DYNAMICS OF IMPLEMENTING MAINSTREAM ENGLISH CURRICULUM AT A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF IN ESWATINI

By

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Declaration

I, Sabelo Mlungisi Khumalo, affirm that this dissertation is my own work. All sources used have been accordingly referenced. This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently considered for any other degree at any other university.

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Dedication

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Abstract

It is essential to explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf. This assists teachers to reflect and critique their practices and experiences with the aim of improving their classroom actions. It also helps to raise awareness of the natural identity of both teachers and learners at the school, with the hope of meeting individual needs and ultimately, the teaching and learning goals. This qualitative study employed the pragmatic paradigm and action research design. Seven teachers purposively sampled participated in the study – six teachers of English and the school principal. The study was guided by three research questions: 1) What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (descriptive); 2) How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation in the school for the deaf? (Operational); and 3) why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are? (philosophical). Five data-generation instruments were used namely: documents review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The Natural Identity Framework guided this study leading to the generation of three categories: the top-down, bottom-up, and individual dynamics. Findings revealed that there is tension between the top-down (professional) and bottom-up (societal/school) dynamics, which affects curriculum implementation at the school. This begged for the recognition of individual dynamics which seek to understand the personal "who" questions. Such dynamics are neutral; and they harmonise the tension of the two giants by combining their strengths. The individual dynamics are realised after reflecting and critiquing current practices and experiences. Such help to meet individual needs and to improve practice. Consequently, the study recommends that teachers should always reflect and critique their practices in order to identify what works in their respective school contexts. As a contribution to the body of knowledge, this study proposes the innate dynamics implementation model which recognises the natural and inborn identity of both teachers and learners as the key driver of a successful curriculum implementation.

Key words: Curriculum, Implementation, Deafness, Dynamics, Identity, Innate, Individual, Top-down, Bottom-up

Abbreviations

ACC	**Augmentative and Alternative Communication**
B.A	**Bachelor of Arts**
B. Ed	**Bachelor of Education**
ESL	**English as a second language**
4IR	**Fourth Industrial Revolution**
ICT	**Information Communication Technology**
ID	**Innate dynamics**
IW	**Ideological-ware resources**
L1	**First language**
L2	**Second language**
LMS	**Learning Management System**
NI	**Natural Identity Framework**
P.G.C.E	**Post Graduate Certificate in Education**
SMS	**Social Media Sites**
STD	**Secondary Teachers Diploma**
SL	**Sign Language**
SSL	**Swazi Sign Language**

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CHAPTER ZERO

THE RESEARCHER'S PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION AND REFLECTION

0.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the factors that triggered the move to conduct the study of the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Dynamics of curriculum implementation constitute the phenomenon of the study.

0.2. The Candidate's Account

My motivation to undertake the study was the interest to understand the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Having noted that the mainstream English curriculum taught to learners with deafness is primarily designed for hearing learners who use spoken language, I was curious to ascertain or explore the dynamics at play when such a curriculum is implemented at a school for the deaf. Thus, I discovered that the top-down (professional), bottom-up (societal), and individual (personal) dynamics influenced the curriculum implementation process at the school. These three dynamics have influenced my life in various ways. Worth noting is that from the time I was born, I have always been influenced by the innate dynamics – natural and inborn, which enabled me to do things naturally, as created by God. For instance, no one taught me how to laugh, walk, and think. Instead, all these abilities were naturally driven.

The next set of dynamics to influence me as I grew up were the bottom-up dynamics (societal). After I was born, I was raised in a family that taught me my first language, Siswati, and the values of life such as respect, humility, care, love, forgiveness, and self-belief. The first language and values helped me to interact and live well with others. In that way, I gained valuable informal lessons which influenced my actions. My family, peers, community and church shaped my life immensely. When I began schooling, I met a third set of dynamics - the top-down dynamics (forces) which come from professionals or policy makers. I was then taught using the planned/intended content knowledge, and assessed using the planned assessment through external examinations. I have since realised that teachers' classroom practices are informed by three

dynamics, namely: top-down, bottom-up, and individual. These dynamics are influenced by the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious minds.

As a school-going learner from my youthful days, I was determined to excel in my academics and to be the best I could be. My parents played a huge role in motivating me to work hard in my studies and to fulfil the potential I had. They had a great deal of faith and belief in my abilities. For this reason, their motivation and encouragement (bottom-up dynamics/factors), coupled with the teachers' influence (through top-down dynamics/forces), triggered my personal/innate dynamics and spurred me to give the best I could in my school work. This saw me completing the general school education and continuing to pursue tertiary education. I enrolled for and obtained a bachelor's degree in humanities as well as a post-graduate certificate in education at the University of Swaziland. Through these qualifications, I became an English Language teacher and taught at high school for seven years. During this period, I produced good results in the school where I taught. The personal/individual/innate dynamics influenced me to consider upgrading myself academically. I thus enrolled for my master of education degree which I successfully completed. In addition, I became a member of the Eswatini national English Language panel. My time as a member of the panel has been worthwhile and an eye opener in many ways. I realised that teachers were caught between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics, resulting in a tension.

In conducting this study, I first sought to understand the extent to which the top-down (performance-based/vertical curriculum) and bottom-up (competence-based/horizontal curriculum) complement one another, and noting the tension between them. The tension emanates from some of the top-down prescriptions/forces not taking into account the contextual factors (bottom-up dynamics) on the ground (schools). I then aimed to ascertain how best the tension between these two giants could be addressed. A third category of dynamics, referred to as individual dynamics, then emerged. The individual dynamics came as a result of reflecting on the teachers' practices and experiences influenced by both top-down and bottom-up dynamics. By engaging in constant reflection and critiquing of everyday actions and experiences, teachers begin to realise and be aware of their individual identities and values which drive their actions/practices and cognitive presence. In so doing, individual needs are met. For this reason, the individual dynamics may improve learning outcomes.

It was therefore critically important to theorise on how best teachers could manipulate the tension existing between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics to benefit the curriculum implementation process. Accordingly, the dynamics of curriculum implementation model/theory were born which fuses the strengths of the two giants to produce individual dynamics. Continuous reflection and critiquing resulted to the recognition of innate dynamics which are inborn, natural, and inherent habits that enable an individual to discover self-identity and potential. Through these innate dynamics, individuals are able to navigate through challenges and obstacles they come across. In other words, they are able to pull through uncertainties. This has helped me realise that all individuals, irrespective of life challenges and disabilities, can reach their full potential and self-actualise, provided they are allowed to work from their self/natural identities. All they need is sufficient support and understanding that they are unique. This ensures that individual needs are met, leading to improved learning outcomes. I argue that the individual dynamics (needs and values) of both teachers and learners should be embraced and considered, in order for any curriculum implementation to be successful.

I also argue that if teachers can apply the theory of the dynamics of curriculum implementation, they will be more pleased and satisfied with their actions. This is because their positive values ultimately drive the curriculum, leading to successful curriculum implementation. However, this study revealed that if teachers' and learners' needs are not taken into account, teachers ultimately become negative, leaving them dissatisfied and unhappy. As a result, such negative values contribute to an unsuccessful curriculum implementation process.

Philosophically, I have explored why the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf are the way they are. Findings reveal that the tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics affect teachers' curriculum decisions and practices. Being exposed to the curriculum discussions and ultimate decisions as a member of the English Language panel has actually granted me a platform to empower teachers on how to deal with the competing dynamics of implementing the curriculum. Thus this academic journey of pursuing this PhD study has given me many insights and skills, such as improving my academic writing skills, theorising findings, generating new theory and knowledge for the literature/academic field. Moreover, from the findings of this study, I hope to generate articles for publication and to further enhance my knowledge of the dynamics of implementing the curriculum.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Teaching mainstream English Language at a school for the deaf is driven by dynamics that influence teachers' actions. Two dominant dynamics (top-down/performance-based and bottom-up/competence-based) spearhead the teaching of English, these dynamics being in constant tension. According to Makumane and Khoza (2020), these dynamics are influenced by professional and societal reasonings. This causes the aforementioned tension and affects curriculum implementation. In order to manage this tension, Khoza (2020a) recommends the integration of the two 'giants' in order to offer personal/individual or pragmatic knowledge building which addresses individual needs. I thus found it expedient to explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. This was meant to uncover the interplay between the dynamics. Moreover, this study adds to the on-going debate on how far the relationship of dynamics of curriculum implementation contributes to the attainment of educational goals. In addition, the exploration of the dynamics is critically important in the academic space, in that it helps to better understand the dynamics influencing teachers when teaching.

A minimal discussion has been given of the dynamics that influence curriculum implementation in Eswatini. Therefore, through this research, I sought to explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. This chapter provides a deeper understanding of the contextual orientation of the study, the rationale, and the problem. It also presents the significance of the study, objectives, and research questions. Finally, the organisation of the study and chapter summary are presented.

1.2.Background and Context of the Study

There are two official languages in Eswatini: Siswati and English. English is taught as a second language in most schools. Even learners with deafness, like other learners with disability, are taught English as a second language. These learners use sign language as a first language and main communication tool such that even during the English Language lessons, it (sign

language) is the medium of instruction. Thus all teachers of learners with deafness are expected to be proficient in sign language (Ntinda et al., 2019). In Eswatini there are mainstream schools as well as special schools. The latter schools are built for learners with disabilities such as those with visual and hearing loss. For instance, learners with deafness are taught at the school for the deaf. Currently, there are two special schools for the deaf in Eswatini: the primary school in Siteki and the high school for the deaf in Matsetsa. The schools are situated in the Lubombo region of the country, and approximately 13 km apart. The primary school serves as the main feeder school for the high school.

The study setting was at the high school for the deaf where teachers are expected to teach the mainstream English curriculum to learners with deafness from Form One to Form Five as prescribed (top-down dynamics) by the Ministry of Education and Training. For purposes of the study, focus was on the junior secondary level (consisting of Form One, Form Two and Form Three), where the learners sit for the Junior Certificate Examination in order to proceed to senior secondary education (high school from Form Four to Form Five). In other words, the expectation is that in teaching this curriculum, the duration at junior secondary level should be three years after which the learners sit for the planned external examinations at the school. This is the same amount of time taken by hearing learners in the mainstream schools. The junior secondary English Language curriculum taught at the school is competence-based (bottom-up) and advocates for mastery in four language skills, namely: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, the enactment of this curriculum seems to be following the performance-based curriculum with its prescriptions (top-down dynamics), most of which do not consider the contextual factors (bottom-up dynamics). According to Makumane (2021), such a situation may overwhelm teachers who are faced with the challenge of dealing with two different curricula.

The mainstream English curriculum used at the school for the deaf is said to have an auditory focus, rigid and inflexible, and is seen to be impeding the learning of the learners with deafness (Mzizi & Rambuda, 2014; Motitswe, 2012; Stoppok, 2010).

1.3. Rationale

I have observed that the Junior Certificate examinations in the school for the deaf have been recording poor academic results (100% failure rate) over the last three years in English (Examinations Council of Eswatini, 2019). Teachers of English, subject advisors, and principals have shared similar sentiments on the performance of learners in English, citing dynamics in the implementation of the curriculum. Studies conducted (Renner, 2019; Adi, Unsiah & Fadhilah, 2017; Ikasari, Drajati & Sumardi, 2019; Hidalgo & Abril, 2018) highlight that strides have been made to adapt the main stream English curriculum to address learners' needs. Despite these attempts, the needs of learners with deafness are still not met (Ntinda et al., 2019).

The junior certificate English curriculum often presents challenges not only for learners with deafness but also for teachers in the classroom. Some of the implementation challenges could be attributed to the existing tension between the top-down (professionals/performance-based/vertical curriculum) and bottom-up (societal/competence-based/vertical curriculum) dynamics. Researchers such as Makumane and Khoza (2020), Khoza (2020b), and Khoza and Biyela (2019) posit that emphasising either of the two giant dynamics while disregarding the other may impede the realisation of educational goals. In the Eswatini context, the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf have not been explored. Hence this study purposed to explore these dynamics with the goal of raising awareness and need for the recognition of individual dynamics of teachers. Such will enable teachers to work from their natural/innate disposition in addressing individual needs. In so doing, teachers and learners would be liberated (Dlamini, 2022) and allowed to teach and learn naturally, governed by individual values.

This study aimed to ascertain the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Moreover, it sought to understand why the dynamics are the way they are. I believe that the exploration of these dynamics involved in the curriculum enactment at the school will contribute to ensuring that the teachers' and learners' needs are met. In other words, this pragmatic study hopes to contribute to the use of best practices that embrace individual identity. The study's view is that understanding the teachers'

and learners' individual dynamics (identity) will promote the implementation of the English curriculum at a school for the deaf.

1.4. Confronting the Problem

Teachers are key players in curriculum implementation. For this reason various researchers have described the teachers' roles in the implementation process in various ways. For instance, they are "agents" (Stenhouse, 1979, p. 4); "final arbiters" of classroom proceedings (Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011, p. 221); "language policy actors" (Brown, 2010, p. 298); and "main actors" in the implementation process (Altrichter, 2005, p. 5). In other words, without teachers, curriculum implementation would be very difficult particularly because they are interpreters of curriculum (Dlamini, 2022). It is therefore critical to understand the dynamics that drive and influence teachers' practices/actions during curriculum implementation.

Teachers are mandated by policy makers at the macro level (national) to teach curriculum following a set of prescriptions and rules (top-down dynamics). Hence their roles as agents and key policy actors presuppose that teachers are expected to teach English as stipulated in the policies. However, their role of being interpreters and final arbiters seems to suggest that teachers implement curriculum according to their own understanding (individual dynamics). Such may show remarkable differences to the intended curriculum, and ultimately to the making of final decisions and judgements. In fact, Khoza and Fomunyam (2021a) assert that teachers' experiences assist them to interpret the planned/official curriculum, and to put it in action. Thus the reality is that the enacted curriculum is different from the intended curriculum. This points to the tension that exists between the top-down (forces from the professionals/performance-based/vertical curriculum) and bottom-up (societal/competence-based/horizontal curriculum) dynamics.

The situation is further heightened when teachers primarily trained to teach hearing learners in mainstream schools are posted to teach learners with deafness at a school for the deaf. The school administration lamented the sad reality of the situation. *"We don't have any control on the posting of teachers to the school and their transfer from the school. Government does this willy nilly without involving us. We groom and capacitate teachers to benefit the school only for government to then transfer them to other schools (mainly mainstream) and this cripples our teaching staff."* (T7). The administrator's account suggests that government does not

involve the school administration when posting teachers to the school or when transferring them from the school. In other words, government simply imposes the teacher-movements, and such actions are influenced by the top-down dynamics. Besides, such actions by policy makers are not pragmatic and impede on the school's efforts to address individual needs. Interestingly, the curriculum that teachers are required to use when teaching English to learners with deafness is the mainstream curriculum designed with an auditory focus primarily for hearing learners. Researchers report that the main challenge facing learners with deafness is communication (Ntinda et al., 2019; Csizer & Kontra, 2020), and this has a bearing on their learning. This implies that the curriculum for these learners should be one that readily gives them access to it through the accommodation of sign language due to their visual orientations. According to Csizer et al. (2020), using sign language in the curriculum of learners with deafness contributes to the efficiency of teaching.

While Ntinda et al. (2019) declare that the reasons for the poor academic performances of learners with deafness remain unknown, this study argues that the dynamics influencing the implementation of the mainstream curriculum could potentially shed some light on these performances at the school. Statistically, schools for the deaf are said to record about 20% pass rate in formal examinations (planned/summative assessment) (Dissake & Antindogbe, 2019). For this reason, teachers are at the receiving end of all the blame and criticism behind the low academic performances of the learners with deafness (Shongwe et al., 2020). This points to a number of dynamics at play from the intended (top-down) to the implemented (bottom-up), thereby stretching the tension between these two giants of curriculum. Thus exploring and understanding the interplay of dynamics involved when implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini cannot be overemphasised. This includes ascertaining how these dynamics influence the curriculum implementation and why the dynamics are the way they are.

Since knowledge is not static, this pragmatic study helps teachers to recognise the value of reflecting and critiquing their practices/actions and experiences to accomplish individual goals. Teachers and learners have individual needs that must be met. This helps to fulfil teaching and learning goals and to improve academic achievement. I argue that the tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics could be influencing the low classroom achievement of learners

with deafness at the school for the deaf. According to Khoza and Fomunyam (2021a; 2021b), this tension between the two giants compromises the achievement of personal/individual or self-actualisation needs. This then calls for the identification and recognition of a neutral set of dynamics which pacifies the existing tension by combining the strengths of the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. This study argues that the neutral individual dynamics help to address the teachers' and learners' needs. It also assumes that teachers' individual dynamics can harmonise the friction that comes from the two dominant dynamics: top-down and bottom-up. The study theorises on the tension by capitalising on the strengths of the two giants in a bid to fulfil learning goals. I assume that as long as individual dynamics are suppressed, the learning goals will be affected, and ultimately, so will the success of the curriculum implementation process. If the dynamics and values are recognised and upheld, teachers could thus be liberated and allowed to work towards self-actualising. Therefore, exploring and understanding the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf would contribute to the success of the implementation process.

Furthermore, there is minimal published research on the dynamics of implementing the mainstream curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Exploring these dynamics would not only enhance the understanding of curriculum implementation at the school but also help to improve teachers' practices by reflecting on and critiquing their actions and experiences.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The dynamics of curriculum implementation constitute the phenomenon of the study. Ndlovu (2016) defines dynamics as forces and factors which affect the way a curriculum is perceived and put into action. Imbedded in this definition are three types of dynamics, namely, top-down (forces), bottom-up (factors), and individual (perceived/implemented).At the intended/planned curriculum stage, there are prescriptions/guidelines/forces that are given to teachers at the school to abide by and conform to in their practices (Hoadley, 2018; Khoza, 2019; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a). However, Ndlovu and Khoza (2021) contend that the curriculum mandates/policies/directives/prescriptions do not guarantee effective implementation. At the same time the school context usually presents factors which cause tension between the planned and implemented curriculum. Ndlovu (2016) observes that this tension impacts on the way teachers perceive and enact the curriculum. In an attempt to navigate through these challenges,

teachers resort to using their perceptions which are influenced by reflections coming from the subconscious mind (Khoza & Biyela, 2019). According to Ndlovu and Khoza (2021), the individual dynamics ensure that unique personal goals/needs are accomplished and that unique teaching methods are utilised by teachers during implementation. Worth noting is that the perceived curriculum which is dependent upon the teachers' interpretations and reflections seems to be the one that eventually drives the curriculum implementation. This necessitated the need to comprehend the dynamics that drive mainstream curriculum enactment at a school for the deaf.

Accommodating individual teachers' dynamics which combine the strengths of the two dominant giants (top-down and bottom-up) of curriculum is essential in harmonising the tension between them. In fact, the individual dynamics bring teachers closer to objective reality since they require teachers to reflect on their actions and experiences. Such liberates teachers from being bound by either top-down or bottom-up dynamics, and ultimately improves their practices (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). Teachers also learn and acknowledge that reflection, as the key driver of individual dynamics, is an ongoing event in the teaching process. That being the case, teachers begin to realise that when top-down, bottom-up, and individual dynamics fail, they need to continue reflecting on and critiquing their actions in order to discover their innate/natural/inborn dynamics. Such provides possibilities for them to navigate through uncertainties as they teach learners with deafness. It is important to consider dynamics of implementing the curriculum as a way of strengthening the learning environment, thereby ensuring that goals and individual needs are met. The study sought to focus on the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. It has been theorised that the dynamics are key in teaching and learning (Shoba, 2018).

The Junior Certificate English curriculum taught at the school is a competence-based/horizontal curriculum. That it is originally meant to be taught in the mainstream schools to hearing learners makes it context-specific. However, since this curriculum is also taught at the school for the deaf suggests that teachers at the school are coerced to try their utmost to help the learners acquire relevant skills and competences which benefit society (Makumane, 2021), overlooking the contextual and implementation challenges. Stenhouse (1975) advocates for the freedom of teachers to contextualize knowledge in a bid to achieve teaching/learning

needs, since the school context is the 'informant' for teaching and learning (Shoba, 2021). According to Priestley et al. (2012), the school attributes and uniqueness influence their classroom decisions and actions. Accordingly, this research would facilitate and hasten an understanding of the contextual implications of implementing mainstream curriculum at a special school for the deaf. Shoba (2021) laments the fact that, in a way, complying with educational policies tends to restrict teaching experiences, thereby suppressing teachers' own identities. This implies that teachers are bound to conform to top-down dynamics, and in the process 'forget' who they are. Thus, their needs and those of the learners are not met.

Ntinda et al. (2019) reported that the continuous poor academic achievement of learners with deafness still remains a major cause for concern for teachers, parents, and researchers in Eswatini. According to these researchers, the reasons remain unknown for the below-average performances in the external examinations by these learners at the school. Unfortunately, teachers often find themselves at the receiving end of all criticism from various stakeholders. All these factors point to the existence of certain dynamics at play at the school, which need to be explored. Hence there is an urgent need for solutions to the low attainment of academic goals, and also a demand for knowledge about the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. This is significant because it is a contribution to enhancing the attainment of educational goals and needs at the school.

I argue that the dynamics of implementing the mainstream curriculum at the school influence the teachers' actions/practices in the classroom (how they teach learners with deafness). The fact that teachers are given this mainstream curriculum to teach to the learners with deafness is an indication of top-down (professional/performance-based/vertical curriculum) dynamics at play. How teachers respond to this curriculum in accordance with their school context points to bottom-up dynamics (societal/competence-based/horizontal curriculum) at play. Therefore this situation leads to the friction/tension between the two giants which impacts on teaching/learning. While some studies have been conducted on the general education of learners with deafness as well as on the experiences of teachers of these learners, no study in Eswatini has been conducted on the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf.

This study assumes that teachers of English at a special school for the deaf possess various understandings of how English should be taught to learners with deafness. This is brought about by the tension between the dynamics. For this reason, I explored the dynamics to mitigate the tension between the dominant dynamics influencing practice. Moreover, many people could benefit from the findings such as policy makers and the entire Ministry of Education who could learn more on how teachers and learners at the school could be assisted to meet their needs/goals. By extension, the study would inform teacher training institutions on how they can adjust their courses in a way that addresses the tension between the dynamics influencing teaching and learning of learners with deafness.

1.6. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to understand the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Particular focus was on the implementation of this curriculum at junior secondary phase. Teachers shared various views that described the dynamics, how they influence the curriculum implementation, and why the dynamics are the way they are.

1.7. The Research Objectives and Questions

1.7.1 Research Objectives
The study sought to meet the following objectives:

1. To explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini.
2. To understand how the dynamics of mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf in Eswatini.
3. To understand why the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum are the way they are.

1.7.2. Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini?
2. How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation in the school for the deaf?
3. Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are?

1.8. Data Analysis

Noble and Smith (2014) posit that the analysis of data entails assembling or reconstructing data to better understand them and is more meaningful when not altering the original submissions of the participants. Put differently, this includes segmenting data into more digestible chunks that help in responding to the research questions. For this study I used thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. I chose thematic analysis because it permitted the recognition of themes and categories which were guided by the phenomenon of the study (dynamics of curriculum implementation). Moreover, the themes were also informed by the theoretical model that guided the study. Data were generated using these five methods: document review, reflective activity, video observation, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions.

1.9. Research Methodology of the Study

1.9.1 Research paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018) define a research paradigm as beliefs or a worldview that guide(s) the research process or investigation. These sets of beliefs deal with first principles that indicate where the researcher bases all his actions during the research inquiry. Kivunja et al. (2017) assert that a worldview is the perspective or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that inform the meaning or interpretation of research data. However, they clarify that a paradigm defines the researcher's worldview, and that means that a paradigm constitutes the hidden and abstract beliefs and principles that influence the researcher's view of the world and actions within that world. In addition, a paradigm represents a worldview that defines a researcher's understanding of an individual's world, his place in it, as well as his relationships (Guba et al., 1994). This suggests that a paradigm is the mirror through which the

researcher views and interprets the research phenomenon by considering the research context, interactions and beliefs of the participants.

