studies in Swaziland, Ntinda et al. (2019) indicated that teachers of DLs were experiencing a gap in teaching a mainstream curriculum, which adversely affects the academic performance of DLs. This concurs with the study of Kelly et al. (2020), carried out in South Africa which also revealed that there is a decline in the number of Deaf Learners who are academically competent enough to reach Grade 12.

Thus, although the preliminary vision of Lesotho's inclusive policy (2018 : 4) was extremely broad and ambitious, and hinged on 'empowering educators on teaching strategies that could best cater for diverse needs of learners including DLs in the inclusive settings', learners with disabilities, particularly DLs, are among the most disadvantaged learners in terms of academic performance. Therefore, this current study aims to explore the of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

## **2.2 Background of Deaf Learners**

The extent of loss of functional hearing and dependence upon visual communication medically defines deafness. However, deafness differs in degrees of hearing loss, the age of onset, and the level of hearing loss (Landsberg, Kruger & Swart, 2011). Baroni and Lazzari (2020) reiterated that deafness is proven to vary according to cognitive style, the degree of deafness, the language competency in the mother tongue and the prevalent type of communication (verbal or sign language). The Canadian Association of the Deaf (2015), recognises learners to be medically or audio-logically deaf when they have little or no functional hearing and depend upon visual rather than auditory communication. Similarly, for Landsberg et al. (2012), Deaf Learners refer to the audio-logical aspect of having hearing loss. Watson (2019) further asserted that learners who are deaf have a lack of auditory response to sound due to deficits in language and speech development.

According to an agreement with the World Federation of the Deaf (2016) and the International Federation of the hard of hearing, DLs recognised and regarded themselves as Deaf or hard of hearing. 'Deaf' learners are subsequently spelled with capital "D" and lower case "d", since according to the Australian Catholic Bishop Conference (2021), capital "D" refers to the linguistic and cultural minority group. Brentani and Coppola (2012), emphasised that "Deaf" and "deaf" are used to reflect the level of hearing loss, but mostly concerns deafness as an individual disability versus the Deaf as a linguist minority community. Brentani and Coppola

(2012) also clarify that the use of capital “D” indicates the community of the Deaf who use Sign Language as their language and identify with other deaf people who share their language culture and history. According to the University of Washington (2022), DLs describe or identify learners who have severe hearing problems. According to the Parents’ Information and Resource Center (2022), DLs are viewed as having the condition that an individual cannot receive sound in all or most of its forms and consistently prefer to communicate through Sign Language rather than verbal means.

### **2.2.1 Categories of Deaf Learners**

According to Moravkova (2011), the term 'deafness' can be defined and categorised from several points of view, such as the time when deafness occurred, the part of the body that affects the ability to hear, and the degree of deafness in the focus of time. In this manner, those solely using Sign Language as a preferred communication mode also identify themselves as culturally Deaf. They are more likely to be born deaf or become deaf early in life, or be pre-lingual deaf (Australian Catholic Bishop Conference, 2021). Meanwhile, Felman (2018), DLs contends that DLs are categorised through the defined classes. For instance, pre-lingual deafness is an inability to fully and/or partially hear before learning to utter or understand speech. Post-lingual deafness appears after a child has acquired speech and expression skills (Felman, 2018; Moravkova, 2011).

Similarly, Landsberg et al.’s (2011), classification of DLs is in terms of age of onset, namely that the learners may either be born deaf, either pre-lingual deafness or congenital, which is acquired before language is developed. A child acquires post-lingual deafness after language has developed. Despite having and/or being in this condition, deafness does not affect a learner's intellectual capacity or ability to learn. Generally, it requires support to receive adequate education services (Parents’ Information and Resource Centre, 2022). The appropriate support, however, must be implemented on a multisectoral basis. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the academic support they need in the next section.

Among these various categories of Deaf Learners, the preferable mode of communication is Sign Language, hence the reason why it is used as a medium of instruction in the schools. They identify themselves as a strong and close deaf community with its own culture and sense of identity, based on a shared language. According to their cultural model, DLs believe they fit into a minority language community (Brentani & Coppola, 2012; Educational Sign Language

Interpreters Association of Nigeria, 2020). ‘Deaf’ is the genetic term, which is widely used in Africa, and Lesotho is not exempted. Therefore, it is used in this thesis for the whole study.

### **2.2.2 Sign Language**

Language is defined as a very important factor for all round development of children. Therefore, Sign Language has been recognised as the main means of communication in the Deaf community (Olatunji & Olawepo, 2020). According to Olatunji and Olawepo (2020), Sign Language is the use of signing in communication as the name implies. Alshahrami (2014) agreed with the notion that Sign Language is a set of modulations of the hands and fingers about the top-half body and space in front of it, although the face and body movement and eyes play their role. According to Brentari and Coppola (2012), Sign Language has its own syntax and grammatical system that vary in structure from spoken forms of language. Educational Sign Language Interpreters Association of Nigeria (2020), justified this language as a proven vital tool for educating the Deaf and hard of hearing. Hence, Sign Language has unique and dependent characteristics, which makes it as distinctive, rich and complex as other languages in the world (The Educational Sign Language Interpreters Association of Nigeria, 2020). Therefore, it is used as the medium of instruction in the teaching and learning of DLs in Lesotho’s inclusive schools.

### **2.3 Conceptualisation of supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners**

According to Tamene (2016), a conceptual framework is described as a network or a plane of interlinked concepts that provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Regoniel (2015) further illustrated that it identifies the variables required in the research investigations and/or the researcher’s map in pursuing the investigation. Varpio et al. (2019) observe that the conceptual framework outlines the methodological underpinning of the research project. It serves as a map that would guide the researcher toward realising their study’s intent or objectives. Rashaelly (2017) defined a conceptual framework as a research tool that can assist a researcher in developing awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny.

As for Watson (2019), support is any service, strategy or situation that may benefit every learner in school. Hence, the accessibility of support significantly affects the academic performance of the learners. Thus, the supportive environment plays a vital role in creating effective teaching and learning, and measures the amount of assistance, concern, and friendship directed to the learners. According to Sharma (2010), every support perceived by learners is associated with a greater feeling of school belonging, motivation, and better performance. In

addition, Watson (2019) indicated that learners must receive enough support in school and at home, because they need support to accomplish the school tasks. Hela et al. (2018) stressed the need for support by indicating that identifying the factors that influence learners' academic performance is essential to provide timely and effective support intervention.

Therefore, in bridging this gap between the impact of deafness and the academic performance of Deaf Learners, this study aimed to support DLs' academic performance by exploring multisectoral strategies in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Contemporary research has shown that DLs need to be considered as potential and capable citizens who can transform their performance, not as passive victims who are academically challenged. Despite diverse ways of supporting their academic performance, this study opted for the inherent assets approach that can help DLs to improve their performance and thrive. These assets should be drawn from multiple sectors, such as their teachers, parents, the learners themselves, and even the community (Makhasane & Khanare, 2018).

Reviewed literature has shown that academic challenges facing learners with disabilities are problematic internationally and nationally. Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the academic achievement of learners with disabilities in inclusive schools( Kaindu, et al. 2022.; Lamas, 2015 ; Leigh, 2015). However, the academic performance of DLs is lagging behind, particularly in Lesotho. Therefore, these learners need support in order to enhance their academic performance in inclusive settings Learner support is a critical component of an effective learning environment that changes the situation of the learner and may even require changing teacher service ( Great School Partnership, 2014; Watson, 2019). Ciobanu (2013) asserted that learner support contributes to the quality of their learning experience, and therefore it is critical to the learners' success in higher education.

Demaray et al. (2016) concurred that learner support consists of providing needed information or advice. Hence, learner support is a crucial factor contributing to the success of disadvantaged learners. A growing body of knowledge has revealed that learner support is among the main important factors in education quality assurance (Ndinisa 2016 ; Mahmood and Shah 2020 ; Leigh & Marschark 2016) As a result, every learner needs support in the teaching and learning process, which is why it is also important for DLs to be supported. Therefore, it cannot be deemed idle curiosity to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

This aim of the current study concurs with the asset model of Raish (2019), which showed that learner success depends on the recognition of a community's talented residents and community assets by its unique strengths, passions, and interests, typically both individually and collectively. Therefore, supporting the academic performance of DLs depends on the school community's involvement with multiple identities, intersections, and experiences, including the learners themselves. In this case, the support is obtained by involving all stakeholders to have a voice in the ownership of the learning, focusing on strengths, even when frustrated or challenged. This implies that collaboration is essential since learners are given the appropriate support by working together with teachers and other academic sectors, which makes it easy for them to learn accordingly (Ndinisa, 2016). However, this depends on how multisectoral strategies utilise relationships among school community members, in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

According to Shaheen, Mahmood and Shah (2020), academic support for DLs is crucial, since academic success depends on cognitive factors and learners' social adjustment, social stability, and personal wellness. Ndinisa (2016) also observed that academic support is necessary and it can be in all forms and from anyone concerned about the learning of the learner with some challenges. According to Maciver et al. (2018), in supporting learners with a disability, for instance DLs, learner centered education is a key element, because it provides learners an opportunity to express their views about their school experiences, including their performance within a subject. They also associate support with collaborative inclusion, since it is important to observe and listen to others' practices to develop and understand their role and responsibilities. This concurs with Kretzman and Mcknight (1993) who value the positives and strengths that other sectors portray through their varied voices and experiences as available assets that they bring to support academic performance in their local community. Therefore, all parties concerned are identified as agents of change.

### **2.3.1 Current support practiced for Deaf Learners**

In their studies in Australia, Shaheen, Mahmood and Shah (2020) observed that it is possible to identify several current and emerging possibilities for alternative use of Sign Language and spoken language in early intervention and education for Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. The speech and signed modes of communication are used simultaneously to support comprehension and auditory learning (Shaheen, Mahmood & Shah, 2020). Leigh and Marschark's (2016) study in Milan on recognising the diversity of deaf education revealed that the logic of using the

differentiated approach to instruction involves using varied processes and procedures to ensure effective learning for varied deaf individuals. Moreover, the approach applies equally to all learning domains, but is particularly applicable to the language and communication development of the Deaf. Hence, DLs should be educated bilingually from an early age and every learner must be taught using Sign Language.

On the contrary, Knoors and Marshark (2012) argue against a one-size-fits-all approach to school placement, which is a similar approach to language planning. Hence, it is a policy which is out of date at its best and discriminatory at its worst. Alternatively, assistive technology is identified as important to enhance opportunities for the Deaf and hard of hearing, in order to access language and expand their communication opportunities. Thus, cell phones provide DLs with virtually unlimited access to information and a potential source of information (Leigh et al., 2016).

### **2.3.2 Influence of academic performance on Deaf Learners**

Studies in European English-speaking countries have shown poor academic performance of DLs in English subjects, particularly in reading fluency that comprises language, reading, spoken phonology, language and reading progress, and comprehension reading (Easterbrook & Lederberg, 2020; Lederberg, Martin et al., 2019; LuZhang & Galapiti, 2019). Similarly, studies in African countries show that the academic performance of Deaf Learners is below a satisfactory level. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, and Lesotho all have low academic performance (DeafSA 2016, 2019; Kelly, McKinney & Swift, 2020; National Association of the Deaf (NADL) 2019; Opuku, 2022).

Several factors influence the academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools. These include teachers and learning facilities, teaching and learning methods, teachers' and learners' attitudes, physical environment, and Sign Language usage (Rashaelly, 2017). Hence, these factors need to be addressed in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Similarly, Mantey and Cobbin (2017) concurred that the low academic performance of DLs is associated with a complex group of factors that relate to the learners themselves, their families, and various educational institutions.

However, as for Antia, Jones and Reed (2009), successful Deaf and hard of hearing learners had many families, children, and school facilitators in place, whereas unsuccessful learners had few facilitators and many detractors. Moreover, Hadziefendic (2019) observed that the academic performance of DLs is heavily shaped by less tangible variables, such as learning

patterns, self-efficacy programmes, amusement, and admission to intellectually burdensome courses. This essentially means that the academic performance of DLs may be influenced by multiple variables concurrently. In this study, such variables as peer learners, DLs themselves, parents, Sign Language usage, teachers' attitudes, and teaching and learning methods would be discussed as the factors that influence the academic performance of DLs.

### ***2.3.2.1 Peer learners' influence***

Since all learners have the same intellectual possibilities as DLs, the support tool should, therefore, be the engine of every learner who is within the school community and must be utilised for it to yield a positive and acceptable result (Ndinisa, 2019). As to Lee and Pott (2018), DLs are significantly more positive about their deafness, even though they often suffer from an inadequate self-concept, inadequacy, dissatisfaction with self and low self-esteem. Hadziefendic (2019) asserts that DLs have a larger interest in studying, practicing curriculum, and adopting new content, but have inadequate motivation and developed interest, hence the poor performance. Consequently, it is necessary to examine the influencing factors, in order to develop their interest and aspirations for studying, learning, and achieving their best. In contrast to this, some DLs excel academically.

### ***2.3.2.2 Parents' influence***

Family involvement is likely to be related to family resources and parental expectations for their child that may influence learner communication skills and academic success (Antia et al., 2009). Furthermore, the DLs are influenced by academic pressure and encouraged by their parents, teachers and peers to achieve. According to Hlatywayo and Murando (2014), parents are instrumental through their involvement in the teaching of language development, social skills, as well as academic performance. Thus, their limited involvement may result in unsatisfying learning outcomes. Chen's (2021) study revealed that the networking of parents and other stakeholders within the inclusive school, enhance positive measures that contribute to academic performance of their children. The study therefore recognised the contribution of parents as constituting a major multisectoral strategy by mobilising the necessary provision of support to their children.

### ***2.3.2.3 Teachers' attitude influence***

Attitudes represent relatively stable knowledge, emotions and reactions towards people's phenomena and situations (Todorovic et al., 2011). Hence, the components of the willingness

of an attitude include readiness for greater or smaller engagement (Todorovic et al., 2011). Thus, attitudes reveal the extent to which teachers are ready to support the inclusion of DLs into the education system. However, studies conducted revealed that teachers have a positive attitude towards including learners with disabilities in inclusive education, including DLs (Lee & Pott, 2018; Todorovic et al., 2011).

Conversely, other researchers have revealed that some teachers have a negative attitude towards the inclusion of DLs. Therefore, this often leads to lower academic expectations from DLs, as teachers expect less from them, leading to less participation in class and helpless results (Gilmore & Linda, 2012). Likewise, in their proposal of teacher support to teenage mothers, Mukuna and Aloka (2021) concluded that some teachers' negative attitudes towards learners imply that there is need for more sensitisation to teachers in assisting learners to complete their education with minimal stress. Moreover, Topping et al. (2017) observed that teachers with negative beliefs and low expectations towards learners might yield negative effects on their academic performance.

In his review of literature, Özokcu (2018), mentioned that teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of DLs are influenced by various factors. These factors include: (a) teacher-related factors, such as age, gender, teaching experience, the level of learning with regards to receiving special education training; (b) student-related factors, such as the child's inability type and nature; and (c) environmental factors, such as the availability of support staff and educational materials. One of the factors that affects the success of teachers in inclusion practices, is the teachers' self-efficacy perceptions. On the other hand, when teachers are knowledgeable about the needs of DLs, their attitude and expectation are more positive, leading to better outcome for the learners (Gilmore & Linda, 2012). This study therefore necessitated the positive teacher attitude that validates multisectoral strategies and relates to better academic performance of DLs.

#### ***2.3.2.4 Teaching and learning methods influence***

As for Saskatchewan (2019), there are instructional approaches that teachers use every day that incorporates the philosophy and principles of multisectoral teaching. This approach provides a way for teachers to teach the concept of skills to the class while meeting individualised learners' needs. The report by the Alberta Government (2018) illustrates that the Universal Design for Learning is another suggested approach that increases learners' networking and

engagement in their academic success, and helps teachers better support every learner in their classroom.

The Health Policy Project (2014) also suggested a multisectoral approach with its key aim recognising the value of engaging different parties and stakeholders and strengths to successfully achieve the targeted educational goal, like improving academic performance, which is the case in this study. Kuruvilla (2018) concurred with this view that a multisectoral approach could develop and articulate the issue of academic performance that affects the DLs community and possesses community organisation skill. Therefore, the variation and/or allowance of flexibility in teaching and learning approaches based on learners' variability, is highly encouraged and crucial to support the academic performance of the DLs.

## **2.4 CHALLENGES THAT AFFECT DLS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LESOTHO'S INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS**

According to Rashielly (2017), inclusive education is very crucial to DLs, since it exposes them to the real life situation, where they interact and build their social, psychological, emotional and academic life. Thus, education enables them to be self-dependent and add to the development of their societal nation at large. Irrespective of the benefits of inclusive education, there are still challenges that affect the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho, as well as their social, economic, psychological and cultural well-being.

### **2.4.1 Social**

In spite of the positive evidence that inclusive education allows DLs to develop friendships with their hearing peers, they are still experiencing social stigma associated with Sign Language usage and communication barriers among age-appropriate learners, teachers and their parents. Therefore, poor social interaction, less active participation in the school community, and struggling to cope with the core curriculum, which is one-size-fits-all in Lesotho, pose a serious challenge in their academic performance (Jacob & Olisacmekka, 2016). According to Atar and Bagci (2021), DLs and the hard of hearing have poorer social skills and academic scores than hearing learners. In their study on Deaf individuals and English language teaching, Atar and Bagci (2021) concluded that Deaf Learners are experiencing significant problems in getting sufficient stimuli and exposure from the outside world, which crippled their learning skills, leading to social and emotional problems.

### **2.4.2 Economic**

Deaf Learners deserve equal access to quality education, in order to develop and become contributing and useful members to the economic growth of their families, society, community, and the country at large, irrespective of the severity of their disability. The reports from UNESCO (1994) show that people with disabilities, more especially deaf people, are among the poorest and most marginalised of the world. However, Jacob et al. (2016) observed that this might be due to their inability to make an economic contribution to the community and earn meaningful living wages.

Furthermore, the Associate Working Paper Number 106 Report stressed the importance of the economic impact of the DLs (Kim, Byrne & Parish, 2018; Ratzan & Rahamani, 2019). This implies lack of employment opportunities for them than for hearing people, since DLs leave school with less qualifications and therefore experience high poverty rates and economic exclusion, like many other people with disabilities. Hence, the risk of economic hardship faced by deaf people compared to hearing people is high. The hardship is associated with additional barriers linked to communicating in the hearing world. In addition, employment is an important means of securing economic stability and independence, even though the employment rate among the Deaf community is meagre due to systematic discrimination in the social field of education and employment (Fordyce & Riddell, 2015).

### **2.4.3 Cultural**

According to Hlatywayo and Marando (2014), people who are Deaf have cultural and language differences from hearing people. This corresponds with the research evidence provided by Aseery (2016) and Adigun and Ndwandwe (2022), who allude that the Deaf community considers itself as a cultural minority group. Hence, they are proud of their language and culture and strive to maintain it, and thus perceive regular education as destructive to their community. While Kim, Byrne and Parish (2018), in their findings about the Deaf and their economic well-being, observed that the Deaf with a capital 'D' represent the culture and linguistic identity and membership within this community, they however based their findings on shared experiences, as well as the collective values of the Deaf community. Jaffe (2020) further posited that the deaf community shapes its histories, the deaf culture, and the organisations' resistance to power by converting prestige in Sign Language that continues to hold these communities.

However, the cultural identity of DLs challenges the notion of what is prevailing in inclusive schools and what constitutes inclusion of the DLs, with worse consequences on their academic

performance. This is supported by Kelly et al.'s (2020) study which examined the arrival of teachers in an inclusive school without prior knowledge of a deaf culture, Sign Language and deaf pedagogy. Hence, this negates the quality of education they would provide to the DLs. Thus, the current study sought to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies, involving successful communication and sharing of information, in enhancing the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

## **2.5 THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES AS A SUPPORT TO DEAF LEARNERS**

This section discussed multisectoral strategies involving the the engagement of diverse, multiple sectors or stakeholders and their significance in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners across the world. The involvement of stakeholders' voice and varied experiences would encourage their collaborative participation in inclusive settings, which in turn enhances the academic performance of DLs. In this case, multisectoral strategies entail strengthening the partnership among such stakeholders as teachers, Sign Language interpreters, DLs themselves, Deaf Learners' parents, and hearing learners.

### **2.5.1 Definition of multisectoral strategies**

Multisectoral strategies refer to the deliberate collaboration among various stakeholders, groups, and sectors to achieve the set outcomes (Health Policy Project, 2014). Amri, Chatur, and O'campo (2022) define multisectoral strategies as collaborative approaches that involve relevant stakeholders and other groups with a common goal in addressing a particular issue. Salunke (2017) observed that multisectoral strategies address the problems from various angles. In their studies in Canada, Willis et al. (2016 : 102) also observed that multisector partnerships are often considered as dyadic connections between organisations that involve "the sharing of power, work, support and/or information with others for the achievement of joint goals and/or mutual benefits". According to Kuruvilla (2018), the prevailing situation is strategically framed in engaging multisectoral strategies so that all sectors and stakeholders can see their role and contribution to a common issue.

In other ministries, for instance the ministry of health, multisectoral strategies were initiated to mobilise increased assets and resources in order to improve the health and well-being of the people. This strategy was thought to strengthen coherence in addressing health and well-being challenges across sectors, since more coherent policies were perceived to lead to better well-being for all (Corpuz, 2021). Therefore, in the education sector, multisectoral strategies help

address identified academic issues in a focused way, since they help pool the resources and formulate common objectives, in order to optimise the usage of resources and assets (Balisi, 2019; UNICEF, 2021). The focus on multisectoral strategies is an acknowledgment that education is for all. In this study, the reviewed literature helps aggregate evidence on mutual support for multisectoral strategies and collective action. That implies identifying and building on the strengths, or “assets” of individuals and communities, and thus aligning with asset-based theory (Blickem et al., 2018).

According to Salunke (2017), multisectoral strategy outcomes can be jointly achieved by engaging multiple sectors. Hence, partners can leverage knowledge, expertise, research and resources, and benefit from their combined and varied strengths as they work towards the shared goal of producing better academic performance. The current study, therefore, urges all stakeholders and partners, such as teachers, Sign Language interpreters, hearing learners, and heads of departments, as well as DLs themselves, to join efforts, and combine strengths to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho’s inclusive schools. According to Howard (2001), the promise of multisectoral strategies to support enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners in the educational setting, can easily be fulfilled by identifying and securing partners from sectors that have the capacity and willingness to contribute to learners' education. According to Howard (2001), these attributes entail the features and characteristics that distinguish learners as potential partners and their respective capabilities, which include their enforcement ability to develop and articulate issues that affect the community and possess community organising skills. The resources of each partner constitute their ability to support the academic performance of DLs. However, the competencies of core stakeholders include their focus on rules-based activities and supporting marginalised populations, including DLs.

This concurs with Ramatea and Khanare (2021) who emphasised the importance of the community development strategy that is primarily recognised by pooling of resources and/or assets of individuals, associations, and institutions, in accordance with perceived local needs. Therefore, enhancing the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings depends on the collaborative efforts of individuals, entities, and partners, through their strengths, organising skills, and experiences. Similarly, this would also depend on how each partner within the school premises optimises the usage of their resources, and contribute to the academic performance of DLs, as well as their school and the community.

### **2.5.2 Significance of multisectoral strategies**

Contemporary research has shown that the multisectoral approach was used to promote public health and well-being challenges that the health sector could not address alone (Health Policy Project 2014). According to Salunke's (2017) study in India, collaboration with other stakeholders was an essential and important measure for effective health service delivery. Hence, the involvement of multiple sectors encourages participation and inclusive approaches. These results suggest that promoting multisectoral strategies within other ministries is important for effective service delivery through the implementation and strengthening of communication to ensure multisectoral coordination (Salunke, 2017). Moreover, the World Health Organisation's (2018) overall analysis revealed that multisectoral action for health and well-being has the potential to provide the transformation called for by the 2030 Agenda and mobilise additional resources for health and well-being.

Moreover, its effectiveness was identified within UNICEF's (2021) developmental goal, which is working across various sectors for the programmes and services for children's protection. It is a multidisciplinary field that requires collaboration among actors across many different sectors, including education, health, justice, and social protection; and at multiple levels, such as government ministries, international agencies, donors, civil society organisations, religious institutions, and communities. The sectors are effectively coordinated to deliver diverse strategies, including ensuring access to and quality of formal education and reducing the rate of child marriages.

Furthermore, contemporary research has shown that the multisectoral collaboration approach in education is efficient in empowering the marginalised in Africa (Balisi et al., 2019). Balisi et al. (2019) observed that the strategy is one of the measures that can be utilised towards achieving social inclusion and empowerment in education. Hence, through the multisectoral approach, the programme has helped nurture graduates' skills, knowledge, and abilities in providing care and support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Therefore, contemporary research significantly support the contribution of multisectoral partnerships in enhancing service delivery and highlighted some strengths, as well as areas for improvement, of the approaches to multisectoral collaboration. However, there are many challenges associated with multisectoral strategies given sectoral differences in working approaches, human resource capacity, and bringing together people from different sectors with different capacities in terms of skills and knowledge, and different ways of working.

### **2.5.3 Construction of multisectoral strategies to support Deaf Learners' academic performance.**

According to Maciver et al. (2018), collaboration is the core requirement for good practice, development, and maintenance of school-wide initiatives, and thus achieving inclusion. However, schools have developed a defined line of communication to share information, roles, and responsibilities in order to support this collaboration process. Thus, the multisectoral strategy entails working collaboratively with all partners involved, including teachers, Sign Language interpreters, learners, parents, the school management board, the community, and higher education institutions, in order to bolster the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) points out that a positive relationship among all the stakeholders, such as teachers, peer learners, parents, and the community, is essential to all learners' self-esteem and sense of inclusion in supporting the learners' optimal development. Moreover, the reflection of transition, sharing of information, and monitoring of learners by collaborating individuals, was observed and identified as the key method of supporting learners' academic performance, particularly DLs (Maciver et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2021).