This study adopts the pragmatic paradigm which is essentially practical rather than idealistic (Cohen et al., 2018). In seeking the solution to practical problems, pragmatists focus on what works on the ground to address the research questions (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Cohen et al., 2018; Pansiri, 2005; Khoza, 2021a). In other words, pragmatism advances the teachers' practices, experiences, and beliefs because they represent what works for them in the classroom situation. What works is advocated for despite the influence by professional or societal actions (Khoza, 2021a). For instance, pragmatists are mainly interested in explanations that produce desired outcomes (Pansiri, 2005). This implies that even research conducted on a particular problem or phenomenon should be aimed at helping the participants to improve their knowledge and practice.

The choice of this paradigm for this study is informed by the desire to see practical solutions to the phenomenon under investigation, and to ensure that the most relevant methods guided by the purpose and objectives of the study are utilized. Also, the choice of this paradigm is informed by the pragmatists' belief that there is no absolute truth (Pansiri, 2005). For pragmatists, truth is perceived to be what works at a particular time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Pansiri, 2005). This is because they see the world as ever changing or evolving; and human actions contribute to these changes (Kaushik et al., 2019; Morgan, 2014b). These researchers argue that, for pragmatists, there is an objective reality existing apart from human experience. As a result, experience is seen as a product of the on-going interaction of beliefs and action (Morgan, 2014b). This suggests the need to explore how far this interaction of beliefs and action contributes to meeting the learning needs and desired outcomes.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four elements of a paradigm, namely: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology. Creswell (2007) refers to these elements as philosophical assumptions, and further states that the researcher has to position himself in each of these assumptions since they influence the research design and procedures in the entire study. For this reason, qualitative research allows the researcher to begin the research design embracing philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Knowledge of these assumptions therefore guides the researcher to carefully conduct the study and to be mindful of

how knowledge will be generated, how reality in the context of the study is to be understood, and the ethical considerations and methodology to be utilized.

Epistemology focuses mainly on the basics of knowledge which include its nature, forms, how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to other people (Kivunja et al., 2017). Epistemological questions include: "How do I know the world?" and "What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), and "Is knowledge something which can be acquired on the one hand, or, is it something which has to be personally experienced?" (Kivunja et al., 2017, p. 27). These questions suggest that the researcher cannot create knowledge on his own, since that is against reality. Rather, the researcher needs to collaborate with the participants and spend quality time with them in their natural world to gain more insights (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018). Ontology, according to Kivunja et al. (2017), is the philosophical study of the nature of reality. Researchers need to be aware of the multiple realities that exist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Accordingly, philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality are vitally important if deeper understanding and meanings of the data gathered are to be possible (Kivunja et al., 2017). Knowledge of the realities thus has implications for practice. For example, in pragmatism, reality is perceived to be what really works (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). In executing this research, I needed to understand that the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf are influenced by the teachers' individual, social, and professional experiences.

Axiology has to do with the role of values in research (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researchers such as Kivunja et al. (2017) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018) refer to these values as the ethical issues to be considered when planning research. For instance, researchers have to be able to define, evaluate, and understand behaviour deemed either right or wrong relating to research (Kivunja et al., 2017). In so doing, the researcher should ask questions such as "How will I behave as a moral person in the world?" (Denzin et al., 2018). Methodology is concerned with the process and method of carrying out an investigation. It targets the best means for gaining knowledge about the world (Denzin et al., 2018). Pragmatism offers researchers a set of research options for generating data from the research area, and the freedom to select appropriate methods (Pansiri, 2005). This is in line with Feilzer (2010), who posits that pragmatism aims to interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate research method. However,

this researcher also concedes that pragmatists' main concern on the method(s) is whether they have the potential of answering the research questions.

1.9.2 Research approach and design

This study uses the qualitative method of research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Thus, the interpretations and understandings of the phenomenon being researched by individuals involved in the study using their different experiences is very important in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018). The participants' meanings about the problem or phenomenon under investigation are key, rather than the meanings that researchers often bring to the study (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it is what works for the teachers that informs the meanings and explanations of the research problem.

The study adopted principles of action research as a design to generate data. Piggot-Irvine et al. (2015, p. 548) define action research as "a collaborative transformative approach with joint focus on rigorous data collection, knowledge generation, reflection and distinctive action/change elements that pursue practical solutions". This definition is in line with Cohen et al.'s (2018) assertion that action research is aimed to improve practice, adding that it combines both problem identification and problem solving. In other words, the teachers collaborate to identify the problem in their school environment and then reflect on their actions (teaching practices) to determine how best they can solve the problem (Mpungose, 2018). According to Mpungose (2018), the collaboration and reflection make action research both participatory and democratic, while also focusing on practically comprehending human action. Comprehending these human actions ultimately helps practitioners to better understand the particulars of a specific practice-based situation (Jefferson, 2014), and to address critical societal challenges (Mpungose, 2018). Teachers are thus better placed at the school to understand the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf.

Mabuza (2018) argues that action research is the best tool for exploring teachers' own practices. Teachers are seen as researchers in their own right - they inquire about their own practices (Hagevik et al., 2012). Teachers do this to keep their actions in constant check so that their actions remain relevant practically rather than being too theoretical (Myers, 2019; Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015). In this way teachers contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes. This makes the

action research process cyclical in its development so that the culture of reflecting on and improving practice may be fully embraced. One of the key components of action research is reflection (Madin & Swanto, 2019; McNiff, 2013) which enables teachers to learn from their practices by "examining their previous knowledge and relating them with current ones" (Rahman et al., 2012, p. 485). Knowledge is seen not as static, in the same way reality is perceived (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). If teachers are familiar with the current trends of knowledge, and are particularly keen on pursuing what works best for them in their context, they remain competitive. Therefore, action research provides a platform for teachers to reflect upon and discover strategies which can change their teaching practices upon discovery of those better and more effective (Hagevik et al., 2012; Myers, 2019; Norasmah & Chia, 2016). These researchers contend that action research allows teachers to premise their research on the classroom realities, with the resultant knowledge informing their subsequent actions and practices. Therefore Black (2021) and Ulla (2018) assert that action research will always remain effective because of its relevance to practitioners (teachers). By reflecting on their actions and experiences, teachers discover what works best for them thus improving their practices (Anyanwu & Jules, 2022; Myers, 2019; Norasmah et al., 2016; Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015).

In this study, I served as a facilitator and mediator to help teachers become familiar with what was expected of them, especially in reflecting on their practices and identifying what works for them in their school context. This is particularly because action research allows the researcher the opportunity of both intervening, while at the same time studying the effect of the intervention (Myers, 2019). Mabuza (2018) posits that exposure to this research practice (design) and training on its assumptions and principles would enable teachers to be familiar with it and to discover what works for them in their respective schools. This would be preferable to always enduring the pain of dealing with top-down forces, difficult to deal with in some school contexts.

1.9.3 Sampling

In qualitative research, selection of participants depends on the purpose of the research (Shaheen et al., 2019), and participants are recruited to a study on the basis of their exposure to or their experience of the phenomenon in question (Ryan et al., 2007). This study used purposive sampling which is an exploratory sample often used in small-scale research (Denscombe, 2014). According to Denscombe, an exploratory sample is used as a way of probing relatively unexplored topics;

and as a channel for further discovering new ideas or theories. Denscombe (2014) also posits that this sample provides the researcher with the means for generating insights and information from the participants with first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study.

Purposeful sampling also "means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The researcher therefore selects participants he deems to be information rich and better placed to enhance his deeper understanding of the research problem and phenomenon. The choice of purposive sampling in this study was made because I was interested in obtaining rich qualitative data from the teachers of English who, as curriculum implementers at the school for the deaf, are better placed and more familiar with the phenomenon under study. This is because qualitative research allows researchers to conduct research in the natural setting of the phenomenon (Creswell et al., 2018; Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018). The aim here was to gain an insider's perspective of the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. The English Language department at the school currently has six teachers, including the head of department, and all these were part of the study sample. The school principal was also included among the participants in order to obtain an administrative perspective on the dynamics that influence the implementation of the mainstream English curriculum at the school. As a result, the total number of participants was seven. This is in line with the benefits of qualitative research as a holistic and in-depth approach (Schreier, 2018).

1.9.4 Data generation methods

Data generation is one of the most important steps in the research design which has a bearing on the success or failure of a study. For this reason, researchers need to make careful and informed choices of the methods to use for generating data. This study used five data-generation methods, namely, document review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. The use of these data-generation methods will provide adequate triangulation such that each method will be administered.

1.9.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Harrell and Bradley (2009, p. 6) define an interview as "a discussion, usually one-on-one between an interviewer and an individual, meant to gather information on a specific set of topics." The

researcher prepares a set of questions that assists him to better understand a particular phenomenon. The aim of qualitative interviews is to give participants a platform on which to share their knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and experience about the phenomenon under investigation (Hennink et al., 2020; King et al., 2018). Even though different people may work in the same environment and under similar working conditions, King et al. (2018) argue that they may have varying interpretations and understanding of seemingly similar facts and events. This suggests that experience and belief is personal, and that in finding the best way of digging deep into this experiential knowledge and understanding, one-on-one interviews are useful (Hennink et al., 2020). For this reason, the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas (Creswell, 2007), otherwise the whole purpose of the interview might not be achieved. During such interviews, the researcher enjoys the flexibility of this tool as a multi-sensory channel in that it allows for the use of verbal, non-verbal, seen, spoken, and heard data (Cohen et al., 2018). These researchers add that interviews can also be written or even conducted online.

However, interviews have their own shortcomings as with other data-generating methods. For instance, Hennink et al. (2020) assert that individual interviews do not offer interaction or feedback from other participants. This is because they (interviews) mainly focus on individual perceptions. This study used one-on-one semi-structured telephonic interviews with each of the sampled participants; and constituted a mixture of open and closed questions (Bryman, 2012). According to Barret and Twycross (2018), semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to explicitly ask participants about the core issues of the phenomenon being studied, particularly on a one-to-one basis. The choice of the telephone interviews over face-to-face interviews was influenced by access issues to the school (Lechuga, 2012), particularly due to the advent of the novel Corona virus pandemic that has compromised face-to-face interactions with the participants. Telephone interviews allow the participants to feel relaxed and able to disclose information which otherwise, they would not have given in a face-to-face interview (Novick, 2008). However, Novick also admits that the "absence of visual cues via telephone is thought to result in loss of contextual and non-verbal data and to compromise rapport, probing, and interpretation of responses" (p. 395). To that effect, Lechuga (2012) argues that telephone interviews when supplemented by other sources of data can provide the necessary data to contribute to the full understanding of a phenomenon.

The questions or themes that were used to interview the participants were formed from the research purpose and the main research questions (Ryan et al., 2007). The semi-structured interviews helped me to answer the philosophical "why?" question: Why the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are? Through these interviews, I was able to probe and rephrase the question until I found out the reason for the dynamics being the way they are. According to King et al. (2018), interviews in qualitative research use an interview guide that outlines the main topics the researcher would like to cover. However, researchers emphasise that this guide is flexible in terms of the phrasing of questions, and in the order in which they are asked, which also allows the participants to lead the interaction in unanticipated directions. Accordingly, interviews have the benefit of yielding direct quotations from participants on their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). This is important in ensuring that reality and trustworthiness of the data is maintained.

All six teachers of English were interviewed at times negotiated between the teachers and the researcher, in order not to disrupt their personal or academic programmes. This means that flexibility in this regard was observed, to make the participants comfortable and willing to participate in the study. The participants were also informed (and accepted) that a voice recorder would be used to capture their voices and statements; and each interview was estimated to take between twenty-five to thirty minutes.

1.9.4.2 Focus-group discussion

Kelly (2003) asserts that focus groups are especially designed to draw perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group in which each participant possesses experience of the phenomenon under study. In other words, the participants targeted to be part of the focus-group discussion are those that are information-rich; they help in offering diverse opinions on the phenomenon including seeking community norms (Hennink et al., 2020). This qualitative method of data generation has no fixed way of conducting it - it needs a trained moderator to facilitate the discussion (Marczyk & DeMatteo, 2005; Vaughn et al., 1996). For instance, Marczyk et al. (2005) posit that focus-group discussions consist of several participants, usually 6 to 10 individuals plus a trained moderator whereas Vaughn et al. (1996) posit that the group should comprise 6 to 12 members who are relatively homogeneous. The latter add that the trained moderator comes with prepared questions which he uses to facilitate the discussion. In this study, the focus-group

discussion involved all six teachers of English at the school for the deaf; and I, as the researcher, facilitated the discussions.

Focus groups have the advantage of providing an opportunity for participants to interact in a more 'naturalistic' way which is closer to everyday life than the individual interview with the interviewer (King et al., 2018). This is in line with Kelly's (2003) observation that, instead of having merely a straight-forward and rigid question-and-answer session, focus-group interviews often involve disagreements and discussion among participants. The researcher adds that such platforms, therefore, help the participants also to clarify and modify their ideas through discussion and challenge with other participants. The participants' public deliberations and debates among themselves help to ascertain the strength of the convictions held (Kelly, 2003). By extension, the group interviews can present an opportunity to obtain a different kind of data that can reveal the social and cultural context of people's understandings and beliefs (King et al., 2018). This is echoed by Cohen et al. (2018) and Hennink et al. (2020) who assert that focus-group discussions give insights which one-on-one interviews may not give, and provide a range of issues and opinions, respectively. This ultimately produces a collective rather than an individual view (Cohen et al., 2018) as well as the necessary details, justification and clarification of issues (Hennink et al., 2020). By implication, the researcher is able to gain the true picture of the situation on the ground from the team as a whole instead of only basing conclusions on the submissions of individuals.

As much as there are numerous advantages of focus-group discussions, there are also drawbacks to this method of data generation. For instance, Ngozwane (2018) observes that some people are reluctant to express their views in the presence of other group members; they would rather be interviewed individually. Therefore, compelling such people to speak in groups would not yield positive results for the research. Conversely, some people feel comfortable expressing themselves in the presence of group members rather than separately; and they may be willing to open up about their personal experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). For this reason, the researcher must be vigilant and skillful when facilitating focus-group discussions so that such shortcomings of focus-group discussions are compensated for in the one-on-one interviews, and vice versa. Hennink et al. (2020) add that, unlike individual interviews, focus-group discussions produce less depth of information. The focus-group discussions were aimed at answering the operational "how?"

question: - How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation in the school for the deaf?

In this study, I utilised two phases of focus-group discussions with the participants (teachers). During the first phase of the focus-group discussion, we collaborated on planning the necessary action research for curriculum implementation. This platform was an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their current practices and to ascertain what works best for them in their context; also to determine ways of improving their practices so that learning needs are met. After the planning session, the participants were given the opportunity of putting the plans in motion in their respective classrooms, through lessons. During this time, teachers were asked to take video recordings of their lessons for reflection and further discussion in the second phase. I gave participants sufficient time to express themselves while ensuring order, so that I could access what they see as important in the implementation of the English curriculum at the school.

1.9.4.3 Documents review

Bowen (2009) defines document review (or analysis) as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material. Flick (2018) observes that, in most cases, researchers do not produce data; instead, they use existing data (secondary) for analysis. According to Flick (2018), all sorts of documents such as records, files, school essays and journal articles are used in qualitative research as existing data for analysis. This is supported by Patton (2002), who adds that researchers may also study excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or programme records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; and personal diaries. The first step in this document-review process, is to locate relevant materials that would help generate useful data (Merriam et al., 2015). The kind of document review to consider is dependent upon the phenomenon under investigation. For instance, a qualitative study of a classroom instruction would lead to documents such as: instructor's lesson plans, student assignments, objects in the classroom, official grade reports and school records, teacher evaluations, and many others (Merriam et al., 2015).

According to Merriam et al. (2015), the researcher as the primary instrument, relies on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents. The rationale for document review is its use as a methodological and data triangulation as well as its ability to be used as a stand-alone method

in some specialized forms of qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). In this study, documents were reviewed for triangulation purposes, and particularly to ascertain the forces that are prescribed by the formal English curriculum used at the school. Bowen (2009) also observes that documents are "unobtrusive" and "non-reactive" (p. 31), meaning that they are unaffected by the research process. However, one main disadvantage of this data-generation method is that access to documents may be intentionally denied by the participants and gate keepers (Yin, 1994); and that would result in failure to access the sought-after data.

For this study, permission was sought from the school principal and respective participants (teachers) to access documents which included teacher files and policy documents for teaching English Language. I used current documents that teachers use to teach English to learners with deafness, in order to ascertain whether their teaching practices are informed by current curriculum policy stipulations. I reviewed these documents once to add to the data generated from the interviews (both individual and focus group discussion); this helped to improve the trustworthiness of the findings. Also, this data-generation method was meant to establish what is prescribed in specific documents on the phenomenon being studied. It has also helped to answer the descriptive question "What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini?"

1.9.4.4 Reflective activity

According to Coghlan and Shani (2013), reflective activity is similar to an open-ended questionnaire. In other words, when preparing it, researchers draw up a set of questions seeking to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Khoza & Mpungose, 2018). Participants are expected to respond to these questions in writing (Cohen et al., 2011; Coghlan et al., 2013). Participants use their experiences and knowledge of current practices to respond to these questions hence this method of data generation was appropriate for this study. I used the reflective activity to generate data for the descriptive "what" question of the study. I prepared these questions in the form of a questionnaire which participants had to complete in writing. They were given time to complete the questions before sending them back to me. In essence, this data-generation method was useful in the planning stage of the action research. It confirmed whether I had correctly captured all the descriptive dynamics from the document review that influence their actions in the

classroom. This method allows participants to freely express their thoughts and knowledge of the dynamics that influence their practices (Samuel, 2009).

However, as with any other data-generation method, reflective activity has its own pitfalls. For instance, Cohen et al. (2018) observe that, in most instances, participants are not very eager to reflect on their own practices. These researchers note that participants shy away from responding directly to questions pertaining to what they do in the classroom; preferring to focus on what others are doing. To help these participants, I explained that this pragmatic study also aimed at empowering them on the dynamics of curriculum implementation. Ultimately, they are driven by the individual/personal dynamics which meet individual needs. The first phase of the action research design enabled me to ascertain the dynamics that drive the curriculum implementation at the school. The second phase then sought to address the emerging gaps noted in the first phase in order to improve practice.

Also, participants seemed to take a long time to complete the reflective activity. Initially, we had agreed on one week before submission, however, the time increased to three weeks. This is probably because this exercise required that teachers express their responses in writing.

1.9.4.5 Video observation

Observation is another data-generation method that was used for triangulation purposes in this study to support data from the other methods (Hennink et al., 2020). According to Cohen et al. (2018), observation has the potential to produce first-hand data that is deemed valid and authentic. Participants must observe how people act and interact in certain social situations (Hennink et al., 2020). In other words, through observation, the actual behaviour of people is identified.

Observation in this study took the form of video observations of lessons conducted by the teachers of English to their respective groups of learners. The teachers recorded the videos of the lessons using their cell-phones; and they were requested to forward the recordings to the researcher. This enabled me to see how the dynamics of the English Language curriculum unfolded during a lesson in a classroom situation. Researchers such as Cohen et al. (2018) point out that video recording has benefits for qualitative researchers. One of these benefits is that the video record enables the researcher to view it several times to get the full understanding of what exactly takes place in the classroom. This also allows the researcher to make a complete analysis and to have multiple

interpretations of the data while continuing to scrutinize them (Cohen et al., 2018). These researchers add that because a video recording may be shared by many researchers, the research bias is reduced of only focusing on a single aspect of an event or recording. Instead, a holistic analysis and interpretation of the recording produces a true picture of the recorded event.

On the contrary, Cohen et al. (2018) argue that the mere presence of a camera in the classroom may change human behavior in that behaviour may become unnatural. Cameras should be fixed in a position where they are not seen in the classroom. Still, there could be other loopholes about this arrangement, as Cohen et al. (2018) observe. For instance, they observe that, unlike a human observer who can easily turn attention to other parts of the classroom to capture what may be very useful for the study, a fixed camera cannot do this. This could result in missing a very important detail of the lesson. In addition, these researchers note that learners in the classroom may unintentionally block the eye of the camera, or obscure the camera when they shift positions or move around the classroom. This, therefore, calls for the teachers, as researchers themselves, to ensure that class movements are controlled, so that learners do not obscure the camera.

1.10 Trustworthiness issues

1.10.1 Trustworthiness

Ryan et al. (2007) calls trustworthiness a rigour which is "the means of demonstrating the plausibility, credibility and integrity of the qualitative research process" (p. 742). These researchers point out that the most common criteria used to evaluate qualitative research studies are: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These criteria are preferred in qualitative research over validity and reliability which are used in quantitative research. In this study I used five data-generation methods to ensure triangulation. These are: document review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

1.10.2 Credibility

Credibility addresses the issue of whether there is consistency between the participants' views and the researcher's representation of such views (Ryan et al., 2007). Noble and Smith (2015) call this the truth value. In other words, credibility interrogates the truthfulness of the findings. If there are any biases and misrepresentations, the credibility of the findings would be questionable. In this study, I took the responses as they came and avoided tampering with their originality.

1.10.3 Dependability

Noble et al. (2015) refer to dependability as the consistency of the findings. Dependability relates to the extent to which the methods used to carry out the study can be trusted. This is echoed by Ndlovu (2016), who asserts that qualitative research focuses on whether the findings are consistent with the data generation and not whether the findings will be replicated in a similar study. To ensure dependability in this study, I used direct quotations as part of the evidence to give readers an insight into what participants said. I also recorded the interviews in order to refer to them for the authenticity of the data.

1.10.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to whether or not findings can be applied outside the context of the situation (Ryan et al., 2007). Qualitative research encourages the study of small samples purposefully selected to understand phenomena occurring in specific subjective contexts (Bryman, 2012). Transferability could be said to be equivalent to generalizability in quantitative research; even though qualitative research is not very concerned about the findings being generalized to other populations due to their subjectivity (Denscombe, 2014). I correctly captured the data as given by participants in order to make them meaningful to individuals who are not involved in the research study, including relating them to their own experiences.

1.10.5 Confirmability

Ryan et al. (2007) refer to confirmability as the demonstration of how researchers reach certain conclusions and interpretations. This is only achieved when credibility, transferability, and dependability are addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2007). Findings of the study should not be confused with the researcher's interests and patterns of thought (Noble et al., 2015). This is because what matters in research is the data as given by participants not researchers. According to Morrow (2005), the integrity of findings lies with the data. In this study, therefore, all data generated through interviews and focus-group discussions were recorded to ensure that I presented accurate data.

1.11 Organisation of the Thesis

1.11.1 Chapter One: Background and Contextual Layout of the Study

The first chapter presents the introduction and contextual background of the study. It also includes the problem, rationale and a general overview of the dynamics of curriculum implementation.

1.11.2 Chapter Two: Dynamics of Implementing the Mainstream English Curriculum at a School for the Deaf

This chapter constitutes the review of literature on the phenomenon of the study. I present various scholars. First a conceptualisation of curriculum is presented, followed by various scholars who theorise on the nature of dynamics of curriculum implementation. Two main dynamics namely: top-down and bottom-up dynamics were identified in the literature. Top-down dynamics include: prescribed content, prescribed teaching objectives, teaching strategies (pedagogy), prescribed resources, allocated time for instruction, and summative assessment of learning. The bottom-up dynamics include: learning outcomes, learning areas, everyday knowledge/content, facilitation as pedagogy, and peer assessment.

1.11.3 Chapter Three: Practicalising the Dynamics of Curriculum Implementation

This chapter unpacks the methodology used in the study. The study employed the action research design using the pragmatic paradigm. The qualitative approach was utilised to carry out the study. Data-generation methods used were document review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. In-depth discussion of each of these methods is presented in this chapter. The chapter also discusses the purposive selection (sampling) of participants in the study. Moreover, the study includes the discussion of the thematic analysis technique used to analyse data. Finally, issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations, as well as limitations of the study, are presented.

1.11.4 Chapter Four: Reflections on the Dynamics of Curriculum Implementation

This chapter presents and discusses findings on the descriptive "what" and operational "how" questions that guided the study. The data were generated using the documents review, reflective activity, and video observation.

1.11.5 Chapter Five: Naturalising the Dynamics of Curriculum Implementation

In this chapter findings of the philosophical "why" question are discussed. Data here were generated using the semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. During the discussions, participants gave reasons for dynamics of implementing mainstream English at a school for the deaf being the way they are.