#### ***2.5.3.1 Teachers***

Teachers implement strategies that ensure learners have their voices heard, that their opinions matter, and that their work is improved and respected. In addition, Saskatchewan (2019) posited that the more teachers use multisectoral strategies that incorporate the philosophy and the principles of a multi-level learning environment, the greater the progress of learners and the more energy the teachers have to support learners. However, in their views, Todorovic, Stojiljkovic and Djigic (2011) point out that the component of the willingness of teachers' attitude towards inclusion may reflect the extent to which teachers are ready to support the educational system of learners with disabilities and their academic issues. Hence, DL teachers lack communication skills, particularly using Sign Language among learners with severe hearing loss, who use only a Sign Language. When teachers of DLs cannot use Sign Language, they face challenges in delivering instruction and assessing learners' progress. In addition, DLs lose confidence in their teacher's ability to assist them in improving their knowledge and skills and their academic performance (Alasim, 2019).

#### ***2.5.3.2 Sign Language interpreters***

The role of educational interpreters in the inclusive education classroom is necessary because they provide communication access to d/DLs and hard-of-hearing learners by interpreting and

clarifying the teacher's instruction and relevant spoken information used by individual learners' (Alasim, 2019). According to the researcher's personal experience in observing "the inclusion of Deaf Learners in Lesotho", there is lack of awareness of the Sign Language needs of Deaf Learners, not only at the Ministry of Education level but even among the classroom teachers of DLs. This situation makes DLs rely desperately on the information from the third party, who are interpreters. Likewise, Davitti (2015), pointed out that Sign Language interpreters act as third players, who mediate parents-teachers' meetings that are not sharing the same language. This maintains cooperation with the characters, establishing a common ground and allowing all involved parties to fully understand what is going on and interact on a level playing field. It is, therefore, critical that there is active collaboration with the Sign Language interpreters so that they prepare for each class. The Sign Language interpreters supplement teachers' speech and facilitate DLs' participation in the lesson discourse and instruction (Erbas, 2017).

#### ***2.5.3.3 Learners: Deaf and hearing***

Willis et al. (2016) identify learners as immediate partners and stakeholders who hold numerous values, with a varying degree of importance. However, in engaging multisectoral strategies, the issue of academic performance should be strategically demarcated, so that DLs in particular could perceive their role and contribution, and realise the deliberate, coordinated action they need to take to tackle the identified need. According to Lekhetho (2013), DLs' involvement is significantly essential as their varied views and expertise and lived experiences in an inclusive setting should assist to improve their academic performance and have a sense of ownership, so that their education is centred on their strengths. This implies that DLs should take ownership of their education as the core foundation and greatest contributors to their academic success.

#### ***2.5.3.4 Parents***

According to Adigun and Ndwandwe (2022), the involvement of the parents in every learner's everyday academic behaviour and social activities serves not only as a significant protective factor but also as assistance to build resilience to several phenomenal challenges, irrespective of the nature of the disability. Also, Hlatywayo and Marando (2014) emphasised that parents are instrumental in teaching academic, language and social skills. Thus, particular interest lies in creating the relationship between teachers and parents who are working as partners in

establishing a literacy environment for DLs. Parents may limit their involvement in their child's academic activities when communication challenges exist.

Furthermore, Aakellot and Bangirana (2019) argue that it is significantly essential for parents to focus, contribute and be involved in the school programmes, and participate in the decision making and learning process of DLs. In line with Maciver et al. (2018) and Aakellot et al. (2019), the parents collaborating with the community help to strengthen the spirit of volunteerism as it positively increases their effects on academic performance.

#### ***2.5.3.5 School Governing Bodies***

According to Wyk (2004), a School Management Board (SGB) is defined as a structured group of people responsible for the strategic running of the school. Mncube (2011) views it as the committee operating within the schools to address the issue of democracy and justice in the school running. Wyk (2014) argues that SGBs establish a working relationship with stakeholders in schools to enable the school to function according to the community and national need. The elected SGBs comprise teachers' representatives, non-teaching staff, parents and learners. James (2017) suggested that great harmony among the committee members is encouraged, and the absence of such harmony might effectively shut out some of the stakeholders' voices and exclude them from contributing meaningfully to the school activities. This means SGBs are, inter-alia, committed to developing the academic performance of DLs with conferred interest in the education system (James, 2017; Mncube, 2011). However, the rationale behind this study is to construct a space for Deaf representatives in the school management board to ensure their involvement and represent their missing voice for convenience purposes, which, in essence, serves as a multisectoral strategy at its best.

## **2.6 Factors enabling multisectoral strategies to support enhance Deaf Learners' academic performance**

Establishing the formal and informal structure for cooperation and shared history of previous collaboration were considered important facilitating factors, since it builds communication and a common understanding and a sense of ownership among the stakeholders (Lillefjell & Maass, 2022). Furthermore, the collaboration among the stakeholders results in an additional source of cooperation. Ouedraogo et al. (2019) observe that factors influencing the successful use of multisectoral strategies include community participation, strengthening sector involvement and

commitment, integration of intervention, effective coordination of actors and mobilising financial resources. In correspondence with this study, the social, environmental, economic, academic factors and involvement of the beneficiaries are among the facilitating factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support Deaf Learners' academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### **2.6.1 Social factors**

Involving groups of people that feel marginalised in society in a supporting process with visible outcomes can contribute to the perception of ownership and mastery of the local social community. It contributes to the perception of feeling valued and reinforce belonging to the place and local social community. It is also the key strategy to ensure the measures that build on local resources and contribute to social equality (Ouedraogo et al., 2020). According to Lillefjell et al. (2022), community involvement and engagement are the key factors in the success of multisectoral strategies. Similarly Atar et al. (2021) identified social relationships as a critical factor in improving the quality of education and life. This simply means that if DLs lack social skills, they experience a higher risk of being rejected in the community, which would affect their academic performance. Therefore, communication and language skills within the community are crucial factors in developing adequate social skills, which enable the success of multisectoral strategies.

Contemporary research has shown that, in Canada, working together to promote social skills among learners by assessing learners' performance and planning for transition from each stage with parents and other community members are the practices that promote the effective use of multisectoral strategies in inclusive classes (Rashaely, 2017). WHO (2020) highlighted the frequency of communication events as the key enabling factor of multisectoral strategies, as it ensures informed discussion for common understanding among participating parties, open inclusion, and thus transparency in sharing essential information.

### **2.6.2 Academic factors**

Academic performance may be influenced by social, environmental and economic factors that can be addressed with holistic multisectoral strategies. This depends on the key capacities of multisectoral strategies that include recognising the value of engaging different sectors and parties, and leveraging the strengths of each partner to support DLs and improve their academic performance. However, WHO (2020) emphasises the shared vision, objectives and long-term outcome as an enabling factor that can facilitate multisectoral strategies in an inclusive setting

as it would ensure thorough, effective communication, common understanding of an agreement on the vision, and therefore harmonise coordination. Public Health Nutrition (2020) and WHO (2020) observed that identifying incentives and co-benefits for partners and/or stakeholders are also enabling factors in the education of DLs. Hence, this demonstrates economic benefits, boosts determination and promotes a sense of ownership, since DLs are made core partners that are responsible for their academic performance.

### **2.6.3 Environmental factors**

According to Adigun and Ndwandwe (2022), the capacities and development of an individual are influenced by environmental factors and conditions. Those environmental factors are capable of fuelling interaction with the factors that further influence personal development. Hence, the home environment and affection, bond and cordial family relationship between the school and parents can improve the psychosocial functioning of Deaf Learners' academic performance. In addition, political support creates an enabling environment, mobilises stakeholders, and facilitates legitimisation of multisectoral action (WHO, 2020).

## **2.7 Chapter summary**

The academic performance of Deaf Learners is a matter of serious concern globally and nationally. This chapter discussed the factors that contributed to the current academic performance of Deaf Learners, the benefits for Deaf Learners of learning in inclusive schools, conceptualising support for Deaf Learners, and challenges experienced by Deaf Learners in the inclusive schools, as well as the significance of multisectoral strategies as potential strategies to address the plight of Deaf Learners in inclusive schools. The study has highlighted that DLs need to receive adequate education services, with reference to different studies on inclusion practices across the world.

Reviewed literature has revealed that the academic performance of Deaf Learners depends on cognitive factors, economic factors involving mobilising financial resources, social adjustment, and their well-being in inclusive settings. This chapter discussed how multisectoral strategies can best enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners in inclusive settings, with implied reference to the theoretical framework that guided the study, which is asset-based theory. The theory values the positives, strengths, capacities, and potential that other sectors within the community portray through their varied voices and experiences, as available assets that they

bring to enhance and support their local community members. This theory is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presented the theoretical lenses that guided this study. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), a theoretical framework is a blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry. It provides the structure to define how the researcher would philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the study or dissertation. Likewise, it connects the researcher to the existing knowledge through guidance by the relevant theory (University of Southern California Libraries (USC), 2020). In addition, Khanare (2015: 64), emphasised that theory provides a framework for the research and “identifies the area of knowledge the study is intended to expand”. The theoretical framework guiding this study is the asset-based theory propounded by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). The researcher first highlighted the founding principles of the asset-based theory, and then observed the origin and background of the theory, the objectives of the theory, and the assumptions and principles of the theory. Lastly, the researcher discussed the relevancy of the theory to the study and presented the chapter summary.

#### **3.2 Theoretical context**

According to the researcher’s experience as a specialised teacher and a Sign Language interpreter, the DLs’ voice is largely absent in the day-to-day running of inclusive schools in Lesotho. The basic education in Lesotho is commonly referred to as a three-legged pot, implying that education is the responsibility of the government (the school personnel), parents, and the learners themselves (*thuto ke pitsa e maoto a mararo*). This concurs with Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) asset-based community development theory, which in turn becomes the theoretical framework of the study, since it emphasises the need to redress the balance between meeting the needs and nurturing the individual’s strengths, unique skills, capacities, and the existing assets of citizens in the community. The researcher approached this study with the belief that the current support offered to enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners (DLs) is subjective and, therefore, cannot be generated abstractly without their involvement, that is without identifying and using their strengths and experiences. Thus, the study sought to explore the of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho’s inclusive schools.

Social systems, such as schools, parents, and the government, are mandated to transform their resources for better, particularly to enhance the academic performance of DLs. They cannot make meaningful changes unless they know how such changes would address their needs and challenges in inclusive settings (Mosia and Phasha, 2017). Hence, there is need to consider and value the positives, strengths, gifts, skills, and knowledge of other stakeholders, including peer learners and DLs themselves, in line with the asset-based theory, which are portrayed through the inclusion of voices and experiences in the decision making process. Unlike the deficit approach that focuses on the community's problems, the asset-based theory seeks to unlock learners' potential by focusing on their talents and strengths. The multisectoral strategies and asset-based theory adopted for this study jointly depicted the context of the connectedness capacity and social capital (McClean, 2021).

One of the fundamental concerns in the asset-based theory states that each person, regardless of their disability, has "unique strengths, passions, and interests," and typically has "much to offer" both individually and collectively, especially when it comes to teaching others about their communities (Raish, 2019). Hence, this arises from possibilities and potential, rather than only needs and barriers, in their perspective of life (McClean, 2021). The asset-based theory is also known as the strength-based approach and contradicts with the deficits-based approach that highlights learners' inadequacies rather than their strengths and the resources within a system.

### **3.3 Background and origins of the asset-based theory**

An asset-based theory is the relationship needed to be rebuilt between individuals, local associations and institutions through facilitation, based on the strengths and talents of the individuals involved (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). The asset-based theory originated with the work of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), and their 18 associates, as an alternative that challenges the dominant traditional deficit-based approach that stands out by focusing on the needs, deficiencies, and problems of communities as a strategy to solve their problems and needs. In deficit-based approaches, people are encouraged to seek institutional and professionalised support. Other scholars posit that the needs-based approach results in communities that cannot acknowledge their strengths, capacities, assets and resources (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Ebersöhn, & Eloff, 2006). Hence, this perspective would have citizens believe that the most valuable resources exist outside their communities, which routinely results in top-down, bureaucratic solutions (Transformed Integrated Care, 2017).

According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), everyone has strength, gifts, skills, experiences, knowledge abilities, and capabilities that can be used as resources to overcome community challenges. The asset-based theory has become influential and gained popularity internationally among many researchers in health care and education, in order to influence lives and well-being positively (Dunst, Raab & Hamby, 2017; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006; Rodin, 2015; Transformed Integrated Care, 2017).

According to Ebersohn and Eloff (2006), the asset-based approach is also described as a "bottom-up approach" that shifts the emphasis from a service perspective to an empowerment perspective. Accordingly, Myende (2015) emphasises the bottom-up approach to school decision making. Furthermore, the bottom-up approach not only applies control but also suggests a more effective approach to addressing school challenges as it entails more locally generated energy that improves schools. Transformed Integrated Care (2017), added that the asset-based approach aligns with participatory approaches, where active participation and empowerment are the basis of practice.

The asset-based approach has been successfully used and revealed its effectiveness in healthcare facilities. According to Jones, Jamieson, and Fitzpatrick (2019), there is need for service development within existing resources and the interrelationship during the community development process. Stoltenberg Bruursema (2015) views the asset-based theory as a positive approach that deals with community challenges by nurturing existing assets to strengthen the capacities of a community and its individuals rather than become dependent. Fundamental to the asset-based theory is that it builds on the assets in the community and mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together, and realise and develop their strengths. This differentiates it from a deficit-based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and Mathie and Cunningham (2005) further pointed out the key distinctions of an asset-based theory as facilitating space for citizens to join together to co-create what matters to them as communities — largely outside of services and contracts — including love, laughter and friendship, all of which are critical determinants of well-being.

The Transformed Integrated Care (2017) rightfully argued that when applying asset-based principles, communities are not considered complex masses of needs and problems, but rather they focus on discovering diverse and capable webs of gifts and assets within their community. Jones, Jamieson, and Fitzpatrick (2019) affirm that the theory values community skills, knowledge, connections and potential. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) put more emphasis on the

fundamental principles of the asset-based approach that focuses on the positive, considering people as possessing the necessary inner strength for taking charge of their own lives and building the relationships and networks such as assets, strengths, capacities and the potential resources which are not yet utilised. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) and Mathie and Cunningham (2005), an asset-based theory aims to identify individual assets and community resources and connect them in ways that improve their power and effectiveness. The theory also aims to create a sense of enablement and self-determination. This, therefore, emphasises individual strength, local assets and empowerment as the key to ensuring sustainable community development and that people have a life of their own choice (Transformed Integrated Care, 2017). The next section discusses the significance of an asset-based theory and its relevance to the current study.

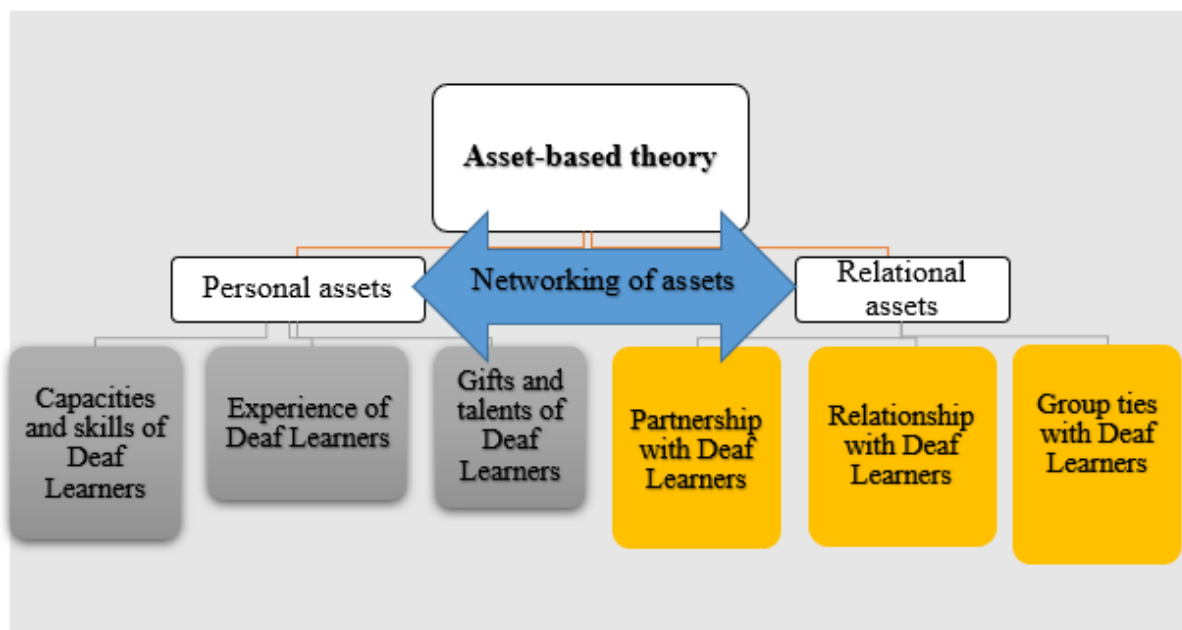
### **3.4 Significance of asset-based theory**

The asset-based theory appears to be a popular approach in many research studies across the world, including social work practice and the broader field of education psychology. This, however, shows a necessity to incorporate an asset-based approach in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Some researchers view the asset-based approach as a strengths-based approach that identifies the concerned community resource mobilisation, networking, and establishing participation and empowerment within the community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; McKnight & Russel, 2018). Many researchers across the world adopted principles of assets, which incorporate personal assets like capabilities, skills talents, experiences, and relational assets like partnership, relationship and group ties, as well as strengths as the essential and potential elements of the asset-based approach (Ebersöhn, & Eloff, 2006; Ennis & West, 2010; Kretzmann, 2010; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Some scholars suggested that these are unique characteristics of an asset-based approach that signifies that everyone has something to offer, regardless of who they are and how aware they are of this fact (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006; Skill & Care, 2022). Therefore, there must be a clear identification of assets and an understanding of these principles of assets.

This study, therefore, employed the model of utilising DLs as assets and incorporates personal and relational assets as two pillars of support. Similarly, Mclean (2021) postulates that these assets would be more visible and valuable to academic performance if DLs are acknowledged and utilised as potential assets in the inclusive education community.

Thus, the study used this model, with two fundamental support principles, as multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. This model, in essence, enabled the development of the academic performance of DLs in this study. Figure 3.1 illustrates the model of the assets-based theory, where the personal assets and relational assets network is generally used to emphasise six categories, such as capacities and skills, experiences and gifts, and talents that network through relationship, partnership, and group ties, according to the study.

**Figure 3.1: The model of the assets-based theory**



*Source: The researcher*

The model above was preferred in this study because it illustrates DLs as assets and pillars in which their identification and development within inclusive contexts rest in parallel with the other elements in the model. This model indicates a strategy that could be utilised as an asset and allows the researcher to consider the personal assets and relational assets, that can be drawn from DLs as individuals within the inclusive schools to support their academic performance (Skill & Care, 2022). The model views and considers these assets as pillars upon which the improvement of the academic performance of DLs rests. Furthermore, the model is against the underlying assumption of deficiencies and problems of communities as a strategy to solve their issues (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). Thus, the model could be employed to improve the academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools in Lesotho. According to Skills and Care (2022), each pillar consists of specific strengths of individuals and indicates their roles that may be very

useful in the improvement of the academic performance of DLs. The next section, therefore, highlights the pillars from which asset-mapping can take place.

### **3.4.1 Personal assets**

According to the asset-based theory, personal assets focuses on individuals' strengths, rather than their deficits (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In this principle, Mathie and Cunningham (2003) and Skill and Care (2022) highlighted the community and people's assets, including their strengths, abilities, skills, experiences and resources. Missingham (2017) in parallel with the model, assert that individuals rely upon personal strengths, capacities, and skills experiences, gifts and talents, in which local community members could be seen as experts on their local conditions, resources, values, and knowledge. As for Missingham (2017), the role of each personal strength as an asset is underpinned by the idea that everyone has something to offer. It shows that no stakeholders, including DLs, are assets in a vacuum (Khanare & De Lange, 2017), but are personal assets in inclusive schools where they could draw their support to improve their academic performance. This justifies that each person has unique assets that need to be utilised and mapped.

In this context, the teachers, learners, interpreters, and heads of department are identified as agents who are active in sharing their capacities and skills, talents and experiences as essential assets, and have the insights to support the academic performance of DLs through multisectoral strategies. The next section highlights the principal elements from which utilising Deaf Learners as assets, can take place.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Gifts and talents of Deaf Learners***

In the asset-based theory, individual gifts are perceived as assets and, therefore, they need to be recognised and identified. When applying asset-based principles, Kretzmann (2010) believe that communities, such as schools are not thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather they focus on discovering diverse and capable webs of gifts. The Transformed Integrated Care (2017) further emphasised that the exchange between people sharing their gifts and talents as assets, creates connections, and these connections are vital assets to the community. According to the lenses of this study, the approach resembles multisectoral strategies, and hence the study believed it was an appropriate theory that would support the academic performance of DLs.

According to Gange (2004), gifts and talents denote the potential for becoming critically acclaimed performers and exemplary producers of ideas. Similarly, in most professionals, giftedness designates the potential and the use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities in domains to the degree that places an individual among top achievers of age peers, particularly in the education literature (Gange, 2004; Heller et al., 2000). With the potential of the assets-based approach, the study adopted an atmosphere that reflects the recognition and the value of all stakeholders in the inclusive schools and the community, and hence multisectoral strategies in which individuals, gifts and talents are equally valued and used to deliver a difference in the academic performance of DLs.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Experiences of Deaf Learners***

The teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education depends on experiences with DLs, teacher education, and the availability of support (Ndinisa, 2016). The Transformed Integrated Care (2017) added that listening to the conversation could engage Deaf Learners' experience of successful activities. This brings together a group of committed stakeholders, such as Deaf Learners, who are experienced, interested, and motivated to act on what they care about, using their experiences, strengths and gifts, to open the networks of relationships inside the community and deal with or solve their issues.

Furthermore, within the asset-based theory, all individual diversity of experiences and abilities are viewed as an additive and valuable potential benefit. This study viewed and identified the experiences of Deaf Learners as active agents of change. This means DLs, who have navigated the education system have insights into the inclusive setting experiences, social experiences, and academic experiences that might only be known by them, and thus their involvement as part stakeholders to be identified and valued as potential assets just to offer that sense of ownership and responsibility in their education. In addition, the theory also builds on the lived experience of the teachers, hearing learners, Sign Language interpreters, and heads of departments to come together to realise and develop their strengths and support, and improve the academic performance of DLs.

#### ***3.4.1.3 Capabilities and Skills of Deaf Learners***

The application of these personal assets, like capabilities and the skills of DLs, follows the process where trust is developed and assets are acknowledged, documented, and mapped. This process is essentially internal to enable the concerned bodies to recognise their capabilities and strengths and understand what they "have". According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993),

this can create a sense of hope and capability so that DLs become empowered and inspired to implement action by addressing the issues articulated by academic performance. Therefore, the capacities of each stakeholder are appropriate at the center of the asset-based map. Thus, the researcher believes that changes in the academic performance of DLs can be achieved by identifying and engaging the capacities and skills of multiple stakeholders as the most valuable assets and their relationships (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). The overall view of the current study is that among all concerned multisectoral strategies, DLs are also brought in as stakeholders in the discipline process and are given a voice. The study believes the DLs would feel welcomed, treated with positivity, valued, and supported (Garoutte & Gilmore, 2014). Therefore, there is emphasis on thinking about the potential of DLs and how the existing potential can be directed towards available opportunities (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006).

Furthermore, the study recognises that capabilities and skills are powerful resources and assets when they are brought into the classroom to support the academic performance of DLs. Through experience in the inclusive context, particularly the inclusion of the DLs, the researcher observed that the best way to understand and support DLs academically would be to involve them as active participants by sharing and exhibiting their capabilities, which is their expertise and skills in the research. Active participation by concerned parties, such as DLs is valued as a critical concept both in the asset-based theory and multisectoral strategies, and thus convenient to this study.

Although the concepts emphasise the personal strength assets, the scholars, however, commonly recognise that individual gifts and capabilities are powerful and acquire more value when they are connected, hence the multisectoral strategy. For instance, all concerned stakeholders within the inclusive premises and outside are valued as assets for what they bring to the classroom, such as gifts, capacities, skills, strengths, experiences and resources. Some scholars refer to them as maintaining the focus alongside personal strengths, community strengths, social assets and neighborhood assets (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

### **3.4.2 Relational assets**

Developing the theoretical framework for this study was intricate in bringing forward other ways of interaction among individuals, groups, and different environments by potentially eliciting discussion regarding the identification of assets, valuing them as they are beneficial to DLs, and supporting their academic performance in this tremendous circumstance that they

experience. However, according to Giota, Katerina and Theo (2016), relational assets permit the distinct stakeholders not to pool their particular resources, such as knowledge and abilities, but collectively interact and provide cognitive capacities needed to effectively deploy these resources and assets. Essential to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), acknowledging the existing assets and understanding the relationship among these various assets, is outlining and defining community assets. Kelly, McKinney and Swift (2020), define relational assets as meeting learners with openness and respect to allow them to take responsibility for their part of the relationship as stakeholders. Giota et al. (2016) assert that repeated interaction among different stakeholders or shareholders in a consent context, such as an inclusive setting, develops a sense of trust, network, partnering and learning how to engage in community issues.

Stressing the importance of contextual networking of stakeholders, Giota et al. (2016) proposed relational assets as an approach to understanding and valuing this issue of equal participation and social inclusion. This means relational assets underpin the notion of individual valuing and group organisation within an inclusive context network. Lubbe and Eloff (2004) emphasise the relationship between personal assets, entailing capabilities, experiences and gifts and talents and relational assets consisting of networking, relationship, partnership, and group ties, brought about by an existing assets theory that influences the support of DLs. The study considers them as core pillars of the assets-based theory.

#### ***3.4.2.1 Relationships oriented with Deaf Learners***

The relationship-oriented theory considers every person as having irreplaceable gifts, skills, and passions as an approach by mobilising relational power to produce sustainable and satisfying change. The broader idea is that this collective efficacy links with the collaboration skills of teamwork to achieve positive change around the issues the learners encounter in their academic performance (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Some scholars explained that a major aspect of multisectoral strategies for DLs is to understand the value of relationships among their community members and to also contemplate their strengths and capacities in the sphere of social networking, while grouping together what was brought in as stakeholders in the discipline process and given a voice (McKnight & Russel, 2018; Mclean, 2021).

This indicates that in multisectoral strategies, experiences, skills and gifts should be appreciated to enter into a relationship within and outside the inclusive school community. The relationship can comprise of teachers, Sign Language interpreters, heads of departments, parents, support staff, the learners themselves, and other para-professionals. The asset-based

theory stresses a relationship-driven strategy that works on building and rebuilding relationships within and among community groups (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Ebersohn and Eloff (2003) concurred that relationships need to be built and rebuilt between learners, local stakeholders and higher institutions through the process of facilitation, based on the strengths and talents of the individuals involved. Because of this, studying the relationship among stakeholders, offer the opportunity for multisectoral strategies.

#### ***3.4.2.2 Partnership with Deaf Learners***

According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the strategic process of an asset-based theory begins with recognising the community's assets and building on the existing resources. Insights provided by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) indicated that one of the useful ways to describe the community and its sectors is through a technique known as mapping. However, the partnership within the community maps the bounds of that community, identifying assets and potential resources. According to Lee and Mathews (2017), partnership is where separate groups are brought together with full commitment to a common mission. The purpose of an effective partnership is to open discussion and suggestions among all stakeholders and the wider community to contribute their time, skills, ideas, and resources to support DLs in the issue of academic performance and therefore contributing to positive change. In this case, a partnership among all involved multisectoral strategies and/or stakeholders in the inclusive context, and is valued as the potential asset to donate positive change in the academic performance of DLs.

#### ***3.4.2.3 Group ties with Deaf Learners***

In the asset-based approach, classification of group ties are defined, and comprise identified teachers, learners, class managers, the deputy principal, and the school infrastructure as components of the layer of assets (Chikoko & Khanare, 2012). In this study, these group ties are considered as components of multisectoral strategies to support DLs. This means their collective ideas, experiences, capabilities and strength of teamwork would promote partnership, and develop a strong relationship that may tie up to achieve positive change. The researcher's ontological assumption is that change can be acquired through the influence of group ties that are positioned as active agents of change. Wood (2008) provides a clear outline in his analysis that interpersonal connections develop strong group ties to the inclusive school community with a sense of social power. Hence, relationships based on shared values and group ties in the community produce bonds that are meaningful and sustainable.

### **3.4.3 Networking personal and relational assets**

Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) fundamental principles of contributing to achieve positive change within the community by creating a sense of self-determination are important. In their advanced work on community relationships and networks, Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) and Ebersohn and Eloff (2006), emphasise the establishment of networks and relationship building that are invaluable in this study. Compared with the deficit approach, the asset-based theory pays more attention to the context of the individual assets as possessing the necessary personal strength, building relationships and their networking (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) emphasised that engagement of both personal and relational assets linked and motivated the act of caring about what they possess, using their strengths and gifts. These strategies would open networks of relationships inside the inclusive school community.

The key element of the positive change in networking is underpinned by bringing forward means of interaction among DLs, and identifying stakeholders' abilities as assets, groups, and other environments by grouping them together in a hive-like behaviour to multiply the capacities and strengths into relational power (McKnight & Russel, 2018). Thus, the researcher believes that interaction among multisectoral strategies through their various capacities promote partnership and build good relationships and networking of both assets that would support and bring positive change to the academic performance of DLs. However, even though concepts of relational value propose dyadic approaches, this study conceptualised the model in Figure 3.4, where the researcher drew on the context of multisectoral partners networking through an operational relationship among all stakeholders to support the academic performance of DLs. Schoonjans, Cauwenberge and Bauwhede (2013) concur with Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) that through networking of assets, the stakeholders can obtain the knowledge and skills necessary and possess the necessary inner strength, hence the necessity of this theory to the study.

### **3.5 Relevancy of asset-based theory to the current study**

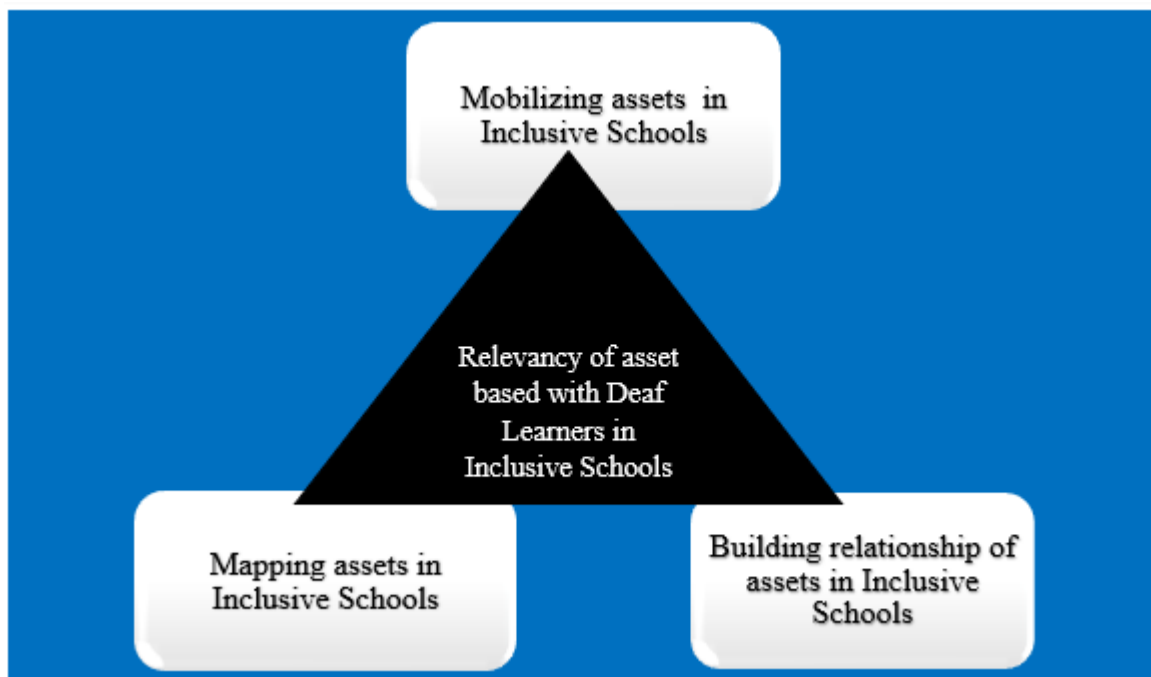
Given the evidence across relevant literature, the asset-based approach is familiarised by acknowledging that local people have the capacities, gifts and abilities required to identify assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), and when these skills are used, people would live and thrive (Rodin, 2015). Therefore, the asset-based theory is relevant to this study which is

concerned with people sharing their gifts and experiences as assets, creating connections that are very vital to the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Therefore, in accordance with the importance of multisectoral strategies as observed in reviewed literature, the researcher believes that both asset-based and multisectoral strategies have the potential to assist and support the academic performance of DLs. This means that these combined and varied strengths are identified as assets and work towards a shared goal in the inclusive schools community in order to produce better educational outcomes. These identified similarities influenced the researcher to adopt the asset-based theory, because it potentially enhances the academic performance of DLs through the combination of multiple individual strengths which are identified as assets. Thus, the asset-based theory and multisectoral strategies were used in this study as they complement each other.

Both the asset-based theory and multisectoral strategies were used in framing this study, as they signify and value the strength and power, capacity, skills, knowledge, connections, and the potential of all stakeholders in the inclusive school community. Therefore, it is imperative to engage DLs among other stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process, in order to enhance their academic performance. In a similar vein, the practice of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) ensures the mobilising, mapping, as well as building of relationships, as key stages in framing sustainable multisectoral strategies (McKnight, 2017). Figure 3.2 illustrates the relevancy of asset-based theory with DLs in inclusive schools. This study, therefore, reveals that the personal and relationship assets of DLs as concerned stakeholders need to be mobilised and mapped, in order to build relationships between stakeholders within and outside an inclusive school setting.

*Figure 3.1: Relevancy of an asset-based theory with Deaf Learners in inclusive schools*



*Source: The researcher*

### **3.5.1 Mobilising assets in an inclusive school**

Mobilising assets has become self-organising and active by sharing knowledge and resources and identifying common interests (Foot & Hopkins, 2009). In other words, active participation in the local community builds relationships and trust which is essential in mobilising an inclusive school community that has a closer link to the multisectoral strategies perception and, therefore, opens up the potential of stakeholders, including DLs themselves. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the idea that all individuals, including people with disabilities, can contribute to their community, was fundamental to this approach.

### **3.5.2 Mapping assets in an inclusive school**

According to Gilmore and Linda (2012), asset-mapping is a process of learning about the resources that are available in a community. In the asset-mapping model, all communities in inclusive schools can create sustainable growth from within. Previous research has identified the participation of Deaf Learners in asset-mapping as co-creators and co-learners rather than understanding them as subjects in need of outside assistance (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Garoutte & Gilmore, 2014). The notion of inclusion prioritises social interaction and networking in the inclusive setting (Goico, 2019). According to Giota et al. (2016), mapping assets enable the participating stakeholders to discuss what they would like to change in their academic performance, and to exchange ideas on how to co-develop outputs and share their

experiences. Mathie & Cunningham (200) and Missingham (2017) added that exploring, identifying, and understanding individuals' skills, experiences, and strengths already have been viewed as skill-mapping. Thus, the approach can enhance DLs' academic performance, increase their quality of life, and improve their well-being in inclusive settings.

### **3.5.3 Building relationships in an inclusive school**

Santos, Sardinha and Reis (2016) observe the need for inclusion as the crucial step for harnessing professional specialists, the collaboration of concerned stakeholders, and the social interaction of diverse learners, including DLs themselves. Thus, building relationships among all these multisectoral strategies or multiple sectors, who are working within an inclusive school, assists in utilising their ability in order to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners. Hence, they should attain independence and equal opportunities with their hearing peers and become potential and competent citizens in Lesotho. As Kelly et al. (2020) observe, understanding and promoting relationships in an inclusion setting among partners and/or stakeholders is crucial to ensure effective communication, success, and development in the performance of all learners. Therefore, the asset-based theory supports this study on the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

## **3.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the theoretical framework adopted in this study, which is the asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). The chapter also discussed the importance of the theory and its fundamental elements that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. Finally, the chapter concluded with a brief exploration of the relevance of the theory to the study. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology adopted for this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework that guided this study. This chapter presented the research approach, research design, and the research methodology used in this study. The qualitative approach was utilised to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in enhancing the academic performance of Deaf Learners (DLs) in Lesotho's inclusive schools. This is followed by debating and justifying the choice of the transformative paradigm followed by describing and explaining the participatory research design adopted in this study. The chapter further discussed the data generation tools, how the data were analysed and addressed the issue of reliability and trustworthiness. The chapter lastly explained the ethical considerations which were followed in this study and presented the chapter summary.

#### **4.2 Qualitative approach**

The qualitative research approach was chosen in this study to provide insight into the contribution of multisectoral strategies in enhancing the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The researcher adopted this approach to explore and examine how the experiences, situations and problems of DLs could be harnessed to solve challenges in their day-to-day setting (Mays & Pope, 2019). Nassaji (2020) views a qualitative approach as an approach that seeks to understand the perceptions, beliefs and feelings from the participants, rather than to explain and manipulate variables through the sample size. The qualitative approach therefore allowed DLs in the selected inclusive schools to speak out for themselves of understanding why and how they are included in their learning environment (Bailey & Hennik, 2020). However, the subjective (and in-depth) insights into a phenomenon are achieved through researchers immersing themselves within their data (Woermann, 2018).

Therefore, the qualitative approach is relevant to this study, since it explores the subject from the perspective of the individuals directly involved. According to Dabija, Benjan and Puscas (2020) and Hansen (2006), in qualitative approach, the detailed written explanation of the phenomenon under investigations, produces outcomes, unlike the quantitative approach, where the experiences, behaviour, understanding and actions are statistically analysed. This is grounded on the fact that the rich detailed understanding of certain concepts is developed from the insights of individuals. This approach is suitable to the current study, which sought to obtain

rich data from complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of all stakeholders involved in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. Therefore, individual strengths were valued as assets during data generation. Qualitative research is used to develop a rich and detailed understanding of certain theories, concepts, and constructs.

### **4.3 Transformative paradigm**

In the structure of science, Kuhn (1962), considers the word ‘paradigm’ to mean a philosophical way of thinking. The word has its etymology in Greek where it means pattern (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In educational research, the term ‘paradigm’ is used to describe a researcher’s ‘worldview’ (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This study is positioned within the transformative paradigm to ensure that the current academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools is transformed and delocalised, using multisectoral strategies.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) claim that transformative paradigm addresses the social and economic issues, which lead to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur. Mertens (2017) views transformative paradigm as means of achieving change at a personal level and community level. This means transformation in the Deaf Learners’ education and their involvement is appropriate and necessary, as it contributes to address issues of discrimination and oppression against the marginalised groups, even though Merters (2007) blames the paradigm as having no specific method that it is associated with. Cook (2019 : 19) asserts that transformative paradigm “focuses on the tensions that arise when unequal power relationships permeate a research context that addresses intransigent social problems.” This is quite contrary to transformative pedagogy, by often disempowering effects on DLs and giving them a sense of powerless and despair by not involving them in the issues that directly concern their education, including transforming their academic performance.

This paradigm is appropriate to this current study, because it buttresses the researcher’s deliberate efforts to support human rights (the rights of Deaf Learners), and increases social justice and reciprocity (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The Children’s Protection and Welfare Act of (2011), Section 13, enshrines the rights of children with disabilities, such as the right to dignity and the right to quality education. The Act stipulates that learners require full support from the immediate community by formalising partnerships with different stakeholders to facilitate efficient support in most valued DLs. Therefore, the transformative paradigm focuses

on the strengths of DLs who experience exclusion, discrimination and oppression, based on their learning experiences and cultural values. Likewise, the transformative paradigm acknowledges the roles of privilege, power, inclusion and culture in working with communities (Deaf Learners) to overcome the challenges of learning they encounter (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

According to Romm (2015), the transformative paradigm places central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalised groups, such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, people with disabilities, and those who are poor. Furthermore, the paradigm highlights the transformative assumptions on ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, which are often ignored when developing interventions on disability issues (Matjila, & van der Merwe 2021). This concurs with Mertens' (2017) view that a transformative paradigm provides a framework that examines assumptions that explicitly address power issues, social justice, and cultural complexity throughout the research process. Omodoh (2020) further added that the transformative paradigm ensures the participation of Deaf Learners as marginalised groups in the research processes for transformation.

The researcher, therefore, found this paradigm suitable for this study, because the central focus of the research is engaging DLs in an inclusive school context as partners during the exploration of multisectoral strategies to support their academic performance. The intention was to empower and utilise their participation by listening to their voice among other stakeholders, in order to transform and develop their own performance. This seems rare and limited in numerous studies conducted, particularly in Lesotho. The paradigm therefore seeks to address and confront social oppression and improve the social justice in the situation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

#### **4.3.1 Transformative ontological assumption**

Ontology is the study of being, and is concerned with existence and reality, of what is real and true (Hasgil, 2014). In a similar manner, Al- Ababneh (2020) view ontology as the concept that concerns the nature of reality. In line with the given definition of ontology, it was worth identifying the transformative ontology of this current study. In this study, the inclusive setting consists of diverse individuals with experiences, capacities, thoughts, skills, interpretations and meaning. Therefore, the researcher incorporated these characteristics as the foundation for personal strength and thus as valuable assets that are essential in enhancing the academic performance of DLs through the use of multisectoral strategies. Thus, the ontological

assumption in this perception is that the reality lies in stakeholders' knowledge and experiences.

The contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools was clearly revealed in focus group discussions among participants, and collage techniques which bring together disparate visual elements that communicate and interpret the participants' voices, particularly DLs' feelings on their inner thoughts, opinions and experiences. This evidently concurs with the aim of the study which was to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs.

#### **4.3.2 Transformative epistemological assumption**

According to Al-Ababneh (2020), epistemology involves knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology. The the epistemological stand in this study supports the ontological perspective of acquiring knowledge from the subject and related theories through the voices, experiences of the participants, and their interpretative sense that make meaning. The researcher also considered the factors that could help multisectoral strategies support the academic performance of DLs.

#### **4.4 Participatory design**

Akhatar (2016) defined research design as the arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose, and decide the paradigm that informs the study with economy and procedure. Similarly, Marshall and Rossman (2011), view research design as a plan for, and justification of, how the researcher intends to conduct the research and the methods employed to generate data. Akhatar (2016) indicated that research design is necessary for smooth sailing of the research, that is for the researchers to organise their ideas in a way that would be possible for them to look for shortages and errors. This study is situated within the transformative paradigm to ensure that the academic performance of Deaf Learners in inclusive settings is supported and transformed. In line with the transformative paradigm, the qualitative approach is harnessed as an ideal method for applying participatory design. The data generation methods used in this study are focus group discussion and collage – an art-based method.

As a research design, participatory approach places more value on collaborative effort by engaging the researcher(s) and the participants (Deaf Learners) in the process of finding

solutions to a problem. It is concerned with using multiple methodologies organised in terms of the levels of participation (Hall et al., 2021). Participatory research design continues to gain popularity in qualitative research for its ability to encourage openness and equity of sharing knowledge and experiences, and nurturing close collaboration in all things that are challenging within current context (Hall et al., 2021). The researcher adopted the participatory design because the participants in this study worked closely with the researcher to promote the learning environment of DLs in inclusive settings. That is they cooperatively participated during the data generation.

According to Nekoto et al. (2020), participatory research describes a broad set of methodologies, organised in terms of the level of participation. Hall et al. (2021) define the participatory approach as establishing trust and rapport between researchers and participants and advocate actively the involvement of participants in the planning, implementation and evaluation of a research issue. Hall et al. (2021) further added that participatory research generally involves working closely with participants and communities to co-design and conduct research. It is used to improve social practice through a reflexive process of planning, implementing, observing and reflecting (Hall et al., 2021).

Since Nekoto et al. (2020) blamed the products that are developed too quickly, participatory research involves a variety of methods alongside focus-groups, including collage, which allows participants to share expertise, knowledge and experience visually through images, facilitating reflection and promoting critical dialogue and knowledge exchange. This concurs with Cook (2019) who prioritised the genuine involvement of DLs and placed more value in their collaborative efforts in the process of finding the solution to their academic performance problem. Participatory approaches depend heavily on building trust and nurturing close collaborations. These are the things that are now more challenging within the current COVID-19 pandemic context, characterised by social distancing (Hall et al., 2021).

#### **4.5 Research context**

Dinsmore and Alexander (2012) view context as the ‘where of learning’ and postulate it as a critical dimension in learning. This means learning is always taking place in some context, whether one is referring to the physical context, such as a classroom, a social context like a group project, or a cultural context like a museum. Dinsmore and Alexander (2012) further elaborated that the contextual consideration could be a beneficial factor to the study by explaining why inconsistencies in literature are occurring. For instance, the academic

performance of DLs has been the focal point in numerous studies, some concerning reading development of DLs in inclusive classrooms (Alasim, 2019), and some on strengthening teachers to support DLs in inclusive education (Kelly et al., 2020). Thus, some arguments are concerned with inclusive education practises and the attitude and motivation of DLs and hard of hearing that constitute the prevailing performance (Hadziefendic, 2019). Therefore, the research context is important in explaining why the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools is unsatisfactory.

The current study took place in an inclusive school in Leribe District, which was the only high school throughout the countrywide where DLs were admitted, and where the teaching and learning of DLs was taking place in an inclusive setting. The data was generated from the school context in this study, where the multisectoral strategies were explored in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs through focus group discussion and collage.

#### **4.6 Research setting**

The study was conducted at an inclusive school located in the northern part of Lesotho in Leribe District. The school had the highest perseverance rate of 34% among DLs in 2022. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) has specifically focused on ensuring that all individuals, including other marginalised groups regardless of need or ability, gain access to education and social opportunities alongside their hearing peers. Lesotho, like many other countries in Africa is not an exception. The country demonstrated this commitment. The statistical overall population of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) enrolled in high schools was 7395 in 2016 (Lesotho Inclusive Policy, 2018). What is valuable in this study is that a large number of LSEN were DLs in Leribe District. This particular high school is the only one in the country that is admitting DLs and it is responsible for their education. Thus, the district in which the research is contextualised is a critical space to explore the multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

##### **4.6.1 School**

Likoche High School (a pseudonym) is geographically located in the lowland region of Lesotho. It is a well-known inclusive school in Leribe District that admits and accommodates only DLs, who are learning together with their hearing counterparts countrywide. It was first a comprehensive Catholic school established 44 years ago under the guidance of His Lordship, the Bishop of Leribe Diocese. It commenced as a commercial school, thus bookkeeping and

commerce were the main subjects in the school. The school was managed and supervised by Catholic nuns with the aim of providing charity education.

Likoche High School's mission was to cater for the educational needs of DLs, even before the mandate and introduction of inclusion by the ministry of education and training. All the schools, including Likoche, are now well administered and follow the protocols to maintain dignity. The school management structure comprises the secretariat office, the provincial council, the school board, the principal, the deputy principal, heads of departments, teachers, sign language interpreters, learners and non-teaching staff.

The school was launched through the call of Education for All by the United Nations' recommendation, with five DLs in 1995. There were no interpreters nor specialised teachers. The teaching and learning process relied on lip reading. The first and second interpreter volunteered in 2008-2010. Since then, the number of DLs increased rapidly. The first group of four interpreters were hired in 2012 and the school currently exists with eight interpreters with the enrolment of 83 DLs. The medium of instruction changed from lip reading instructions to sign language, hence the presence of sign language interpreters. Therefore, Likoche High School the DLs admission rates increased and became high. However, the academic performance of DLs remained low, which the researcher believes to be associated with the lack of cooperation among stakeholders, and hence the exploration of multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

#### **4.7 Selection of the school and participants**

The researcher utilised purposive sampling in the school selection and the selection of the research participants for this study. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), purposive sampling targets specific groups or objects to be included in the sample. The group does not represent the wider population, but represents itself. When using purposive sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that would be informative about the interested topic, in order to provide the best information that addresses the purpose of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this case, the researcher deliberately selected one inclusive school in Leribe District, because it is the only school that is presumed to have an in-depth knowledge about the academic performance of DLs, through their experiences in the teaching and learning of DLs. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study, because it enabled the researcher to select a sample of experts that are most useful to the purpose of the research.

The researcher selected the participants who were more likely to yield rich and in-depth data and leverage knowledge and expertise from their varied strengths, as they work towards shared goals to support the academic performance of DLs. In this case, DLs, their hearing peers, and other participants are knowledgeable and experienced about the effects of the current academic performance of DLs in Lesotho. Participants had to show their availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions clearly. The researcher purposively selected DLs who had attended an inclusive school for over two years, the hearing peers, who interacted and learnt together with DLs in an inclusive classroom, and teachers, because of their daily interaction and their ability to communicate with DLs through sign language interpreters as special education professionals who understand their language and the deaf culture better and are knowledgeable about inclusive practices. Further, the sample included heads of departments, who partake in the teaching and learning of DLs and constituted foreseers in the monitoring of departmental subjects per teacher. Therefore, they are accountable and knowledgeable to compete with school tasks and are deaf-aware.

According to Bertram et al. (2014), there is less need to consider the sample size in qualitative research. This is to maintain one of the advantages of qualitative study, which is to gain detailed knowledge about the specific phenomenon rather than statistical references. Hence, 12 DLs aged 15 – 20 years, and twelve hearing learners of the same age were recruited. The sample included five teachers, three Sign Language interpreters, and two Heads of Departments (HODs). The idea was to allow these experts to offer insight into their experiences on the inclusive setting and the academic performance of DLs and how they make sense of that inclusiveness and the support offered to DLs, and not necessarily to generalise the phenomenon in question.

One other reason for this selection is that participants were selected to acquire the in-depth construction of the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs and explore their experiences in identifying the factors that can enable and facilitate the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho. Additionally, the reason behind the selection of hearing learners is that they interact daily with DLs in teaching and learning processes that are occurring inclusively in a typical classroom setting. Therefore, they are aware of the challenges that are experienced by DLs, particularly those that affect their academic performance, hence the need for multisectoral strategies to support them.

## **4.8 Procedures**

Having gained permission from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the research in the selected schools ( Appendix A), I The researcher further applied for ethical clearance from University of Free State and was granted approval to start data generation (Appendix B). In preparing to start data generation, the researcher visited the school principal and submit the letter that request for permission to meet the participants (Appendix C) , that describes the study, set up the appointments and agree on the dates to commence data collection.

### **4.8.1 Access to participants**

The principal informed the HODs about the researcher's proposed visit. With the permission from the HODs, the class teachers assisted the researcher to identify the desired group of learners. Teachers, Sign Language interpreters, and HODs volunteered to participate in the study. The Sign Language interpreters assisted by interpreting for DLs, while explaining the information in relation to the study. They also assisted in collecting signed parental consent forms from the parents and guardians (Appendix D) and the assent letters from the learners ( Appendix E). The researcher was permitted to use a quiet classroom. Since the researcher is the sign language interpreter she managed to communicate and understand DLs through Sign Language.

The researcher assured the participants that their participation was voluntary and, therefore, they were free to withdraw anytime and at any stage. The researcher also assured them that their participation was vital to them and to the development of their school. The researcher convinced the participants that their real names would not be used in the study to maintain confidentiality. The participants were then given parental informed consent forms to take to their parents or guardians to permit them participate in the study. The researcher gave the participating learners a week to return the signed forms, and hence it was month end and the learners staying in the boarding section of the school were going home to their parents, and some their parents visited them. The researcher allowed them to use her contacts details in the form for any clarification.

## **4.9 Data collection methods**

This section discusses the choice of data generation methods employed in the study. Therefore, the data generation methods used in this study are focus group discussion and collage – an art-based method.

### **4.9.1 Focus group discussions**

In qualitative research, focus group discussions (FGDs) refer to the data collection method that focuses on discussing and exchanging opinions and experiences with the participants (Muijeen et al., 2020). Moreover, some scholars view focus group discussion as a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a topic or issue in-depth. The aim is to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants facilitated by a professional, external moderator (Cohen et al., 2011; Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017).

Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017) define FGDs as the qualitative research method and data collection technique where selected groups of people who share common characteristics that are meaningful to the research topic discuss the phenomenon of interest in-depth. A professional moderator facilitates the discussion. In line with the participatory design, FGDs can engage different stakeholders in collecting information. The interaction of various stakeholders can enrich the quality and quantity of data generated (Garbutt et al., 2017). In this case, FGDs were used as alternative method that enabled discussion and the sharing of knowledge among multiple sectors to reveal ideas, opinions, suggestions and recommendation or solution for the academic challenges that are experienced by DLs.

In their views, Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017) and Garbutt et al. (2017) concurred that FGDs require a group of or a team consisting of a skilled facilitator and assistance. Nyumba et al. (2017), added that it should also be used to access the views of people with expert knowledge. Therefore, FGDs were used in this study to explore how multisectoral strategies support the academic performance of DLs. While using this data collection method, the researcher probed participants as a way of gaining a deeper understanding and yielding rich data (Yin, 2017). That's the participants were also engaged in discussions on the factors that can enable and facilitate multisectoral strategies to support DLs. To complement this method, the researcher used collage-guided discussion, which is explained in detail in the next section.

#### ***4.9.1.1 Facets and uses of focus group discussion***

According to Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017), the FGD method involves participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, as well as practices that are shared during interaction with different people. Based on this important characteristic of FGD, researchers use the technique to help identify and clarify shared knowledge among groups and communities with the same characteristics. The FGD can also be used to access the views of minority groups such as women, children or people with disabilities. This is possible because FGDs can be comprised entirely of people from specific groups, such as DLs who would not find it easy to discuss their particular needs and opinions in a mixed setting (Garbutt et al., 2017).

#### ***4.9.1.2 Processes of focus group discussion in this study***

The researcher stated the aim of the study to selected participants, which is exploring how multisectoral strategies can support the academic performance of DLs at an inclusive school in Lesotho. Further, the researcher informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and that the study would not use their real names, but pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were also notified that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the study. In addition, assent forms were submitted to the researcher by the teachers that assisted in by collecting them from the learners after they were signed by their parents and guardians, permitting their children to participate in the study. After ensuring all the ethical considerations were observed, the researcher generated data for the study, using the focus group discussion method.

Both focus group discussions took place in a classroom at Likoche High School (pseudonym). The researcher introduced herself to the participating learners and fellow colleague. The colleague is also studying at the University of Free State, and she was there to assist with interpreting sessions during the discussions.

The researcher welcomed all the participants, thanked them for agreeing to join the discussion and appreciated their good attendance. Further, the researcher then wrote the research topic on the chalkboard and elaborated on it to both groups. The researcher also discussed the set ground rules governing the FGD with all the participants, including elaborating that every answer is

correct and that participants only differed in opinions, as well as that they were supposed to feel free to share their point of view even if it differed from what others had said. Moreover, the participants had to remind the participants that the researcher's interest was in negative comments as much as in the positive comments, and that at times the negative comments are most helpful. The researcher then made an agreement with the participants to start working with the first group.

#### ***4.9.1.3 Focus group discussion 1***

The first FGD comprised 12 participants: seven DLs and five hearing learners. The division of groups or the selection of the members was the choice of group members. The members of the group were seven boys and five girls. The researcher distributed three pamphlets and typed questions to be discussed. One of the participating learners read the question audibly to all the group members and simultaneously the Sign Language interpreter interpreted the question to DLs. The questions were read twice and then the researcher allowed the participants to discuss the question.

Meanwhile, the researcher took notes and posed probes when necessary to get clarity. The other participant volunteered to manage the group discussion, since the participants became too noisy, while DLs were signing at the same time with no turn taking, particularly when the questions were more challenging. One participating learner assisted the researcher in taking notes, since she was concerned that the researcher might miss some important points. The discussion successfully took 45 minutes.

#### ***4.9.1.4 Focus group discussion 2***

The second FGD commenced immediately after the first group. The group comprised six participating DLs and six hearing learners. The members were seven boys and five girls from the various classes. From the onset, the group selected the group manager, who they assigned the responsibility to chair and control behavioural disorder in the group. Since all the welcoming remarks and ground rules were shared before the researcher distributed the pamphlets with typed questions to be discussed. Unlike in the first group, a DLs in the second group signed the questions then the Sign Language interpreter voiced out the participating learner's responses. Similarly, he signed the question twice and then the group deliberated on

it. This time around, the other hearing learner assisted the Sign Language interpreter in voicing out DLs during the discussion session. The group was very eloquent and argumentative, however, it was very informative. The members of this group completed the discussion in 40 minutes and like the first group, none of them withdrew from the discussion.

#### ***4.9.1.5 Focus group discussion 3***

The third FGD comprised teachers. They encompassed four male teachers and six female teachers. FGD 3 was conducted in the resource room, which was readily prepared for the session in the school setting. At this juncture, the researcher introduced herself and her assisting colleague. The researcher further welcomed the participating teachers and thanked them for agreeing to join the discussion. They unpacked the topic of the research and the aim of the study. the researcher put to them the set ground rules for the FGD and then started the discussion by distributing the questions to the teacher participants. The researcher audibly read the question to all the participants and then started discussing them. The discussion took an average of 45 minutes.

#### **4.9.2 Collage**

The second data generation method adopted in the present study is collage. The collage method has become increasingly popular in art-based research (Gerstenblatt, 2013). Collage is the multiplicity of images or, and they can create and generate new constellations of possibilities (Hanawalt, 2019). A collage is a form of visual arts in which virtual elements are combined to create a new image that conveys a message or idea. This virtual artwork is created by selecting magazine images of textured papers or ephemera; cutting or altering, arranging and attaching them to support such a paper or cardboard (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Furthermore, a collage brings together disparate visual elements that reflect a commitment to a relationship, making the ordinary something special and bringing diversity into unity (Chilton & Scotti, 2014).

According to Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010), collage involves gathering and selecting imagery that can serve as data and analysing, synthesizing, and presenting the results of these processes. Davis (2008) affirms that collage as a participatory method, is often regarded as an aspect of “visual art” or means of a corresponding message. Linked to Gerstenblatt (2013), an explanation of collage views it as a technique of composition consisting of various materials

like newspaper cuttings, cardboard, photos, as well as fabrics, painted or glued on the board. The researcher's interest in collage is primarily grounded in its capacity to allow people to talk, ask questions, disagree, reveal misconceptions, share and even learn from each other (Khanare, 2015).

According to Gerstenblatt (2013), the term 'collage' originates from the French word "colle" meaning glued work. It is used as a research tool to blend images and text to create a reality and find meaning, most notably using art as a symbol and metaphor. In this study, collage was used to create new meanings from selected images glued as a method of gathering, selecting, and presenting the experiences, capabilities and skills and strengths of participants to support the academic performance of DLs.

#### ***4.9.2.1 Facets and uses of collage***

Extant literature shows that in Japan, collage has been successfully used over ages ago to enhance their poetry and to promote artwork to be more accessible (Davis, 2008). Khanare (2015) stated that collage has been used in educational issues, in inter-professional workshops and professionals such as nursing in the north of England. In her study, Khanare (2015), justified the significant use of collage where she pointed out that these visual arts-based methods elicited joy and excitement among the participants, producing their artifacts, discussing and sharing their knowledge. The use of collage also encouraged participation. The researcher advocated for learners to reflect their preferences and voices as the postmodern way of thinking, knowing and communicating through art the use of collage thereof.

#### ***4.9.2.2 Process of creating a collage in this study***

The researcher met the participants for the second session of the data generation process, and first introduced the processes and or steps to be taken in collage creation. These processes included the definition of the term 'collage' to the participants, an introduction of the collage activity and doings related to the question in the FGD, which was, "What factors enable and facilitate the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho?" The sample of the collage was used to enable the participants to become familiar with the structure of the collage and therefore copy from the example when creating their own collage. The participants were informed that the collage session would

similarly take 1 hour 30 minutes. Materials such as magazines and newspapers were distributed to the participants. These helped them to represent their ideas in terms of the factors facilitating and enabling multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs.

The participants were then asked to create their collage showing or factors that can enable and facilitate the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. Three collages were made: one from the group of teachers and the other two from the groups of learners. At this stage, each group discussed and interpreted their collage as the reflection of their work.

The researcher considers the creation of the collage as significantly beneficial to this study, hence encouraged participants' contribution and involvement in the discussion. It aligns with Kretzman and Mcknight's (1993), asset-based theory in which the participants are active agents of change, potential assets, and thus collage methods allow them to express their capabilities, strengths and potential through artifacts.

#### ***4.9.2.3 Collages 1 and 2***

##### ***4.9.2.3.1 Explanation and preparation for of the collage***

The researcher first explained the meaning of collage by showing the participants the sample of the collage she had made and provided a time for questions from the participants. Since the participants had already formed two groups for participating learners and one for teachers, the researcher used the same groups for collage construction. The researcher distributed the magazines, pairs of scissors, glue sticks, charts and coloured markers to each group.

##### ***4.9.2.4 Construction of the collage***

During the collage construction, the discussion revolved around the influencing factors that enable and facilitate multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. The participants cut and pasted the materials or pictures on the charts with their intentions in interpreting their message. Then each group explained and interpreted their collage. It took 10 minutes after the completion of the collage for each group to present and interpret their collage. Throughout the construction of collage, the researcher facilitated the process by moving from one group to the other, reminding them that there is no wrong answer in collage construction.

For the participating learners to develop two collages, it took them 55 minutes. All in all, the session took 1 hour 05 minutes.

#### ***4.9.2.5 Collage 3***

Collage 3 is the teacher collage constructed on the 15th of February by the same members of the FGD. All the procedures for collage 1 and 2 construction for the participating learners were followed in collage 3. Cutting, pasting, discussing, and interpreting the collage took an average of 1 hour.

#### ***4.9.2.6 Reflection on the collage process***

After cutting, pasting and discussing the collage session, the researcher asked the participants a question: ‘How they felt about their session today?’ In their responses, they highlighted that the activity was not only informative, but also full of fun. The most substantial part of the lesson learned in the collage construction was how the participants collaborated to combine pictures for collage construction. This activity also encouraged cooperation among participants, effective communication, and valuing each member's point of view.

### **4.9.3 Field notes**

Effective field notes promote the segregation of data – an analytic function (Jack, 2015). Writing field notes is one of the useful ways of enabling the qualitative researcher to engage in reflective practice. Jack (2015) defines field notes as an exercise that is more practical and less theoretical by being in the field observing, taking notes, reflecting, registering emotional responses and capturing what a researcher sees for further reflection. In the same way, Khanare (2015) and Pacheco-Vega (2019) both posited that field notes is an exercise in describing the situation and the events as they are happening, the practice that the researcher has to describe when, where, and under what conditions the phenomena being observed was made. Therefore, the researcher wrote notes, and captured video-recordings as evidence, which helped to link data generation from two methods, which are FGD and collage, as well as capturing the interaction of the participants in this study during the data generation session.

#### ***4.9.3.1 Field note in processes***

On Friday, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 the researcher made a verbal appointment with the school principal about the preparation and the visit to the school for data generation. The school principal positively agreed. She however emphasised the significance of the lessons and studies during the week that the learners were not supposed to miss. The principal then gave the researcher the option to use the weekend (Saturday or Sunday), provided there were no lessons on these days. She suggested the afternoon hours after the study as well when learners are free and in their leisure time. The researcher settled for Saturday afternoon, considered it as the suitable slot for data generation.

On the agreed Saturday, the researcher met 24 learners. These were DLs and hearing learners combined. The researcher informed the participating learners about the intentions of the study and my interest in working with them as co-creators of knowledge through participating in the study. The researcher further stated the purpose of the meeting for the generation of data with the aim of exploring the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho.

The researcher informed the participants about the rules and regulations of the research and that they were highly considered. The FGD commenced with two groups comprising 12 participants each, since only 24 learners managed to turn up for the discussion. Each group had seven DLs and five hearing learners. The discussion was initiated at 14h30 and ended at 15h45 and both groups attended all the questions positively until the end of the discussion.

The researcher invited a former colleague, who had just obtained her master's degree, a Sign Language interpreter and a senior teacher by profession. The colleague assisted in interpreting for DLs since the FGDs were made of HLs and DLs inclusively. The researcher was assisted by my colleague, who signed the questions for DLs, because DLs use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. They managed to interpret and translate Sign Language into spoken language with the support of hearing learners who are good signers.

#### **4.9.4 Triangulation**

Triangulation involves using multiple data methods, mainly in qualitative research, to generate data, and to assist the researchers in reducing the likelihood of including their own bias in the conclusion (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Similarly, Noble and Heale (2019) posit that triangulation

is crucial in qualitative research, since the researcher draws data from different sources, leading to more insight and discoveries. Noble and Heale (2019) and Blog (2020) regarded data triangulation as another aspect of enhancing the credibility of the research generation methods, because it involves crosschecking of information and collection procedures to ensure validity. Therefore, triangulation helps to ensure that the fundamental biases arising from the use of one single method are overcome (Jack, 2015).

According to Noble and Heale (2019), triangulation is categorised into data, investigation, theory and methodological triangulation. However, in the case of this study the triangulation issue was addressed through methodological triangulation that promotes the use of several data generation methods, such as focus group discussion and collage. The group of participants had the chance to share their views and ideas about the collage, and the collaboration among the participants was observed in the focus group discussion.

#### **4.10 Data analysis**

In this section, the researcher discusses the data analysis processes in the study. It is defined as cleaning, transforming and processing raw data to discover useful information and help make informed decisions (Kelly et al., 2020). Therefore, the data for this study was analysed qualitatively through thematic analysis, as a process of identifying the themes (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) indicate that this method provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analyses. In this study, the researcher therefore used thematic analysis for its particular advantage of being a method rather than a methodology, therefore unlike many qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). This makes it a very flexible method, a considerable advantage given the diversity of work in learning and teaching (Kelly et al., 2020).

The data that was analysed include that generated from the focus group discussion and collage, collected from the learners, their teachers, Sign Language interpreters and HODs, as the participants. The data therefore, was analysed and gave a report on this inclusive school in Lesotho, exploring the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. As for McMillan and Schumacher (2014), this process involves the familiarisation, coding identified from the participants' transcripts and collages after the researcher has immersed in

the data and generated themes naming the themes, defining the themes and writing it up (Cohen et al., 2011).

According to Braun & Clarke 2006 's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis, it is the method that is principally concerned with Step 1: Become familiar with the data, this step in any qualitative analysis requires reading, and re-reading the transcripts. The researcher become very familiar with the entire data. Step 2: Generate initial codes, this step lets the researcher to start to organise her data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding was done to reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning Step 3: the researcher searched for themes that captures the significance and the interest of the research question. Step 4: Review themes, the researcher then reconsidered whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set and if there should be coherent. Step 5: Define themes, the themes were outlined and during step 6: Write-up at the end point the themes are written as reporting a thematic analysis

#### **4.11 Trustworthiness of the study**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is about establishing credibility, confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability. Trustworthiness and rigor are terms used to establish credible findings (Khanare, 2015; Sullivan & Joan, 2021). They further emphasised that triangulation is one of the techniques often used to enhance trustworthiness. It is linked to the source's honesty, integrity and expertise, hence an important component of credibility (Marshall et al., 2013). This is where multiple data sources, such as FGD and collage were used to answer study questions. Strategies and procedures to meet the criteria of trustworthiness are discussed in the next section.

##### **4.11.1 Credibility**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) define credibility as the extent to which the research findings reflect the reality and lived experiences of the participants. Marshall et al. (2013) suggest that a combination of experience and perceived research awareness contribute to the credibility of data obtained from the participants. They also affirm that it is associated with the level of trust born of personal assessment of an individual, rather than their skills. Probyn et al. (2016) elucidate that credibility can be attained by adopting well-established methods that are appropriate to answer research questions. Metzger and Flanagan (2012) stated that credibility can be defined as the believability of the source, particularly on the perception of the trustworthiness and expertise of the information as interpreted by the researcher. Credibility is commonly judged in validating information by checking information across different sources.

The measures to ensure and enhance credibility in this study were:

- Writing detailed field notes, and use of video-recording during data generation.
- Discussing the generated data with the participants to make sure that their viewpoints were understood and presented correctly or establish if any was omitted.
- Confirming the common strategy of validating information by checking information across different sources such as FGD and collage that were incurred in this study.

#### **4.11.2 Confirmability**

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Confirmability concerns making the research process transparent with the interpretation and findings that clearly demonstrate the same conclusion of the study (Bertram & Christiansenn 2014)

#### **4.11.3 Dependability**

The researcher can achieve dependability when she can account for variation in the study. That is comparing the current study with the previous study already in the field and identify the key difference (Bertram & Christiansenn 2014) While Lincoln & Guba, 1985) indicated that one way that a research study may demonstrate dependability is to do audit trial

#### **4.11.4 Transferability**

Sullivan and Joan (2011) indicated that the concepts of precision, credibility and transferability are key aspects of evaluating a qualitative study. Transferability refers to how the qualitative research study's findings are applicable to a similar situation, population and phenomena. It includes the degree to which the findings of the qualitative research can be transferred to other context or settings with other participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). However, this qualitative research demonstrates transferability as such that others should be inspired to create change and those who wish to replicate the study in their own context, can do so (Khanare, 2015). Therefore, the researcher facilitated truthfulness, consistency and transferability of the study with thick description and purposeful sampling. Further, they clearly elucidated all the research processes from data collection, context of the study to the production of the final report. The researcher also selected and focused on the key participants, such as DLs, hearing learners, teachers, Sign Language interpreters and HODs who were knowledgeable about the issue of the academic performance of DLs.

#### **4.12 Ethical considerations**

According to Arifin (2018), the consideration of ethical issues is crucial throughout all the stages in a qualitative study to protect human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles and to keep between the risks and the benefits of the research. Furthermore Ziyani et al. (2004) elucidated in consideration of the ethics, the research participants must grant permission voluntarily. In addition, the permission needs to be obtained from any pertinent authorities and institutions. Therefore, the researcher ensured as much as possible that the research protocols were considered and the relevant authorities were contacted to obtain the required permission and the nature of the context. Permission to do this research was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Free State, Lesotho Ministry of Education, school principals and the parents, since some of the learners were between the ages of 14 and 15 years, hence they had to sign parental informed consent forms and permit their children to participate in the study. For the FGD, permission was obtained from the following parties: hearing learners, DLs, teachers, Sign Language interpreters and HODs. The researcher also obtained permission to create the collage from the DLs and the hearing learners only.

Furthermore the participants were made aware of their rights such as voluntary participation and withdrawal at any stage of the research. The researcher politely informed the participants that their participation was voluntary. They were free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, hence the participation is voluntary. In addition the participants were ensured about the the management of data and its protection.

The hard copies of the participant's answers are stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard for future research or academic purposes; electronic information are stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After the expected period of time the information will be destroyed by burning the hard copies and deleting all electronic information. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity the researcher signed a confidentiality agreement. Assurance to use of pseudonym to keep anonymity. The measures that will be taken if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs is that the researcher will be at risk too and can be sued.

### **4.13 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the research methodology and justified the choice of the qualitative approach used in the current study. The chapter further underlined the transformative paradigm, employed the participatory research design and the purpose of their choice. Given its participatory orientation, a qualitative approach become the most appropriate for this study, as it offered insight into the experiences of DLs as related to their social context, as well as their academic performance. It also dealt with the sampling techniques adopted to select the participants and the data generation methods and procedures, as well as the thematic data analysis. The study engaged two data generation methods, which were FGD and collage. They both provided participants an opportunity to voice out their experiences and challenges in an inclusive school and their expertise on how multisectoral strategies could support the academic performance of DLs. Ethical considerations were put into perspective before data generation and the issue of trustworthiness was addressed. The next chapter is the presentation and discussion findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the justification of the paradigm, the choice of the research approach, and the methodological consideration used in the current study. This chapter outlined data analysis and presentation. The data were presented using two methods, which are focus group discussions and the collage-guided discussion, in order to respond to the three research questions, as well as the aim and objectives, espoused in the study. Three major themes and several subthemes emerged during data analysis. Furthermore, the participants' narratives were presented verbatim in order to enhance the credibility of the research findings. Lastly, the chapter summary was presented.

#### 5.2 Participants' demographic data

*Table 5.1: Focus group discussions for deaf and hearing learners (FGD 1 & Collage group 1)*

Participants	Gender	Age	Grade Level	Residential areas	Deaf/hearing learners
Learner 1	Male	18	9	Hlotse	Hearing learners
Learner 2	Female	19	9	Hlotse	Deaf
Learner 3	Male	20	11	Pitseng	Deaf
Learner 4	Male	20	11	Maputsoe	Deaf
Learner 5	Female	18	10	Mahobong	Deaf
Learner 6	Female	19	10	Pitseng	Hearing learners
Learner 7	Female	19	10	Mahobong	Deaf
Learner 8	Male	17	9	Pitseng	Hearing Learners
Learner 9	Male	18	9	Kolonyama	Deaf
Learner 10	Female	16	10	Sebothoane	Hearing learners
Learner 11	Male	19	10	Pitseng	Deaf
Learner 12	Male	20	11	Teyateyaneng	Deaf

**Hlotse:** This is a town with suburbs in Leribe District.

**Pitseng:** This is a village in the foothills of Lesotho. It is a rural area in Leribe District.

**Maputsoe:** This is a small town found in Leribe District. The town is highly populated because it has an industrial area.

**Mahobong:** This is a nearby village located along the road from Hlotse town to Pitseng.

**Kolonyama:** This is the most popular area in Leribe District of Lesotho. The first prime minister of Lesotho was born in this village. The village is located between Berea and Leribe District.

**Sebothoane:** This is a suburb in Hlotse town.

**Teyateyaneng:** This is a town in Berea District, which is another district of Lesotho

**Peka:** This is a village adjacent to Teyateyaneng in Leribe District.

**Leribe:** This is a village in Leribe District, from which the district obtained its name.

**Khubetsoana:** This is a village that separates Berea District from Maseru District.

**Teachers' line:** This is a residential area within the school campus that is rented by teachers.

### **5.2.1 Participants for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 1**

**Learner 1:** This was a male hearing learner aged 18 years. He resided in Hlotse town. He was in Grade 9.

**Learner 2:** This was a female Deaf Learner aged 19 years, who resided in Hlotse town. She was in Grade 9.

**Learner 3:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 20 years. He was from Pitseng village and was in Grade 11.

**Learner 4:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 20 years. He was in Grade 11 and resided in Maputsoe.

**Learner 5:** This was a female Deaf Learner aged 18 years. She was in Grade 10. She resided in Mahobong village.

**Learner 6:** This was a female hearing learner aged 19 years. She was in Grade 10 and resided in Pitseng village.

**Learner 7:** This was a female Deaf Learner aged 19 years. She was in Grade 10 and resided in Mahobong village.

**Learner 8:** This was a male hearing learner aged 17 years. He was in Grade 9 and resided in Pitseng village.

**Learner 9:** This was a male hearing learner aged 18 years. He was in Grade 9 and resided in Kolonyama.

**Learner 10:** This was a female hearing learner aged 16 years. She was in Grade 10 and resided in Sebothoane.

**Learner 11:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 19 years. He was in Grade grade 10 and resided in Pitseng village.

**Learner 12:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 20 years. He was in Grade 11 and resided in Teyateyaneng.

*Table 5.2: Focus group discussions for Deaf and hearing learners (FGD 2 & Collage group 2)*

Participants	Gender	Age	Grade level	Residential areas	Deaf/Hearing learners
Learner 1	Female	17	9	Hlotse	Hearing learner
Learner 2	Female	18	9	Hlotse	Hearing learner
Learner 3	Female	16	9	Hlotse	Hearing learner
Learner 4	Female	17	9	Khubetsoana	Hearing learner
Learner 5	Male	20	11	Lekokoaneng	Deaf
Learner 6	Female	18	10	Peka	Deaf
Learner 7	Male	20	11	Mahobong	Deaf
Learner 8	Male	17	9	Mahobong	Deaf
Learner 9	Female	19	10	Peka	Deaf
Learner 10	Male	19	10	Maputsoe	Deaf
Learner 11	Female	17	9	Sebothoane	Hearing learner
Learner 12	Female	19	11	Pitseng	Deaf



### **5.2.2 Learner 1: This Participants for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 2**

was a female and hearing learners learner aged years. She was in Grade 9 and resided in Hlotse town.

**Learner 2:** This was a female and hearing learners learner aged 18 years. She was in Grade 9 and resided in Hlotse town.

**Learner 3:** This was a female and hearing learner aged 16 years. She was in Grade 9 and resided in Hlotse town.

**Learner 4:** This was a female and hearing learner aged 17 years. She was in Grade 9 and resided in Khubetsoana.

**Learner 5:** This was male Deaf Learner aged 20 years. He was in Grade 11 and resided in Lekokoaneng.

**Learner 6:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 18 years. He was in Grade 10 and resided in Peka village.

**Learner 7:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 21 years. He was in Grade 11 and resided in Mahobong village.

**Learner 8:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 17 years. He was in Grade 9 and resided in Mahobong village.

**Learner 9:** This was a female Deaf Learner aged 19 years. She was in Grade 10 and resided in Peka.

**Learner 10:** This was a male Deaf Learner aged 19 years. He was in Grade 10 and resided in Maputsoe.

**Learner 11:** This was a female hearing learner. She was in Grade 9 and resided in Sebothoane.

**Learner 12:** This was a female Deaf Learner aged 19 years. She was in Grade grade 11 and resided in Pitseng village.

*Table 5.3: Focus group discussions for teachers (FGD 3 & Collage group 3)*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender Male(M) /Female(F)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Teaching subjects</b>	<b>Departments</b>	<b>Highest qualifications</b>	<b>Grade levels</b>	<b>Residential areas</b>
Teacher 1	Female	55	Married	Agriculture	Maths and Science	Bachelor Degree in Ed	All grades	Teachers line
Teacher 2	Female	53	Married	Life skills	Social sciences	Bachelor Degree	grade 8-10	Hlotse
Teacher 3	Female	38	Married	Sesotho& English	Languages	Honours Degree	All grades	Hlotse
Teacher 4	M	25	Single	Maths and Physics	Maths and science	BEd	grade 8-10	Leribe
Teacher 5	Female	42	Married	English	Languages	Hons Ed	All grades	Leribe
Teacher 6	M	32	Married	Design and technology	Science and Technology	BEd	All grades	Pitseng
Teacher 7	M	43	Married	Sign language interpreter	Social sciences	Dip S Ed	grade 11	Pitseng
Teacher 8	Female	48	Single	Religious Studies	Social Sciences	Hons Ed	All grades	Pitseng
Teacher 9	Female	54	Single	Sign language Interpreter	Social sciences	ADSE	Grade 8	Sebothoane
Teacher 10	M	45	Single	Sign language interpreter	Social sciences	BEd	All grades	Sebothoane

B.Ed.: Bachelor of Education

Hons Ed: Honours in Education

DipSEc: Diploma in Secondary Education

ADSE: Advanced Diploma in Special Education

### **5.2.3 Focus group discussions for teachers (FGD 3 & Collage group 3)**

**Teacher 1:** This was a female teacher aged 55 years. She was married and her highest qualification was Bachelor of Education. Her teaching subjects were Agriculture and Life skills. She taught Grade 8 up to Grade 11. She initially belonged to the Department of Mathematics and Science. She resided on the campus in the teachers' line.