1.11.6 Chapter Six: Summary, Propositions and Conclusion of the Study

This chapter presents the summary of findings based on the three research objectives and questions. Propositions of the study are also presented. Moreover, implications of the study, recommendations, and a conclusion are presented.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the overview and outline of the study. It has included the background and context of the study, the research problem, significance, purpose, research objectives and questions, and the methodology. The overall organisation of the study is also presented. The next chapter focuses on the review of literature on the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf.

CHAPTER TWO

DYNAMICS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MAINSTREAM ENGLISH CURRICULUM AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature related to the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum into schools for the deaf. Hart (2018) defines a literature review as the analysis, critical evaluation and synthesis of existing knowledge relevant to the research problem. This review of literature calls for the awareness of what has already been done by other researchers in the proposed area of research, and how it has been done. This is also supported by Jesson et al. (2011) who assert that the review of literature promotes the awareness and interpretation of what is already known, so that the researcher can identify the contradictions and gaps in existing knowledge. These highlighted gaps in literature expedite the need for further studies aimed towards filling the gaps and subsequently adding to the existing body of knowledge. By so doing, the review of literature helps to contextualise the research (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). According to these researchers, the literature review should describe and synthesise the major studies that are related to the research phenomenon. By extension, the literature review sheds some light on the main theories used in the subject area, how they have been applied and developed. The literature review brings knowledge of the main criticisms of the research and methods applied in the field of research being investigated (Hart, 2018).

The review of literature in this study is guided by three research questions: 1) What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf; 2) How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf; and 3) Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum into schools for the deaf the way they are? The review begins by discussing the conceptual definitions of curriculum espoused by different scholars, and the curriculum levels and representations. It then discusses the dynamics of curriculum implementation, and the Natural Identity Framework which has been used to frame this study.

2.2 Conceptualising the Curriculum

A curriculum has been defined in various related ways by various scholars. In cases where a particular concept like a curriculum has been defined in various ways, it is wise to consider its etymological origin (Van den Akker et al., 2010). According to these researchers, the Latin word *curriculum* refers to a "course" or "track" to be followed (or a plan). This is confirmed by Mckernan (2008, p. 4) who explains that the word curriculum originates from the Latin verb *currere* which means "a course to be run, or the running of the course". Other researchers who have also defined curriculum as a plan include Thijs et al. (2009) and Taba (1962). For example, Thijs et al. (2009) explain that this "plan" allows teachers to expand and elaborate on it in ways that benefit their levels (school/classroom) and contexts. Therefore, in the context of education where learning is the central activity, a curriculum is a path/course/plan followed by teachers during teaching and learning. Thus a curriculum is often defined as a plan for teaching and learning (Berkvens et al., 2014). This plan comes in the form of the official curriculum prepared by the state (or provincial) government, and implemented by the teachers in the schools. Other researchers such as Pinar (2012) refer to a curriculum as a plan of teaching and learning, and in such cases, it is motivated and promoted by the fulfilment of learning outcomes (Khoza, 2018).

Vorwerk (2009) underscored the importance of curriculum as representing an implementation theory for any learning programme or policy to be implemented. For that reason, the researcher contends that its structure and content are determined by the nature and purpose of the learning required. This argument has earlier been corroborated by Walker (2002), who defined a curriculum as a way of organizing teaching/learning content in schools. This definition allows any content, any purpose and any way of ordering such. It also does not favour any particular stance on the ideal curriculum. In most cases, the curriculum content is packaged in the form of a syllabus, which itself is often referred to as the curriculum (Klu, 2017). However, Klu quickly clarifies that a syllabus is the main component of the curriculum.

Sumekto (2018) observes that educational theory defines curriculum as the "what" of education, and teaching and learning jointly as the "how" of education. He further notes that the concept of curriculum, however, needs to expand to include the teaching of intellectual and social-emotional skills. Learners must be taught to think deeply; problem solve together; be encouraged to persevere; and be taught the skills to organise and evaluate their learning. By evaluating their

learning, this researcher suggests that the learners ought to be in a better position to reflect on their learning experiences during and after each class, determining whether they have achieved the intended learning objectives. This is substantiated by Obilo and Sangoleye (2010) who define curriculum as the collection of all learning experiences and anticipated learning outcomes that are offered to the learners at school. This definition, however, confines all the learning experiences and learning outcomes within the school; and suggests that all other experiences happening outside the school boundaries are not part of the curriculum. The above mentioned researchers add that curriculum is the means through which teaching/learning goals are attained. This interpretation of the curriculum is confirmed by Pinar (2012, p. 2), who describes the curriculum as "our key conveyance into the world". Such suggests that the policy makers use the curriculum to transfer their ideals, values, beliefs and convictions, among other aspects. Moreover, the curriculum as a vehicle complements the view of curriculum as a "course" or "track" which simulates a road on which the vehicle/curriculum travels.

By contrast, researchers such as Jansen (1995), Chisholm (2005) and Molapo and Pillay (2018) view the curriculum using the political lens. These researchers observe that the school curriculum is not merely a technical document outlining intended learning outcomes or specifying content to be covered, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures. Instead, these researchers define a curriculum as a politically inclined document which mirrors the debates of rival political groups' wishes, values, legacies and philosophies. In other words, the school curriculum embodies the dominating values and interests of influential political groups in society. For this reason the curriculum is constantly revised according to new needs and priorities, pressures and politics (Chisholm, 2005; Mckernan, 2008; Dowden, 2013). This highlights the value and importance of the curriculum in shaping and meeting the needs of society. Such is gauged through the attainment of learning outcomes, goals, and visions. In order to better understand the stages of curriculum from design/development to the realization of goals and visions, a knowledge and awareness of curriculum levels and representations is imperative.

2.3 Curriculum Levels and Representations

According to Van den Akker et al. (2009) there are five levels of curriculum namely: international curriculum (supra), national/state curriculum (macro), school/institution curriculum (meso), classroom/teacher curriculum (micro), and learner curriculum (nano). In order to better understand

these levels, differentiating between them is highly significant and useful. These levels of curriculum follow a top-down order commencing from the most powerful top (supra), to the lower (nano) level where there is less power. At the international (supra) level, international discussions, decisions and agreements on the state of education, its quality, and direction take place (Van den Akker, 2007). This researcher posits that the international debates are influenced and backed up by empirical findings of internationally comparative studies which then inform what national governments (at macro level) will consider when developing curriculum policies that suit their respective contexts.

The national or macro level of curriculum is responsible for the crafting and development of national curriculum frameworks. This is because at the government level, all political and administrative decisions on the curriculum are made which result in curriculum goals and materials used for teaching and learning, among other things (Vass, 2017). Similarly, Priestley et al. (2021) purport that this level enables the state to regulate and control education throughout the entire country by means of the curriculum policy. This is in line with Westbury's (2008) observation that state-mandated programmes and policies are authoritative and prescriptive in terms of how knowledge, attitudes, and competencies appropriate for learners are distributed. Without doubt, there are good reasons for adhering to curriculum policies made at this level, as highlighted by Taylor (2013). For instance, curriculum, through the published teaching-learning materials, addresses the learning goals that teachers have to strive to achieve and for which they are held accountable.

Also, these curriculum goals are collaboratively written and critiqued by various personnel during the cycles of design, piloting, and revision. However, Chisholm et al. (2003) decry the fact that new policies are put in place at the national level without considering the contextual factors of schools, such as organizational, financial, and service-delivery implications. This is echoed by Mehlomakulu (2013) who laments the assumption at the national level that the policies will automatically be implemented and become active. As a result, the gap between the curriculum policy design, vision, actual implementation and delivery appears to be widening (Mehlomakulu, 2013).

At the school or meso level of curriculum, is where the actual context of the curriculum is found. Whether or not the schooling experience is made meaningful and relevant to the learners is

dependent upon the effectiveness of the school curriculum (Dowden, 2013). For instance, if the curriculum supports shared values such as caring for one another, there will be fewer cases of bullying. Similarly, if the school curriculum values embrace and support learners' learning difficulties, such as those with deafness, such learners will improve on their learning outcomes. However, Mckernan (2008) rejects the notion that an effective curriculum should be predictable in terms of the learning outcomes or experiences that it targets. This researcher argues that a productive and effective curriculum is one that makes learners discover more than what was planned and predicted. Consequently, Mckernan advocates for a curriculum that impacts positively on real-life experiences.

The micro level of curriculum is the classroom set-up in which the actual teaching and learning take place. Since the teacher is the one to oversee and plan all classroom processes, the curriculum at this level is also referred to as the teacher curriculum. This is supported by Dowden (2013) who posits that the classroom context is where teachers have a major impact on curriculum construction. According to Dowden (2013), the reason for this great impact is that teachers are believed to be better placed to know and understand more about the learners than other stakeholders.

The nano level of curriculum is the curriculum developed at individual learner level in the classroom; and its impact is viewed through the output (learning experiences or outcome) (Vass, 2017). In other words, its focus is on the ultimate influences that the curriculum has on individual learners after learning has taken place. Priestley et al. (2021) refer to this level as the activity that takes place as teachers and learners interact. According to these researchers, in the course of their moment-by-moment interactions during the lesson, teachers and learners negotiate productive paths that enable them to fulfil set policy goals. Both parties do, however, concede that sometimes the classroom interactions take emergent and uncertain trajectories as and when the situation demands. This implies that the way in which the curriculum enactment process eventually pans out is not always cast in stone. In line with Priestley et al. (2021), Shohamy (2010) posited that the learning outcome at the nano level of curriculum may not easily be predicted by the teacher because it is within the learners' power to comply with or resist curriculum policies, as witnessed by their learning. It is likely possible to tell the effectiveness of the curriculum at this level through the learners' responses to the use of the curriculum during the classroom interactions.

All five levels of curriculum differentiated above are linked to the curriculum representations. According to Khoza (2015), the curriculum may be summarised into three main layers: the intended/planned curriculum; the implemented/enacted curriculum; and the attained/achieved/assessed curriculum. Curriculum, such as the mainstream English curriculum in this context, changes its form as it moves from the macro level (national) to the nano level (learner curriculum). For instance, the intended curriculum from the policy level changes into the implemented/enacted at classroom level; and the implemented changes into the attained at nano level (Mogami, 2014). The intended/planned/prescribed/official/formal curriculum is a written policy of ideas framed by educational vision with goals as well as intentions of the teaching/learning curriculum (Khoza, 2015). This curriculum refers to the influence of policy makers and curriculum designers/developers; and serves as the national curriculum that is prescriptive and given to the schools to follow.

On the contrary, the practised curriculum, also known as the curriculum in action, is the interpretation of the intended curriculum as perceived by teachers and in the actual process of teaching in operation (Nieveen & Plomp, 2018; Khoza, 2015). This places the teachers' role in the curriculum as the prime focus, making teachers responsible for implementing the formal curriculum such as the mainstream English curriculum. Carl (2012) asserts that the implemented curriculum often portrays remarkable disparities between the national and classroom levels. Nieveen et al. (2018) concur with Carl (2012), and explain that, while the expectation of policy makers is for teachers to follow the curriculum as given to them, in real classroom practice, the official curriculum is interpreted in the schools by teachers who reorganize the classroom exchanges and processes according to how they perceive them. For this reason, these researchers concede that more often than not, the curriculum policy perceptions and interpretations by teachers do not fully conform to the original intentions of the policy statutes. This could be because when it comes to the real school and classroom context, plans usually need some few adjustments before they are effectively implemented (Hoadley & Jansen, 2014). By implication, the deviations from the planned policy aspirations may yield learning experiences and results that do not mirror and align with the primary intentions. Therefore, how the teachers eventually implement the intended curriculum and the form that it takes in the classroom provides a very useful insight into the dynamics that are at play during teaching and learning.

The attained/achieved/assessed curriculum comprises the learning experiences perceived by learners as measured through their achievement of learning outcomes (Vass, 2017, Khoza, 2015). In other words, this curriculum belongs to the learners at the nano level; and the success of the implemented curriculum is measured and determined through the attained/assessed/achieved curriculum (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a). However, the hard work, planning, and reasoning that teachers invest in the classroom have a bearing on how well the learners perform after they have been taught in the classroom (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). These researchers support the notion that reasoning is categorised into three propositions: personal reasoning, social reasoning and professional reasoning. The above mentioned researchers explain that personal reasoning is unique to each individual and that each person attaches a personal significance and identity to their experiences. While social reasoning is mainly influenced by societal opinions that are usually non-factual and oral, professional reasoning stems from a factual or disciplinary perspective (Makumane et al., 2020). In the context of this study, the attained curriculum of the English curriculum at the school for the deaf is best mirrored by the learners' performances and competences in English language after being taught using the mainstream English curriculum. This English curriculum serves as a plan for teaching and is therefore driven by professional reasoning which follows a prescribed subject content and structure (Makumane, 2018).

Literature refers to the curriculum driven by professional reasoning as a performance curriculum (Bernstein, 1999; Makumane et al., 2020). Bernstein (1999) in particular, refers to this curriculum as a vertical curriculum because knowledge emerges from already existing information. This curriculum promotes international standards (Makumane, 2021) which are used to assess teachers in order to ascertain how far the learners attain the learning goals (outcome-based) such as per CAPS in South Africa which was introduced in 2012 (Shoba, 2021; Khoza 2017). According to Khoza (2016a; 2017) in performance, vertical, or collection curriculum each subject has its own boundaries, unique content and resources. This is because in this curriculum, the individual subject content serves as a base upon which student achievement is to be assessed.

By contrast, when the curriculum is defined as a plan of teaching and learning, it is driven by social reasoning and is referred to as a competence curriculum (Khoza, 2017; 2018). This curriculum combines subjects to form a learning area and is driven by achievement of learning outcomes (Khoza, 2017). According to Makumane (2021) this curriculum which is also referred to as the

integrated curriculum contextualises knowledge to make it appropriate and in line with the learners' needs. In other words, this curriculum allows teachers to be context-specific and to maximise learners' potential by aiming to meet their specific educational needs (Makumane, 2021). However, in order to successfully and effectively meet all learners' educational needs and potential, it is vital to understand the interplay of the dynamics of implementing a curriculum.

2.4 Dynamics of Implementing Curriculum

Ndlovu (2016) defines dynamics as forces and factors which affect the way a curriculum is perceived and operationalised at micro level (classroom level). Ndlovu (2016) further adds that these forces and factors include, amongst others, visions and approaches used to implement and enact a curriculum. Literature seems to agree that dynamics of implementing curriculum are categorised into two: the top-down and bottom-up dynamics (Zohar & Hipkins, 2018). These two dynamics, which are controlled by the forces and factors from the macro level and micro level, respectively, are discussed in the following subsections.

2.4.1 Top-down dynamics

Top-down dynamics within the parameters of this study refer to the forces that emanate from the curriculum planning, design, and development which take place at the macro/national level, and are directed to teachers and learners in the classroom. In other words, the forces move vertically from the top (curriculum policy makers) down to the classroom where teaching and learning (teachers and learners). At this level (intended stage), where curriculum is seen as a plan for teaching and learning (Berkvens et al., 2014), there are specific sets of rules and prescriptions (forces) put in place for teachers and learners to adhere to in the classroom during teaching and learning (curriculum implementation).

According to Sahib et al. (2021), curriculum development in countries where top-down approaches are used is highly centralized. The planning that takes place here leads to the formulation of a prescribed document for teaching and learning (Khoza & Fomunyan, 2021a; 2021b). This document is compiled using professional reasoning which follows a specified structure (Makumane, 2018; Makumane & Khoza, 2020). In other words, this set structure serves as a template made by policy makers before being distributed to the various schools country wide to be used as a pattern for teaching and learning.

According to Sumekto (2018), curriculum is shaped by those who advocate for its use as well as those instructed to follow its prescriptions. Advocates of the curriculum place certain demands and expectations that influence teachers to act in a particular way when implementing any curriculum in the classroom. While all the curriculum demands and expectations of teachers are part of the forces and factors (dynamics) which inevitably influence the overall implementation process, curriculum implementation itself constitutes the actual rollout of the curriculum policy document, particularly in the classroom set-up (Palestina et al., 2020). For this reason, Lin et al. (2015) caution that focus should not be confined to planning an appealing blueprint; instead, particular attention for curriculum developers should be on how the blueprint of curriculum is to be implemented in the classroom. This is in line with Chaudhary (2015), who highlights that curriculum implementation entails following the laid-out plan and path of the specific subject demarcation and syllabi.

Zhu and Shu (2017) describe the top-down dynamics as featuring a radical approach to implementing innovative principles due to the many 'dos and don'ts' that have to be followed. Similarly, Zohar et al. (2018) describe these forces as 'tight' because they compel teachers to subscribe to the stipulated principles, failing which, the curriculum goals may not be achieved. For this reason, the top-down prescriptions are usually met with resistance from the teachers in the schools who also refuse to own and commit themselves entirely to their implementation (Zohar et al., 2018). Common practice at the macro level is that the curriculum policy reflects the cultural selections, ideals, values, and aspirations of powerful social groups (Sumekto, 2018). As a result, teachers are often left powerless by their lack of autonomy and control over the imposed nature of the curriculum policy design (Brown, 2010).

The restrictive nature of top-down approaches on teachers discourages their independent choices and compels them to follow the dictates of the curriculum policies (Sahib et al., 2021). These researchers observe that the lack of autonomy has adverse effects on teachers since it makes them less resourceful and more reliant on documents from government. This creates gaps between the resultant curriculum policies, which are detached from the actual school and classroom contexts, thus posing challenges for teachers who enact them in the classroom. To illustrate this situation, in Taiwan, Lin et al. (2015) reported gaps between education reform policy and curriculum implementation in the technology curriculum of Taiwan's 9-year articulated technology

curriculum. According to Salminen and Annevirta (2016), such gaps appear because it is naturally difficult to enact some curriculum ideals which have not been practically tested and put in motion. This implies that feedback and reflection on a particular curriculum is possible after it has been put into practice in the school/classroom.

The forces coming from the prescribed curriculum document include: prescribed content, prescribed teaching objectives, teaching strategies (pedagogy), prescribed resources, allocated time for instruction, and summative assessment of learning.

2.4.1.1 Prescribed content

One of the principles (forces) of the prescribed document which is received from the macro level is the prescribed content. This content is seen as one of the drivers of the descriptive approaches of curriculum which, together with objectives, "produce a specific system of dealing with curriculum" (Khoza & Fomunyan, 2021a, p. 2). According to these researchers, the subject/discipline content is a common feature that is specified before teaching and learning take place. This is also supported by Muller and Hoadley (2019), who explain that the amount of content to be covered, the pace at which it is to be covered, as well as the sequence in which it has been arranged, are the key drivers of the performance curriculum. Khoza and Biyela (2019) refer to such as discipline knowledge; Hoadley (2018) refers to this as the school knowledge taught; and Khoza (2016a; 2021) refers to the performance curriculum as the legacy content. In other words, each subject has a specific content/knowledge that forms part of the scope of coverage for both teachers and learners, that is prepared by the curriculum developers. According to Hoadley (2018), this knowledge is selected, refocused, and changed for the purposes of teaching it, and is usually packaged in the form of syllabus documents.

The syllabus is an important component of the performance-based curriculum which emphasizes an independent content for each subject also used to assess learners' performance. This is also called a collection curriculum (Khoza 2016a; 2017), because, in addition to the collected/organised subject content, there are also specific teaching and learning resources. Ndlovu et al. (2021) refer to the subject/discipline content as the professional force as a result of the various academic disciplines found in learning institutions. Teachers are thus expected to study and master the content or discipline knowledge (Ndlovu, 2016). For this reason Ndlovu et al. (2021) refer to teachers as mini scholars who are expected to impart their knowledge to learners. During

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classroom teaching and learning, the teachers are the transmitters of the knowledge through interactions with the learners who acquire the knowledge (Hoadley, 2018). This is supported by Khoza (2021), who posits that the teacher's role here is that of an instructor who instructs students in order for them to master the prescribed content. To effectively disseminate this knowledge to learners in the classroom, content is divided into several objectives.

2.4.1.2 Prescribed teaching objectives

As with the prescribed content, teaching objectives in the performance curriculum are also prescribed and specified before the actual teaching takes place (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a). Hoadley (2018) defines objectives as short-term goals for teaching. These objectives belong to teachers. However, objectives reveal what students should attain after teaching has taken place (Remillard & Heck, 2014). These researchers also describe objectives as specified learning expectations and outcomes. Kurangi et al. (2017) define a teaching objective as an expression of intent to be demonstrated, monitored, and evaluated in the classroom. Literature reveals that objectives are a subset of the overall curriculum goals – which themselves are classified into aims, objectives, and outcomes. Objectives are also called "performance objectives" (Abutu, 2020), "specific learning goals" and "instructional objectives" (Kurangi et al. (2017).

According to Yamanaka and Wu (2014), objectives are key to the lesson-planning process, and they assist the teacher to identify intended learning outcomes. Objectives serve as a guide that assists teachers to arrive at the intended destination which comes in the form of targeted learners' experiences and achievements. This is affirmed by Kurangi et al. (2017) who persuade that objectives facilitate the learning of a structured way of planning. Such plans are in line with the professional reasoning which is used to present objectives (Makumane et al., 2020). These researchers contend that teachers use the school knowledge to enact the intended objectives. During the lesson plan, objectives assist teachers to carefully select appropriate teaching and learning materials, resources, activities and assessment tools (Yamanaka et al., 2014). Objectives are thus important in aligning content, materials, activities and outcomes through appropriate assessment tools.

In addition to properly aligning objectives, content and outcomes, particular attention should be given to properly setting objectives that will lead to the achievement of the desired learning outcomes. A study by Addisu and Wudu (2019) illustrated loopholes in objectives, and gaps in the

content which eventually affected the overall intended learning outcomes. The purpose of the study was to investigate the practice of preschool curriculum implementation in selected parts of South West Shoa Zone in Ethiopia. The findings revealed that objectives of the curriculum were unable to address all the key areas of children's development, and the contents fall short of appropriately preparing children for life and future learning. Moreover, appropriate instructional methods, materials, assessment and record-keeping systems that guarantee the proper implementation of the curriculum were not employed. There was an obvious misalignment between instructional methods, materials, and assessment and objectives and content.

Literature reveals that teaching objectives are framed and expressed using models such as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), Mager and ABCD models of writing objectives (Mager, 1997; Yamanaka et al., 2014). Most educational objectives follow Bloom's Taxonomy which is classified into lower and upper levels. The former level reflects behavioural outcomes mainly targeting memorization and recalling of facts; the latter level aims towards complex learning outcomes targeting critical thinking and problem solving of abstract knowledge (Bloom, 1956). The teaching objectives inform the teaching strategies to be used to enable the learners to master the prescribed content.

2.4.1.3 Teaching strategies (pedagogy)

Teachers are central to the implementation of the performance curriculum and they are expected to adhere to the prescribed structural teaching strategies that assist the learners to master the prescribed content (Bernstein, 1999; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a; 2021b; Shoba, 2021; Khoza, 2021a). According to Salminen and Annevirta (2016) teachers' planning of how they would teach the prescribed content is influenced by their interpretation of how the curriculum has been framed/formulated. These researchers refer to a teacher's plan of teaching as pedagogical thinking, which is important in curriculum implementation. Zhu et al. (2017) refer to this plan as "step-wise lesson plans" used to deliver content to the learners. Hoadley (2018) observes that in many developing countries, such as eSwatini, the pedagogic form follows the traditional and inflexible teacher-centred and instruction-driven plan, in which teachers use mainly the chalkboard to supplement talking. Such practices include rote and surface learning, collective chanting, chorus, copying and drilling to teach content to the learners (Hoadley, 2018; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a).

Shoba (2021) refers to the prescribed teaching approach as a 'tick box', or 'to get things done' mainly because they are always accountable to outside forces such as external examiners and inspectors. Khoza and Mpongose (2020) reason that some academics are still determined to use traditional teaching strategies because they see no need to embrace change to the latest practices. That being the case, learners are often assigned passive and reactive roles where they simply memorise and regurgitate what the teacher feeds them (Hoadley, 2018; Muller et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2017). This suggests that while the performance curriculum is mainly advancing the teachers' needs, it is also excluding the learners' needs (Mpungose, 2019) which ought to be prioritised during curriculum implementation (teaching and learning). Teachers' needs are more amplified because teachers are seen as technicians who simply deliver the curriculum content as it is without engaging learners (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). As a result, the learners' performance is adversely and inevitably affected: the reality is that most of the traditional teaching strategies and practices produce poor learning outcomes (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2015; Muller et al., 2019). For instance, in South Africa, learning outcomes are still a major cause for concern despite the many curriculum reforms (Muller et al., 2019).

In order to assist the learners to achieve academic success, interventions that aim towards the improvement of pedagogy are necessary (Muller et al., 2019). This calls for teachers to critically reflect on their teaching practices (Khoza, 2018; Mpungose, 2019; Mlaba, 2020). For instance, teachers should engage learners by making use of their experiences (social and personal needs) (Mpungose, 2019; Khoza, 2018). In addition, Glewwe et al. (2015) suggest that policies should now prioritise cheap strategies that are effective in achieving similar objectives, instead of always opting for expensive yet ineffective strategies which nevertheless fail to achieve the prescribed objectives.

Unfortunately, such a habit of adopting prescriptive pedagogies impede teachers' from developing their creative and critical thinking skills (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). This is perhaps the reason that most trends in practice reveal that some educators prefer to conform and adhere to the formal (rigid and restrictive) approaches than adopt the informal (flexible and user friendly) ones which favour most students' learning (Mpungose, 2019). For instance, a study by Mpungose (2019) concluded that lecturers were using formal reflections to be more familiar with the formal curriculum than the informal curriculum of Moodle yet this compromised students' learning outcomes. In

Indonesia, the English proficiency is generally low in the entire country and marked with great disparity between the English proficiency of students from rural areas and those from urban areas (Poedjiastutie eta al., 2018). Such a situation poses challenges for teachers and requires them to be innovative. In such cases, teachers, as actors and interpreters of curriculum, are better placed (in the specific classroom context) to know the best teaching strategies that would help the students to understand the content and, in the process, improve their performance. In order to effectively teach learners, teachers should utilise the prescribed resources and materials which are discussed below.

2.4.1.4 Prescribed resources

Resources play an important role in the implementation of curriculum; and teachers are expected to deliver the content using the prescribed resources. According to Khoza (2018), in performance curriculum, each subject has its own collection of teaching resources. Khoza and Mpungose (2020) define resources as objects or persons communicating the teaching and learning. These researchers posit that resources are divided into three categories: hardware (machines and tools used in teaching), software (materials used with hardware), and ideological-ware (ideas that motivate people to use hardware/software). Examples of hardware resources include: computers, laptops, mobile phones, iPads/tablets, sewing machines and stoves (Khoza, 2017; Mabuza, 2018; Khoza, 2019; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020); examples of software resources include: software applications (Microsoft office, the internet, LMS, among others), file management, and operational software (Khoza, 2017). Idealogical-ware resources (IW) are the mental processes and systems motivating academics and students to use hardware and software resources (Khoza, 2018; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Khoza, 2017).

While the teaching resources and materials are prescribed by the curriculum policy document/ policy makers, the irony is that, in most cases, schools often complain about lack of resources (Molapo & Pillay, 2018; Hoadley, 2018; Tsanwani & Juta, 2015). For this reason, the teaching and learning process is affected, and this results in poor learner performances (Mathura, 2019; Chirwa et al., 2022). For instance, this situation was experienced in Malawi during the implementation of the School Revised Curriculum. Here lack of resources led to students' poor academic performance (Chirwa et al., 2022). This suggests the need for flexibility to be exercised in the curriculum policies so that teachers are allowed to use other readily available resources and

improvisations, so long as these would help to achieve similar prescribed objectives. This is also because, while the formal curriculum prescribes the type of resources and materials to be used during teaching and learning, this occurrence also has detrimental consequences for teachers. For instance, on the one hand, practical subjects like Agricultural Sciences ultimately have a more theoretical content due to inadequate resources (Nkohla, 2016). On the other hand, teachers become less resourceful, growing dependent on curriculum documents produced at the macro/ governmental level (Sahib & Stapa, 2021).

According to Khoza (2019), hardware resources are designed in such a way that enable teachers to operate in a linear way that directs learners to follow a plan. Khoza (2019) cites the example of a computer which demands students first to switch it on, login using usernames and passwords before accessing application software. The same procedure is true for smart phones. These logical steps and patterns are informed by the professional reasoning (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). However, the shortage of hardware resources compels teachers to allow learners to share the few available resources (Mabuza, 2018). Besides, some available facilities in different schools do not promote the use of both hardware and software resources. Consequently, teachers are forced to adhere to traditional face-to-face environments. This is further compounded by some school principals and heads of departments not professionally managing financial resources (Mabuza, 2018).

In this highly technological era, on-line learning has seen the emergence of digital curriculum and software applications such as Moodle, Zoom, and Skype video conferences which are widely used. Their use and relevance have been heightened by the novel corona virus (COVID-19) which was first discovered in China in 2019. Many researchers recommend the usefulness and effectiveness of such resources for curriculum implementation (such as Mlaba, 2020; Khoza, 2018; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). All the prescribed resources have to be used within specified time allocations, a concept that is discussed below.

2.4.1.5 Allocated time for instructions

The performance curriculum which follows international performance standards is expected to be taught within specified and allocated time frames. Mabuza and Khoza (2019) define allocated time as the time that the region, district, school, or teacher offers the learners for instruction. In the school system, the allocated time is usually indicated in the form of a timetable. The various

subjects, number of periods (and their duration per day), and activities (including extra curricula activities), are marked for both teachers and learners to refer to. The teachers mainly aim to complete teaching the prescribed content on time; and to enjoy the convenience of the teaching and learning process in order to achieve success (Dowling & Wilson, 2017).

However, some valuable teaching time could be lost through the teachers' practices during the teaching and learning. For instance, researchers such as Hoadley (2018), Muller and Hoadley (2019) observe that there could be limited content coverage as a result of the slow pace that teachers use in the classroom informed by the traditional teaching methods such as drilling and memorisation. These findings are corroborated by Okoth (2016) and Mabuza (2018) who contend that valuable time may be lost as a result of the content overload on the prescribed curriculum which eventually affects the curriculum implementation process. Owing to the limited time to cover the prescribed content, Mabuza (2018) reported that Consumer Science teachers in Swaziland ultimately were obliged to work on Saturdays and during holidays. Besides, knowledge gaps are inevitable in learning outcomes and experiences (attained curriculum) as the learners move from one class to another. The effects are particularly pronounced for subjects such as science and mathematics which are rich in concepts (Muller & Hoadley, 2019). Therefore factors such as slow pacing in teaching and learning may derail the achievement of positive learning experiences.

Moreover, there seems to be concerns from some teachers that the time allocated to their subjects is inadequate. For instance, Mabuza (2018) argues that time is poorly allocated for the teaching of consumer sciences in eSwatini. This negatively affects the teaching of this subject such that content coverage is not completed. Apart from the allocated teaching and learning time, other external activities feed on the time that is intended for the lesson. For instance, Nkohla (2016) reported unproductive meetings from teachers' union in which most deliberations were on petty issues that yielded nothing of substance. This time could have been better utilized in the classroom. In order to determine whether the prescribed objectives have been achieved within the allocated time frames, summative assessment is carried out.

2.4.1.6 Summative Assessment

Just as in any other curriculum model, assessment of the learners' knowledge of the prescribed content in the intended curriculum is very important in the implementation process (Muller et al.,

2019). Khoza (2016a; 2017) asserts that in performance-based curriculum, the cognitive domain is used to determine the success of learners within individual subjects. In as much as this particular curriculum assesses what students have learnt from the prescribed content (Khoza, 2018; Mlaba, 2020; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a), its main focus is on what students should have achieved (Khoza, 2016a; Khoza, 2019). The target of this curriculum is therefore that students obtain a hundred percent grade in any work given, not settling for less. This is echoed by Muller et al. (2019) who argue that the learners' performance on the mastery of the prescribed knowledge as given by the intended curriculum is what is evaluated or assessed. This kind of assessment is referred to as the summative assessment, or assessment of learning, which is conducted after learning has already taken place (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Khoza, 2017).

The summative assessment is based on the professional needs of the curriculum (Makumane, 2021). This is because the learners' performance is gauged in terms of the set standards (international) of the curriculum (Khoza, 2019), a practice which seems to overlook the learners' specific needs (Ndlovu & Khoza, 2021). The rigidity of these set standards of performance limits the learners' potential and learning experiences. For this reason, Ndlovu et al. (2021) highlight the relevance and significance of the learners' experiences especially in fulfilling the learners' needs, and they amplify their importance by referring to them as the personal force. Learners' performances should thus not be restricted to only the mastery of prescribed content; instead, learners' skills, competences, and potential should be factored into the assessment of learning and the learning process itself.

According to Khoza (2016) the summative assessment of the factual/intended curriculum is aimed towards the attainment of a formal qualification which is the ultimate golden prize at stake. This is echoed by Khoza (2021a; 2021b) who note that in this assessment, teachers are able to determine whether or not students should pass or fail on the basis of the prescribed objectives. This is because the objectives serve as a model used to frame all relevant learners' experiences which learners should have acquired at the end of the teaching and learning session (attained curriculum) (Makumane, 2021; Khoza, 2019; Yamanaka & Wu, 2014). The curriculum is therefore said to have been successfully implemented if the set objectives, which adhere to international standards (Khoza, 2019), are achieved, and vice versa.

Besides, the summative assessment of the curriculum goals should aim to benefit the learners in every way possible during and after the curriculum implementation. For instance, results of a study by Sarmiento and Orale (2016) on the Basic Education (K-12) Curriculum specifically the senior high school (SHS) in the Philippines, United States, and Japan revealed that the SHS curriculum is intended to prepare students either to enter into college/university or to work in the industry or to become an entrepreneur. This suggests that the curriculum implementation becomes successful when the learners enrol in tertiary institutions and subsequently add value to society as professionals. By so doing, the curriculum has prepared the learner for real life situations. Therefore, educators are always held accountable for every activity that takes place in the classroom (Shoba, 2021). According to Shoba (2021) the constant reporting of teachers to inspectors also serves to gather quantitative data which is then used to assess the learners' performance in curriculum such as CAPS.

Nevertheless, there could be factors in the classroom that could impede learners from attaining the intended curriculum goals. In Taiwan, for instance, a gap in learning activities was identified by Lin et al. (2015) during the implementation of the curriculum reform plan in the technology curriculum. In this instance, the prescribed learning activities could not elicit the desired learning outcomes from the learners, leading to the passive participation of learners in the classroom and subsequent lack of critical learning skills. Guerrero (2019) confirmed this observation in his study on the factors that hinder or prevent college English students from participating in class discussions at Jiangsu University in China. Findings highlighted students' passive involvement in classroom discussions caused by their lack of critical learning skills and lack of understanding of the subject matter (content). That being the case, their understanding of English in the tertiary curriculum implementation was affected. This finding calls for the school authorities and teachers to reconsider the appropriateness of the learning activities in order to facilitate optimal participation and understanding of learners.

2.4.2 Bottom-up dynamics

Bottom-up dynamics, the second category of dynamics, are the factors that influence curriculum implementation found at the micro level (classroom) where the actual teaching and learning of the formal curriculum takes place. These factors become amplified at the implemented/enacted stage where curriculum is mainly viewed as a plan of teaching (Khoza, 2019), and pioneered by the

teachers who are key curriculum interpreters and actors. In other words, this position of curriculum definition targets what works best in the classroom after considering the contextual challenges. This is perhaps the reason why Zhu et al. (2017) refer to the bottom-up factors as a more lenient model that embraces the unique and specific realities unfolding in the school contexts. Khoza and Fomunyam (2021a) also affirm that the teachers' planning results in the compilation of a reflective document after teaching and learning has taken place. This is echoed by Lee (2019) who posits that the curriculum should reflect everyday experiences.

The bottom-up dynamics recognise the contribution and importance of teachers in all stages of curriculum from design to implementation. Mathura (2019) argues that involving teachers in this process enables them to give relevant feedback informed by the context in which the curriculum is implemented. Researchers advocate for the inclusion of teachers in the planning and development process in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the curriculum (for example, Salminen et al., 2016; Alvunger et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2015; Palestina et al., 2020). This is because teachers, as key players in the curriculum implementation, are better placed to understand what works and what does not work in their schools and classrooms.

However, Zohar & Hipkins (2018) refer to the bottom-up dynamics (factors) as loose because they have no specific and rigid structure that is followed by teachers during the enactment of curriculum. Just like in the macro level where policy makers have their ideals and beliefs which they prefer to be part of the curriculum, teachers, as curriculum implementers have their own differences and beliefs emanating from their respective ideals. Nevertheless, the bottom-up submissions are often overlooked and ignored by the curriculum policy makers. For this reason, Nieveen et al. (2018) contend that room should be created for bottom-up initiatives as well as site-specific interpretations and choices for teachers. This therefore implies that each school context influences the interpretation of the curriculum policy and the subsequent choices that align with the interpretations.

The bottom-up factors which could positively influence the effective implementation of the official curriculum include: learning outcomes, learning areas, everyday knowledge/content, facilitation as pedagogy, and peer assessment.

2.4.2.1 Learning outcomes

The integrated/competence-based curriculum advances the achievement of learning outcomes. According to Khoza (2021b), learning outcomes are learning goals, or what learners achieve by the end of their learning process. These learning goals are evaluated through the attained, achieved, or assessed curriculum, which comprises the learning experiences perceived by the learners as measured through learning outcomes (Khoza, 2016a). Learning outcomes are influenced by the enacted curriculum, which reflects what exactly takes place in the classroom during teaching and learning (Remillard & Heck, 2014); and the achievement of each learner is demonstrable (Muller et al., 2019). This is because learning outcomes are driven by social reasoning (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). Therefore, in this curriculum learners aim to understand the "how" question of teaching and learning in order to achieve learning outcomes (Khoza, 2019). This is echoed by McPhail and McNeill (2021) who describe the outcomes as resulting from a "procedural knowledge or know-how-to process" instead of the "propositional knowledge or knowledge-that".

Contrary to the performance curriculum, in which the mastery of the prescribed content is assessed following international standards, Khoza (2016a; 2020) contends that levels of outcome are not important in the competence-based curriculum. Instead, achieving outcomes/competencies becomes an end into itself, and not necessarily what students should have achieved (Bernstein, 1999; Muller et al., 2019; Khoza, 2016a; 2020). According to Jansen (1998) the mere focus on the outcomes sidelines the emphasis on content coverage since they (outcomes) give the learner a clear guide of what to attend to. Mabuza (2018) supports this assertion and reasons that the learning outcomes are an expression of the competencies that learners eventually exhibit after learning has taken place. She adds that these competencies show themselves in the form of the skills, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour changes needed by the society. This is because the curriculum aims to advance specific social skills that are then used to meet societal needs through the people' or group members' opinions (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). For instance, students may be tasked by their respective communities or other organisations to conduct specific research to meet societal needs (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a; 2021b).

Khoza (2019) highlights that even the activities carried out in the horizontal mirror the societal challenges in order to bring relevant and lasting solutions. In other words, all skills acquired are seen as the answer to these social challenges to promote relevance of the education and curriculum.

Even the students are encouraged to link and relate their classroom experiences with real-life experiences (Coastley, 2015; Lee, 2019; Alghamdi, 2017). Lee (2019) contends that the integrated curriculum helps learners to deal with and manage social challenges mainly because learning and life experiences are inseparable.

2.4.2.2 Learning areas

The integrated/horizontal curriculum which combines different subjects pays no attention to individual subject boundaries (McPhail & McNeill, 2021; McKernan, 2008; Anderson, 2013). According to McKernan (2008), this lack of distinct boundaries advances the principles of inquiry learning where learners are at liberty to move across subject domains while searching for answers/knowledge. This presupposes that knowledge is not static or confined within the parameters of a single subject. Therefore, to have a broader scope of understanding, learners should read extensively and draw conclusions from various sources of knowledge. This integration of knowledge from the various subjects/courses ultimately produces a learning area (Ndlovu & Khoza, 2021; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015).

Mncube and Khuzwayo (2017) describe the integration as happening "across disciplines/subjects". These researchers also describe the integration as happening "across all learning areas". Both these descriptions suggest that the rigidity and stereotype in terms of subject focus and content which is a common feature in the performance curriculum is done away with in the learning areas of the competence-based curriculum. Instead, there is now less guidance in the content covered, and the main emphasis is on the competencies that learners possess which are seen through the learning outcomes (McPhail et al., 2021). McKernan (2008) posits that themes are used to organize the learning areas during the formulation of this curriculum. In such cases, the teacher ensures that the identified theme during each session of the teaching and learning process is touched upon.

However, the lack of easily identified subject boundaries in the integrated curriculum is often described as having a weak classification when compared with the performance curriculum. That is probably what Bernstein (1999) refers to in the language produced here as having "weak grammars" whereas Khoza and Fomunyam (2021a; 2021b) describe the curriculum as having "flexible structures", that is if they are available in the first place. This is the probable reason for students using this curriculum to take a great deal of time to complete their studies (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021b). Despite these shortcomings of the competence curriculum, Raselimo et al.,

(2015) contend that the learning areas serve as "quality control mechanisms" ensuring that the key competencies expected from learners are arrived at after implementation of the curriculum.

2.4.2.3 Everyday knowledge or content

In the competence/horizontal curriculum, learners socially construct content because they like to socialize (Khoza, 2019; Hoadley, 2018). According to Khoza (2016a), knowledge (content) is generated horizontally from simple, known local sources instead of being prescribed, as is the case with the vertical curriculum. This is because the prescription of content restricts the learners from having the freedom to express themselves in helping them meet their learning needs (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Learners express themselves orally with their peers from whom they also learn ideas and share such. This knowledge is therefore referred to as common-sense knowledge (Bernstein, 1999). In this digital era, learners use various social media sites (SMSs) for active social interactions. Such sites are useful in the generation of everyday knowledge and experiences which expedite the achievement of learning outcomes (Khoza, 2021b).

For the creation of the everyday knowledge, the societal force is at play (Ndlovu & Khoza, 2021). According to these researchers, the societal force concedes that schools are not an island; instead, they are part of the society in which they are located. The researchers argue that schools should therefore teach the knowledge that is found in society. This is in line with Nhlongo's (2020) assertion that the community influences the transformation of people's lives in the sense that in whatever a person does, the community must either approve or disapprove of. For instance, people in their workplaces or schools often value the advice and perspectives of their colleagues or peers, despite that such advice and perspective may not actually be implemented (Nhlongo, 2020). People should always have a critical mind and not simply take things as given (Makumane & Khoza, 2020; Salminen & Annevirta, 2016).

Conversely, knowledge (content) taught in schools that is not generated within the specific context in which the schools are found may be considered foreign and ineffective in meeting the learners' needs. Research seems to agree that educators' main concern in this curriculum is to equip learners with relevant skills and competencies that would benefit the entire society (promoting specific social skills) (Makumane, 2021; Shoba, 2021; Makumane & Khoza, 2020). For instance, Shoba (2021) observes that learners struggle to deal with some reading material because these promote foreign knowledge which contradict the learners' background and context. For this reason, learners

become demotivated and frustrated because they cannot relate to what they are reading about (Shoba, 2021). Thus most learners perform poorly not because they are incapable and incompetent but simply because they are compelled to learn abstract knowledge (content) which is also used to assess their learning outcomes.

Accordingly, and probably as a solution to this challenge, the competence-based curriculum gives the learners freedom to generate content without prescriptions and boundaries. However, Muller et al. (2019) argue that generating knowledge and curriculum without guidance is extremely ambitious because it is difficult to control. This is echoed by Bernstein (1999), who concedes that managing a range of languages (knowledges) with different procedures is problematic. As a result, Niemela (2021) argues that the whole issue of integration cannot be left to teachers and students alone. Instead, he advocates for the development of a differentiated and integrated structure for school subjects as a way of supporting the teaching-learning process. Moreover, Niemela (2021) and other researchers advance the claims that the integration of knowledge from different subjects creates a "powerful knowledge".

2.4.2.4 Facilitation as pedagogy

Unlike the performance curriculum in which traditional methods involving rote teaching and learning are emphasised, the competence curriculum emphasises the communicative method (Sahib & Stapa, 2021; Makumane, 2021), which involves social interaction. These researchers posit that, in situations in which the communicative approach is used, such as in the English curriculum of Malaysia, students are allowed to determine classroom activities, choose topics to discuss, and identify and bring texts and other materials for reading activities. This is done to make the learning activities more relevant and meaningful for the learners, encouraging everyday use of the English Language as a target language (Sahib et al., 2021). All these materials and classroom collaborations allow learners to play the dominant role by sharing ideas (Mpungose, 2019; Sahib et al., 2021; Khoza, 2020; Ndlovu & Khoza, 2021). In other words, this horizontal curriculum gives learners an excellent platform to explore the "how" of learning outcomes (Khoza, 2021b).

The teachers, in this case, are no longer transmitters of knowledge to students but only serve as facilitators, helping the students construct knowledge and achieve the learning outcomes (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). According to these researchers, students assume the role of knowledge creators; they dispel the notion that learners come to class as blank slates that

have to be filled with knowledge. Rather, learners have hidden abilities, competencies, and potential that can only be activated when they are given the platform to create knowledge (Mogami, 2014; Hoadley, 2018; Muller et al., 2019). Muller et al. (2019) describe the teacher as a midwife responsible for the birth of competence. These researchers define competence as an inner or in-built potential for some specialised repertoire. Therefore, Hoadley (2018) and Muller et al. (2019) refer to learner-centredness and constructive learning as progressive models. Ndlovu and Khoza (2021) refer to this type of learning as discovery and self-directed learning by the learner.

However, the control that learners enjoy in the learning process should not be confused with taking authority from the teacher. According to Alvunger (2018), teachers allow the learners to 'own' the learning process; however, they (teachers) are careful not to allow the learners to 'get out of hand'. Instead, this researcher posits that an interactive space is always present in the teaching and learning process involving the interplay between teachers and learners in the classroom. This reasearcher argues that learners act as 'co-authors' in this interactional space of the classroom. There is shared knowledge, not just among learners, but also between the learners and teachers (Alghamdi, 2017). The teacher thus also learns from the learners' experiences and everyday knowledge instead of assuming a 'know it all' attitude. Khoza (2020) argues that both teachers and students are able to generate and share knowledge (content) through their interactions on social media platforms such as WhatsApp.

2.4.2.5 Peer assessment

The competence-based curriculum, with its central principles of socialization, uses peer assessment. According to El-Senousy (2020), peer assessment permits learners the opportunity to evaluate one another's work. This opportunity and responsibility places learners as active, engaged, and critical assessors (Lorna. 2006; Mabuza, 2018). This motivates learners always to take their work seriously and always to be critical thinkers who can apply themselves fully when analysing new information. Learners can relate such to prior knowledge, thereby promoting new learning experiences (Norma, 2006; Coastley, 2015). However, peer assessment does not necessarily imply that the teacher is completely out of the picture when assessing learning outcomes. This is supported by El-Senousy (2020), who clarifies that peer assessment aligns itself with the quality standards that are set by the teacher using a rubric. All that the educator prioritizes in such instances is ensuring that learners are equipped with relevant skills. By means of such

skills, learners will be able to make necessary links across diverse disciplines relating to subject matter as well as to their personal lives (Coastley, 2015; Anderson, 2013). From the perspective of set quality standards, El-Sonousy (2020), contends that peer assessment is still consistent with real evaluation where students are expected to master particular skills following the required standards of performance.

When learners are actively involved in assessing each other's work, this promotes shared learning experiences. This is what Lorna (2006) and Khoza (2021a) call "assessment as learning". For instance, Lorna (2006) explains that, "assessment as learning is based in research about how learning happens, and is characterized by students reflecting on their own learning and making adjustments so that they achieve deeper understanding" (p. 41). Mabuza (2018) concurs with Lorna (2006), asserting that student reflections are the key drivers of peer assessment. Student reflections are therefore a significant part of the learning process since they help the students have a profound and rich understanding of every learning experience and tasks deriving some lessons that will be useful to their daily lives. Accordingly, when learners take charge of their learning, they are also able to follow their own learning process (Lee, 2019).