**Teacher 2:** This was a female teacher aged 53 years. She was married and her teaching subjects were Life skills and Computer studies. She taught Grade 8 up to Grade 10. Her highest qualification was Bachelor of Education. She is in the Department of Social Sciences and resided in Hlotse town.

**Teacher 3:** This was a female aged 38 years. She was married and her highest qualification was Honours in Education. Her teaching subjects were Sesotho and English Language. She taught Grade 8 up to Grade 11. She belonged to the Language Department. She resided in Hlotse town.

**Teacher 4:** This was the youngest male teacher aged 25 years. He was single. His subjects were Mathematics and Physics. He taught Grade 8 up to Grade 10. His highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education. He was in the Mathematics and Science Department and resided in Leribe village.

**Teacher 5:** This was a female married teacher aged 42 years. She taught English from Grade 8 up to Grade 11. Her highest qualification was Honours in Education. She belonged to the Department of Languages. She resided in Leribe village.

**Teacher 6:** This was a male teacher aged 32 years. He was married. He taught Science and Technology all Grades. His highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education. He belonged to the Department of Science and Technology. He resided in Pitseng village.

**Teacher 7:** This was male interpreter aged 43 years. He was married. He specialised in Sign Language and was an interpreter for all subjects offered in Grade 11. He was in the Department of Social Sciences. His highest qualification was a Diploma in Secondary Education. He resided in Pitseng village.

**Teacher 8:** This was a female teacher aged 48 years. She was single and taught Religious Studies from Grade 8 up to Grade 12. Her highest qualification was an Honours in Education. She belonged to the Department of Social Sciences. She resided in Pitseng village.

**Teacher 9:** This was male Sign Language interpreter. He was 54 years old and single. His highest qualification was an Advanced Diploma in Special Education. He belonged to the Department of Social Sciences and was an interpreter for all subjects offered in Grade 8. He resided in Sebothoane.

**Teacher 10:** This was male Sign Language interpreter. He was 45 years old and single. His highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education. He belonged to the Department of Social Sciences and was an interpreter for all subjects in all Grades. He resided in Sebothoane.

### 5.3 THEMATIC FINDINGS

Three themes, which include multisectoral strategies that support DLs' academic performance, DLs' challenges that affect their academic performance, and factors influencing the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho, emerged from the findings.

*Table 5.4: Thematic findings*

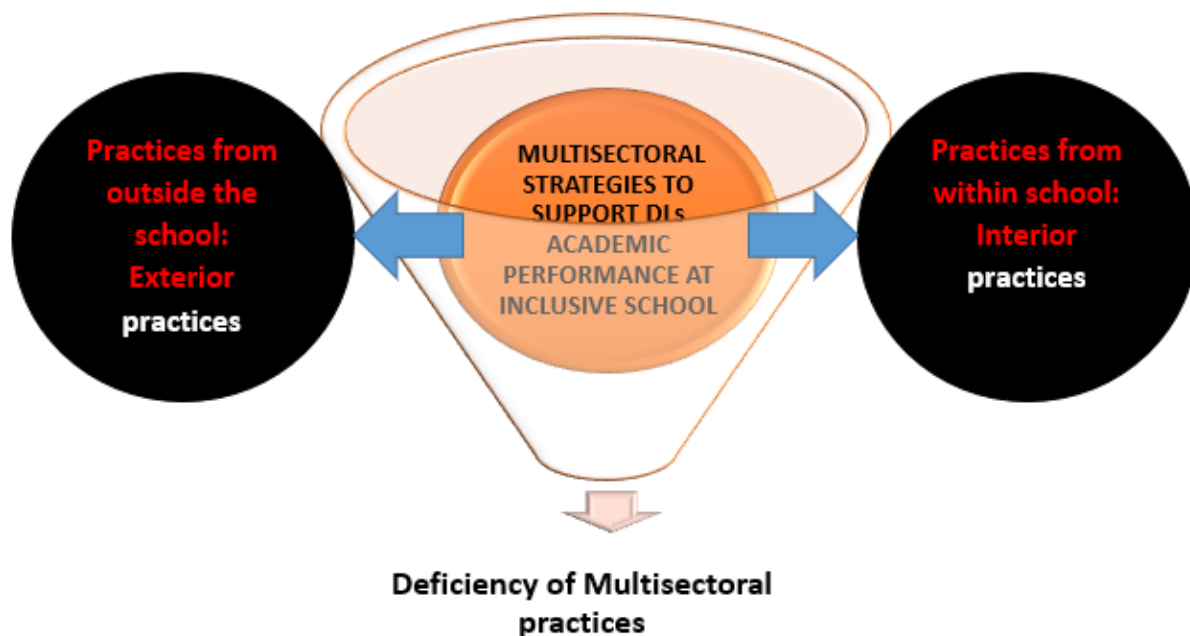
Themes	Subthemes		
1. Multisectoral strategies that support DLs' academic performance at an inclusive school	1.1 Practices from within the school (Interior practices)	1.1.1 Personal support 1.1.2 Self-support 1.1.3 Environmental cohesion support 1.1.4 Collaboration engagement support	
	1.2 Practices from outside the school (exterior practices)	1.2.1 Governmental support 1.2.2 Non-Governmental support 1.2.3 Neighbouring school support 1.2.4 Institution of higher learning support 1.2.5 Health support	-Providing additional training skills
	1.3 Deficiency of Multisectoral practices	3.1 Ignorance of the mode of communication 3.2 Segregation	
2. DLs' challenges affecting their	2.1 Sign language as a barrier to learning		

academic performance at an inclusive school	2.2 Teachers' misunderstand with deaf culture 2.3 One size fits all curriculum and assessment 2.4 Discrimination		
3. Factors influencing DLs' academic performance at an inclusive school	3.1 Enabling factors	3.1.1 Sharing of information among stakeholders and deaf learners 3.1.2 Breaking language barrier 5.2.3.1.3 Peer learning 3.1.4 Varying teaching approaches and assessment tools	
	3.2 Facilitating factors	3.2.1 Workshop training for teachers 3.2.2 Counselling sessions for sign language interpreters 3.2.3 Deaf learners counselling therapy	

### 5.3.1 Multisectoral strategies that support the DLs' academic performance at an inclusive school in Lesotho

This study found that multisectoral strategies, which include practices from within the school (interior practices) and practices outside the school (exterior practices), help enhance DLs' academic performance at Lesotho's inclusive schools. The study also revealed that there are no multisectoral practices in Lesotho's inclusive schools that enhance DLs' academic performance. The findings have revealed that the participants, who included learners, as well as teachers, interpreters, and heads of departments, observed some positive practices in their school and outside their school that support the academic performance of DLs. Figure 5.1 demonstrate the representation of the multisectoral strategies that support DLs' academic performance in inclusive schools.

*Figure 5.1: Multisectoral strategies to support DLs' academic performance at an inclusive school in Lesotho*



*Source: The researcher*

#### **5.4 Practices within the school: interior practices**

Participants' responses from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have revealed that there are current practices within the school such as personal support, self-support, environmental cohesion support, and collaboration engagement support, that serve as multi-sectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

##### **5.4.1 Personal support**

The participants' responses from FDGs have shown that personal support is a practice within the school that supports the academic performance of DLs. The illustrations of personal support are identified from learners, teachers, non-academic staff members, as well as individual parents, who seemed interested in knowing the sign language and truly wishing for DLs' success. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*"Yah! I think individuals who wish to assist them, although helping DLs is not a specific planned practice. I am saying this, because I would assist them with the assignment"*  
(Learner 1, FGD 1).

*“Other learners are truly on our side, especially during the discussion. They will join us and work with them as well in class work activities. Some are supportive”* (Learner 6, FGD 2).

*“With laughter, more especially those who are eager to know Sign Language! They are good opportunists, you know I like them”* (Learner 3, FGD 1).

Moreover, some participants from the FGD 3 acknowledged the presence of interpreters as another support that supports the academic performance of DLs. Some participants intimated that individual teachers in their leisure time were an important form of support. Hence, they carry on remedial classes that helped DLs to fill the gap on where they lagged behind during lessons. Also, some participants have intimated that solitude is a important way of supporting DLs. The participants shared the following;

*“I consider the presence of interpreters as great support, since they are the ones who break the language barrier between the hearing world and the deaf world, and our mediator”* (Teacher 2, FGD 3).

*“I have an example of a teacher who would always ask us as learners to interpret in Sign Language to assist DLs in the absence of an interpreter, particularly on weekends. I appreciate that”* (Learner 6, FGD 2). *“Shrugging shoulders! ‘Na, I see the supporting practices as more in isolation than multisectoral strategies. Every individual has their target of focus, or what they are interested in”* (Learner 2, FGD 1).

*“Just like us, the main target of interacting with DLs daily, joining discussion groups with them, and assisting in interpreting at the assembly helps us to be Sign Language interpreters in the future* (Learner 3, from FGD 1).

*The main intention is to further our studies after our Grade 11 and then become professionals”* (Learner from 1, FGD 1).

In FGD 1, the participants happily shouted with laughter, since in their school support is considered a priority. One participant shared the following;

*“That is the spirit!”* (Learner 7, from FGD 1 ).

Therefore, the participants viewed personal support as essential, because individuals were resourceful and voluntarily and willingly provide DLs with academic support. DLs felt

accepted and acknowledged in the inclusive setting which in turn enhanced their academic performance. Thus, personal support supported the academic performance of DL.

#### **5.4.2 Self-support**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that self-support is a practice within the school that supported the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that self-support is the support provided by the learners themselves, which is highly valued in their education. The learners considered themselves as capable learners who are responsible for their learning. Therefore, they should have a say in decision making, particularly on decisions that pertain to their education in inclusive schools. However, some participants considered deafness as vulnerability which leaves them desperate for anybody's support. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“My disability does not determine my ability; my education and my future are my responsibility. My well-being matters more, and self-love just makes me believe in myself”* (Learner 4, FGD 1). *“Nothing for us without us”! This is exactly where the saying applies. In any practice, our involvement and/or participation as the member of the group is of good value”* (Learner 5, FGD 2, quoting the slogan of the International Disability Conference, 1993):

*“Almost 90% of the schoolwork is my responsibility. I will apply my skills and experiences to make my academic work better”* (Learner 5, FGD 1).

*“We DLs as well do not want to see anyone of us suffering, both academically and financially. Therefore, we support each other, because we are aware that the situation affects our academic work but... it's like it is not enough”* (Learner 2, FGD 1, showing emotional expression).

*“I love playing soccer a lot. Whenever I came from the field I feel relieved. I feel as if I have expressed something. You know sometimes we need a place to share. If there is no platform, I make one in sports, and go back to my studies fresh-minded”* (Learner 7, FGD 2).

*“I am a dancer and the competitions are rare. I hope our school could have such programmes. They train focus, build the confidence of standing in front of people, and refresh our minds. Therefore, dancing makes me start my lessons with passion”* (Learner 6, FGD 2).

Some participants have articulated clearly their responsibility as learners in their education. The participants believed this to be a pathway to self-motivate and self-support. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“Being patient with our schoolwork, and not giving up even when it is difficult, is a way of demonstrating the love of our work”* (Learner 6, FGD 2).

*“Self-acceptance as well helps us to understand that our way of learning is far different from that of the hearing learners”* (Learner 5, FGD 1).

Therefore, the participants have revealed that self-support is a practice within the school that supports the academic performance of DLs. Thus, the learners identified themselves as potential agents of self-support in their academic performance.

### **5.4.3 Environmental cohesion support**

The participants’ responses from Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) have revealed that the environmental cohesion support is an interior practice that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that environmental cohesion is the support obtained from a friendly environment, an environment that is accommodating and promoting the learners’ academic performance. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“It is a fact that the church enrolled learners with disability to learn together at the same school with their hearing peers. I consider this chance that is given to them it as crucial support. It is therefore their responsibility as DLs to work hard and thrive”* (Teacher 12, FGD 3).

*“It is crucial for the church to give us a chance and get the opportunity of going to school”* (Learner 9, FGD 2). *“The calibre of the school and church services contribute to developing and educating DLs holistically, academically, psychologically, and spiritually. The practice promotes an accommodating environment that ensures our value regardless of disability”* (Teacher 10, FGD 3).

*“You know! Some of us only attend the church while at school, since it is the only place where interpreters are there in the church. Then we become part of the congregation”* (Learner 6, FGD 2).

*Then we receive our spiritual healing and engage in our studies well. Amen”* (Learner 4, FGD 1).

This last rejoinder by the participant Learner 4 (FGD 1) was uttered sarcastically with a lot of fun, and group members all burst out in laughter. However, the participant Teacher 10 (FGD 3) further emphasised the importance of having School Governing Bodies (SGBs) as participating stakeholders. The participant shared the following;

*“True the initiatives of SGBs is accorded a preference. They arranged various meetings in order to create awareness about the situation of their school”* (Teacher 10, FGD 3).

Furthermore, the participants intimated that although the SGBs are representatives of other stakeholders within the school, they provide supportive authority and use their experience to solve academic issues faced by DLs. One participant shared the following;

*“The visits of some NGOs and the Ministry of Education and Training departments to this school with advice on the calibre of teachers that should be hired is of course very supportive”* (Teacher 9, FGD 3).

Therefore, participants’ responses from Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) have revealed that the environmental cohesion support is an interior practice that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have revealed that the church believed in the ability of all individual, including DLs. Hence, it had the vision to provide DLs with an opportunity to learn together at the same school with their hearing peers and improve their competence skills.

#### **5.4.4 Collaboration engagement support**

The participants’ responses from FDGs have revealed that collaboration engagement support is a practice that supports the academic performance of DLs. The participant learners defined collaboration engagement support as the social and academic activities performed at school level that portray support. The participants considered such activities as collaborative and cooperative, and thus enhancing the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. The participants shared the following;

*“I am a soccer player and an athlete playing in the school team. This means being engaged in the school team provided me an opportunity to demonstrate my skills and talents”* (Learner 4, FGD 1).

*“Teaming with DLs socially creates a strong squad that makes us learn together through challenges and successes”* (Learner 6, FGD 1).

*“Sports clubs provide us with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. We even express our feelings through sports; some of us express our feelings through dancing”* (Learner 8, FGD 2).

Furthermore, the participants emphasised on the importance of academic clubs as well, that enhance the competence skills of the learners, as DLs compete with their peers from different schools. The participants intimated that the interaction of learners in different platforms, or different settings and contexts, is a crucial initiative of peer learning, involving fun, feedback, connection and support. The participants shared the following;

*“Yeah! Most DLs who participated in Science and English clubs obtain good results”* (Teacher 6, FGD 1).

*“Even if we're interested we are sometimes disadvantaged because of the absence of an interpreter in such clubs. However, we do benefit a lot from educational clubs because that is where we get the opportunity to review our classroom experiences”* (Learner 4, FGD 1).

*“Meeting and socialising with our colleagues outside the classroom is a form of positive reinforcement”* (Learner 3, FGD ). *“Peer learning yielded positive results on our side. Maybe it's because they interact freely with their colleagues and the language is not too formal”* (Teacher 8, FGD 3).

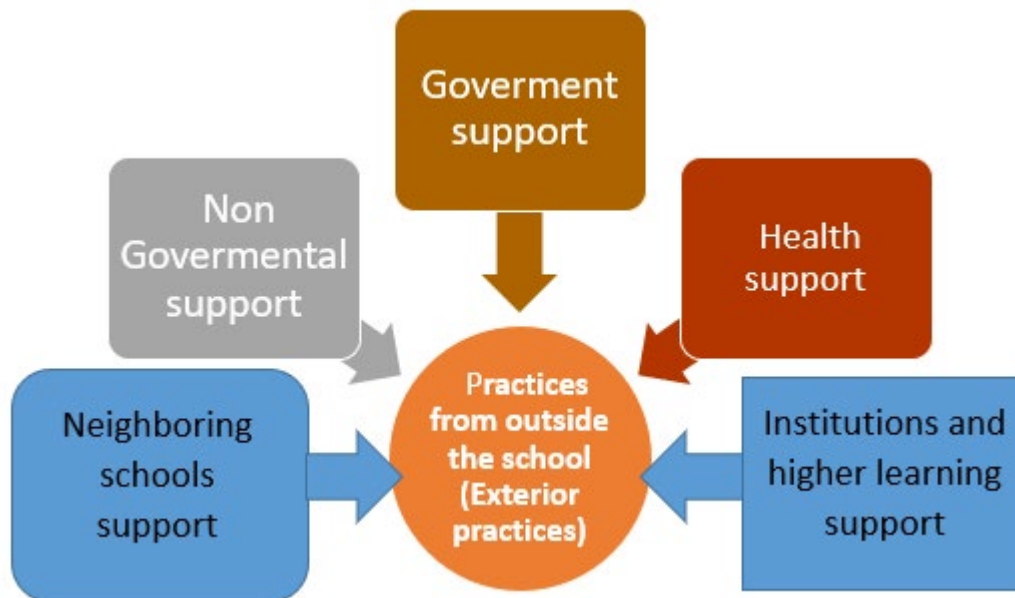
Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that collaboration engagement is a practice that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participant learners viewed collaboration engagement as the social and academic activities performed at school level that portray support. The participants considered such activities as collaborative and cooperative, and thus enhancing the academic performance of DLs.

## **5.5 Practices from outside the school: exterior support**

Another sub-theme that emerged from FGDs are the practices from outside the school. The participants have revealed that there is exterior support that enhances the academic performance of DLs, which include governmental support, non-governmental support, neighbouring schools support, health support, and institutions of higher learning support. The participants have imitated that exterior support is largely motivated by the sense of sympathy

and vulnerability of Deaf Learners in Lesotho’s inclusive schools. Figure 5.2. shows a schematic representation of exterior support.

*Figure 5.2: Exterior support that supports the academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools*



*Source: The researcher*

### **5.5.1 Governmental support through the Ministry of Education**

The participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that governmental support is an external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have intimated that Governmental support involves Government entities that support DLs financially and academically. The participants appreciated the support provided by the Government, as one of the active stockholders in the school. The following responses from FGDs help illustrate this point:

*“The Ministry of Education and Training has made several initiatives to support the education of DLs, including paying their school fees. Thus, their education is guaranteed, since DLs are never dismissed from classes for not paying fees” (Teacher 1, FGD 3).*

*“The ministry has its system of governance that stops the sponsorship of DLs. Once the learner fails s/he is left un-sponsored. We face many conditions that influence our failure and I think we do not deserve that punishment” (Learner 6, FGD) 2.*

*“The ministry also looks for donations of technology-based devices that help ease the teaching and learning of DLs” (Teacher 3, FGD3).*

*“Ummm! The use of devices that are technology-based within the school is attractive and improves the attention span of all learners” (Teacher 7, FGD 3).*

*“The technology devices are Deaf friendly as well” (Teacher 2, FGD 3).*

*“The examination council of Lesotho also created a moderation platform for DLs during the final examination. This is a sign of recognition of DLs’ plight and commitment to develop their academic performance even, though the understanding still lacks” (Teacher 7, FGD 3).*

Some participants appreciated the support from the ministry, but expressed their concern about strict sponsorship regulations which cannot be negotiated. The participants shared the following;

*“The ministry is helping us with numerous things, including school fees, feeding, stationery, and transport. However, the ministry does not communicate with the schools they assist in order to obtain relevant feedback” (Teacher 2, FGD 3).*

*“The ministry would just bring the bus to transport us home when their schedule allows them, and in most cases it comes outside the school calendar” (Learner 4, FGD 1).*

*“...you can’t believe it! Due to lack of communication between the school and the Ministry, we left the school without sitting for examinations, which were delivered home” (Learner 5, FGD 1).*

Therefore, participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that governmental support is an external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Thus, open discussions and suggestions from all stakeholders including DLs, the Ministry, and the inclusive school are necessary. Thus, the support provided by the Government, as one of the active stockholders in the school, is appreciated.

### **5.5.2 Non-Governmental support**

The participants’ responses from FGDs have also revealed that non-governmental support is a critical practice from outside the school that supports the academic performance of DLs. The participants have intimated that non-governmental support involves entities outside government boundaries that interact and show interest in supporting the academic performance

of DLs. Thus, participants identified such forms of non-governmental support as the provision of additional training skills, neighbouring school support, institutions of higher learning support, and health support.

#### **5.5.2.1 Providing additional training skills**

The responses from FGDs have revealed that the provision of additional skills is one form of non-governmental support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that such organisations provide additional skills that are not provided by the school. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“We are also lucky that our school is visited by non-governmental organisations. Some of them equip our learners with computer skills. The learners are trained for a certain period of time and then awarded certificates”* (Teacher 8, FGD 3).

*“Some non-governmental organisations used to support our vulnerable DLs with toiletry and take them to different training sessions”* (Learner 7, FGD 2).

Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that non-governmental support is another exterior multisectoral support that enhances the academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools. Hence, they provide DLs with additional skills which are not available in their schools, including computer training courses.

#### **5.5.3 Neighbouring school support**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that neighbouring school support is another form of external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have intimated that neighbouring school support involves the common practices of fundraising among schools in the sub-zonal region, with the intention of contributing to the academic performance of DLs. The participants shared the following;

*“We normally celebrate the Sign Language Day per annum with our neighbouring schools, though it is not regular. This is done by raising funds to buy technology devices to help ease the teaching and learning of DLs”* (Teacher 4, FGD 3).

*“...Hey! That is called a silent day, we all speak in Sign Language. If you talk, you are made to pay R5. Even teaching and learning are done through Sign Language. The day appears too long for us, but very accommodating and informative”* (Learner 2, FGD 1).

*“(Rising and emphasising)The day made me proud of my native language”* (Learner 4, FGD 1).

Therefore, participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that neighbouring school support is another form of external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants consider the support from the neighbouring schools as the perceived multisectoral strategies that critically enhance the academic performance of DLs.

#### **5.5.4 Institutions of higher learning support**

The participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that institutions of higher learning support is another form of external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that institutions of higher learning support involves the recognition that is given to learners with disabilities, including DLs as special cases, in their admission criterion just to accommodate them. The participants shared the following;

*“DLs are recognised in our local institutions of higher learning. They hire sign language interpreters. Therefore, in our follow-up after DLs complete their high school level, we obtained great support from these institutions”* (Teacher 8, FGD 3).

*“Some even revisit us to obtain experience on how to work with DLs.”* (Teacher 6, FGD 3).

Therefore, participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that institutions of higher learning support is another form of external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that the institutions of higher learning accommodate them and use the inclusive schools from which they learned as their reference, particularly when they come across the challenges concerning DLs’ teaching and learning.

#### **5.5.5 Health support**

The participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that health support is another major external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that health support involves the specific attention they get from health services. The findings have revealed that the support they are given increases their awareness of chronic diseases. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“The nurses are normally sent to our school for us to take vaccinations for infectious diseases and, lately, they collaborate with the national association of the Deaf and distribute Universal Serial Bus (USBs) with awareness videos” (Learners 5, FGD2).  
“Yeah! Our nearby hospital recognises our school as well. They always update us about vaccinations and raise awareness of infectious diseases. However, our learners experience lack of privacy due to the absence of sign language in health services” (Teacher 9, FGD 3).*

Therefore, participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that health support is another major external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Even though the practices are still more solitary they critically enhance the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that their healthy well-being promotes effective engagement in their studies.

### **5.6 Deficiency/Inadequacy of multisectoral practices**

The participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that the contribution of multisectoral practices in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho’s inclusive schools is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. Participants have revealed influencing factors that negates the contribution of multisectoral practices in their school, including lack of communication and segregation. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“In my view, I see no practices of support here except that DLs are attending school like any other learners, which is their right” (Learner 1, FGD 1).*

*“Litichere lia ba tenehela” (Some teachers are behaving impatiently to our fellow DLs) (Learner 11, FGD 2).*

*“This is mostly identified when DLs are lagging behind and require a teacher to repeat the meanings of certain points” (Learner 4, FGD 1).*

*“...sometimes they are lost and demand clarity” (Learner 4, FGD 2).*

*“The pace of teaching that some teachers have does not accommodate DLs. They are too fast when teaching and ignore the use of the chalkboard.”*

Therefore, participants’ responses from FGDs have revealed that the contribution of multisectoral practices in enhancing the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho’s inclusive

schools is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. Hence, there are influencing factors that negates the contribution of multisectoral practices in their school.

### **5.6.1 Ignorance of the mode of communication**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that ignorance of the mode of communication is another influencing factor that negates the positive contribution of multisectoral practices in their school. The findings have revealed that ignorance of the mode of communication stems from reluctance among teachers to learn Sign Language. Hence, Sign Language is the most appropriate means of communication, although some teachers of DLs in an inclusive school are reluctant for assimilate it. The participants shared the following;

*“Teachers relax a lot; they do not bother equipping themselves with Sign Language skills. They rely desperately on Sign Language interpreters”* (Teacher 4, FGD 3).

*“The absence of interpreters becomes a challenge among these teachers, since the whole system of teaching and learning DLs stops”* (Teacher 1, FGD 3).

*“If they care and support the DLs academically, they should have made an effort to assimilate Sign Language since their arrival at this school. The initiative would have denoted a sense of dedication and clear practice of support”* (Learner 7, FGD 2).

*“(With the high-pitched voice) In the absence of interpreters, some teachers will be teaching without using Sign Language. Thus, DLs lose much information during the lesson, which implies lack of support”* (Learner 4, FGD 2).