Unlike in the performance curriculum where learners are assessed based on their mastery of the prescribed content, and specifically what they should have achieved Khoza (2016), assessment in the competence curriculum is based on the actual skills and competences that a learner readily demonstrates after the learning experience (Muller et al., 2019; Khoza, 2019; 2016a). The area of concern here is the knowledge that the learner possesses and what he can actually do with it (Mogami, 2014). This researcher refers to this assessment as the general competence criteria, consistent with the definition of an assessed curriculum as the knowledge and skills obtained by learners (Arai, 2020). Therefore, the learners' skills, competencies, and potential constitute what is evaluated and activated in the competence-based curriculum (Muller et al., 2019).

Having discussed the two categories of dynamics, the top-down (forces) and bottom-up (factors), there still seems to be a tension between the two claims made by professionals (performance- based curriculum) and society (competence-based curriculum). This tension impacts on the effectiveness of the curriculum implementation process, finally creating what Shoba (2021, p. 237) describes as a "disconnect between curriculum prescriptions and content taught as a result of conflicting voices and superiority of certain knowledges". This is reiterated by Hoadley (2018) who observes that

this tension engenders the learning limbo and causes a dislocation between curriculum requirements (top-down forces) and social manifestations and influences (bottom-up factors). Shoba (2021) further contends that this disjuncture is compounded by curriculum designers who turn a blind eye to curriculum development stages.

The tension is also caused because individual responsibility (personal/individual/pragmatic dynamics) is being ignored. This is because individual responsibility helps raise an awareness of who exactly is involved in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the tension between these two giants (performance and competence-based curricula) resulting from sidelining or ignoring the individual responsibility, suggests that there is a need for the interrogation of issues that emerge from the fight between top-down forces and bottom-up factors. Similarly, Khoza (2021a) reiterates the need for theories that would "harmonise the tension between teaching for professional knowledge and teaching for societal skills through identification of personal or pragmatic identities" (p. 5). This researcher contends that the personal or pragmatic identities (dynamics) combine the strengths of both the professional and societal (dynamics), which influences the curriculum's implementation in this study. Personal theories which drive an individual's conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind/thoughts are thus needed (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a; 2021b).

2.4.3 Personal/Individual/Pragmatic dynamics

To pacify the tension that exists between the forces and factors brought about by the professionals (performance-based curriculum) and society (competence-based curriculum), respectively, this study advocates for a curriculum that combines the strengths of both curricula. Such curricula consider the individual responsibilities (dynamics), and is called the pragmatic/personal/individual curriculum (Khoza, 2020a; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021b; Makumane & Khoza, 2020). This curriculum seeks first to understand the individuals involved in the teaching and learning process: the "who" question is predominant when dealing with individual/personal identities. Teachers and students should therefore "learn to answer the question of 'why me?' or 'why not me?' after they have understood their identities" (Khoza & Fomunyam (2021b, p. 233). Such questions are pertinent because the reason for teaching in a personal/individual/pragmatic curriculum is to personalise teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of the people involved (Sokhulu, 2020).

According to Sokhulu (2020), personalisation experiences (dynamics) are determined by students' individual needs unique to all individuals. They (experiences/dynamics) are informed by professional (forces/dynamics) and societal experiences (factors/dynamics). In the context of the present study on the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini, there is a need to focus on the individual responsibilities (individual dynamics), drawing from the strengths of both the top-down forces (professional dynamics) and the bottom-up factors (societal dynamics). As a new category of dynamics, individual dynamics may address the needs of individual learners at the school; and may eventually help the learners to self-actualise (Sokhulu, 2020; Khoza, 2021a). This is because "in addition to qualification (professional forces) and socialisation (social factors), education also impacts positively or negatively on the student as a person" (Biesta, 2015, p. 77). Biesta (2015) refers to this as subjectification, suggesting that students exist as capable individuals who can reason and make their own choices in order to have a meaningful educational experience.

Biesta (2015) contends that drawing from the strengths of the performance (top-down forces) and competence-based (bottom-up) curricula (in order to develop individual dynamics) creates a balance between them, and in the process avoids a one-sided emphasis of one over the other. This is because an emphasis of one category of dynamics, for example on academic achievement, may cause stress for the youth especially in situations where failure is not an option (Biesta, 2015).

Individual responsibilities that constitute individual dynamics include the goals, formative assessment, academic roles, teaching/learning environment, and ideological-ware resources. These are discussed in the following subsections.

2.4.3.1 Goals

Khoza and Biyela (2019) define goals as actions that must be achieved through the learning process. Knowledge and understanding of goals, as part of curriculum visions (Khoza, 2016a), is fundamental to meeting learners' needs. This researcher posits that goals are divided into aims, objectives, and outcomes. While aims are teachers' long-term goals, objectives are teachers' short-term goals, and learning outcomes are what students should achieve at the end of the lesson (Khoza & Biyela, 2019; Khoza, 2017; 2016a). For the pragmatic curriculum, teachers should have long-term goals that appear as aims. Makumane and Khoza (2020) assert that aims are habitual, unique, and representative of each individual's interpretation of the curriculum vision. For this reason, they

advise educators to carefully craft aims that would help learners to meet objectives and learning outcomes.

2.4.3.2 Formative assessment

According to Khoza (2020a), formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, helps to establish the identities of those involved in teaching and learning. This enables the teachers to know who exactly they are dealing with in the teaching and learning process in order to meet their needs. Unlike summative assessment that is conducted at the end of the lesson to assess mastery of content, formative assessment is a continuous event carried out from the beginning of the lesson until the end (Budden, 2016; Mabuza, 2018; Khoza & Biyela, 2019). According to Budden (2016), this assessment provides a diagnosis of how the teaching and learning is progressing throughout the lesson. This is meant to provide feedback that enables teachers to monitor whether learners are achieving learning goals (Mabuza, 2018). Assessment for learning suggests that every question that the teacher asks learners is intended to establish their level of knowledge and is also intended to improve the educational experience (Khoza, 2021a).

2.4.3.3 Academic roles

As part of the requirements of a pragmatic/individual/personal curriculum, educators are expected to play a number of roles in effective teaching and learning. Such roles include being a facilitator, instructor, researcher, and assessor (Khoza, 2020a; Budden, 2016; Mabuza, 2018). For instance, the teacher may begin as an instructor and finish up as a facilitator. As researchers, both teachers and learners should utilise relevant theories that complement their respective identities (Khoza & Biyela, 2019). This is because these researchers emphasise that effective curriculum implementation is enhanced when the personal/individual identities of students are known.

2.4.3.4 Teaching and learning environment

According to Khoza and Biyela (2019), a learning environment is a platform for learning that is divided into face-to-face, online, and blended learning. This definition suggests that the learning place or environment should not be confined to just one platform, such as only using face-to-face platforms which restrict the consideration of others. This is because the learning environment may become a deterrence to learning if it is unfavourable and not motivating for learners (Mabuza, 2018). Therefore, the learning platform(s) used should be set in such a way that they assist the

learners to meet their learning needs; this includes, combining the face to face, online, and blended learning platforms. Khoza and Biyela (2019) add that the learning environment determines the types of learning activities required in a lesson.

2.4.3.5 Ideological-ware resources

Khoza (2018; 2017) and Khoza and Mpungose (2020) define ideological-ware resources (IW) as the mind processes and systems that motivate academics and students to use hardware and software resources. The cognitive and intellectual abilities of both teachers and students therefore play a critical role during the teaching and learning (curriculum implementation) in the classroom. Khoza (2018) reported that the IW resources contributed immensely to the success of the CAPS curriculum in South Africa. Therefore, IW resources play a crucial role in helping to meet personal needs. Khoza (2018) adds that these resources are driven by the personal/individual, societal, and professional curriculum reasons.

The individual/pragmatic dynamics which bridge the existing tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics have been discussed. The Natural Identity Framework which was propounded by Khoza (2021a) is ideal for consideration as a framework that could be used to interrogate dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini.

2.4.4 The Natural Identity Framework

The natural identity (NI), as an educational experience and framework is rooted in the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison et al., 2010; Khoza, 2021b). Even though this framework has mainly been applied to issues of the digital curriculum (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b), it can be applied to various other contexts such as that of the present study. The NI framework is informed by three constructs/identities, namely, the personal/pragmatic, societal and professional identities. These three constructs combine to form the natural identity (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b) as illustrated in Figure 1 below. This places the NI at the centre of these three identities.

Khoza (2021a) defines natural identity as the unconscious, subconscious, and conscious cognitive processes of believing that all actions and their outcomes are guided by natural laws, actions, or forces. The cognitive process leading to particular actions and outcomes, therefore takes place in each individual's mind and influences their actions, judgements and outcomes, thus rendering each

person as unique. This uniqueness comes naturally, and when nature is initiated, no one can control it. For instance, learners' classroom performances, according to natural identity principles, depict what nature allows to be the learning outcome. Khoza (2021a) argues therefore that, no matter how hard a learner may try to attain a 100% grade in a test, if the learner was naturally not meant to attain such a mark as created by God, the outcome will always be different. This implies that learning may not necessarily be judged on the basis of grades/scores obtained from summative assessments. Instead, prime focus should be in making sure that learners' individual needs are met during the teaching and learning process.

Accordingly, in the school/classroom context, Khoza (2021a), through the natural identity framework, advises educators constantly to re-reflect and re-critique so as to answer the philosophical "why" questions of education - such helps us better to comprehend the natural identity. According to Khoza, teachers are able to appreciate and embrace their own actions and outcomes after they have reflected and critiqued their actions using the professional, societal, and personal identities. Their reflections and critiques also enable learners to self-actualise and to deal with uncertainties (Khoza, 2021a).

In addition to answering the philosophical "why" questions, the NI framework addresses the descriptive "what" (through the principles of the professional identity/performance curriculum), the operational "how" (addressed through the principles of the societal identity/competence-based curriculum), and the personal "who" questions of education (Khoza, 2021b). This researcher asserts that addressing these questions would enhance effective teaching and learning by responding to the professional, societal and personal needs of the curriculum. The responses to all these questions would thus produce the NI which is equivalent to a worthwhile educational experience.

According to Khoza (2021a), the personal identity combines the professional (performance-based curriculum) and societal (competency-based curriculum) identities. Knowledge of the individual identities helps to meet the specific needs of both teachers and learners during the course of teaching and learning (Khoza, 2020a). This is echoed by Khoza and Fomunyam (2021b) who contend that personal needs, which occur within the personal lived space (ownership of space) mediate between the professional and societal spaces, in order to produce individual, natural actions. These individual and natural actions are unique to them (personal identities) and they

allow teachers and learners to reflect and critique their actions as unique cognitive individuals (Khoza, 2021a). This researcher argues that quality education, as far as personal identity is concerned, is about first identifying how the personal needs are to be addressed, and what works for an individual can therefore be regarded as quality education. This implies that individual choices and preferences should be accommodated in the curriculum so long as they help in the achievement of learning outcomes.

The personal identity is informed by the personal reasoning which is unique to each individual and based on their experiences, values, and beliefs (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). These researchers assert that a combination of the performance and competence-based curricula which is driven by personal reasoning will produce a pragmatic curriculum. This emerging curriculum is considered to be more relevant in empowering educators to handle different types of curricula (Makumane & Khoza, 2020).

The three main identities, that is, professional (performance-based curriculum), societal (competence-based), and personal (pragmatic) which collectively form the natural identity, are driven by assessment: summative, peer, and formative assessment. These forms of assessment mediate between the three identities. For instance, summative assessment, which assesses the mastery of the subject content or knowledge after teaching, connects the professional and societal identities in order to grade learners (Khoza, 2020a). Peer assessment, which takes place among learners, connects the societal and personal identities in order to better understand learning communities or environments (Khoza, 2021a; 2020a). Lastly, the formative assessment, which is also known as assessment for learning, connects the professional identity and the personal identity so that the specific learning needs can be identified and addressed during the teaching and learning process (Khoza, 2020a). This is aimed at improving the educational practices (Khoza, 2021a).
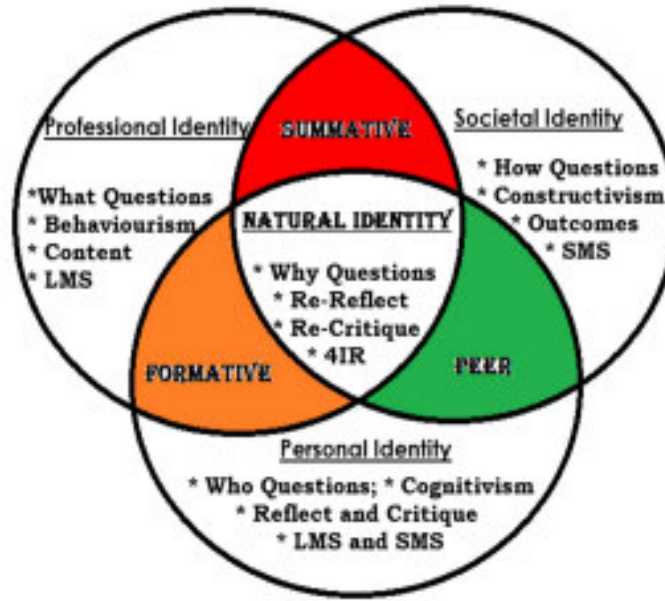
Figure 1: Natural Identity Framework, adapted from Khoza (2021a)

In support of the Natural Identity Framework (NI), and applying it to the present study, the three identities appeal as the top-down dynamics (forces from professionals), bottom-up dynamics (factors from the society), and individual (personal/pragmatic) dynamics. These dynamics combined form the innate dynamics (ID) which contribute to a worthwhile educational or learning experience as shown in Figure 2 below. The ID is basically the unique human identification which is a response to the philosophical "why" question of education. The ID brings awareness of that each individual is unique as a result of natural forces and occurrences such as birth and cognitive make-up, which influence their actions, thought processes, and learning outcomes. Therefore, the natural wiring and make up of an individual is what constitutes the innate dynamics (ID) in this study. This is basically what works best for each individual in terms of meeting their specific learning needs, and most importantly, what could be referred to as quality education for learners (Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a).
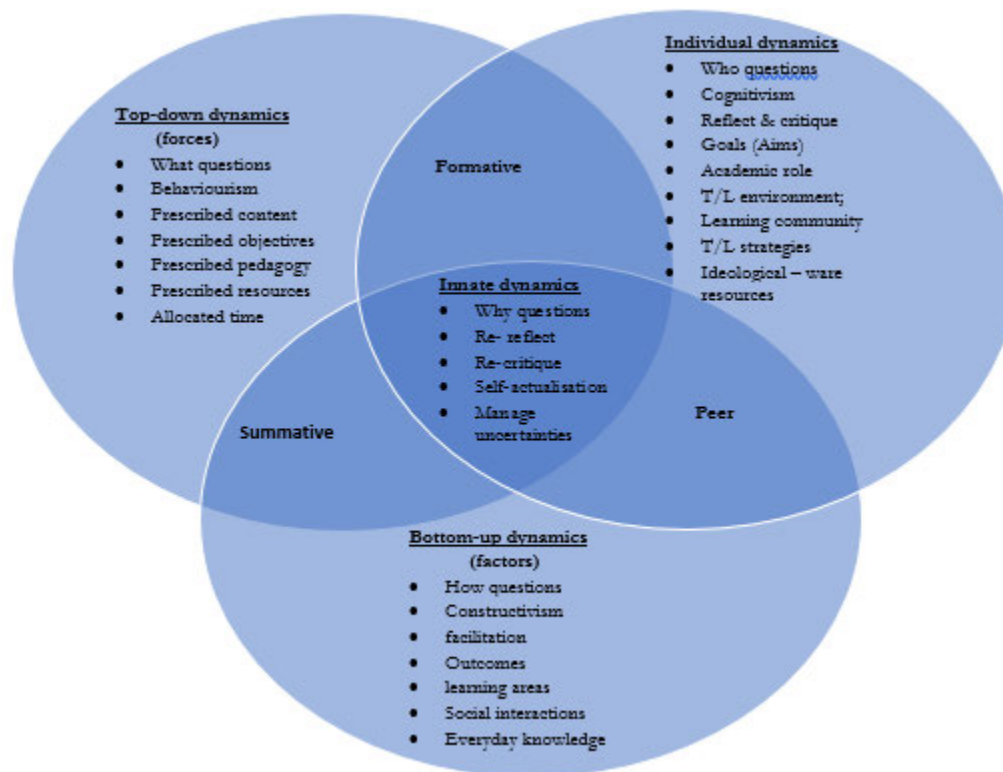
Figure 2: Dynamics of Curriculum Implementation

The ID unifies the professional (top-down/teaching), societal (bottom-up/social) and the individual (pragmatic/cognitive) requirements/needs in order to promote an effective and productive learning experience. The ID is the heart of the educational experience. The ID allows teachers the opportunity to re-reflect and re-critique their present practices, ensuring that learning needs are achieved. This also allows both teachers and learners to appreciate and embrace their inherent and inborn uniqueness which shows itself off through the learning outcomes and actions. This critical reflection is conducted to ensure that individual learning needs are met, thus attaining the desired learning outcomes. The ID framework assumes that the natural make-up of people is a strength that must be acknowledged and nurtured. This is such that the goal of teachers should not be to attempt to change an individual's identity to that of another. Also, the ID assumes that quality education makes use of the natural God-given abilities of the learners/individuals.

In a nutshell, the ID advocates that in attempting to answer the philosophical "why?" question, the personal "who?" or "for who?" question should always be remembered so that all forms of reasoning are considerate of meeting all the learning needs. The ID is seen as driven by "self-re-

reflection" and "re-critique" of human experiences that respond to any given situation (Khoza, 2021b). The ID framework also addresses the descriptive "what" (addressed through the principles of the professional identity/performance curriculum), operational "how" (addressed through the principles of the societal identity/competence-based curriculum). Responses to all these questions would promote effective teaching and learning by meeting the professional, societal, and personal needs of the curriculum.

2.4.5 Conclusion

The discussion of the top-down and bottom-up dynamics showed that there is friction between the performance (professional) and competence-based (societal) curriculums, respectively. This tension is harmonised by the identification and recognition of the individual dynamics which focus on the specific individual needs and what works for the teachers and learners directly involved in the curriculum implementation process in the school for the deaf. The conceptualisation of these three categories of dynamics influenced the choice of the Natural Identity Framework, which embraces the natural laws and forces influencing thoughts, actions and outcomes. Reflection on dynamics resulted in the emergence of innate dynamics which seek to answer the philosophical "why" question. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on practicalising the dynamics of curriculum implementation by unpacking the methodological paradigm, research methodology, design, data generation methods, and sampling technique most applicable to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICALISING THE DYNAMICS OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the dynamics of curriculum implementation and the framework of the study. This chapter practicalises the conceptualisation of the dynamics of curriculum implementation in order to answer the three main research questions: What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (descriptive); How do the dynamics of mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (operational); and Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are? (philosophical). The chapter first discloses the research paradigm (pragmatic), research style/design (action research), and research methods (one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion of reflective activities, and document review). It also reveals the purposive sampling technique, thematic data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical issues, and anticipated problems/limitations.

3.2 Paradigmatic Orientation of the Study

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) posit that the word "paradigm" has its origin in Greek meaning "pattern". In educational research, a paradigm is associated with the pattern of thought that researchers follow when conducting research. Researchers Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Denzin and Lincoln (2018) define a research paradigm as beliefs or a worldview that guide(s) the research process or investigation. These researchers add that these sets of beliefs deal with first principles that indicate where the researcher bases all his actions during the research inquiry. Kivunja et al. (2017) posit that a worldview is the perspective or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data. However, the above mentioned researchers clarify that a paradigm defines the researcher's worldview. A paradigm thus constitutes the hidden and abstract beliefs and principles that influence the researcher's view of the world and actions within that world. In addition, a paradigm represents a worldview that defines a researcher's understanding of an individual's world, his place in it as well as his relationships (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A paradigm becomes the lens through which the researcher views and

interprets the research phenomenon, by considering the research context, interactions and beliefs of the participants.

Paradigms are important in research because they provide beliefs and a pattern of thought for researchers in various disciplines to follow. Paradigms influence what should be studied and how the results should be interpreted. It is therefore critically important for researchers to be careful in their choice of a paradigm because the choice reveals the intent, motivation as well as the expectations for the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Therefore, the choice of a paradigm implies a near certainty about particular methodologies that flow from that paradigm (Kivunja et al., 2017). Researchers are driven by particular convictions about the paradigm they choose to follow when conducting a study. Researchers have the conviction that the methodologies informing the paradigm have the best chance of producing the desired data.

The review of literature seems to agree that there are basically four paradigms namely: the positivist, interpretivist, pragmatic, and the emancipatory. This study adopts the pragmatic paradigm which is essentially practical, rather than idealistic (Cohen et al., 2018). The word *pragmatic* is derived from the Greek word *pragma* which means realistic, logical action (Khoza, 2021a). Pragmatism offers a "matter-of-fact approach to life, oriented to the solution of practical problems in the practical world" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 36). In seeking the solution to practical problems, pragmatists focus on what works on the ground to address the research questions (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Cohen et al., 2018; Pansiri, 2005; Khoza, 2021a). Pragmatism advances the teachers' practices, experiences, and beliefs because these factors represent what works for them in the classroom situation. What works is advocated for despite the influence by professional or societal actions (Khoza, 2021a). Thus pragmatists are mainly interested in explanations that best produce desired outcomes (Pansiri, 2005). This implies that even research conducted on a particular problem or phenomenon should be aimed at helping the participants to improve their knowledge and practice. Where possible, interventions should be made so long as they will help to solve problems (Goldkuhl, 2012). All stakeholders involved in the curriculum implementation should therefore be willing to join hands in supporting teachers in schools to bring lasting solutions to the challenges they face so that learning needs and desired outcomes are met.

Pragmatism emphasizes action that leads to positive change (Goldkuhl, 2012; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). For instance, Goldkuhl (2012) argues that action is the way to change existence. However,

he concedes that the action undertaken ought to be guided by purpose and knowledge so that the desired change can be experienced. For pragmatists, the meaning of an idea/concept, human actions and beliefs lies in their practical consequences (Kivunja et al., 2017; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Goldkuhl, 2012). These researchers contend that this is the central argument of pragmatist philosophy. Kaushik et al. (2019) add that human actions are tied to their past experiences and beliefs that have been upheld as a result of these experiences. The choice of this paradigm for this study is informed by the desire to see practical solutions to the phenomenon under investigation, and to ensure that the most relevant methods guided by the purpose and objectives of the study are utilized. Also, the choice of this paradigm is informed by the pragmatists' belief that there is no absolute truth (Pansiri, 2005). For pragmatists, truth is perceived to be what works at a particular time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Pansiri, 2005). This is because they see the world as ever changing or evolving, and human actions contribute to these changes (Kaushik et al., 2019; Morgan, 2007; 2014a; 2014b). These researchers argue that, for pragmatists, there is an objective reality existing apart from human experience. As a result, experience is seen as a product of the on-going interaction of beliefs and action (Morgan, 2014a; 2014b; 2007). This suggests the need to explore how far this interaction of beliefs and action contributes to meeting the learning needs and desired outcomes.

Morgan (2014a) maintains that in pragmatism, actions are assessed based on the situations and contexts in which they occur. Actions are therefore better explained and understood within the context in which they take place. By extension, a deeper insight into the practicality of dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf can be conducted within the school context or situation. Also, according to Morgan (2014a) actions are interpreted based on their consequences, producing the desired changes. Therefore if the consequence of a particular action does not produce the desired outcome, there is still room for re-reflection and re-critiquing of the actions. Kaushik et al. (2019) add that if the situation of the action changes, the consequences would also change despite the actions being the same. Human actions are influenced and shaped by shared views and beliefs about the world (Morgan, 2014a). However, pragmatists do not subscribe to the notion that two people may have identical experiences (Kaushik et al., 2019). Even then, these researchers concede that there are varying degrees of shared experiences between any two people which could subsequently result in degrees of shared beliefs.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four elements of a paradigm, namely: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. Creswell (2007) refers to these elements as the philosophical assumptions, and further states that the researcher has to position himself in each of these assumptions since they influence the research design and procedures in the entire study. Therefore, qualitative research allows the researcher to begin the research design with philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The knowledge of these assumptions guides the researcher to carefully conduct the study and to be mindful of how knowledge will be generated, how reality in the context of the study is to be understood, and how ethical considerations and methodology are to be utilized.

3.2.1 Epistemology of pragmatic paradigm

Epistemology focuses mainly on the basics of knowledge which include its nature, forms, how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to other people (Kivunja et al., 2017). Epistemological questions include: "How do I know the world?" and "What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), and "Is knowledge something which can be acquired on the one hand, or, is it something which has to be personally experienced?" (Kivunja et al., 2017, p. 27). These questions suggest that the researcher cannot create knowledge on his own since that is against reality. Rather the researcher must collaborate with the participants and spend quality time with them in their natural world to gain more insights (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018). This collaboration enables the researcher and participants to develop constructive knowledge which combines other knowledge forms such as prescriptive (giving guidelines), normative (exhibiting values) and prospective (suggesting possibilities) forms, all of which are significant in pragmatism (Goldkuhl, 2012). According to this researcher, knowledge is constructed to manage existence and participation in the world. This calls for the researcher to spend sufficient time in the research environment thus gaining first-hand information about the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018). The more time the researcher spends collaborating with the participants the more this enables him to have sufficient faith in the data generated (Kivunja et al., 2017).

3.2.2 Ontology of pragmatic paradigm

Ontology, according to Kivunja et al. (2017) is the philosophical study of the nature of reality. Researchers must be aware of the multiple realities that exist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Accordingly, philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality are vitally important if deeper understanding and meanings of the data gathered are to be possible (Kivunja et al., 2017). Knowledge of the realities therefore has implications for practice. For example, in pragmatism, reality is perceived to be what really works (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). This is supported by Goldkuhl (2012), who asserts that the essence of a pragmatist ontology is actions and change. Ideas and practices should always be put to the test to determine whether they produce the desired changes and outcomes. Therefore, it is not what the researcher perceives to be working, but what the teachers (practitioners) find to be useful and relevant in meeting their needs that matters for pragmatists. Goldkuhl (2012) views the world in which people operate as being in a constant state of becoming. This is probably because, until the practitioners finally discover what actually works for them in their context to meet their individual needs, they will keep on engaging in action research to identify and solve recurring problems.

Researchers (such as Morgan, 2014a; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; and Cohen et al., 2018) affirm that ontologically, there is no single absolute truth in pragmatic paradigm. Perhaps this is why Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that pragmatists are not committed to a single system of philosophy and reality. This calls for the consideration of both subjectivity and objectivity of the phenomenon under investigation. In executing this research, I need to understand that the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf are influenced by the teachers' individual, social and professional experiences.

3.2.3 Axiology of pragmatic paradigm

Axiology has to do with the role of values in research (Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018). Researchers such as Kivunja et al. (2017) and Denzin et al. (2018) refer to these values as the ethical issues to be considered when planning research. Researchers have to be able to define, evaluate and understand behaviour deemed right and wrong relating to research (Kivunja et al., 2017). In so doing, the researcher should ask questions such as "How will I be as a moral person in the world?" (Denzin et al., 2018). For this reason, Creswell (2012) argues that it is important for researchers to declare these values from the outset in order to properly position themselves in

the study. It is expected of researchers to limit biases as far as possible because bias has implications for practice and overall results of the study (Creswell, 2007). That being the case, Creswell suggests that the researcher has to openly discuss values that shape the narrative; his interpretation should be in tandem with the interpretations of the participants.

3.2.4 Methodology of pragmatic paradigm

According to Kamal (2019), methodology is concerned with the process and method of carrying out an investigation. Methodology targets the best means of gaining knowledge about the world (Denzin et al., 2018). Pragmatism offers researchers a set of research options for generating data from the research area, and the freedom to select appropriate methods (Pansiri, 2005). This is in line with Feilzer (2010), who posits that pragmatism aims to interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate research method. However, this researcher also concedes that pragmatists' main concern with the method(s) is whether they have the potential of answering the research questions. Creswell et al. (2018) agree, and reiterate that the methods, techniques, and procedures employed in the research should best meet the researchers' needs and purposes. Creswell (2012) refers to this revision of questions as "refining them" so as to better understand the research problem. This is in line with Kivunja et al. (2017), who also add that the systematic processes of the research project help the researcher to know more about the research problem.

3.3 Research methodology

To begin with, pragmatism allows the use of either qualitative or quantitative research methodologies, or both (mixed methods). This present study uses the qualitative method of research. Creswell et al. (2018) define qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The interpretations and understandings of the phenomenon being researched by individuals involved in the study using their different experiences is important for qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018). The participants' meanings of the problem or phenomenon under investigation is key, rather than the meanings that researchers often bring to the study (Creswell, 2007). In other words, it is what works for the teachers that informs the meanings and explanations of the research problem.

Each phenomenon, group, or individual is targeted for their uniqueness (Cohen et al., 2018) and studied in their natural setting where the participants have first-hand experience of the issue or problem (Denzin et al., 2018; Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018). This allows the social construction of reality, since qualitative researchers seek answers to their questions in the real world from people and places, events and activities, rather than in a laboratory or through written surveys (Flick, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2011; Creswell et al., 2018). A qualitative researcher's frequent visits, sometimes remaining in the natural setting where the research phenomenon occurs makes him or her the key instrument for data production (Creswell, 2007). The researcher is thus fully immersed in the research process instead of relying on others to conduct the research on his or her behalf. The researcher directs the use of various methods of generating data such as, observations, interview transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, and other official records (Denzin et al., 2018; Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Creswell, 2007; Creswell et al., 2018).

However, all the data generation methods should be looked at as part of the research process as well as the problem being investigated (Flick, 2018). Also, the use of several data generation methods then calls for researchers to use more than one interpretive practice in any study (Denzin et al. 2011). By so doing, the researcher stands an even better chance of studying the phenomenon holistically. Methodologically, the qualitative approach gives me the opportunity to interact with the English teachers in their work environment or context. In this way I should gain more insight into how they use the mainstream English curriculum to teach learners with deafness at the school (Creswell, 2007; 2012; 2018). Eventually, these collaborations and engagements with the participants could unearth the dynamics of implementing this curriculum at the school for the deaf.

According to Bogdan et al. (1997), qualitative researchers are more interested in the research process than in the outcomes. Every step and action is planned carefully, including negotiating meaning and deciding whether or not certain labels should be used (Bogdan et al., 1997). This is in line with Rossman et al. (2012), who posit that the entire process of research from curiosity to understanding, and knowledge of a phenomenon, effects a remarkable change in both the researcher and participants. Also, qualitative researchers follow the inductive line of thinking when generating and analysing data (Bogdan et al., 1997; Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Qualitative researchers move from the specific to the general by going into the field

to generate data, analysing and interpreting before developing some theory(ies). Creswell (2007) and Bogdan et al. (1997) refer to the researcher's action as building a theory from bottom-up rather than from top-down.

3.4 Action Research as a Research Design

As much as this was a case study, I applied principles of action research as a design to generate data. Piggot-Irvine et al. (2015, p. 548) define action research as "a collaborative transformative approach with joint focus on rigorous data collection, knowledge generation, reflection and distinctive action/change elements that pursue practical solutions". This definition is in line with Cohen et al.'s (2018) assertion that action research is aimed to improve practice, adding that it combines both problem identification and problem solving. In other words, the teachers collaborate to identify the problem in their school environment and then reflect on their actions (teaching practices) to determine how best they can solve the problem (Mpungose, 2018). According to Mpungose (2018), the collaboration and reflection make action research both participatory and democratic while also focusing on practically knowing human action. Understanding these human actions ultimately helps practitioners to develop a better understanding regarding the particulars of a specific practice-based situation (Jefferson, 2014), thus addressing critical societal challenges (Mpungose, 2018).

Jefferson (2014) identifies some assumptions of action research which reiterate the significance of collaboration and reflection by teachers to improve practice. For instance, action research assumes that practitioners become more effective and productive when they identify problems affecting them directly in their teaching, applying themselves fully to solving these problems (Jefferson, 2014). Also, action research encourages practitioners to continually evaluate their own work and collaborate in sharing ideas with a view to improving their practices (Jefferson, 2014). These assumptions of action research also suggest that teachers are better placed to understand their problems, reflecting on and critiquing their own practices to promote better learning outcomes. It is for this reason that all the teachers of English at the school for the deaf have been included in this study, thus promoting the principles of action research which are participation, reflection, empowerment, and emancipation (Mpungose, 2018).
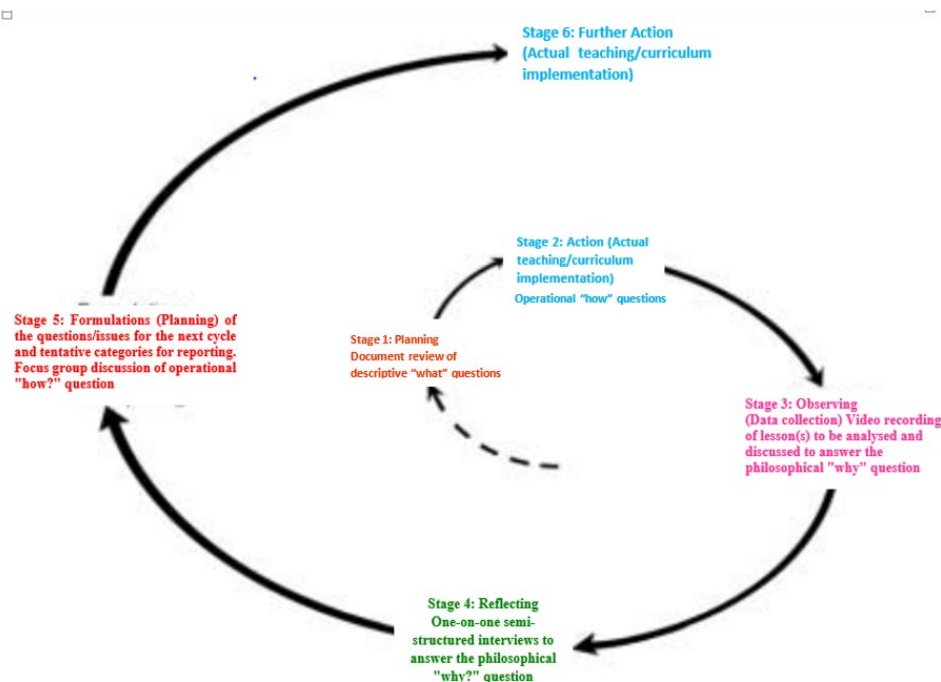
Figure 3: Action research cycle (Adapted from Bates, 2008, p. 102)

3.4.1 Strengths of action research

Action research is often preferred as a data-generation design because of its numerous benefits not only for research purposes, but also for its immense contribution to the improvement of teachers' (practitioners') practices (Faikhamta & Clarke, 2015; Mabuza, 2018; McNiff, 2013). Mabuza (2018) insists that action research is the best tool for exploring teachers' own practices. Teachers are therefore researchers in their own right and they enquire about their own practices (Hagevik et al., 2012). Teachers do this to keep their actions in constant check, so that their actions remain practically relevant instead of being too theoretical (Myers, 2019; Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015). In this way, teachers contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes. This makes the action research process cyclical in its development (as seen in Figure 3) so that the culture of reflecting on and improving practice may be fully embraced. In the action research cycle shown in Figure 3. Bates (2008) identifies six stages that researchers and practitioners involved in action research should follow. These stages are: planning, action, observing (data generation), reflecting, formulations (further planning), and further action. All these stages will be followed to facilitate

the identification of the problem and best possible ways of solving it, so that practices are further improved.

One of the key components of action research is reflection (Madin & Swanto, 2019; McNiff, 2013). Such reflection enables teachers to learn from their practices by "examining their previous knowledge and relating them with current ones" (Rahman et al., 2012, p. 485). Knowledge, like reality, is not static (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). If teachers are familiar with the current trends of knowledge, and are particularly keen on pursuing what works best for them in their context, they will remain competitive. Therefore, action research provides that platform for teachers to reflect upon, discovering strategies to change their teaching practices upon finding better and more effective ones (Hagevik et al., 2012; Myers, 2019; Norasmah & Chia, 2016). These researchers contend that action research allows teachers to premise their research on the classroom realities, with the resultant knowledge informing their subsequent actions and practices. Black (2021) and Ulla (2018) assert that action research will always remain effective because of its relevance to practitioners (teachers).

McNiff (2013) advocates that all professionals, teachers included, should be reflective practitioners. This is intended to sensitise them about keeping track of their practices, thus determining whether they are effective or need to be revamped. Action research, therefore, will afford teachers, at the school for the deaf, excellent opportunities for reflection. This will encourage teachers to develop their own theories that inform and justify particular actions which influence learning in the classroom (McNiff, 2013). It is hoped that this will help them confront challenges better known to them and to identify ways of addressing them. In so doing, teachers will discover what works best for them thus improving their practices (Anyanwu & Jules, 2022; Myers, 2019; Norasmah et al., 2016; Dehghan & Sahragard, 2015).

By its very nature, action research promotes collaboration among the participants (teachers) and this leads to the creation of collaborative learning environments (Hagevik et al., 2012; Chapron & Morgan, 2020). Such learning environments promote the constant sharing of ideas, information and critical reflection. This is supported by Carr and Kemmis (1989) who observe that action research emancipates and encourages practitioners to act based on what they have found to be working for them instead of basing actions on unproven assumptions and ideologies. Davis et al. (2018) echo these suggestions and add that action research empowers teachers with new skills and

offers them valuable opportunities for learning. These learning opportunities allow teachers to inquire, reflect on and improve their practices (Faikhamta & Clarke, 2015). Therefore during the collaborations, teachers learn from one another, a practice that bodes well for curriculum implementation. Action research thus helps in the creation of expected conditions (Darwis, 2016). In the words of Black (2021, p. 47) it seems as though action research is the way to go in education because "it has the potential to reconstruct schools into professional learning communities that are able to identify educational issues and develop appropriate solutions for 21st century learning".

3.4.2 Limitations of action research

Despite the numerous advantages of action research that have been identified by various researchers, there are weaknesses of this research design that have restricted its use by some researchers. For instance, some researchers and practitioners are sceptical about using action research to help them generate data because they are unfamiliar with the methods (Faikhamta & Clarke, 2015; Bates, 2010; Norasmah et al., 2016; Zhou, 2012; Dehghan et al., 2015). This unfamiliarity with action research manifests itself in the teachers' misunderstandings of the principles of action research (Zhou, 2012; Norasmah et al., 2016); and this subsequently leads to teachers developing negative attitudes towards it (Faikhamta et al., 2015). Findings of a study by Dehghan et al. (2015) on Iranian English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' views on action research and its application in the classroom, reveal that teachers regard action research as research belonging to professional researchers not teachers. There is therefore a need for teachers and researchers alike to be trained on and exposed to the usefulness of action research so that they may embrace it as a way of improving their practices. In this study, I will serve as a facilitator and mediator to help teachers become familiar with what is expected of them, especially in reflecting on their practices and identifying what works for them in their school context. This is particularly because action research allows the researcher the opportunity both to intervene and at the same time to study the effect of the intervention (Myers, 2019).

Action research is also perceived as laborious and demanding for the participants (teachers). Zhou (2012) proposes that the research process on its own pressures and frustrates teachers because of the amount of work it demands. This is corroborated by Mabuza (2018) who observes that some of the challenges with action research pertain to its planning, processes, reporting and application of outcomes. Therefore, exposure to this research practice (design) and training on its assumptions

and principles would enable teachers become familiar with it. Exposure would help teachers to discover what works for them in their respective schools instead of always enduring the pain of top-down forces that are difficult to deal with in some school contexts. Such exposure should be accompanied by practical guidance on how to effectively and efficiently conduct action research (Zhou, 2012). However, Myers (2019) laments the tendency for action researchers to overemphasize the importance of the intervention they make in the research area/environment and the contribution they make to academic research. This seems to water down the overall purpose of action research which is to help in improving practices to meet the learning needs. Myers (2019) also observes that action research is risky in the sense that it may not always be feasible. For instance, in the real-world, projects may suffer delays which may subsequently render action research less viable (Myers, 2019).

3.5 Selecting/sampling participants

Selecting participants is one of the most important considerations in planning and designing research (Marczyk & DeMatteo, 2005). These researchers point out that selecting participants comes after choosing an appropriate research design. In qualitative research, selection of participants depends in the purpose of the research (Shaheen et al., 2019). Participants are recruited to a study on the basis of their exposure to or their experience of the phenomenon in question (Ryan et al., 2007). Maxwell (1996) adds that sampling decisions demand considerable knowledge of the setting of the study. Perhaps this is because the setting, if not properly studied or selected, may lead to a misguided selection of participants. This study used purposive sampling which is an exploratory sampling often used in small-scale research (Denscombe, 2014). According to Denscombe, an exploratory sample is used as a way of probing relatively unexplored topics and as a channel for further discovering new ideas or theories. Denscombe (2014) also posits that this sample provides the researcher with the means of generating insights and information from the participants, gaining first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study.

Purposeful sampling also "means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The researcher selects participants deemed information rich and better placed to enhance a deeper understanding of the research problem and phenomenon. This is echoed by Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 60) who declare that purposive sampling

allows the researcher to "make specific choices about which people, groups or objects to include in the sample". Similarly, the choice of purposive sampling in this study was made because I was interested in obtaining rich qualitative data from the teachers of English who, as curriculum implementers at the school for the deaf, are well placed and familiar with the phenomenon under study. Qualitative research allows researchers to conduct research in the natural setting of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018). The aim here was to gain an insider's perspective of the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. The English Language department at the school currently has six teachers, including the head of department, all these teachers are part of the study sample. The principal was also included among the participants in order to obtain an administrative perspective on the dynamics that influence the implementation of the mainstream English curriculum at the school. As a result, the total number of participants was seven. This is in line with the benefits of qualitative research as a holistic and in-depth approach (Schreier, 2018).

However, purposive samples are often criticized for being generally small in size (Sheheen et al., 2019). According to these researchers, the small sample size questions its utility and credibility on account of their logic and purpose. Even then, it should be noted that that the small sample size, as is the nature of most qualitative research, allows the researcher to effectively conduct in-depth research of the phenomenon (Schreier, 2018). Also, the subjective nature of purposeful sampling assists the researcher to identify and sample only participants that help to meet the research objectives (Sheheen et al., 2019). These researchers purport that the significance of qualitative research is seen when the sample selected is information rich. This sample produces quality and sufficient data which then also demand excellent analytical skills from the researcher in order to appreciate the value of the sample selected (Sheheen et al., 2019).

Table 1: Participants' Details

Participant	Age bracket	Teaching experience (mainstream)	Teaching experience (School for the deaf)	Gender	Qualification
T1	40 – 45	5 years	7 years primary and 5 years high school	F	B.A + P.G.C.E + B. Ed Special and Inclusive Education
T2	35 – 40	1 year	12 years	F	B.A + P.G.C.E + Masters in Special Education
T3	35 – 40	N/A	9 years	M	Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) + B.Ed in Special and inclusive Education, Pursuing Masters in Special Education
T4	35-40	N/A	13 years	F	B.A + P.G.C.E, B, Ed Honours Special and Inclusive Education
T5	35 – 40	4 years	7 years	F	B.A + B.A Honors in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), P.G.C.E,
T6	50 – 55	20 years	5 years	F	B.A + P.G.C.E, Pursuing Masters in Special Education

T7	40 – 45	11 years	3 years	F	STD + B. Ed in Senior and Further Education and Training Phase + Honors in B.Ed + Masters in Inclusive Education

The pseudonyms T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7 represent teachers of English at the school

B.A: Bachelor of Arts; P.G.C.E: Post Graduate Certificate in Education

B. Ed: Bachelor of Education

STD: Secondary Teachers Diploma

3.6 Data-generation methods

Data generation is one of the most important steps in the research design which has a bearing on the success or failure of a study. For this reason, researchers need to make careful and informed choices of the methods to use for generating data. According to Rossman et al. (2012), reliable instruments produce valid conclusions. Conversely, unreliable instruments produce invalid conclusions. Yin (2009) points out several sources of data which include focus group discussion, observation, interviews, and documentary review.

Due to the corona-virus pandemic, this study used data-generation methods that are COVID-19 compliant and that limit face-to-face interactions such as semi-structured one-on-one telephonic interviews, focus-group discussions via Zoom video conferencing, document reviews, video observation, and reflective activities. The use of the five data-generation methods provided adequate triangulation such that each method was administered. The one-on-one semi structured interviews was the main method of data-generation intended to find deeper insights and understandings from the teachers on the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. The other methods were intended for triangulation purposes to prove the credibility of the data. Olsen (2004) defines triangulation as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic. However, this researcher

cautions that triangulation is not aimed merely at validation but at deepening and widening one's understanding (Olsen, 2004). Each data-generation method that a researcher uses helps to bring a different perspective of the phenomenon under study, improving the ability to draw conclusions from the study (Scandura & Williams, 2000). This is also supported by Flick (2018), who observes that the use of other methods increases the scope, depth, and consistency in methodological proceedings, which ultimately puts the findings on a more solid foundation.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are one of the most frequently used and primary methods of generating data (King et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Johnson and Christiansen (2008, p. 203) define an interview as "a data collection method in which an interviewer asks an interviewee questions". In other words, interviews afford researchers the most direct and straightforward approach of generating rich data about a specific phenomenon (Barret & Twycross, 2018). The aim of qualitative interviews is to give participants a platform on which to share their knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Hennink et al., 2020; King et al., 2018). Even though people may work in the same environment and under similar working conditions, King et al. (2018) argue that they may have varying interpretations and understanding of seemingly similar facts and events. This suggests that experience and belief is personal, and that the best way of digging deep into this experiential knowledge and understanding, is to use one-on-one interviews (Hennink et al., 2020). The researcher thus needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas (Creswell, 2007), otherwise the whole purpose of the interview might not be achieved. During such interviews, the researcher enjoys the flexibility of this tool as a multi-sensory channel in that it allows for the use of verbal, non-verbal, seen, spoken, and heard data (Cohen et al., 2018). These researchers add that interviews can also be written or even conducted online.

However, interviews have their own shortcomings, as with other data-generating methods. For instance, Hennink et al. (2020) claim that individual interviews do not offer interaction or feedback from other participants. Interviews are said mainly to focus on individual perceptions. This study used one-on-one semi-structured telephonic interviews with each of the sampled participants; and constituted a mixture of both open and closed questions. According to Barret et al. (2018), semi-structured interviews enable the researcher explicitly to ask participants about the core issues of

the phenomenon being studied, particularly on a one-to-one basis. The choice of the telephone interviews over face-to-face interviews is influenced by access issues (Lechuga, 2012) particularly the advent of the novel corona virus pandemic that has compromised face-to-face interactions with the participants. Telephone interviews may allow the participants to feel relaxed and able to disclose information which otherwise, they would not have given in a face-to-face interview (Novick, 2008). However, Novick also admits that the "absence of visual cues via telephone is thought to result in loss of contextual and non-verbal data and to compromise rapport, probing, and interpretation of responses" (p. 395). To that effect, Lechuga (2012) posits that the use of telephone interviews, when supplemented by other sources of data, can provide the necessary data to contribute to the full understanding of a phenomenon.

The questions or themes that were used to interview the participants were formed from the research purpose and the main research questions (Ryan et al., 2007). The semi-structured interviews helped me to answer the philosophical "why?" question (why the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are?) Through these interviews, I was able to probe and rephrase the question until I discovered why the dynamics are the way they are. According to King et al. (2018), interviews in qualitative research use an interview guide that outlines the main topics the researcher would like to cover. However, they emphasise that this guide is flexible in terms of the phrasing of questions, and the order in which they are asked, which also allows the participants to lead the interaction in unanticipated directions. Accordingly, interviews have the benefit of yielding direct quotations from participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). This is important in ensuring that reality and trustworthiness of the data is maintained.

All six teachers of English were interviewed at times negotiated between the teachers and the researcher in order not to disrupt their personal or academic programmes. Flexibility in this regard was thus observed, to make the participants comfortable and willing to participate in the study. Respondents were also informed that a tape recorder would be used to capture their voices and statements; each interview was estimated to take between twenty-five to thirty minutes.

3.6.2 Focus-group discussion

According to Marczyk et al. (2005), focus-groups are formally organized, structured groups of individuals brought together to discuss a topic or series of topics during a specific period of time.

The above researchers add that focus groups are typically made up of individuals who share a particular characteristic, demographic, or interest relevant to the topic being studied. This is supported by Kelly (2003), who asserts that focus groups are especially designed to draw perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group in which each participant possesses experience with the phenomenon under study. The participants targeted to be part of the focus-group discussion were therefore those that are information-rich. These participants helped to give diverse opinions on the phenomenon, including seeking community norms (Hennink et al., 2020).