*“To my understanding or my observation, some subjects such as mathematics do not need both the interpreter and the teacher, since they are practical subjects but the ignorance of the language frustrates the DLs even more”* (Learner 3, FGD 2).

Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that ignorance of the mode of communication is another influencing factor that negates the positive contribution of multisectoral practices in their school. The findings have revealed that teaching and learning among DLs proceed mainly through Sign Language and thus its ignorance becomes an unsupportive practice.

### **5.6.2 Segregation**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that segregation is also is another influencing factor that negates the positive contribution of multisectoral practices in their

school. Participants have intimated that segregation is the practice in the inclusive school in which learners are grouped according to their level of ability. Hence, this contributes to DLs' poor academic performance. The participants shared the following;

*“This practice of separating the DLs from hearing learners denies us the opportunity to interact with them fully and help each other” (Learner 1, FGD 2).*

*“I wish we should be involved in decision making because being separated from hearing learners makes me feel discriminated” (Learner 2, FGD 2).*

*“I think it is a good practice because the DLs are always lagging behind and delay the process of teaching and learning. Therefore, when they are in their class, the teacher will teach according to their pace and apply appropriate approaches” (Learner 5, FGD 1).*

*“Some school practices are sometimes not so satisfying and we need a platform to share our grievances. This practice is done with no explanation, particularly this practice of separation” (Learner 4, FGD 1).*

Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that segregation is another influencing factor that negates the positive contribution of multisectoral practices in their school. Hence, this leads to poor academic performance among DLs. However, the separation of classes of DLs' classes according to ability defeats the purpose of inclusion and engenders the feeling of segregation among DLs.

### **5.7 DLS' challenges affect their academic performance at inclusive schools**

In the previous theme, the researcher presented the data relating to the multisectoral practices in an inclusive school in Lesotho. The findings have revealed that the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs is diverse. Also, the findings have revealed that the participation DLs themselves in supporting their academic performance is critical, since they constitute an important group of stakeholders.

In this theme, the findings are discussed in relation to the challenges that are still encountered in DLs' academic performance. This study has revealed that DLs experience various challenges affecting their academic performance. These include Sign Language as a barrier to learning, teachers' misunderstanding of the deaf culture, an one-size-fits-all curriculum, and assessment and discrimination.

### **5.7.1 Sign Language as a barrier to learning**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that Sign Language is a barrier to learning and affects the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that Sign Language as a barrier to learning is the inability to communicate through Sign Language. They view sign language as a significant attribute among stakeholders that supports the academic performance of DLs. However, all participants have revealed that there is lack of free communication, due to the language barrier. This in turn leads to lack of networking among stakeholders within the inclusive school, as well as outside the school. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“In most cases, DLs are not attended because most people around them do not know Sign Language” (Learner 7, FGD 1).*

*“DLs experience the challenge of inappropriate services on the school campus, and outside the campus including at hospitals and other offices, because people do not know or understand their language (Sign Language). Even at school, teachers cannot assist them in the absence of interpreters” (Learner 3, FGD 1).*

*“There is communication barrier, especially among DLs, their teachers, and other able-bodied learners” (Teacher 10, FGD 3).*

*“...and therefore this affects their teaching and learning process from running smoothly, and their interaction with hearing peers becomes a struggle” (Teacher 9, FGD 3).*

Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that Sign Language is a barrier to learning and affects the academic performance of DLs. Hence, this lack of Sign Language acquisition among stakeholders within and outside the inclusive context is the main challenge affecting the teaching and learning of DLs, which in turn affects their academic performance.

### **5.8 Teachers' misunderstanding of deaf culture**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that misunderstanding deaf culture is also one of the main challenges that affect the academic performance of DLs. The participants highlighted that teachers' misunderstanding deaf culture is regarded as illiteracy in terms of deaf norms and practices. They further emphasised the need for hearing learners to be oriented

in deaf cultural practices in order to improve their relations with DLs. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“DLs fail to merge deaf culture with the hearing culture that prevails within the teaching and learning process, since the major part of the national curriculum is based on practices of the hearing world. The teachers as well are not aware and therefore cannot appreciate the deaf culture”* (Teacher 7, FGD).

*“Teachers who are not knowledgeable in deaf culture are expected to produce better results among DLs, and this is the most worrying challenge we are experiencing”* (Learner 3, FGD 1).

Therefore, participants’ responses from FDGs have revealed that misunderstanding deaf culture is also one of the main challenges that affect the academic performance of DLs. The findings have revealed that both participant learners and teachers concur that ignorance to deaf culture is a major contributing factor to the dismal academic performance of DLs.

### **5.9 One-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment**

The participants’ responses from FDGs have revealed that problems in curriculum and assessment are challenges in the teaching and learning that affect the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment, which is fixed and rigid, is inappropriate to the conditions of DLs because it does not allow flexibility. They emphasised the need to modify the curriculum in order to accommodate various assessment methods, since all learners including DLs are inappropriately subjected to one method of assessment. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“The curriculum does not cater for DLs because everything including assessment is treated as normal in the syllabus. Nothing is modified to accommodate the needs of DLs”* (Teacher 6, FGD 3).

*“It becomes a challenge to DLs, because the major part of the national curriculum and assessment is based on the hearing world”* (Teacher 5, FGD 3).

*“...even if teachers can vary their methods of teaching and assessment to cater for the needs of DLs, the final assessment tool is rigid as it is applied to every learner, irrespective of their diversity”* (Teacher 9, FGD 3).

Therefore, participants’ responses from FDGs have revealed that problems in curriculum and assessment are challenges in the teaching and learning that affect the academic performance of

DLs. The findings have revealed that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment, which is fixed and rigid, is inappropriate to the conditions of DLs because it does not allow flexibility. This in turn affects the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### **5.10 Discrimination**

The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that discrimination is one of the main challenges that affect the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. Participants have intimated that discrimination is an exclusionary challenge that is experienced by both DLs and hearing learners. Hence, this challenge is portrayed when DLs isolate themselves in groups during school intervals and when teachers exercise negligence in classroom participation. The participants claimed that this practice negatively affects the academic performance of DLs. The following responses from FDGs help illustrate this point:

*“As much as we are practising inclusion, there is still the common practice of isolating groups of DLs and hearing learners. I feel that there is a sense of discrimination prevailing” (Teacher 5, FGD 3).*

*“When distributing of Sign Language dictionaries and developing projects, the supporting organisation, which is the National Association of the Deaf (NADL) demonstrated discriminative practices by concentrating only on DLs and ignoring the presence of hearing learners” (Learner 5, FGD 1).*

*“We are not treated equally with hearing learners and not being accepted to participate in other sporting activities makes us feel discouraged and incapable in some life dimensions” (Learner 3, FGD 1).*

Therefore, participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that discrimination is one of the main challenges that affect the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. The findings have revealed that the this discrimination is portrayed when DLs isolate themselves in groups during school intervals and when teachers exercise negligence in classroom participation.. Hence, this practice negatively affects the academic performance of DLs.

### **5.11 Factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs**

This section presented the findings on this theme in relation to data generation through collage with the same groups used in the FGDs, in order to explore the factors that enable multisectoral

strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The findings have revealed important enabling factors on multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

Through collage-guided discussions, the participants cut and pasted pictures, words, written captions, and accompanying explanations of pictures during collage creations as illustrated in Figures 5.3 to 5.5. In Figure 5.3, deaf and hearing learners inclusively constructed a collage depicting factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho.

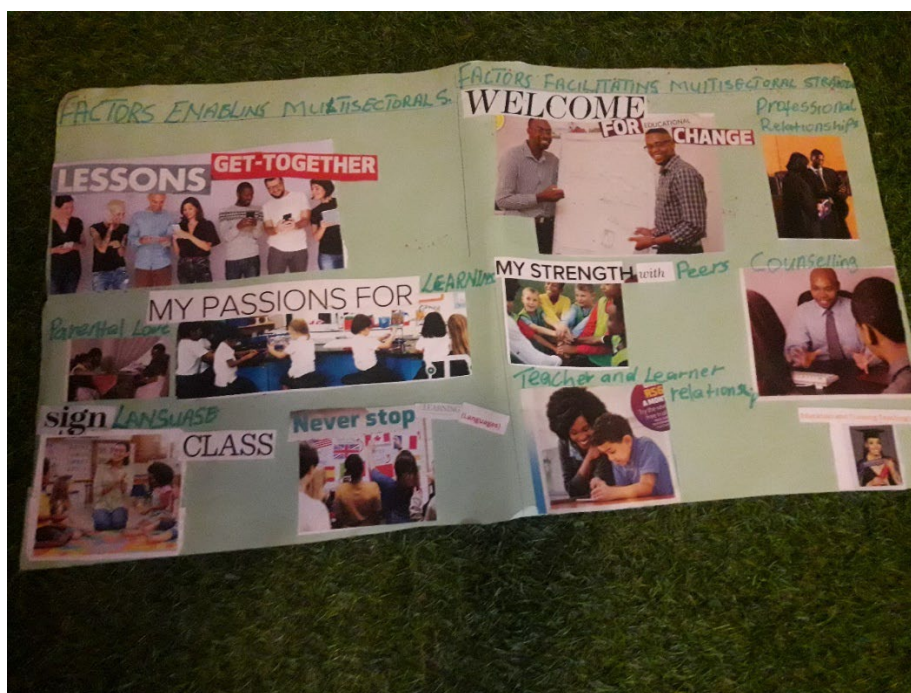
*Figure 5.3: Collage 1*



*Source: The researcher*

In Figure 5.4, deaf and hearing learners collaboratively constructed a collage depicting factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho.

*Figure 5.4: Collage 2*



*Source: The Researcher*

In Figure 5.5 teachers constructed a collage depicting the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho.

*Figure 5.5: Collage 3*

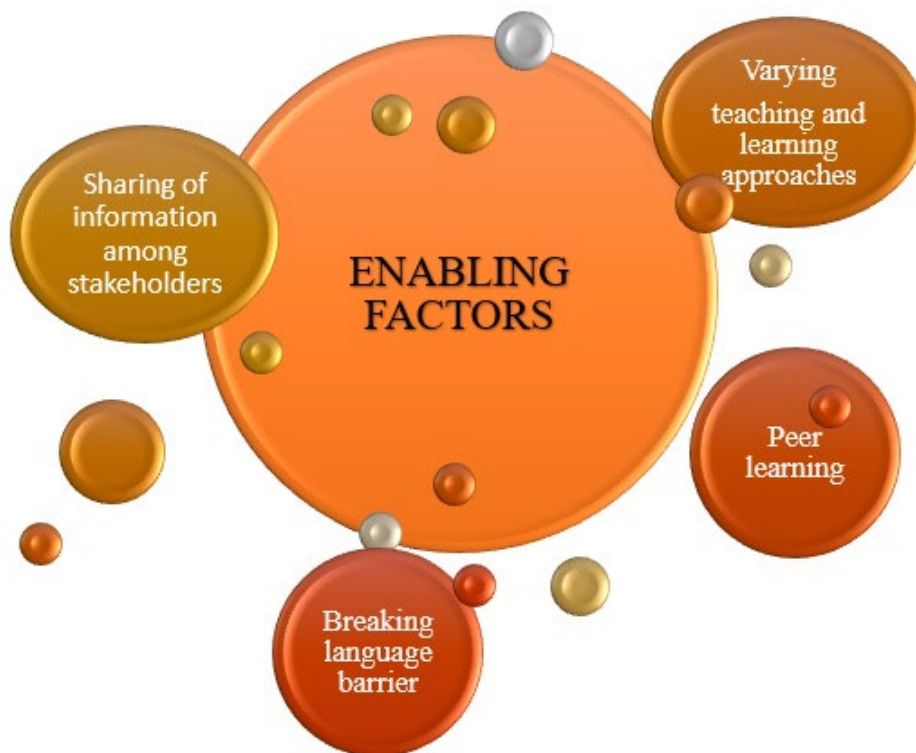


*Source: The researcher*

## 5.12 Enabling factors

Through the collage-guided discussions, the participants highlighted that there are factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support enhance the academic performance of DLs. The participant learners and teachers have revealed that the sharing of information among all stakeholders including DLs, breaking the language barrier, variation of teaching and learning approaches, and peer learning, are critical factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho’s inclusive schools. Figure 5.6 outline the scheme of factors enabling the multisectoral strategies to support academic performance of DLs.

*Figure 5.6: Factors enabling multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs*



*Source: The researcher*

### **5.13 Sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs**

The participants' responses from collage have revealed that sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs is a significant factor that enables the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. Sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs involves the inclusion of representatives in school forums to voice out their experiences, to contribute to the issues that concern them, and to be involved in decision making. The following responses in form of quotations from collage help illustrate this point:

*"We prefer to be informed about the things happening around us so that we can have a say and not be pushed without any explanation" (Learner 4, Collage 2). "Since we are the consumers, sharing our views and our involvement in our education reminds us that we are responsible for our education" (Learner 4, Collage 1).*

In the collage construction, the participants portrayed the living and working together of DLs with their hearing counterparts, teachers, interpreters, and others in their school. The participants in their captions shared the following;

*"...yes in our collage we showed that sharing and working together with all involved in the teaching and learning enable collaboration" (Learner 3, Collage 1)*

*“If the special education office and curriculum and assessment can visit our school and work hand-in-hand with the school it helps us to discuss and share our experiences” (Teacher 2, Collage 3).*

*“Teachers form part of a multisectoral strategy. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and its partners need to involve them fully in decision making because they are hands-on and thus have the experience to share” (Teacher 10, Collage 3).*

*“The involvement of the school, particularly DLs as part of stakeholders in the issues that concerns them, enables multisectoral strategy to enhance their academic performance, since they are now able to voice their views” (Teacher 1, Collage 3).*

Therefore, participants’ responses from collage have revealed that sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs is a significant factor that enables the multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. The findings have revealed that the sharing of information among all involved stakeholders in the teaching and learning of DLs is crucial in enhancing their academic performance.

### **5.13.1 Breaking language barrier**

The participants’ responses from collage have revealed that breaking the language barrier is a significant factor that enables the multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Hence, breaking the language barrier involves free and open communication among all stakeholders. The findings have revealed that this would also enable networking among all stakeholders within and outside their school premises. The participant in their captions shared the following;

*“...true there is an offer given to teachers and hearing learners to attend Sign Language lessons freely within the school campus. The purpose is to promote effective communication among stakeholders” (Learner 5, Collage 2).*

Some participants have suggested that the school authorities should ensure that there is a compulsory lesson for Sign Language, whether it is included in the curriculum or not. One participant shared the following;

*“The school authorities working cooperatively with timetable managers should create a slot for a sign Sign Language lesson. We should not wait for the curriculum since this hinders freedom of communication” (Learner 4, Collage 1).*

Some participants pointed out that everyone within the inclusive context should have the love for Sign Language. Hence, teachers in particular need to develop a positive attitude towards Sign Language as they offer their educational services to DLs. The participants shared the following;

*“..hmm teachers should have the love for Sign Language so that DLs can acquire information straight from the source, not as secondhand” (Learner 3 Collage 2). “Indeed Sign Language learning will benefit all through smooth communication and would ensure the accommodation of DLs in the inclusion, thus enabling multisectoral strategies to enhance their academic performance” (Learner 8, Collage 1).*

Therefore, the findings revealed that Sign Language learning establishes a common ground and allows all stakeholders involved to fully understand each other without relying desperately on the information from the third party, which is an interpreter.

### **5.13.2 Peer learning**

During the collage depiction, the participants have also revealed that peer-learning is a significant factor that enables multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. Hence, peer-learning includes DLs learning from hearing learners and vice versa, as well as cooperative learning and the expression of love among learners towards one another. The findings have revealed that peer-learning helps learners to build relationships and enable academic networking within their schools. The participants shared the following;

*“As learners, we have more information to share from hearing learners to DLs and vice versa. Learning from each other promotes a tight relationship among learners, hence free communication” (Learner 4, Collage 1).*

*“This justifies the need to learn Sign Language so that we can work together” (Learner 9, Collage 1).*

*“Classmate relationships among colleagues form part of multisectoral strategies, since there is freedom of speech and the use of informal language unlike in the classroom context” (Learner 7, Collage 2).*

*“Learning from one another as colleagues encourages education preference among learners” (Teacher 9, Collage 3).*

The participants have also revealed that peer-to-peer learning is a major collaborative aspect in multisectoral strategies that contributes to knowledge base sharing among stakeholders. One participant shared the following;

*“The major influences to the improved academic performance are the learners themselves who develop positive attitudes among each other, and help each other to promote inclusive learning in their school”* (Teacher 10, Collage 3).

Therefore, the findings have revealed the significance of DLs who need to be part and parcel of the teaching and learning team in order to enhance their academic performance. The findings have also revealed peer learning as a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support enhance the academic performance of DLs.

### **5.13.3 Varying teaching approaches and assessment tools**

The participants’ responses from collage have revealed that varying teaching approaches and assessment tools is a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. Hence, varying teaching approaches and assessment tools are dynamic and flexible teaching and assessment approaches that accommodate all DLs. Participants have revealed that this variety of teaching approaches and assessment tools would accommodate and enhance the academic performance of DLs. The participants shared the following;

*“With the inclusion of DLs, the education system should devise other ways of teaching because the structure itself is failing them, leading to dismal academic performance”* (Teacher 1, collage 3).

*“The Ministry of Education and Training ( MoET) should visit our school to learn from our experiences, to replan and revise the teaching and assessment approaches, and to support the DLs academically”* (Teacher 3, Collage 3).

Learner 4, Collage 1 clarified the point on revising the assessment tool by mentioning that their involvement is not only about sharing their experience as potential assets within the inclusive school, but also working collaboratively with other stakeholders to improve their academic performance. The participant shared the following;

*“The assessment tool should be user friendly; it is too complicated for us.”*

*“...Yes, our involvement will play a major impact as know how minorities and also contribute to our success through working together with our educators” (Learner 2, Collage 1).*

Therefore, the findings from collage have revealed that varying teaching approaches and assessment tools is a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. The participant teachers and learners made it clear through collage that the teaching and assessment approaches in an inclusive setting should be collaboratively revised by concerned stakeholders. Hence, this would in turn enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs.

#### **5.14 Facilitating factors**

The participants’ responses from collage have revealed several factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. The participants drew much focus towards workshop training for teachers, counselling sessions for Sign Language interpreters, and Deaf Learners' counseling therapy. These were viewed as critical factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs.

##### **5.14.1 Workshop training for teachers**

The common element shared by the majority of participants in their collages was workshop training for teachers, as a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. In their reflection on the collage, workshop training for teachers is the refresher course in nurturing the acquired skills and knowledge to keep their teaching informed, particularly in a deaf-friendly way. The participants shared in their captions the following;

*“Teachers need to be trained or be equipped with some strategies on how well they can treat DLs, and how best they can assess them” (Teacher 8, Collage 3).*

*“We need an adequate supply of modernised equipment that is accessible and user-friendly to DLs, in order to enhance their learning” (Teacher 9, Collage 3).*

*“As teachers we form part of the multisectoral strategies, although we lack training. The workshops by special educators might help” (Teacher 3, Collage 3).*

Therefore, the findings have revealed the necessity for workshop training for teachers to improve their teaching and learning sessions in inclusive curriculum, and in turn support the academic performance of DLs.

#### **5.14.2 Counselling sessions for Sign Language interpreters**

The participants' responses from collage have revealed that the counselling sessions for Sign Language interpreters are a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. Hence, counselling sessions for Sign Language interpreters are the sessions that would equip Sign Language interpreters to assist in strengthening resilience among DLs within the school community and at home. It was evident that Sign Language interpreters' involvement would enable the multisectoral strategies to enhance DLs' academic performance. The participants shared the following;

*“Interpreters need counselling sessions to avoid the overprotection behaviour they portray towards DLs. They just act as if they are the only ones that support DLs.”* (Teacher 6, Collage 3).

*“My point exactly, hence interpreters are specialised teachers as well. They should prepare DLs or make them build resilience to the outer community, such as knowing and accepting who they are. They should not be offended by teasing terms used against them”* (Teacher 10, Collage 3).

*“Yeah, true, and parents should form part of the counselling session may be to accept the presence of deaf children in their families and build good family affairs with their children”* (Teacher 1, Collage 3).

Furthermore, the participants also revealed the need for Sign Language interpreters to join the counselling sessions and the workshops with teachers to cooperatively assist DLs to develop academically. One participant shared the following;

*“Sign Language interpreters need workshops in the evaluation stage to assist teachers in developing the work of DLs”* (Teacher 9, Collage 3).

Therefore, the findings have revealed that DLs need Sign Language interpreting counselling sessions which would equip them with skills and help build their resiliency towards the

challenges they encounter. It was evident that Sign Language interpreters' involvement would enable the multisectoral strategies to enhance DLs' academic performance.

### **5.14.3 Deaf Learners' counselling therapy**

The participants' responses from collage have revealed the need for Deaf Learners to receive counselling therapy, which is a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to enable the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that Deaf Learners' counselling therapy are the sessions done by social workers that create safe platforms for DLs to express their feelings via counselling, particularly as a result of deducing tension towards their studies. The participants shared the following;

*‘Sometimes we experience some stress without treatment. This, in turn, affects our academic performance’* (Learner 6, Collage 2).

*“ (With emotional anguish) Our academic work is affected by various factors that include family problems, classroom problems, and financial problems with which we have no one to share with other than the Sign Language interpreters who sometimes are not cooperative. We therefore need some space to share”* (Another Learner 1, Collage 1).

Therefore, the findings have revealed that participant learners, including DLs, also suffer from by emotional stress that in turn affects their academic performance in inclusive settings. Thus, it is evident that counselling therapy among DLs would enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs.

## **5.15 Chapter summary**

This chapter outlined data analysis and presentation. The data were presented using two methods, which are focus group discussions and the collage-guided discussion, in order to respond to the three research questions, as well as the aim and objectives, espoused in the study. Three major themes and several subthemes emerged during data analysis.

Also, the participants' narratives were presented verbatim in order to enhance the credibility of the research findings. The next chapter presents a more comprehensive discussion and

interpretation of the data, strengthened by reviewed literature and the theoretical lens adopted in this study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

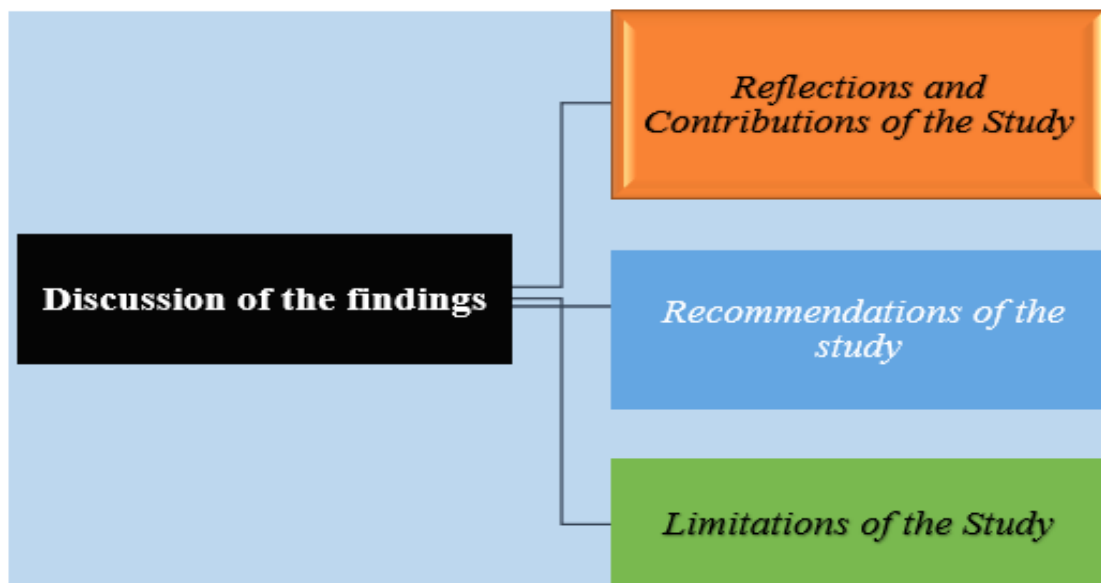
### **DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS, REFLECTIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the data analysis and the presentation of the findings. This chapter focused on the discussion of the findings, recommendations, reflections, contributions, and limitations of the study. The research findings have revealed that the voice of the learners, including the voice of Deaf Learners (DLs) as stakeholders, is the missing part of multisectoral strategies that enhances the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school. The study, therefore, explored the contribution of multisectoral strategies in enhancing the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The study followed a qualitative research approach within the transformative paradigm that acknowledges the roles of learners as a privilege and as appropriate participants for the transformation that takes place inside their learning environment as their natural setting. The study utilised a participatory research design that involved 40 purposeful chosen participants, consisting of staff members (teachers), DLs, and able-bodied learners.

The research findings have revealed that there are current practices within the school which include personal support, self-support, environmental cohesion support, and collaboration engagement support, that serve as multi-sectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The findings have also revealed that there is exterior support that enhances the academic performance of DLs, which include governmental support, non-governmental support, Neighbouring schools support, health support, and institutions of higher learning support. The findings have also unearthed possible practices through multisectoral strategies that might address the challenges faced by DLs in their academic performance. The study further employed the asset-based theory which explains that everyone in the community has his or her strengths that can be utilised to solve existing problems, as a lens to make sense of the findings (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Figure 6.1: Diagram format for Chapter 6



## 6.2 Research questions of the study

1. What are the multisectoral strategies that can support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?
2. What are the challenges faced by Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools that affect their academic performance?
3. What are the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?

## 6.3 Discussions of the findings

In this section, the study sought to respond to the three research questions that were espoused in this study.

**First research question: What are the multisectoral strategies that can support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?**

### **6.3.1 Multisectoral strategies to support DLs' academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools**

The research findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and collage have revealed that there are current practices within the school which include personal support, self-support, environmental cohesion support, and collaboration engagement support, that serve as multi-sectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The findings have also revealed that there is exterior support that enhances the academic performance of DLs, which include governmental support, non-governmental support, neighbouring schools support, health support, and institutions of higher learning support.