Literature on focus-group discussions seems to agree that this qualitative method of data generation has no fixed way of being conducted; and that it needs a trained moderator to facilitate the discussion (Marczyk & DeMatteo, 2005; Vaughn et al., 1996). Marczyk et al. (2005) posit that focus-group discussions consist of several participants, usually 6 to 10 individuals plus a trained moderator; whereas Vaughn et al. (1996) suggest that the group have 6 to 12 members who are relatively homogeneous. The latter add that the trained moderator comes with prepared questions which he uses to facilitate the discussion. In this study, the focus-group discussion involved all six teachers of English at the school for the deaf; and I facilitated the discussions.

Focus groups have the advantage of providing an opportunity for participants to interact in a more 'naturalistic' way which is closer to everyday life than the individual interview with the interviewer (King et al., 2018). This is in line with Kelly's (2003) observation that instead of just having a straight-forward and rigid question and answer session, focus-group interviews often involve disagreements and discussion among participants. The researcher adds that such platforms, therefore, help the participants also to clarify and modify their ideas through discussion and challenge with other participants. The participants' public deliberations and debates among themselves therefore helps to ascertain the strength of the convictions held (Kelly, 2003). By extension, the group interviews can present an opportunity to obtain a different kind of data that can reveal the social and cultural context of people's understandings and beliefs (King et al., 2018). This is echoed by Cohen et al. (2018) and Hennink et al. (2020), who assert that focus-group discussions give insights which one-on-one interviews may not give, providing a range of issues and opinions. This ultimately produces a collective rather than an individual view (Cohen et al., 2018) as well as the necessary details, justification and clarification of issues (Hennink et al.,

2020). By implication, the researcher is able to gain the true picture of the situation from the team as a whole instead of only basing conclusions on the submissions of individuals.

As much as there are numerous advantages of focus group discussions, there are also drawbacks to this method of data generation. For instance, Ngozwane (2018) observes that some people are reluctant to express their views in the presence of other group members, and would rather be interviewed individually. Therefore, compelling them to speak in groups would not yield positive results for the research. Conversely, some people feel comfortable expressing themselves in the presence of group members rather than separately; but they may not be willing to open up about their personal experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). For this reason, the researcher needs to be vigilant and skillful when facilitating focus group discussions so that if need be, such shortcomings of focus group discussions are compensated for in the one-on-one interviews, and vice versa. Hennink et al. (2020) add that, unlike individual interviews, focus-group discussions produce less depth of information. The focus-group discussions were aimed at answering the operational "how?" question: "How do the dynamics of mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation in the school for the deaf?"

The rapidly advancing technology offers new and various opportunities for conducting qualitative research (Kenny, 2005). This study utilised Zoom Video Conferencing to stage the focus group discussion. Zoom can be defined as an innovative video-conferencing platform with a number of unique features that enhance its potential to qualitative researchers (Archibald et al., 2019). Kenny (2005, p. 414) argues that "whilst the use of focus groups is well established in the repertoire of qualitative researchers, with changing technology, there is the opportunity to use a computer programme that facilitates online engagement and interaction to bring together a group of people to explore issues, attitudes and perceptions". Technology is thus well suited and adapted for use, especially in facilitating easier and quicker communication for research purposes. In their study, Archibald et al. (2019) explored the feasibility and acceptability of using Zoom to collect qualitative interview data within a health-research context in order to better understand its suitability for qualitative and mixed-methods researchers. Sixteen practising nurses participated in online qualitative interviews about their experiences of using Zoom, and concurrently recorded researcher observations. Findings show that, even though several participants experienced technical difficulties, most of them described their interview experience as highly satisfactory.

They generally rated Zoom above alternative interviewing mediums such as face-to-face, telephone, and other video-conferencing services, platforms and products. Findings also suggest the viability of Zoom as a tool for generating qualitative data because of its relative ease of use, cost-effectiveness, data-management features, and security options.

In this study, I utilised two phases of focus-group discussions with the participants (teachers). During the first phase of focus-group discussion, we collaborated on planning the action research, and the necessary action of curriculum implementation. This platform gave an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their current practices; and to ascertain what works best for them in their context; also determining ways of improving them so that learning needs are met. After the planning session, the participants were given the opportunity of putting their plans in motion in their respective classrooms through lessons. During this time, teachers were asked to take video recordings of their lessons for reflection and further discussion in the second phase. I gave participants sufficient time to express themselves while ensuring order so that I could access what they see as important in the implementation of the English curriculum at the school.

3.6.3 Document review

Bowen (2009) defines document review (or analysis) as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material. Flick (2018) observes that in most cases, researchers do not produce data but instead use existing data (secondary) for analysis. According to Flick (2018), all sorts of documents such as records, files, school essays and journal articles are used in qualitative research as existing data for analysis. This is supported by Patton (2002), who adds that researchers may also study excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or programme records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; and personal diaries. The first step in this document-review process, is to locate relevant materials that would help generate useful data (Merriam et al., 2015). The kind of document review to consider is dependent upon the phenomenon under investigation. For instance, a qualitative study of a classroom instruction would lead to documents such as instructor's lesson plans, student assignments, objects in the classroom, official grade reports and school records, teacher evaluations, and many others (Merriam et al., 2015).

According to Merriam et al. (2015), the researcher, as the primary instrument, relies on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents. The rationale for document review is its use

as a methodological and data triangulation, as well as its ability to be used as a stand-alone method in some specialized forms of qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). In this study, documents were reviewed for triangulation purposes, and particularly to ascertain the forces that are prescribed by the formal English curriculum used at the school. In other words, the document review was framed/guided by the top-down dynamics. Bowen (2009) also observes that documents are "unobstrusive" and "non-reactive" (p. 31), meaning that they are unaffected by the research process. However, one main disadvantage of this data-generation method is that access to documents may be intentionally denied by the participants and gate keepers (Yin, 1994); and that would result in failure to access the sought-after data.

For this study, permission was sought from the school principal and respective participants (teachers) to access documents which included teacher files and policy documents for teaching English Language. I used current documents that teachers use to teach English to learners with deafness in order to ascertain whether their teaching practices are informed by current curriculum policy stipulations. I reviewed these documents once to add to the data generated from the interviews (both individual and focus group discussion): this helped to improve the trustworthiness of the findings. Also, this data-generation method was intended to establish what is prescribed in specific documents about the phenomenon being studied. It also helped to answer the descriptive question "What are the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini?"

3.6.4 Video observation

Observation is another data-generation method that was used for triangulation purposes in this study to support data from the other methods (Hennink et al., 2020). According to Cohen et al. (2018) observation has the potential to produce first-hand data that is more valid and authentic. It is meant to observe how people act and interact in certain social situations (Hennink et al., 2020). In other words, through observation, the actual behaviour of people is identified.

 Observation in this study took the form of video observations of lessons conducted by the teachers of English to their respective groups of learners. The teachers recorded the videos of the lessons using their cellphones; and they were requested to forward the recordings to the researcher. This enabled me to see how the dynamics of the English Language curriculum unfolded during a lesson in a classroom situation. Thus these video recordings were framed/guided by the operational

"how" question which identify the bottom-up dynamics. Researchers such as Cohen et al. (2018) point out that video recording has benefits for qualitative researchers. One of these benefits is that the video record enables the researcher to view it several times to get the full understanding of what exactly takes place in the classroom. This also allows the researcher to have a complete analysis of the data as he or she continues to scrutinise them (Cohen et al., 2018).

On the contrary, Cohen et al. (2018) argue that the mere presence of a camera in the classroom may change human behaviour especially if it is easily seen. This suggests that cameras should be fixed at a position where and when they cannot be seen in the classroom. Still, there could be other loopholes in this arrangement as Cohen et al. (2018) observe. These researchers observe that, unlike a human observer who can easily turn attention to other parts of the classroom, capturing what may be very useful for the study, a fixed camera cannot do this. This could result in overlooking very important detail of the lesson. In addition, these researchers note that learners in the classroom may unintentionally obscure the camera when they shift positions or move around the classroom. This, therefore, calls for the teachers, as researchers themselves, to ensure that class movements are controlled so that learners do not block the camera.

3.6.5 Reflective activity

According to Coghlan and Shani (2013) reflective activity is similar to an open-ended questionnaire. Researchers prepare a set of questions seeking to elicit a better understanding of the phenomenon (Khoza & Mpungose, 2018). Participants are expected to respond to these questions in writing (Cohen et al., 2011; Coghlan et al., 2013). Participants use their experiences and knowledge of current practices to respond to such questions; hence this method of data-generation was appropriate for this study. I used the reflective activity to generate data for the descriptive "what" question of the study. I prepared these questions in the form of a questionnaire which participants had to complete in writing. Participants were given time to complete the questions before returning them to me. In essence, this data-generation method was useful in the planning stage of the action research. The method used confirmed whether I had correctly captured all the descriptive dynamics from the document review that influence the actions in the classroom. This method allows participants to freely express their thoughts and knowledge of the dynamics that influence their practices (Samuel, 2009).

However, as with any other data-generation method, reflective activity has its own impediments. Cohen et al. (2018) observe that, in most instances, participants are not particularly willing to reflect on their own practices. These researchers note that participants avoid responding directly to questions pertaining to what they do in the classroom. Teachers prefer to focus on what others are doing. To help these participants, I explained to the participants that this pragmatic study also aimed at empowering them on the dynamics of curriculum implementation so that ultimately they are driven by the individual/personal dynamics which meet individual needs. The first phase of the action research design used enabled me to ascertain the dynamics that drive the curriculum implementation at the school. The second phase then sought to address the emerging gaps noted in the first phase in order to improve practice.

Also, participants seemed to take excessive time to complete the reflective activity. Initially, we had agreed on one week before submission; however, this ultimately was expanded to three weeks. This may be due to this exercise needing teachers to write down their responses.

3.7 Data analysis

After gathering data from the field, researchers must then begin the process of analysing the data. Noble and Smith (2014) emphasise the importance of and need for qualitative researchers thoroughly understand the principles and techniques of analysing data. According to Ryan et al. (2007) data analysis entails the transformation of raw data into final description, narrative, or themes and categories. This is echoed by Noble et al. (2014) who assert that data analysis involves assembling or reconstructing the data in a meaningful way that is easy to understand without altering the original submissions of the participants. Data analysis thus means breaking down the data into more digestible chunks that help to answer the research questions and to better comprehend the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, the processes of data generation, data analysis, and report writing are interrelated and work together in research project (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis cannot be treated independently from the entire research design, and therefore must be designed (Maxwell, 1996).

Braun et al. (2006) and Noble et al. (2014) articulate that data analysis is not a linear process in which the researcher merely moves from one stage to another. Instead, these researchers contend that analysis involves the constant moving back and forth between the entire dataset. Terry et al.

(2017) outline that, within a qualitative paradigm, there is no absolute or right way of analysing data, there being no single truth. This study used semi-structured interviews (individual), focus-group discussion (bottom-up/societal) and document review (top-down/professional) to address the research questions, purpose, objectives, and phenomenon being investigated. For this reason, all the data-generation methods addressed the research questions, objectives, and purpose which was to explore the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. Thus, this study used thematic analysis as the appropriate data-analysis technique. This is because the study is influenced by the top-down dynamics (professional), bottom-up dynamics (societal), and individual dynamics (personal/pragmatic) as generated from the teachers of English who are participants in this study.

3.7. 1 Thematic analysis

This study utilised the thematic analysis, also referred to as guided analysis (Mpungose 2018), to analyse the data. Braun et al. (2006, p. 79) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". These researchers identified six phases/steps to be followed when using thematic analysis which were also adopted in this study.

3.7.1.1 Familiarizing yourself with the data

This is the first step in the analysis process, in which the researcher may transcribe the data (if necessary), read and re-read the data, and jot down initial ideas (Braun et al., 2006). These researchers refer to this phase as the bedrock for the entire analysis; and Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003) refer to this step as "getting to know the data" before the actual analysis. In this study, this step helped me to present tentative ideas in categorising the data and in finding relationships between these categories (Maxwell, 1996). Also, this serves to focus the analysis by reviewing the purpose of the evaluation and what the researcher wants to discover (Creswell & Clark, 2004).

3.7.1.2 Generating initial codes (coding)

After reading and familiarizing oneself with the data, noting the initial ideas, the next step for the researcher is to code the data. According to Braun et al. (2006), the researcher systematically codes what is found interesting in the dataset, collating data relevant to each code. In doing this, the researcher scrutinizes each line of the data to identify keywords and phrases without changing the participants' words (Noble & Smith, 2014).

3.7.1.3 Searching for themes

After the coding of data, the next step of the analysis is to sort the various codes and units of data into potential themes (Braun et al., 2006; Noble et al., 2014). This also involves bringing together all data relevant to each potential theme. According to Noble et al. (2014), identifying recurring and significant themes by searching the data is a central skill in data analysis.

3.7.1.4 Reviewing themes

This step involves revisiting the initial themes identified to refine them. This step includes assessing whether they work in so far as the coded extracts and overall dataset are concerned. Braun et al. (2006) posit that some of these themes may need to be merged with others while some may have little support. Reviewing the themes helps to generate the thematic 'map' of the analysis (Braun et al., 2006).

3.7.1.5 Defining and naming themes

The importance of this step is necessitated by the continuous and compelling need to define and refine the themes to be eventually presented. The ongoing refinement of the themes ensures that the specifics of each theme are ascertained so that clear boundaries are set for each theme. Each theme thus captures and embodies relevant details to avoid overlaps between the themes (Braun et al., 2006; Noble et al., 2014). These researchers stress that this phase/step also helps the researcher to identify and determine whether each theme has subthemes.

3.7.1.6 Producing the report (reporting)

This is the final step in the analysis process. This step takes place after the researcher has clearly spelt out themes with sufficient supporting excerpts from the dataset, and a write-up of the report (Braun et al., 2006). The compiled report tells the story of the data in a way that validates the findings (Creswell et al., 2004; Braun et al., 2006).

Thematic analysis was relevant for this study since it utilised five different data-generation methods. These various methods facilitated the discovery of other themes/categories which further informed the emerging model/theory of dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf. For instance, through the application of the individual semi-structured interviews which employ open-ended questions, I managed to probe responses of the

participating teachers. This was meant to clarify unclear responses particularly those that related to the phenomenon under investigation. The use of reflective activities (in the form of questionnaires) also allowed the teachers to express themselves in writing, and this further revealed more individual dynamics which complemented those that had emerged during the one-on-one interviews (Glesne, 2014; Okeke & Van Wyk, 2016).

The identified themes were used deductively, and they emerged from the five data-generation methods as informed by the study's phenomenon, the dynamics of curriculum implementation. As such, the themes were aligned with the three main research questions, and they were first discussed in the review of literature (Chapter Two). It is in this chapter (Chapter Two) where the themes that were informed by the Natural Identity Framework eventually led to the birth of the dynamics of curriculum implementation model/theory. Therefore, the categories/themes were framed from the three constructs/propositions that influenced teachers' actions in the classroom: the top-down dynamics which describe the professional forces/prescriptions which teachers have to adhere to as stated in the policies; the bottom-up dynamics which account for the social/contextual interactions and opinions of teachers; and lastly the individual dynamics which emerge after combining the top-down and bottom-up dynamics.

The discussion of the three constructs/propositions with the teachers led to the recognition of the fourth proposition, the innate dynamics which is informed by the Natural Identity Framework after re-reflection and re-critiquing of practices and experiences have taken place. This was realised in the second phase of the action research. Thus through the discussion of the four main themes (top-down, bottom-up, individual, and innate dynamics) and their categories, I was able to answer all the research questions. Using open coding enabled me to effectively deduce and differentiate between the deductive/pre-determined and inductive/generated themes. According to Maree (2017), open coding is when the researcher sorts data to identify patterns. In other words, the researcher identifies common relationships in the data and assigns labels to the text as a way of describing it (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Okeke & Van Wyk, 2016). In this study, open coding allowed me to classify and arrange the generated data and to fit them appropriately in their relevant categories. Accordingly, all the data from the five data-generation methods (documents review, reflective activities, video observations, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions) were analysed and coded.

Consequently, using thematic analysis in this study enabled me to label/code the teachers' responses. In order to expedite this process, the identified concepts from the framework and categories were useful such that it was easy to identify new/emerging concepts/themes from the data. Also, the fact that the participants were asked a similar set of questions helped to ensure that the diverse responses given by the teachers were aligned with the concepts that revealed the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum.

3.8 Issues of trustworthiness

According to Rossman et al. (2011), the ultimate aim of a study should be its use. Therefore, the overall findings ought to be believable and trustworthy so that potential researchers, policy makers, practitioners, or participants themselves may use such findings with utmost confidence (Rossman et al., 2011). Ryan et al. (2007) call trustworthiness a rigour which is "the means of demonstrating the plausibility, credibility and integrity of the qualitative research process" (p. 742). These researchers point out that the most common criteria used to evaluate qualitative research studies are: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These criteria are preferred in qualitative research over validity and reliability which are used in quantitative research.

Credibility addresses the issue of whether there is consistency between the participants' views and the researcher's representation of them (Ryan et al., 2007; Morrow, 2005). Noble et al. (2015) call it the truth value. Consistency interrogates the truthfulness of the findings. If there are any biases and misrepresentations, the credibility of the findings would be questionable. These researchers suggest that researchers outline personal experiences and viewpoints that may have resulted in any methodological bias, and that they should clearly and accurately present participants' perspectives (Noble et al., 2015). Also, Ryan et al. (2007) assure that credibility may also be promoted by having prolonged engagements, observation and audit trails with participants.

Dependability involves the researcher giving the reader sufficient information to determine how dependable the study and the researcher are (Ryan et al., 2007; Morrow, 2005). Noble et al. (2015) refer to dependability as the consistency of the findings. Such relates to the extent to which the methods used to carry out the study can be trusted. This is echoed by Ndlovu (2016) who insists that qualitative research focuses on whether the findings are consistent with the data generation, and not whether the findings will be replicated in a similar study. For this reason, qualitative

research views reliability as dependability/consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reliability involves the use of in-depth interviews to elicit the participants' hidden attitudes and beliefs (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher's decisions have to be clear and transparent such that any other researcher who decides to use the same methods in another similar study should be able to derive similar or comparable findings (Noble et al., 2015).

Transferability refers to whether or not findings can be applied outside the context of the situation (Ryan et al., 2007). Qualitative research encourages the study of small samples purposefully selected to understand phenomena occurring in specific subjective contexts (Creswell et al., 2018; Denzin et al., 2018). Transferability could be said to be equivalent to generalizability in quantitative research even though qualitative research is not very concerned about the findings being generalized to other populations due to their subjectivity (Denscombe, 2014). Sometimes the findings may be tested in a different setting or group; if the same results are obtained, applicability or transferability is achieved (Noble et al., 2015). Also, when the results are meaningful to individuals not involved in the research study, including relating them to their own experiences, transferability is enhanced (Ryan et al., 2007).

Ryan et al. (2007) refer to confirmability as the demonstration of how researchers reach certain conclusions and interpretations. This is only achieved when credibility, transferability and dependability are addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2007). As much as the methods used and findings are intrinsically linked to the philosophical orientation of the researcher, including his experiences and perspectives, such should be differentiated from the participants' submissions and perspectives (Noble et al., 2015). This is because what matters in research is the data as given by participants, not researchers. According to Morrow (2005), the integrity of findings lies with the data. In this study, therefore, all data generated through interviews and focus-group discussions were be recorded to ensure that I present accurate data.

The present study was concerned with the insights and experiences of the teachers on their use of the mainstream English curriculum in teaching learners with deafness. This helped to elicit the dynamics of implementing this curriculum at the school for the deaf. In order to ensure trustworthiness of data in this study, I used various data-generating methods, namely: semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focus-group discussion, document reviews, and video observations (Yin, 2009). This process is called triangulation. Rossman et al. (2011) define

triangulation as the use of multiple sources of data or a variety of methods. The authors contend that this helps to ensure that the complete research phenomenon is covered. Besides, "the goal is to use different types of evidence to triangulate or converge on the same research questions. The findings will then be less open to the criticism that they had resulted from and possibly been biased by a single data collection method" (Yin, 2009, p. 261). Moreover, since I could not spend adequate time in the field with participants in order to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon (Rossman et al., 2011), I therefore relied on the strengths of each data generation instrument. All the emerging findings were taken back to the participants for elaboration, correction, extension or argument (Rossman et al., 2011). This is called participant validation or member checkings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

It is imperative for all researchers to pay particular attention to ethical issues when conducting research. Heppner et al. (2008) maintain that ethics are central to the conducting of research, whether qualitative, quantitative or per mixed methods. By virtue of working with participants in their respective environments or contexts, researchers invade the private space of participants (Ndlovu, 2016). For this reason, researchers have to ensure that participants are protected at all costs from any form of harm (Hennink et al., 2020; Mitchell & Jolley, 2010; Heppner et al., 2008). Safeguards include the researcher seeking permission to conduct the study, the signing of informed consent by participants, and the assuring of participants their anonymity and confidentiality.

I sought and received permission to conduct this study at the school for the deaf. This was achieved through letters from the Ministry of Education, the Lubombo Regional Education Office, and the principal of the school, all of whom are gate keepers. In all these letters, and correspondence, the purpose of the study, and how data generation would be conducted, was stated, so that participants were fully aware of what the study entailed. In the same vein, assurance was given that ethical matters were a priority. Permission to conduct the study at the school was backed by the acquisition of an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. This permission opened access to contact the Head of the English Department and members of the department at the school.

Before I began the process of data generation, I first gave the participants informed consent forms to sign as a way of agreeing to the provisions of the study (Creswell et al., 2018). Heppner et al. (2008) define consent as the process of giving participants the opportunity to decide whether or

not to participate in a particular research study. This is important because participants have the right to understand what the study entails before agreeing to participate (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). These researchers add that participants should be volunteers and that they should be aware of any possible risks involved; so that if need be, they can also exercise their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

As part of ethical considerations, participants were assured of confidentiality and privacy. Their personal identities were protected at all costs (Creswell et al., 2018). This is because participants reveal information in confidence in attempting to be as honest as possible. This information ought to be used wisely and carefully such that it is not revealed together with the participants' identities (Heppner et al., 2008). According to these researchers, anonymity exists when the information revealed by the participants cannot be traced back to them. I assured participants of anonymity and confidentiality by using letter/number combinations in place of their real names. I referred to participants as T1 to T7.

Before engaging in the document review, permission was sought from the school principal and respective participants (teachers) to access documents which included teacher files and policy documents for teaching English Language. Similarly, permission to conduct the individual semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, and the respective recordings was sought.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the research paradigm, research methodology, design, sampling technique, data-generating methods and data analysis. It has also looked into the issues of trustworthiness which are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as required by qualitative studies. Lastly, this chapter has given insights into ethical considerations to be taken care of in the execution of this study. The next chapter presents data guided by thematic analysis and research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

REFLECTIONS ON THE DYNAMICS OF IMPLEMENTING CURRICULUM

4. 1 Introduction

This chapter is a follow up on the previous chapter (Chapter 3) which practicalised the dynamics of curriculum implementation in order to answer the three main research questions: What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English Language curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (descriptive); How do the dynamics of mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (operational); and Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are? (philosophical). The data presented here were generated from the document review, reflective activities, video observations, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. Seven teachers participated in the study, six English Language teachers and the principal. To protect their identity, I did not use their actual names. Instead, I referred to them as T1 up to T7. Data are presented, analysed, and discussed following themes generated from the Natural Identity Framework which was adapted to form the Innate Dynamics Framework.

In exploring the dynamics of implementing mainstream English Language curriculum, documents used by the teachers at the school such as lesson plans, National Education and Training Sector policy (2018), JC English Language Syllabus 101 November 2021 – 2023 Examinations, and prescribed texts were used to ascertain the top-down dynamics. Reflective activities were used to triangulate the findings from the reviewed documents and those from the other methods of data generation. Video recordings were also used to determine the classroom set-up during lesson delivery. Finally, one-on-one semi-structured telephonic interviews with each of the seven participants were conducted, and zoom video conferencing was used. The data were analysed using the thematic analysis, and the findings are presented and re-contextualised within relevant literature under these themes.