#### ***6.3.1.1 Practices within the school: interior practices***

The research findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and collage have revealed that interior practices include personal support, environmental cohesion support, and collaboration engagement support. All these practices constitute multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

The participants' personal support includes their strengths that involve their capabilities and skills as unique assets that enhance the academic development of DLs. The participants have intimated that individuals with personal strength-based assets are active agents that enhance the academic performance of DLs. As pointed out in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4.1), this is in line with personal strength assets, in which Missingham (2017) emphasises the role of each person as an asset. Hence, everyone has something to offer. The theory explains that individuals rely upon personal strengths, capacities, talents, and interpersonal skills, in which local community members could be seen as experts on their local conditions, and resources, who are valuable and knowledgeable (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Skill & Care, 2022). Within the asset-based theory, personal strengths or individual assets denote the potential of natural abilities in their domains, which emphasises the recognition and value of all people in the school and community as stakeholders that constitute multisectoral strategies.

The findings also concur with Lekhetho's (2018) observation that the involvement of varied views, expertise, and lived experiences in an inclusive setting, help strengthen the support. In addition, the participants considered support as a priority. Moreover, drawing from the asset-based principle, the participants have revealed that in their school support is considered a priority and they are aware of personal strength assets, although individuals' capacities and talents as unique assets are also utilised in enhancing the academic performance of DLs.

Furthermore, the research findings have revealed that assisting DLs as individuals creates a sense of isolation support in the inclusive school. However, this contradicts Balisi et al.'s (2019) observation that inclusive education implies the provision of shared ideas by stakeholders and appropriate networking to support services versus isolation.

Therefore, the study implies that personal support involves social and psychological support, as well as confidence building, which enhance the academic performance of DLs. Thus, the participants considered themselves agents of personal strength and could therefore use their capacities and talents as unique assets to support DLs. The study also revealed that DLs as individuals are also valued as personal strength-based assets and active agents capable of transforming their own academic performance.

The research findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and collage have also revealed that the sense of self is highly valued in learners' education. This concurs with Willis et al.'s (2016) (*cf.* 2.6.3.3) view that learners need to be valued as the immediate stakeholders, whose education is centred on their strengths. Some learners considered themselves as capable and responsible for their learning, and therefore should have a say in decision-making processes at the school. Thus, the research participants have revealed a sound sense of self-identity, including recognition, as invaluable assets because they considered themselves capable of supporting each other. The participants intimated that their abilities, gifts and talents, should be valued and used to enhance the academic performance of DLs. The participants further revealed their potential and capability to identify pertinent situations in which their potential could become the aspect of self-support in their learning. This concurs with Ebersohn and Eloff's (2006) view that capabilities and skills are valuable assets that need to be recognised in DLs' learning.

Thus, the findings have revealed that each learner has a particular interest or talent to display, such as poetry, sports, dance, and many others. Therefore, these different talents classify them as potential agents of self-support. For instance, some learners highlighted their love of sports and dance, and how they support this love supports their studies. Moreover, the research findings concurred with the findings from Lekhetso (2018) and Lee and Pott's (2018) study. These contemporary research studies identified the involvement of DLs as very essential, since their education is centered on their strengths (*cf.* 2.6.3.3).

Furthermore, they considered themselves as constituting multisectoral strategies that are practiced within the school and valued themselves as responsible for their education, which is

learner-to-learner support. On the contrary, Amri, Chatur & O'Campo (2022) observes that the practice of supporting themselves as colleagues alludes to the positive sense of sharing experiences, but solely supporting themselves as learners militates against collaborative approaches that span across all relevant stakeholders to address a common issue, which is the essence of multisectoral strategies.

The research findings also show that the friendly and accommodating environment and the setting they are learning within constitute supportive multisectoral strategies. Their knowledge of the past and current practices and the environmental cohesion support influence their understanding of multisectoral strategies and thus enhance the academic support of DLs. The participants further emphasised the input of the School Management Boards (SGBs), who play their role of organising the meetings with parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to create harmonious and conducive school environment within the school, for all stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning to improve the academic performance of DLs.

According to Wyk (2004), school governing bodies have the potential to contribute in addressing the issues concerning the school and facilitate effective participation of all stakeholders and its utility in an inclusive school. Hence, environmental cohesion support symbolises multisectoral strategies which promotes the interaction and networking of teachers, parents, and learners via school governing bodies' meetings. The research findings also pointed out that accessible school environments not only provide support, but also promote interaction among learners, teachers, and parents, as well as other stakeholders through SGBs, collaborative groups, and clubs at the school level. These findings corroborate those of Watson (2019), who observed that a supportive school environment is vital in creating effective teaching and learning (cf. Section 2.3).

The research findings have also revealed the importance of collaborative engagement support in enhancing the academic performance of DLs through multisectoral strategies. This involves social and academic clubs formed in schools which promote social and academic interaction among learners and teachers, and thus enhancing the academic performance of DLs. These findings align with Kelly et al.'s (2020) observation that promoting relationships among partners ensures social interaction and collaboration. Some studies, such as those of Jacob and Olisacmek (2016), and Atar and Bagci (2021) concurred that poorer social interaction and less active participation in the school community indicate an unsupportive school environment.

Therefore, the research findings have confirmed the concern raised in this study that the lack of contribution among stakeholders constitute the missing link that is necessary in enhancing the academic performance of DLs through multisectoral strategies in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Thus, DLs should be regarded as active agents of change and competent stakeholders that contribute important ideas in decision-making processes, whose absence leads to poor academic performance.

### **Practices from outside the school: exterior practices**

The research findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and collage have revealed that exterior practices include governmental support, non-governmental support, neighbouring schools support, health support, and institutions and higher learning support. All these practices also constitute multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

Participants have revealed that the Ministry of Education and Training is one of the active external support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have intimated that Governmental support involves Government entities that support DLs financially and academically. The participants appreciated the support provided by the Government, as one of the active stockholders in the school. The Ministry of Education also sponsors the school with Science and Technical skills and the participants appreciated these technologically-based initiatives. The findings concur with Leigh and Marschark's (2016) view that assistive technology is important to enhance opportunities for the Deaf and hard of hearing to access language and expand their communication opportunities.

They indicated that the open sponsorship that is provided to every Deaf learner and the donations of assistive devices support, encourage learners to participate actively in their learning. However, the participants are worried by poor communication between the Ministry and other stakeholders within the inclusive school. This concurs with Lee and Mathews' (2017) view that there is need for separate stakeholders to work together and accomplish a common mission through communication.

The research findings have also revealed the importance of non-governmental support as another exterior support in multisectoral strategies that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have intimated that this support involves providing DLs with additional skills not offered in their schools, such as computer training courses, which are essential in supporting the the academic performance of DLs. These findings therefore concur with UNICEF's (2021) observation that multisectoral strategies require collaboration among donors

and international agencies to ensure access to and quality of formal education to all, including DLs.

The participants again emphasised the need for open communication among stakeholders within the school and the non-governmental bodies. The non-governmental bodies offer appropriate support, such as computer training skills and award the learners with certificates after completing the course. Thus, non-governmental organisations enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs through the provision of computer training skills.

The research findings have also revealed the importance of Neighbouring schools in supporting the academic performance of DLs. Participants have revealed that neighbouring schools take initiatives to celebrate Sign Language Day with them DLs on which they generously provide them with donations. According to the deaf community, Sign Language is a preferred communication mode that is internationally recognised and celebrated globally (Australian Catholic Bishop Conference, 2021). The research findings have revealed that Neighbouring neighboring schools form a networking support team that is seen as a rational asset and bring forward means of interaction among individuals, groups, and other environments that contribute to achieving positive change in the academic performance of DLs (McKnight & Russel, 2018) (cf. 3.4).

The findings have also revealed that Sign Language Day celebration and the donations made by neighbouring schools are highly appreciated and considered as the best practice of multisectoral strategies that enhances the academic performance of DLs. The participants have revealed that the fundraising support that is offered by neighbouring schools benefits the school teaching system overall. Moreover, the celebration also reveals a sense of networking, interaction, and a better understanding of the deaf culture, and thus helps DLs develop a sense of belonging and acceptance within the community.

The research findings have further revealed the contributions of institutions of higher learning as exterior support that enhances the academic performance of DLs. Participants have intimated that institutions of higher learning support involves the recognition that is given to learners with disabilities, including DLs as special cases, in their admission criterion just to accommodate them. Participants have intimated that the institutions of higher learning accommodate them and use the inclusive schools from which they learned as their reference, particularly when they come across the challenges concerning DLs' teaching and learning.

These findings concur with Lee and Mathews's (2017) observation that health centers and higher institutions have strong group ties with the school community to promote partnership and develop a strong relationship that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

The research findings have also revealed that health support, shown by nearby health centers, is very crucial in enhancing the academic performance of DLs, although the participants criticised the absence of interpreters in the health services, which poses the challenge of language as a barrier. Chininthorn et al. (2016) concurred with these findings that there are no professional Sign Language interpreters readily available at any health facility.

In addition, the findings resonate with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which supports the necessity of providing understandable health information to Deaf people. Therefore, the success of health support to improve the academic performance of DLs in inclusive schools is in line with the view of the current study. The study underscores the importance of coordination and team work among multiple stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Training, as well as the DLs' voice, in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools .

#### ***6.3.1.2 Deficiency of multisectoral practices***

This sub-theme presented the findings pertaining to lack of multisectoral strategies that support enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools . The findings revealed that segregation and ignorance of the mode of communication, such as Sign Language, constitute sufficient evidence that the contribution of multisectoral practices in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. The participants' responses from FGDs have revealed that the. Participants have revealed influencing factors that negates the contribution of multisectoral practices in their school, including lack of communication and segregation.

Moreover, ignorance of the mode of communication constitute sufficient evidence that the contribution of multisectoral practices in supporting the academic performance of DLs is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. The findings challenge Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018), which argues that Sign Language should be used as a compulsory medium of instruction in all learning areas. Participants have revealed that lack of support has created the space for the realisation of ignorance to Sign Language. Meanwhile, Sign Language (SL) is regarded as a predominant means of communication for Deaf people. Landsberg et al. (2012) posed that Deaf Learners solemnly use Sign Language as a preferred communication mode.

This concurs with Özokcu's (2018) study, which revealed that the negative attitude of teachers towards DLs is highly demonstrated by various factors, including hesitancy to learn Sign Language. The Canadian Disability Studies Association (2020) also highlight that the practice of isolating DLs is demonstrated by the choice of language use by teachers and the school administration. The study, therefore, concluded that lack of Sign Language usage influences the teaching, learning, and academic performance of DLs, because DLs are unable to interact effectively with peers and teachers, and feel left out. Thus, it is essential for collaborative work to be put in place in order to support the academic performance of DLs.

Furthermore, the research findings have also revealed that segregation constitute sufficient evidence that the contribution of multisectoral practices in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. Participants have intimated that segregation is the practice in the inclusive school in which learners are grouped according to their level of ability. Hence, this contributes to DLs' poor academic performance. Segregation promotes a deficit-based approach. This means focusing on the deficiencies and problems of DLs, as a strategy to solve the problems, which militates against the asset-based theory employed as the lens of the current study. The asset-based theory's assurance is in active participation and empowerment of all stakeholders, including DLs as the basis of practice in decision making (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

The research findings have also revealed discrimination as an exclusionary practice that constitute sufficient evidence that the contribution of multisectoral practices in supporting the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools is inadequate and sometimes absolutely nil. The participants revealed that this challenge is portrayed when DLs isolate themselves in groups during school intervals and when teachers exercise negligence in classroom participation. The participants claimed that this practice negatively affects the academic performance of DLs. This concurs with Jaffe's (2020) view that segregation in education promotes low standards of academic performance.

Similarly, the Canadian Disability Studies Association (2020) observed that when DLs are taught as a group, it defeats the notion of what constitutes inclusion and leads to feelings of segregation. These findings, therefore, contradicts with the concept of multisectoral strategies and the asset-based theory employed in this study. The theory is based on the shared strengths and talents of the individuals involved, while multisectoral strategies similarly aim to engage

the voices of multiple partners that can leverage knowledge and expertise and their varied experiences in addressing problems encountered in inclusive settings.

The research findings also reveal that the segregation was made without the consent of immediate stakeholders, particularly the learners. Thus, it is evident from FGDs and collage that the atmosphere in the discussion groups frequently shifted from discussions to arguments. Furthermore, this practice contradicts the notion of inclusion.

Therefore, the study concludes that DLs should be identified and valued as potential assets in inclusive schools that are given sense of ownership and allowed to take responsibility for their education through multisectoral strategies. The participants appreciated the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting their academic performance in inclusive schools, although the support is more solitary than collaborative, while some of the participants find it missing or inadequate. The study unearthed the lack of understanding among stakeholders of what constitutes multisectoral strategies.

<b>Second research question: What are the challenges that affect the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?</b>
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### **6.3.2 DLs' challenges affecting their academic performance**

The research findings have revealed some challenges that negatively affect the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho. Such challenges include the Sign Language as a barrier, misunderstanding of deaf culture, the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment, and discrimination. Participants considered these challenges as contributing factors that lead to DLs' dismal academic performance in an inclusive school in Lesotho.

#### ***6.3.2.1 Sign Language as a barrier to learning***

This sub-theme discussed Sign Language as a barrier to learning and a challenge to DLs, affecting their academic performance in inclusive schools in Lesotho. The research findings have revealed that illiteracy of Sign Language among hearing learners as DLs' colleagues and among DLs' teachers, as well as other stakeholders within the inclusive setting, affects the academic performance of DLs. The findings from related literature revealed that Sign Language is the natural language of the DLs, as it fits with the visual orientation of language (Brentari & Coppola, 2012). Therefore, inadequate usage of Sign Language is regarded as a serious challenge to DLs' education. This challenge is mostly identified among DLs during teamwork, networking, and engagement with other stakeholders. According to Rosen (2014), the ability of DLs to interact and communicate effectively promotes interpersonal and social relations that foster the academic development DLs. Thus, it is particularly important to promote Sign Language literacy which would play a significant role in discussions with DLs on decision making in the inclusive schools.

Similarly, Ngobeni and Maimane (2020) observe that the gap created by Sign Language illiteracy among stakeholders in the inclusive school puts tremendous pressure on DLs to cope with their education. Sign Language illiteracy results in communication breakdown between various stakeholders of Lesotho's inclusive schools. Consequently, this has an impact on exterior support that enhances the academic performance of DLs, including health, institutions of higher learning, non-governmental organisations, and law enforcement agency services. There are neither policies nor legal provisions in the constitution of Lesotho that protect Sign Language usage and the right to access Sign Language interpretation services, save for school rules in an inclusive classroom. Therefore, the researcher's conviction is that Sign Language

should not be elective but a compulsory subject for all learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools, in order to promote multisectoral strategies that enhance the academic performance of DLs.

### ***6.3.2.2 Teachers' misunderstanding of the deaf culture***

The research findings have revealed that teachers' misunderstanding of the deaf culture is another major challenge that affects DLs' academic performance. The participants have acknowledged their misunderstanding of the deaf culture. Participant teachers and peer learners also revealed that they struggle with the appropriate approaches and assessment tools in the teaching and learning of DLs and find it hard to understand deaf culture. The participants highlighted that teachers' misunderstanding deaf culture is regarded as illiteracy in terms of deaf norms and practices. They further emphasised the need for able-bodied learners to be oriented in deaf cultural practices in order to improve their relations with DLs.

The findings align with observation that the the DLs' teacher strives in vain to maintain the language and culture of the DLs. Also, these findings were corroborated by Kelly et al.'s (2020) study which revealed that the cultural linguistic model of deafness promotes deaf identity, the use of their native language (Sign Language) and particular set of beliefs, history and so on. As a result, if the teachers lack understanding and appreciation of deaf culture and deaf community, they are not empowered to connect with DLs and support them meaningfully. According to Brentari & Coppola (2012), DLs strongly believe that they are a linguistic cultural minority, who consistently prefer to communicate through Sign Language, rather than via verbal means. However, the research findings have revealed that teachers working with DLs are not knowledgeable on Sign Language and DLs' culture, and how best they can teach them effectively.

On the other hand, Özokcu (2018) found that the teachers' attitude towards the inclusion of DLs were affected by such factors as age, gender, teaching experience, the level of learning with regards to receiving special education training, among others. This points to the significance of training courses on deaf culture and deaf education in teacher training institutions and universities in order to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The training would mitigate the challenge of DLs' dismal academic performance and equip teachers with the basics on DLs' norms and practices. Therefore, the study underscores the need for teachers and hearing learners to be trained in Sign Language and oriented in deaf cultural practices, in order to improve their relations with DLs and enhance their academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### ***6.3.2.3 One-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment***

The research findings have also revealed that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment used in education system is another major challenge affects the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho. Participants have intimated that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment, which is fixed and rigid, is inappropriate to the conditions of DLs because it does not allow flexibility. They emphasised the need to modify the curriculum in order to accommodate various assessment methods, since all learners including DLs are inappropriately subjected to one method of assessment. This is consistent with related literature. Meo (2010) emphasised the desperate need to adjust the curriculum to make learning universal and to accommodate DLs. Hence, since the learning outcomes and general assessment are centered on spoken language skills and deny learners an opportunity to exercise their power of knowledge flexibly, the poor academic performance suffered by DLs hinders their progress.

Therefore, the research findings have revealed that the one-size-fits-all curriculum and assessment used in education system of Lesotho is a major challenge affects the academic performance of DLs. The researcher's findings concur with Hall et al.'s (2021) view that the curriculum design would provide DLs with a fair opportunity to show and express their skills and knowledge, and is therefore beneficial to both their social life and academic life. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) also affirm that recognising DLs' abilities and strengths, and understanding what they have, can create a sense of hope empowerment, in addressing their low academic performance.

### ***6.3.2.4 Discrimination***

The research findings have revealed that discrimination is another major challenge that affects the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. Participants have intimated that discrimination is an exclusionary challenge that is experienced by both DLs and able-bodied learners. Hence, this challenge is portrayed when DLs isolate themselves in groups during school intervals and when teachers exercise negligence in classroom participation. The participants claimed that this practice negatively affects the academic performance of DLs. The findings are in parallel with Fordyce & Riddell 's (2015) observation that the deaf community is experiencing systematic discrimination in the social field of education, resulting in future employment problems (cf. 2.5.2). This also concurred with Brew, Nketiah, and Koranteng's (2021) view that DLs' unsatisfactory academic performance is affected drastically by

numerous factors, including teachers' attitudes and discrimination, and sometimes even leading them to drop out of school.

The research findings have revealed that separating classes into DLs versus hearing learners is viewed as discrimination. The participant learners, both Deaf and hearing learners, consider learning together in the same class peer learners and friends, irrespective of their disability, as promoting co-learning and thus enhancing communication skills, cultural awareness, and academic performance. Thus, class separation demonstrates exclusion rather than inclusion and affects the learners' academic performance. The findings from reviewed literature have also revealed that DLs' lack of access to instruction through Sign Language is denial of their democratic right, and an expression of discrimination (Komesroff, 2007).

Therefore, the participants acknowledged that inclusive education signifies access to academic opportunities, social benefits of interaction, and opportunities to establish friendships with all learners, including DLs. However, discrimination tremendously affects the academic performance of learners, particularly DLs in an inclusive school in Lesotho. The study underscores the need to involve the voice of DLs in decision making, as one of the main groups of stakeholders in an inclusive school in Lesotho, in order to enhance their academic performance.

**Third research question: What are the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in Lesotho's inclusive schools?**

### **6.3.3 Factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs**

Under themes one and two, the researcher discussed the data obtained through focus group discussions in order to respond to objectives one and two espoused in this study. This section discussed the findings generated through collage, in order to explore the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. The collage methods were discussed in Chapter 4, which also encouraged the participation of learners and teachers in exploring factors that enable multisectoral stakeholders to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The research findings have revealed that multisectoral strategies comparatively allow openness and respect as individual stakeholders work collaboratively to enhance the academic performance of DLs in an inclusive setting

(Kelly et al., 2020). Multisectoral strategies are therefore more of collective action to mobilise support for all learners in inclusive settings, including DLs.

#### ***6.3.3.1 Enabling factors***

The research findings have also revealed that multisectoral strategies can support the academic performance of DLs through such enabling factors as the sharing of information among all stakeholders including DLs, breaking the language barrier, variation of teaching and learning approaches, and peer learning. These enabling factors help support the academic performance of DLs through multisectoral strategies.

Participants have revealed that these enabling factors also promote inclusive approaches that enhance the academic performance of DLs through collaborative work. Hence they are key factors that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of learners, particularly DLs. The factors can also strengthen coherence in addressing DLs' dismal academic performance and their overall well-being challenges.

The participants' responses from collage have revealed that sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs is a significant factor that enables the multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Sharing of information among all stakeholders and DLs involves the inclusion of representatives in school forums to voice out their experiences, to contribute to the issues that concern them, and to be involved in decision making. These findings are supported by Rosen (2014), who indicated that the ability to share information with other stakeholders promote interpersonal and social contexts that fostered the development among stakeholders. Through these rich responses of the participants, the findings certainly demonstrated the possibility of sharing information with concerned parties, including DLs, as a factor that enables multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

This concurs also with the asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, cited in Giota et al., 2016), which states that stakeholders collectively interact and share their particular knowledge and abilities and provide cognitive capacities needed to deploy these resources and assets in effective ways. Lubbe and Eloff (2004) also agree that repeated interaction among stakeholders develops a sense of networking and relationship among personal and collective assets.

This is again consistent with He, Devine and Zhuang's (2018) view that information sharing is essential to resilience and to bring change in the public and private decision making in the school. It is therefore the researcher's conviction that sharing of information among stakeholders, including DLs themselves, is a fundamental enabling factor that enables multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

The participants' responses from collage have also revealed that breaking the language barrier is a significant factor that enables the multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Hence, breaking the language barrier involves free and open communication among all stakeholders. The findings have revealed that this would also enable networking among all stakeholders within and outside their school premises.

This is consistent with related literature. As indicated by World Federation of the Deaf (2016), Sign Language is the first language for the DLs, thus communication and education depend on it. Olatunji and Olawapo (2020) concurred that Sign Language fluency and ability among stakeholders and/or in an inclusive context is considered as the best strategy for school readiness and success. This allows the full involvement of all stakeholders as assets in the transformation process of teaching and learning, thus enhancing the academic performance DLs.

Furthermore, Davitti (2015) pointed out that the importance of Sign Language learning would benefit not only the teachers and the hearing learners, but would also maintain cooperation with other stakeholders. Therefore, Sign Language learning establishes a common ground and gives all involved parties the possibility to fully understand each other without relying desperately only on the information from the third party, which is an interpreter. Alasim (2019) further concurred that teachers of DLs should use Sign Language to deliver instruction and assess learners' progress.

The participants' responses from collage have also revealed that peer-learning is a significant factor that enables multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Hence, peer-learning includes DLs learning from hearing learners and vice versa, as well as cooperative learning and the expression of love among learners towards one another. The findings have revealed that peer-learning helps learners to build relationships and enable academic networking within their schools. This is consistent with Topping et al.'s (2017) view that effective peer learning is helpful to learners in developing to their full potential. Hence, it

also turns learners into learning opportunities (Topping et al., 2017). Therefore, this underscores the significance of DLs as assets in the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Ebersohn and Eloff (2006), and Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) opined that learners are valued as assets for what they bring to the classroom, such as capacities, skills, strengths, experiences, and resources.

Some literature corroborated this study by indicating that the knowledge and understanding of practices on inclusive education are vital for it to be implemented successfully (Swanwick et al., 2020), while Hadziefendic (2019) stressed the interest of learning from learner-to-learner, including adopting new content and practising their potential in the curriculum. Therefore, peer learning is a significant factor that can highly enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs.

The participants' responses from collage have also revealed that varying teaching approaches and assessment tools is a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Participants have revealed that this variety of teaching approaches and assessment tools would accommodate and enhance the academic performance of DLs. This is consistent with related literature. Baroni and Lazzari (2020) agreed with this concept of varying teaching approaches that are required, in order to develop comparable academic performance. Hence this principle of articulated teaching and learning approach would take DLs from acquisition of words to complex structure. This also ensures dynamic and/or flexible teaching and assessment approaches that accommodate all learners, including DLs (Rao, Rubin & Logli, 2016).

Furthermore, Baroni and Lazzari (2020) justify this by emphasising the significance of a variety of approaches, such as the bimodal bilingual approach, total communication, as well as signing in English to develop comparable early literacy that is very vital in the academic performance of DLs. These findings are consistent with other studies that revealed the need for the collaboration of stakeholders to strengthen partnerships and respond to the problem of DLs' academic performance through flexible curriculum and assessment. This also concurs with the asset-based theory by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, cited in Mathie & Cunningham 2005) which values diverse and capable webs of gifts, knowledge, and experiences to join together and co-create what bothers the community, as a strategy to solve the problems and the needs of the community. According to UNICEF (2021), such multidisciplinary collaboration among stakeholders helps to ensure effective coordination, and access to quality and formal education.

Therefore, constructing and enabling positive aspects and relationships among all the stakeholders, including DLs, and sharing a common understanding of academic challenges affecting DLs, as well as having an agreement on the vision, could enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

### ***6.3.3.2 Facilitating factors***

The research findings have revealed that workshops for teachers' training, counselling sessions for interpreters, and DLs' counselling therapy are possible facilitating factors that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. The participants have revealed that workshop training for teachers is a significant factor that enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. In their reflection on the collage, workshop training for teachers is the refresher course in nurturing the acquired skills and knowledge to keep their teaching informed, particularly in a deaf-friendly way.

This is consistent with related literature. Drawing from their findings in the inclusive education system, Baar (2016) and Singh (2016) indicated that to advance inclusive education, the concerned government should ensure the training of teachers, flexibility, and resources, in order to teach learners with diverse needs and learning styles. Also, Singh (2016) realised the value of teacher training based on inclusive philosophy that focuses more on an individualised approach to teaching. The findings are further supported by Gilmore, and Linda (2012), who indicated that teachers may benefit from additional training, in that the training would create positive attitudes, increase teacher confidence and consequently lead to better academic performance .

However, the findings contrasted with Fajar et al.'s (2019) observation that learners with disabilities, particularly DLs, are more likely to attribute their academic disappointment to factors like bad luck and teachers' incompetence. Nevertheless, Ntinda and Tfungi (2019) observe that DLs' teachers are experiencing a gap in teaching an inclusive curriculum, which adversely affects the learners' academic performance.

Another sub-theme emerging from the participants' responses is the obligation for interpreter counselling sessions on academic performance to support and strengthen DLs' resilience as well as the resilience of the school community and the learners' families that could also enable the multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of DLs. Moreover, the Sign Language interpreter needs counselling sessions and collaborative training with the teachers in

order to enhance the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools. This is consistent with related literature. Berhold and Fischman (2014) observed that it is essential to prepare educational Sign Language interpreters and social workers in order to cater for DLs who experienced academic trauma. This is also apparent in the participants' awareness of the interpreters and social workers' inherent strengths and capabilities to collectively enhance the academic well-being of DLs in an inclusive setting. In a similar way, Bruin and Brugmans (2006), claim that numerous psychotherapists have the opinion that working with Sign Language interpreters in therapy sessions can be a valuable alternative option and the best solution for the therapeutic process. Moreover, DLs in an inclusive context and in society also face mockery from neighbours and the public, including name calling (Leslie Vanzandt & Toni 1997).

The research findings have also revealed the necessity for DLs to attend counselling therapy sessions, as it could enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. These findings concur with Mantey and Cobbin's (2017) view that DLs' low academic performance is associated with a complex group of factors that relate to the learners themselves, their families, and the schooling environment that might affect them psychologically. However, Berhold and Fischman (2014) suggested the counselling of DLs is profitable and aimed at psychological rehabilitation and active social involvement. This was also noted by Leslie, Vanzandt and Toni (1997), whose perception is on the mockery and molesting by neighbours, public and their parents, as well seeing them as good-for-nothing, thus in need of counseling therapy to prepare them for academic work. Thus, the session is provided for the benefit of promoting confidence among DLs and as a confidential platform to share their challenging experiences. Therefore, counselling therapy among DLs can enable multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

#### **6.4 Reflections on the study**

It is noted with grave concern that DLs are experiencing poor academic performance in the inclusive schools in Africa, including Lesotho. The study demonstrates that DLs themselves and other stakeholders, which are currently absent in decision making, need a platform to share their views, expertise, and lived experiences in an inclusive setting. This would consequently enhance DLs' quality of education and enable them to participate in employment opportunities. The study highlighted the need to utilise multisectoral strategies, which recognise the value of

engaging multiple stakeholders that can leverage knowledge, expertise, and the combined strengths in order to enhance DLs' academic performance in Lesotho's inclusive schools.

The research findings have revealed that it is not an inability to hear that leads to poor academic performance among DLs, but the social, environmental and attitudinal factors in the hearing world that hinder their effective participation in their education on equal bases with their hearing peers. As with their deafness thresholds, the possible link between poor academic performance and employment incompetence remains unclear. The researcher also learned from this study that it is not only the discouraging academic performance that makes DLs drop out from school that negatively impacts the inclusive schools in Lesotho, but also the educators' feelings of guilt for failing DLs to acquire satisfying academic performance. Each group is blaming its ability single-handedly. A major fact the researcher takes into consideration is that the study has created awareness for the establishment of networking and building relationships among stakeholders, irrespective of age and disability. This strategy would thus ensure a sense of enablement and self-determination.

The research findings have also revealed that the contribution of various stakeholders would help support the academic performance of DLs in inclusive settings. Therefore, it is apparent that the success of multisectoral strategies lies in the commitment of all stakeholders identified in the interior and exterior practices, including DLs themselves. This can be better achieved by identifying the potential of each stakeholder, sharing key principles, enabling free and effective communication, and facilitating frequent workshops for strengthening partnerships.

The most significant issue arising from the researcher's experience is the method of data generation that involved the engagement of more participants and thus yielding rich outcomes. The study demonstrated that exposure to artwork-based sessions has become interesting and enabled participants to manipulate multisectoral strategies with their enabling and facilitating factors. In this activity, the participants felt the connection between the previous focus group discussion and the collaging where they reflected the feeling of satisfaction, when they work collaboratively. They better understood visual learning and how best to inspire informative communication that engages every member of the discussion group with little Sign Language interpretation.

Another strategy that helped the researcher learn better from this study was the theoretical concept of asset-based theory, which encompasses interpersonal connection to develop strong group ties in inclusive schools to address the academic performance of DLs which was lagging

behind. In line with this theory, the multisectoral strategies involving networking and collaboration of stakeholders in decision making, encourages DLs to be part of the phenomenon, regardless of their disability.

## **6.5 Contributions of the study**

This study has brought to the forefront the engagement of DLs, who are viewed as a minority group in the inclusive setting. This involvement of learners, particularly DLs in the decision making and as part of the multisectoral strategies, has been lacking in an inclusive context. Little has been said about considering DLs as agents of change in their education. The study has therefore offered contributions to the theoretical concept, as well as a methodological concept where the expression of views through art-based methods appeared rare in numerous studies. The contribution and description of DLs' views on the academic support they receive in inclusive schools and how it affects their performance are vague.

### **6.5.1 Theoretical contribution voice of Deaf Learners**

Through the data generation, the participants' discussion clarifies and positions them (learners) as representatives of their learning, hence playing a crucial role in the support of the academic performance of DLs. Second, learners consider themselves as potential assets as they offered clarity on their standpoint on the first research question: What are the multisectoral strategies that can enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners at an inclusive school in Lesotho? They highlighted that their capabilities and skills are valuable assets, as part of multisectoral strategies, and therefore need to be recognised in their learning. Third, drawing from the assets-based model which considers the experiences, gifts, and capacities of learners as the pillar upon which the improvement of their academic performance rest, this study represents the voice of the voiceless (DLs) as part of multisectoral strategies that enhance their academic performance. Therefore, the realisation of the DLs as potential assets and agents of change becomes possible.

The study looks forward to the structure of multisectoral strategies as a social procedure that includes various stakeholders within the inclusive context. Multisectoral strategies provide the framework that maps the learners who understand their value and their essential contribution to their education, hence relying on the principle of participation. WHO (2020) describes such principles as opportunities for meaningful engagement of people with special educational needs, hence, "Nothing for us without us." The study, therefore, offers necessary assumptions for not only becoming agents of change, but also potential assets that can tap into their inherent personal strengths to draw their support and improve their academic performance.

### **6.5.2 Methodological contribution**

In answering research question 3 (What are the factors that enable multisectoral strategies to enhance the academic performance of Deaf Learners in an inclusive schools in Lesotho?) the researcher allowed the construction of a collage and its discussion of the methodological contribution of the study. The arts-based research, situated within a transformative paradigm, enabled the participation of both hearing learners and DLs, and thus contributing to the existing knowledge and enabling multisectoral strategies to enhance academic performance DLs. The participants enjoyed having fun with colleagues, selecting magazine images, and cutting and altering them to reflect the relationship and/or corresponding message to facilitate multisectoral strategies.

Moreover, art-based methods have introduced the participating learners, particularly DLs to exercise their knowledge, experiences, and skills, which they were not aware of previously. It ensured the multisectoral strategies that the study is exploring by strengthening collaborative approaches and encouraging inclusive participation and collective thinking. It added great insight in the presentation of the other strategy of demonstrating and disseminating the learner's expertise of support to improve their academic performance.

The contribution of DLs' representation as part of multisectoral strategies through participatory art-based methods enabled their silenced and ignored voices to be heard and comprehended through collage activities. The use of the collage tool as the representation has signified and enabled participating learners, mainly DLs to be valued as potential assets that are knowledgeable through collage in contesting the deficits-based theory that highlighted learners' inadequacies, rather than their strengths (McLean, 2021). The current study's participation of DLs, positioned them as problem-solvers, thus the responsibility of the researchers to make further research that permit DLs to be co-researchers and participate in knowledge production (Khanare, 2015). Therefore, this study promotes further the discussion and exploration of other possible voices that are overlooked and invisible in the broader context of inclusion.

### **6.6 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of a study are flaws or shortcomings. Therefore, limits exist in every research. In this study, the researcher refers to limitations concerning the research context , number of participants and the use of language.

### **6.6.1 Research context**

This research study was conducted at one high school that admits and accommodates the inclusion of DLs in Lesotho. The researcher consequently work as a Sign Language interpreter in the same school. The researcher, therefore, entered the research site with the knowledge of the school participants and thus had relationships with them. The researcher acknowledge that this experience in the school brought biases. As a Sign Language interpreter, the researcher also had emotional feelings when other participants criticised the work of interpreters.

However, as a qualitative researcher, the researcher was able to look at and bracket the biases through reflective journaling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), member checking with the participants, and discussions with the supervisor.

### **6.6.2 Number of participants**

According to Mays and Pope (2019) qualitative research deals with speech, actions, and texts rather than numbers. The researcher worked with one group of teachers and two groups consisting of 12 learners each and some hid behind others, although only a few did this, while some participated effectively. The researcher just believe the groups were a little too big for them to all participate effectively. This was mitigated by allowing learners to select one of their groupmate and assigned to facilitate the group so that each and every one could contribute and or participate effectively. The study had a sample size of 42 participants, but only 34 participants turned up. However, the data generation was still a success.

### **6.6.3 Use of language**

The participant DLs used Sign Language as a medium of instruction inside and outside the classroom. The researcher entered the research as a Sign Language interpreter, who can fluently interpret Sesotho and English into Sign Language and translate Sign Language into spoken language. However, during the discussion, facilitating the discussion, interpreting, translating and taking notes became a challenge, thus needing the Sign Language interpreter's assistance and/or an additional interpreter. Although The researcher tried her best, she wants to acknowledge that some information might have been lost.

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations that originated in light of the findings and the conclusion of the research study and that were proposed by the participants themselves, are outlined below.

- This study employed a participatory design to explore multisectoral strategies, because it enabled the participants to work closely with the researcher. Even though this was purposefully selected, the study left out the contribution of parents of the DLs, deaf associations, the Ministry of Education and Training whose voices would have contributed more value to the discussion of multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of DLs. The researcher, therefore, recommends department of education to encourage further studies that include these groups of stakeholders to have their side of view and exercise their potential in the learning of DLs. Their participation could be beneficial to DLs thus the findings revealed that the involvement of Parents and ministry of education form another essential part to the support of deaf education.
- The research study drew from participants within the school to discuss the challenges they faced in their teaching and learning. The study recommends the ministry of education and training to encourage more studies to consider the involvement of former DLs or deaf adults, who are already in the outside world, to give their point of view and experiences on how unsatisfactory academic performances would have an impact on their future and life at large, since some of them are the parents of the current learners. Thus the multisectoral strategies to improve the academic performance of DLs
- The study has indicated that both the participant teachers and learners are desperately in need of collaborative juncture, and collective sharing of experiences among all stakeholders from within and outside the inclusive schools. They, however, recommended that the quarterly refresher courses and workshops by the influence of the principals to the ministry of Education should be held by concerned stakeholders, including DLs to consider the theoretical value of this study that prioritises connections of skills, knowledge, and potentials of each stakeholder as a fundamental principle to engage multisectoral strategies to support DLs. As the finding shown.
- The study also reflects on the lack of conceptual understanding of the term ‘multisectoral strategies’, though their explanations and discussion denoted the multisectoral practices. The study, therefore, recommends Ministry of Education and Training to invite professionals, and the researchers to held the workshop awareness to consent stakeholders with the purpose of cognisance and recognition of their

collective strengths and potential to bring transformation to the academic performance of DLs.

- The study also recommends Ministry of Education and Training to held frequent workshop orientations on the awareness and the teaching of deaf culture to peer learners and their teachers since the findings revealed its necessity in the improment of the academic performance of DLs in the inclusive schools

## **6.8 Chapter summary**

The academic performance of DLs is still a challenge in inclusive schools in many countries, including Lesotho. This is affecting their development in various ways. The current study, therefore, focused on exploring how multisectoral strategies can support the academic performance of DLs in Lesotho. The study has also engaged participatory art-based design to enable collaborative efforts, including the participation of DLs to ensure agency in the unsatisfying performance through the strengths or capabilities of learners in this inclusive context. The study has revealed that despite the initiatives and/or interventions taken by the government through inclusive policies, teachers, and the involvement of parents and other stakeholders, the voice of DLs is missing in the discussion of academic performance support. This study has shown how participatory design and art-based methodology framed within a transformative paradigm could be used to explore the contribution of multisectoral strategies in supporting the academic performance of DLs, and enable the intervention of DLs in positioning themselves as experts and contributors in academic performance support. The asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) was used as a lens that added more value and meaning to DLs' contribution to academic support within the inclusive context. The current study, therefore, argued that the multisectoral strategies in inclusive schools in Lesotho should be democratised to ensure the engagement of all stakeholders, including DLs themselves, and to make sure that they are involved in a constructive and meaningful way so that their voices could be heard. The study also recommends further studies to address the issue of voiceless DLs.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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

16-Aug-2022

Dear Mrs Ntloyalefu Palime

#### Application Approved

Research Project Title:

**EXPLORING MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF DEAF LEARNERS IN LESOTHO**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2022/0891/22**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, 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 submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

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

205 Nelson Mandela  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa

P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: +27 (0)51 401  
9337  
[duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



**APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**



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

30 May 2022

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir / Madam

**Data Collection for PhD Research Study**

This serves to confirm that Mrs Ntloyalefu Palime is studying for her PhD with the University of the Free State and has been granted permission to collect data in schools of her choice in the district of Leribe. Kindly be of assistance to her.

Thank you.

Sincerely

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



TELEPHONE: 22400210/22401360

FAX: 22400022

**APPENDIX C: THE LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL**

P.O.BOX 93  
LISEMENG II  
LERIBE 300  
06 February 2023

THE PRINCIPAL  
ST JOSEPH OF MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL  
P.O.BOX 641  
LERIBE 300

DEAR SIR/MADAM

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

I am Ntloyalefu Palime, a specialist teacher and Sign- Language interpreter in Mount Royal High School and a student in the University of Free State. I am pursuing my PhD in psychology of education. The study is on the “Exploration of Multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners in an inclusive high school in Lesotho.” and kindly request permission to conduct my research at your school.

I selected this school because it is the only high school in our country accommodating Deaf learners and teaching them inclusively with their hearing counterparts in an inclusive setting and the main aim of my study is to explore how the Multisectoral strategies can support the academic performance of Deaf Learners. Furthermore, this study will add value in the following manner:

- Provide clear understanding of how Multisectoral strategies perceived to support the academic performance of DLs and to explore the factors that can facilitate and enable the Multisectoral strategies as a support to DLs.

- The educators of the DLs such as teachers and interpreters will have to demonstrate their Multisectoral strategies to improve quality of education and therefore the performance of Deaf learners in whichever way. The researcher believe this teamwork will create thriving and compatible citizens that will contribute in the economy of the country and learners will consider inclusive setting as flexible environment that cater for everyone.
- The involvement of multiple stakeholders Deaf learners included in their education is important to encourage them to use and develop their strengths and take responsibility of their education.
- In higher education, institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by learning from educators or teachers to recognise Multisectoral support as a good approach towards improving the academic challenges at school and in daily life.

This study will be conducted using two method; collages and focus group discussions, the former will lasting for only 45minutes the latter will take 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participants of this study will comprise fourteen (14) Deaf Learners aged 15– 18 years, the average age of 20 years, and fourteen (14) hearing learners of the same age. It will further involve six (6) teachers, six (6) sign language interpreters, and two (2) heads of departments (HODs). The participats will be informed that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous, as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on Email; [justinahpalime@ufs.gmail.com](mailto:justinahpalime@ufs.gmail.com) 57785913

## **REFERENCE**

Dr Kanawa Mukuna (supervisor)  
Senior lecturer at the University of Free State  
Email; [MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za](mailto:MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za) +27810451473

Yours Faithfully  
N.J.Palime

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM PARENTS/ GUARDIAN IN SESOTHO LANGUAGE

Mount Royal High school

P.O. Box 641

Leribe 300

04 Phato 2022

Ho Motsoli

### KOPO EA TUMELLO KA NGOANA

Monghali / Mofumahali

Kele Ntloyalefu Justinah Palime ea sebetsang sekolong se boletsoeng ka holimo, ke sebetsa kele toloko ea puo ea moatsoho (sign language interpreter) ke bile ke moithuti sekolong se phahameng se Africa boroa (University of Free State). Moo teng ke ithutela boithuto ba kelello boemong ba lengolo la bongaka (Doctor of philosophy with specialization in psychology of education) tlasa sehlooho se reng **Exploring the Multisectoral Strategies to Support the Academic Performance of Deaf Lesotho**. Ka hona ke kopa tumello ea ho sebetsa le ngoana oa hau hoba karolo ea boithuto bona mohlomong ka ho fana ka lehlakore la hae la tsebo kapa le maikutlo. Lebaka leo ke nang le thahasello e kholo ka ngoana hau ke hore ke karolo ae baithuti sekolong se khethiloeng sa boithuto. ‘Me ona le kutloisiso e hlakileng ka boithuto bo kopantseng bana ba nang le bokooa ba kutlo le puo le ba senang bona (Deaf learners and hearing Learners). Sepheo sa boithuto bona keho iphumanela ka mekhoha e fapaneng ho bohle ba nang le seabo thutong ea ngoana hore na ts’ehetso ea bona kholong le katlehisong ea sephetho sa ngoana ea nang le bokoa ba kutlo le puo e kaba se feng. Sena se ka ba molemo ho;

- Bana na nkang karolo kaha batla utloisisa le ho hlokomela seabo sa bona thutong ea bona ka kotloloho.
- Sekolo se amehang se tla khola molemo oa hore bana batla fetola mekhoha ea bona ea boithuto ‘me sepheto se tla ntlafala.
- Lekala la thuto le koetliso le tla fetola mekhoha ea bona ea ts’ebetso ho latela maikutlo hotsoa ho baithuti le bohle ba bileng le seabo.

Ke kopa ho u tsibisa hore boithuto bona ke chebisano kapa puisano ea maikutlo ka ho fapana le baithuti babang (focus group discussion) le pokello ea lits’oants’o, ho taka esita leho ngola se boleloang ke lits’oantso tseo (collage).

Puisano eo etla nkoa sets'oantso 'me puisano engoe e tla nka metsotso e mashome a mane a metso e mehlano (45 minutes) ha engoe eona e tla nka hora le mashome a mararo a metsotso (1hr 30minutes). Ho nka karolo hoa ngoana oa hau be boithaopo (voluntary). Hona etlaba lekunutu lipakeng tsaka kele moithuti le ngoana oa hau kaha hake fanaka mosebetsi ona ke tla sebelisa mabitso asa tsebahaleng (anonymous). Mabitso a fosahetseng (Pseudonyms) atla sebelisoa ho qoba kotsi ea mofuta ofe kapa ofe.

Ekaba u kaba le potso malebana le kopo ena eaka ke kopa hore ke fumaneha linomorong tsena

Mohala oa thekeng (Cell number) 57785913

Ka boikokobetso

Ntloyalefu Justinah Palime

N.J.palime

Hau hloka ho etsa ts'alo morao ea litaba tsena u ka letsetsa motataisi oaka (Supervisor)

Dr Kananga Robert Mukuna

Senior Lecturer (Educational Psychology) Department of Educational Foundations

Mohala oa thekeng (Cell number +27810451473)

**APPENDIX E: CONSENT TO TEACHERS' INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING LEARNERS

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



#### Who can I talk to about the study?

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please use my email to contact me on; [justinahpalime@gmail.com](mailto:justinahpalime@gmail.com) my cell number; +26657785913 or conduct my supervisor Dr Kananga Mukuna on [MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za](mailto:MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za) and call her number +27810451473

#### What if I do not want to do this?

The participation in this study is voluntary, if you refuses to take part is free to do so without any harm even if your parents have have agreed to your participation.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES

NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH LEARNERS**

### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: LEARNERS**



The purpose of this activity is to discuss with fourteen (14) Deaf learners and fourteen (14) hearing learners in a selected inclusive school in the Leribe district of Lesotho before they engage in discussions related to how Multisectoral strategies could be used to support the academic performance of Deaf learners in Lesotho schools.

This 1 hour 30 minutes group discussions include the following activities: (A) Welcoming participants, (B) Ground rules (C) Questions to be discussed.

#### **A) WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher, in 5 minutes welcome the purposively selected participants in groups of discussion.

First, you are welcome dear participants, and thank you for agreeing to join me in the discussion about what you perceive Multisectoral strategies as support and how it can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners. I am Justinah Palime, accompanied by ; we are colleagues at the University of Free State. She is here just to assist me in the discussion.

#### **B) GROUND RULES**

- I. May I please put to you that every answer is correct, there is no wrong answer here, but rather we differ in opinions, feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said.
- II. To keep in mind that the interest is in negative comments as much as positive, and at times the negative comments are most helpful.
- III. The video recorder you noticed is probably to record session because no miss of any comments.

IV. The study will not use the participants' real names but pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity; however, the reports will go to the University as part of the study.

V. The participants introduce themselves following these prompts:

**Tell us about your name, the school you are attending, and your grade.”**

**A) QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ( based on research questions)**

**OBJECTIVE 1: What are the Multisectoral strategies that are currently practiced to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners?**

- Firstly, I would like to know if there are some practices, which are done in your school to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners? If yes, may you please state them?
- In what way do this practices support the academic performances of DLs.
- In your sights who particularly are supporting the academic performance of Deaf Learners?
- What else can you say about the support of the academic performance of Deaf Learners in your school?

**OBJECTIVE 2: OBJECTIVE 2: What factors can enable and facilitate the Multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf learners?**

- Do you think the current practices in your school are enough to support the academic performance of DLs? Please explain and give examples.
- In your sight, is there a need for Multisectoral support in the current performance of Deaf learners? Then what can facilitate and enable the multiple sectors to support the performance of DLs.
- At this point, I would like to know other factors that can enable your involvement as the learners to support the academic performance of
- What do you think needs to be done in order to support the current performance of DLs in you school?

**OBJECTIVE 3: What are the challenges experienced by DLs in the inclusive setting that possibly affect their academic performance?**

- On this last point, I would like to know of any challenges that DLs are experiencing in your school. Which are they?
- In what way do you think the challenges that DLs experience affect their academic performance.
- Do you think your involvement into this issue can benefit your school particularly concerning the support of the performance experienced by DLs? Please support your answer.
- In what way do you think your contribution or your involvement as learners could be used as the support to the academic performance of DLs?

Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to how the school can support and involve multiple sectors as a strategy to improve the performance and reduce the challenges encountered by DLs academically in Lesotho?

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



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

## **APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS**

### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH STAFF MEMBERS (teachers, sign language interpreters, heads of department)**

The purpose of this study is to discuss the inclusion of six teachers, six sign language interpreters, and two heads of department in a selected inclusive school in the Leribe district of Lesotho. The discussion is about how Multisectoral strategies can support the academic performance of Deaf learners in the inclusive school Leribe.

This is 1 hour 30 minutes group discussions comprise the following activities: (A) Welcoming participants, (B) Ground rules, and (C) Questions to be discussed

#### **B) WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS**

First, you are welcome dear participants, and thank you for agreeing to join me in the discussion about how you perceive Multisectoral strategies as support and how it can be used to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners. I am Justinah Palime, accompanied by Mamochana Ramatea; we are colleagues at the University of Free State. She is here just to assist me in the discussion.

#### **C) GROUND RULES**

- VI. May I please put to you that every answer is correct no wrong answer here but rather, we differ in opinions, feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others has said?
- VII. To keep in mind that the interest is in negative comments as much as positive ones, and at times the negative comments are most helpful.
- VIII. The video recorder you noticed is probably to record the session because there are no missed comments.
- IX. The study will not use the participants' real names but pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity however, the reports will go to the University as part of the study.

#### **D) QUESTIONS TO DISCUSSED IN THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

**OBJECTIVE 1: What are the Multisectoral strategies that are currently practiced to support the academic performance of Deaf learners?**

- Firstly, I would like to know if there are some practices done in your school to support the academic performance of Deaf Learners? If yes, may you please state them?
- In what way do these practices support the academic performances of DLs?
- In your sights, who particularly supports the academic performance of Deaf Learners? Are they working in isolation or collaboratively?
- What else can you say about the support of the academic performance of Deaf Learners in your school.

**OBJECTIVE 2: What factors can enable and facilitate the Multisectoral strategies to support the academic performance of Deaf learners?**

- Do you think the current practices in your school are enough to support the academic performance of DLs? Please explain and give examples.
- Do you know anything about Multisectoral support ?
- According to your experiences, is there a need for Multisectoral support in the current performance of Deaf learners? Then how can we facilitate and enable it to support the performance of DLs.
- At this point, I would like to know other factors that can enable your involvement as the teaching staff to support the academic performance of DLs.
- What do you think needs to be done to support the current performance of DLs in your school?

**OBJECTIVE 3: What are the challenges experienced by DLs in the inclusive setting that possibly affect their academic performance?**

- On this last point, I would like to know of any challenges that DLs are experiencing in your school. Which are they?
- In what way do you think the challenges that DLs experience affect their academic performance?
- Do you think your involvement in this issue can benefit your school, particularly concerning the support of the performance experienced by DLs? Please support your answer.
- In what way do you think your contribution or your involvement as a team could be used as support for the academic performance of DLs?

Is there anything else you would like to add about how the school can support and involve multiple sectors as a strategy to improve the performance and reduce the challenges encountered by DLs academically in Lesotho?

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

# APPENDIX I: SAMPLE FOR PARTICIPANTS COLLAGE



## APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

**Michelle Woolley**

WRITER EDITOR PROOFREADER TRANSLATOR

Bachelor of Library and Information Science: B.Bibl.  
Reference & Research Librarian

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Translation Studies and Editing

Associate Member of Professional EDITORS' Guild (PEG)

### **CERTIFICATE OF EDITING**

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

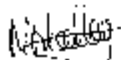
**Title:**

EXPLORING THE MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF DEAF LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS  
LESOTHO

**Author:**

NTLOYALEFU JUSTINAH PALIME  
2008032506

Regards  
Michelle Woolley



Date: 28/08/2023

michellewoolley12@gmail.com  
083 298 2077

Professional  
**EDITORS**  
Guild

## APPENDIX K: TURN IT IN REPORT

### EXPLORING THE MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF DEAF LEARNERS

#### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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