This chapter presents findings on the first two research questions, the descriptive "what" and operational "how", to explore the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini.

Table 2: Themes and categories of findings

Theme	Category
THEME ONE: EQUALITY AS A FUNCTION OF TOP-DOWN DYNAMICS (Descriptive "what" questions)	• Intended content for learners • Physical learning spaces • Planned teaching objectives • Teaching aids/resources • Planned assessment of content • Pedagogy as expected
THEME TWO: EQUITY AS A FUNCTION OF BOTTOM-UP DYNAMICS (Operational "how" questions)	• Adjusted curriculum content • Social Media Site (SMS) for learning • Extended knowledge base • Facilitation as a teaching mode • Learner-driven assessment • Learning outcomes

THEME THREE: JUSTICE AS A FUNCTION OF INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS (Personal "who" questions)	• Reflection
	• Individual values
	  o Positive (patience, diligence, independence, consideration, objectivity/acceptance)
	  o Negative (frustration, attitude, lack of confidence, avoidance/defence)

THEME FOUR: NATURE AS A FUNCTION OF INNATE DYNAMICS (Philosophical "why" questions)	• Re-reflection • Identity

4. 2 THEME ONE: EQUALITY AS A FUNCTION OF TOP-DOWN DYNAMICS

This theme is derived from the descriptive "what" questions asked to ascertain the top down dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. These dynamics are the professional forces that are directed by the policy makers at the macro level (national) to the teachers at the micro level (classroom) where the curriculum implementation takes

place. Teachers are expected to adhere to and conform to the policy expectations with the assumption that they all have similar and equal tools to help them cope with the demands of the curriculum. However, one of the teachers uses sign language (SL) as a natural language both in and outside the school environment. The rest of the teachers only use SL within the school for teaching and learning purposes. This suggests an unrecognized inequality among the teachers. Despite these natural identity differences, all the teachers are expected to conform to the standards set by the curriculum prescriptions. Thus Zhu and Shu (2017) argue that this curriculum has many 'dos and don'ts' that have to be followed. Similarly, Zohar et al. (2018) describe these forces as 'tight' because they demand that the teachers embrace and utilise the stated principles/prescriptions, failing which, the curriculum goals may not be fulfilled. Categories of themes representing curriculum prescriptions explored in the data analysis include: intended content for learners with deafness, physical learning spaces, planned teaching objectives, teaching aids/resources, planned assessment of learning, and pedagogy as expected.

4. 2. 1 Intended content for learners

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers at the school are driven by the top-down dynamics which compel them to use the intended/official content to teach English Language to learners with deafness. In order to understand the dynamics that influence the content teachers use to teach learners, I asked teachers about where they sourced the content they used. The intended content is the kind of content that learners are expected to master in order to attain a 100% pass mark in the final/external examinations. In other words, learners are neither assessed on common knowledge nor on individually developed content. For this reason, mastering the intended content indicates that learners have to reproduce the same content even in assessment such as the examinations; and all classroom activities are informed by this content. The teachers confirmed that they were given the mainstream English curriculum to teach to learners with deafness. At junior secondary level (Junior Certificate), they had in their possession the JC English Language Syllabus 101 November 2021 – 2023 Examinations, the syllabus constituting the intended content they use for teaching English to learners with deafness. Concerning this content, *"…I always refer to the prescribed curriculum for teaching and learning content. This is because we teach our students with the aim of preparing them for… the Eswatini Junior Certificate examination (JC)…"* (T1, supported by T2, T3, T5, and T6).

The teachers' accounts suggest that teachers' are driven by the top-down dynamic/force of preparing learners for the external examination which assesses the mastery of content using set standards (Khoza, 2019). That teachers conform to the set standards and expectations indicates that teachers have less control of the content to be taught to the learners. Teachers assume the position of instructors who train and drill the learners with content to ensure that they master it and attain 100% in the examinations (Khoza, 2020a; Khoza & Fomunyan, 2021a; 2021b; Ndlovu, 2016). However, evidence from external examination results point to loopholes in the professional force/top-down dynamics, learners at the school nevertheless not obtaining the 100% mark. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to consider utilizing, in addition to the intended content, other sources of knowledge generation/development such as common sense/everyday knowledge (bottom-up dynamics/factors) and individually developed knowledge (individual dynamics).

The intended content and assessment objectives of the curriculum emphasise the communicative tasks and activities that advocate for competence in four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing (JC English Language Syllabus 101 November 2021 – 2023 Examinations, p. 7). This proves that this curriculum is strictly language-based (Dissake & Atindogbe, 2019). However, the findings suggest that of the four language skills, two are taught at the school to learners with deafness: reading and writing. All seven teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7) confirmed this finding. Participant T2 highlighted that *"out of the four language skills taught in JC…, we teach two at our institution: reading and writing and exempt our learners from listening and speaking since they are Deaf, thus cannot speak but use sign language as their medium of communication"*. From the teachers' accounts, it was established that the other two skills, listening and speaking, are not taught because learners with deafness cannot access spoken language (Csizer & Kontra, 2020). For this reason, "…it is impossible to evaluate listening and speaking for deaf learners," (Dissake et al., 2019, p. 5). Therefore, the mere inclusion of these two language skills in this curriculum suggests that the intended content does not take into account the natural/pragmatic/individual dynamics of these learners in order to meet their learning needs.

The exclusion of the listening and speaking skills from the intended content suggests that the learners will ultimately learn only fifty percent of the skills/content. This has implications for their assessment in the external examinations at the end of the junior secondary programme which requires all learners to have mastered the four language skills. Without doubt, this disadvantages

learners with deafness, particularly since they compete with other learners, especially from mainstream schools, who are instructed in all four language skills. This finding is consistent with that of Khasawneh (2021) and Szarkowski et al. (2020). On the one hand, Khasawneh (2021) emphasises that the English Language skills offered in the curriculum are not commensurate with the language development of learners with deafness. On the other hand, Szarkowski et al. (2020) advocate for the sensitization of everyone associated with these learners to promote their pragmatic development in order to enhance their language skills. The shortfalls in the intended content/language skills probably explain why these learners do not achieve a hundred percent mark in the final examinations. I therefore argue that there is a need for both teachers and learners to be allowed to reflect and critique their teaching and learning experiences in order to learn more about their innate language skills.

Worth noting is that the official English Language curriculum neither mentions the use of sign language nor a signed version of English. This puts the learners on the back foot, their main communication tool being totally sidelined. By implication, these learners inevitably encounter access challenges to the intended content. This finding is consistent with that of other researchers (see Dissake & Atindogbe, 2019; Obosu et al., 2016). Analysis of data from the classroom video observations confirmed that sign language is the dominant language used as a medium of instruction in the classroom. It is only when a teacher or learner writes on the white board that sign language is temporarily suspended. Otherwise all other explanations, questions and their responses, as well as classroom discussions are in sign language. Thus these observations call for the accommodation of sign language in the English Language curriculum of learners with deafness because it (SL) is the means through which these learners learn English. Unfortunately, when there are such critical exclusions of the natural way of learning for learners with deafness, this infringes upon the individual dynamics of the learners, indicating shortcomings of the top-down dynamics-driven curriculum. Accordingly, this renders the curriculum inflexible (Motitswe, 2012; Mamba & Mafumbate, 2019). According to Csizer et al. (2020), teachers who use sign language motivate learners who cannot access speech. The use of sign language for teaching and learning at the school suggests that both teachers and learners are influenced by the social need to communicate with one another in and outside the classroom (bottom-up dynamics). There is also the individual need to communicate using the natural/innate way (individual dynamics) to meet the learning needs (Mpungose & Khoza, 2020a; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2021).

The social and pragmatic factors involved in this language influence the teaching presence (top-down dynamics/force) (Khoza, 2021b). That being the case, the intended curriculum's non recognition of the social and individual need to naturally communicate in and outside the classroom has a direct impact on the teaching and learning process. There is thus the need for the practical recognition of the sign language in the intended English curriculum used at the school. The need to align the use of sign language at the school with the English Language content as found in the syllabus is also highlighted. The National Education and Training Sector policy (2018) states that *"Swazi Sign Language (SSL) is an officially recognised language in all schools and will be taught and used where appropriate"* (p. 40).

Moreover, findings of the study suggest that there are incompetencies and variations in the use of sign language by the teachers and learners at the school. While both teachers and learners communicate in sign language in the classroom for instruction, most of the teachers are not natural signers or users of sign language. T3 concedes that, *"We do not know sign language ourselves because it is not our natural language. My signing is not perfect because it's not my natural language. As a result, we also learn this language from the learners as well as from colleagues in the department who can sign better"*. The teachers' admission that they face struggles with the use of sign language has implications for the delivery of instruction in the classroom. This points to loopholes in the top-down dynamics in which teachers with no specialised training and proficiency in sign language are posted to teach at the school, ultimately highlighting an unrecognised inequality in the use of sign language. For this reason, experienced teachers who are more proficient in this language are called upon to mentor those who are less proficient in sign language. This finding was corroborated by Ntinda et al. (2019) who reported that the variation in sign language impedes learner engagement and subsequently affects the teachers' communication with the learners.

By extension, the findings reveal that learners at the school serve as tutors of sign language to their teachers as evidenced by T3's account. T6 reiterated that learners are very helpful in teaching them how to sign some words. She said, *"Learners correct us in class. For instance, if I sign a particular word they have learnt, say in Agriculture, they will correct me and give me the sign they learnt in Agriculture. That is why it is important to first fish information from them of what they know"*. Learners are very helpful in making connections between the signing of similar words

across different curricula. This indicates that learners with deafness have huge potential and abilities which, when recognised and used appropriately, benefit the teaching and learning process (Raselimo et al., 2015; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021b; Mncube & Khuzwayo, 2017). However, this is not to suggest that teachers learn everything about sign language from the learners. In order to close the gap that exists in sign language proficiency between and among teachers and learners, respectively, the teachers and learners dedicate some time and day (usually on Monday morning) to socially construct some academic signs and to teach one another this language at the school. All the teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7) agree that this is also the time during which common signs are made for words used in different subject areas. This presents an excellent platform for both teachers and learners to collaborate and sharpen their skills in the language. However, the school administration laments the fact that such arrangements have implications on the limited time to cover the content and sees them as extra work on the part of teachers. *"…but sitting together and working on the sign language on Mondays is now extra work for teachers because there are time challenges."* (T7). This account suggests that much as this internal arrangement helps in harmonising the different dialects of sign language, however, it is a tedious exercise for teachers and ends up consuming the limited teaching time. Thus this is arguably one of the reasons that eventually contribute to an extended curriculum duration of five years for the junior secondary level at the school as discussed in theme two, extended knowledge base. The mastery of content is therefore promoted by knowledge and competence in sign language which is a socially constructed language (societal force) as opposed to the English Language which is the prescribed language (professional force). Accordingly, Ntinda et al. (2019) recommend that the country have a standardized sign language which could enhance positive teaching and learning outcomes.

Findings also indicate inadequacies in the teaching time for covering the intended content to learners with deafness. The present arrangement at the school is such that each of the six teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6) has a particular number of periods assigned to them as per the standards of this curriculum. However, the teachers argue that the planned time for teaching English Language is insufficient. They responded as follows:

T1: "*Teaching time depends on the content being taught. However, the periods are usually not enough. A lot of technical issues are involved in teaching language to deaf students. For example,*

teaching an introduction to any composition may drag for three weeks not days. Language limitations on the part of learners impose great challenges on the flow of learning and subsequently on the duration of any given lesson" (T2, T3, and T5 agree). T6: *"…By the time we write…because they are very slow, time is already up…."*

The teachers' submissions suggest that the planned time, which is influenced by the top-down dynamics, restricts the learning process of learners with deafness. Evidence from the teachers' lesson evaluations reveals that some lessons have to be repeated because learners did not understand them, with most of the lesson objectives not achieved. This has implications for the practices that teachers use to teach these learners, which do not address their learning needs (individual dynamics). Teachers cited various reasons for the insufficient time. For instance, T1 mentioned technical issues involved in teaching language to learners with deafness such as dragging topics (topics that take long to complete)**.** Teaching an introduction to a composition can take three weeks.

T3 further argued that time limitations are compounded in that using sign language is tiresome. As a school they are forced to allow the learners to leave for home an hour earlier than the stipulated time. He elaborates: *"…Learners don't need to take a long time to learn because they get tired from signing for the whole day. As a result, their concentration is affected. That is why they are allowed to go home at 2. 30 pm instead of 3. 30 pm."* (Supported by T7). This is an interesting observation that learners become exhausted from using sign language for the whole day, especially because this is a natural language for the learners with deafness. The fatigue is probably caused by sign language using hand movements and gestures. For this reason, concentration is affected when learners take the whole day learning. Therefore, permitting the learners to leave for home an hour earlier is understood to be an intervention strategy. It is also interesting to ponder how these learners occupy themselves after class time. Much as they are presumed to be resting, the reality is that they continue to communicate with one another around their social space. One then wonders whether these learners need to be trained on managing their signing skills so that they are also able to adjust to the expected time not only within the school set-up but also to meet societal demands way beyond the school environment.

By extension, T1 noted that time losses in class are also caused by the learners' language limitations which affect the flow of learning and subsequently the duration of any given lesson.

This was echoed by T2 and T7, who noted that these learners exhibit significant language delay which results in insufficient time to cover intended content per lesson. These language challenges were confirmed by other researchers (such as Ristiani, 2018; Adi et al., 2017) who acknowledged that learners with deafness have language challenges mainly caused by lack of a strong base in their first language. Ristiani (2018) posits that these learners definitely need language assistance. T6 asserts that learners with deafness are very slow. She explained that before going on to teach a particular topic, she first tries to elicit information from them (learners) about their prior knowledge before they attempt to write. For this reason, T6 leads the learners step by step during the lesson. The insufficient time for teaching the intended content compels the teacher to consider extra time, a feature of bottom-up dynamics, to cater for time shortages (Dzulkifli, 2021; Mabuza, 2018; Mabuza & Khoza, 2019). This suggests the need for the consideration of other times including individually-preferred times that support learning beyond the classroom, which constitutes the individual dynamics (Mpungose & Khoza, 2020a; Khoza, 2021a; 2021b).

4. 2. 2 Physical learning spaces

Findings of the study reveal that all six teachers of English (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6) use mainly physical learning spaces to teach learners with deafness. In the context of this study, physical spaces refer to learning that takes place in the classrooms as well as in the teacher's presence (which may also be outside the classroom). Teachers' accounts suggest that their use of physical spaces is influenced by the training they have undergone and that they are still not capacitated to use other learning spaces such as online and blended learning. For instance, T1: *"I primarily teach them in the classroom because I still need to learn more about online learning. I am also not very well clued up on what blended learning is"*. T2: *"…we rely on the traditional classrooms because we are still to be trained on how to effectively conduct online lessons for our learners."* T3: *"We depend on classroom meetings because it's difficult to use online learning. Even lessons conducted on Swazi TV are not helpful because of the speed of the teachers who teach there. Even the Sign Language interpreter is just placed at the corner of the screen where s/he is not clearly visible for the learners. It would be better if the main screen had the Sign Language interpreter"*.

Two teachers, T4 and T5 articulated that their use of physical spaces for learning was influenced by shortages of gadgets and data for facilitating online learning spaces. T4: *"I only use face to face learning because my learners do not have tablets for online teaching",* and T5: *"I use no other*

platform besides meeting them in class because learners complain that they don't have data for online learning." T6's account, however, suggests that teachers have been cultured to accept that learners with deafness learn better when there are physical engagements between the teachers and the learners. She asserts that *"Learners do work best when they write pieces of work in the teacher's presence for guidance. Otherwise if asked to write say in the hostels or at home, they may ask others to write for them".*

The teachers' accounts suggest that their use of physical spaces for learning is driven by the top-down dynamic. While this set up remains an important professional identity (Khoza, 2021b), it restricts teaching and learning to the classroom/school environment, and in the process suppresses the recognition and effective use of other learning spaces that support learning (Khoza, 2021a; Mpungose & Khoza, 2020a). The teachers' articulations highlight how much they have been captured to believe that physical spaces are the best learning spaces for these learners. This is such that they are even sceptical about trusting learners to do homework on their own as articulated by T6. As much as this is in line with the findings of Khasawneh (2021) who reported that learners with deafness turn to those who do their homework on their behalf, such scepticism has even made the teachers doubt whether online learning would work for them at the school. T6: *"...we don't use online learning. Yes we have heard that it is about to be introduced but we don't know if it will work for us..."* In this regard, teachers ought to be mindful of lifelong learning that continues beyond the four walls of the classroom. In this day and age there are multimedia spaces that support learning of all learners, including learners with deafness. These include Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and Social Media Sites (SMSs) (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Khoza, 2021a; 2021b; Mpungose, 2021; Dube, 2020). However, as noted in their accounts, there is a dire need for the teachers to be exposed to and capacitated on the use of other learning spaces such as online and blended learning spaces. This would help them manage issues of time constraints; learners would still be engaged in learning way beyond the classroom (Mpungose, 2020b).

Presently, Eswatini is facing many socio-economic and political challenges that from time to time have resulted in the abrupt closure of schools. For example, we have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic which also imposed prolonged lockdowns. Also, there has been much political unrest, which has also seen the burning and destruction of some schools. These challenges have grossly impacted the traditional learning process and have posed very critical questions not only about the

quality of education but also on its resilience and sustainability. Therefore, the need to consider other learning spaces cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, these challenges have heightened the need to migrate to a digitalized curriculum (Makumane et al., 2022; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Khoza, 2020b; 2021b). In fact, this is long overdue. It cannot be denied that some learners have certain technological knowledge and skills that need to be enhanced and which, when put to good use, may support learning and subsequently promote positive learning outcomes (Khoza & Biyela, 2019; Makumane et al., 2022).

In addition to the training that teachers need on the use of other learning spaces besides the classroom, there is need for support in terms of the resources that are demanded by these learning spaces. Such resources include the provision of hardware resources such as smart phones, tablets and laptops; and software resources like data bundles. Fortunately, there is internet at the school that is readily available for everyone even in the hostels. I therefore argue that learning should continue even in the areas of residence to encourage learning beyond the classroom.

4. 2. 3 Planned teaching objectives

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers use teaching objectives drawn from the official English curriculum and aligned with the content and assessment objectives. These objectives assist the teachers to deliver the intended content during the lessons. *"From the mentioned curriculum I get the objectives of my teaching…I introduce them to Form 1 JC prescribed curriculum learning objectives"* (T5, supported by T2). T6 added that *"...basically I use those (objectives) that are given in the syllabus and I lift what I feel is appropriate for my learners that is why I said I use those in the syllabus as a guide"*. The teachers' accounts indicate that their use of the planned teaching objectives is influenced by the professional need to deliver content (top-down dynamics) to the learners which they have to master in preparation for the external examination in Form Three. For this reason, the teachers introduce/expose learners to these objectives as early as Form One. T6's submission and use of the phrases "I lift what I feel is appropriate" and "…as a guide", however, seem to suggest that she combines the top-down dynamic (what she takes from the planned objectives) with her own interpretation and addition (individual dynamic). This teacher selects particular aspects that she deems appropriate, and where possible creates her own objectives guided by the syllabus.

Data generated for this category suggests that rather than taking the planned objectives, some teachers create their own teaching objectives. This was affirmed by T1, T3 and T4. For instance, T1: *"I formulate my own teaching objectives, but I rely on the teaching aims outlined in the curriculum to know what I should aim to achieve by teaching each topic"*. In creating their own teaching objectives, T3 and T4 revealed that they use other resources and considerations. T3: *"I use information from the internet and books to formulate teaching objectives"* and T4: *"I get my teaching objectives from the topic I am teaching my learners. Identifying their level of knowledge helps me to formulate them."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that the teachers' use of planned teaching objectives is predominantly driven by the top-down dynamics to cover content. However, there seems to be an apparent diversion from the intended content particularly in the formulation of teaching objectives as witnessed in the accounts of those teachers who opted to create their own objectives in place of those planned. These teachers cited reasons such as difficult language used in the content versus language limitations of learners, cognitive development, and non-contextual nature of the content, all of which are discussed in other sections of this chapter. While some of these objectives involve teachers' careful thought about what should be taught, they still neglect the learners' goals both in the short term (learning outcomes) and long-term (aims). According to Hoadley (2018), objectives are short-term goals for teaching, which reveal the teacher's intentions (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020). The teaching objectives thus only cater for the teacher's goals of ensuring that learners master the intended content, and subsequently attain the desired results (Remillard & Heck, 2014). In the process, the content neglects the consideration of learning and long term goals. For this reason, there is a need for the teachers to reflect on their experiences and consider utilizing aims. Such aims should meet both short term goals (teaching objectives) and learning outcomes (learning goals) (Makumane & Khoza, 2020).

4. 2. 4 Teaching aids/resources

Findings of the study suggest that teachers utilise teaching aids to deliver the intended content to learners with deafness during the English Language lessons. These teaching aids include all equipment and materials that facilitate the teaching and learning process. Before their actual use, teachers reveal that they have particular considerations that inform their choice of teaching aids to

use in a particular lesson. These include content being taught, objectives, assessment, learning style, and teaching aids at their disposal. The teachers gave the following illustrative accounts:

T1: *"The content being taught influences my choice of teaching aids. For example, if I am teaching about pollution (land, water or air) I may only use pictures to show the learners WHAT each type of pollution is or looks like. However, I may need to show them a video that demonstrates HOW the pollution happens. They may also make posters to show HOW a pollution free environment would look like"* (T4 agrees).

T2: *"...I look at a couple of variables like the learning objectives, learner's entry point, pre-assessment or summative assessment, learner's needs, learner's preferred style of learning, and availability of resources".*

T6: *"...I must have visual aids to help learners' understanding. Sub titles also help too but they must not be too wordy".*

The teachers' accounts suggest that teachers' choice of teaching aids is influenced by both top-down dynamics which comes in the form of what the learners have to learn, and the most effective strategies of enabling learners to achieve learning goals (individual/pragmatic dynamics). The latter is particularly significant because it deals with the tension that exists between the top-down dynamics and bottom-up dynamics with a view to helping the learners to achieve their learning goals. This could be why T2's enumeration of variables/considerations that influence her choice of teaching aids includes the learners' preferred style of learning and learners' needs. Moreover, the mention of availability of resources as another variable suggests that teachers are restricted to using what is at their disposal. This implies that while what is readily available may be useful to some degree, there are possibilities that they may not be sufficient. Such also has implications for the quality of teaching aids available and about whether they are able to address the learning needs. Otherwise the lack of appropriate resources in schools is a critical problem that impacts negatively on curriculum implementation (Maharajh et al., 2016).

Also, the teachers' accounts indicate examples of teaching aids they use which are chiefly visually-oriented. Teachers gave the following examples:

T1: *"I use pictures from newspapers and magazines, videos mostly from You Tube, and learners' own artwork".* T2: *"...teaching aids...vary from smartboard, laptop, projector, PowerPoint,*

YouTube (for videos), charts, magazines and prescribed textbooks". T4: *"I use… visual aids, alphabets and colour signs".* T5: *"I use web sites and picture /visual dictionaries. I must have visual aids to help learners' understanding. Subtitles also help but they must not be too wordy"* and T6 outlines that, *"...Now we have the technology we call Clickel 8 which is a programme with English…When you write a sentence using Clickel 8, you insert a word with a picture, for instance an angry face, when you click the word, the picture inserted by the teacher shows up. The learner is able to see the appropriate picture of the word. You feed the word say with different pictures of faces and insert it. We also use cards where we write the words and allow the learners to interchange them and write the words using non-permanent markers*

The teachers' accounts suggest that learners learn better when they can visualize what they are being taught. According to T6 visual teaching aids help the learners to better understand the content/lesson, and they impact directly on their learning outcomes. This is consistent with the finding of Ngonyani (2018) that the appropriate use of visual aids has an influence on the learners' academic performances. Literature seems to agree that deaf learners' ways of learning English Language are highly visual. A study by Dewi et al. (2019) confirms that children with deafness learn English better when the teachers utilize visual images. That being the case, the teachers provided visual support such as attaching pictures to certain concepts to aid the learners' understanding.

The same results were replicated in a study by Ikasari et al. (2019). These researchers investigated the use of multimodal texts in an English classroom in Indonesia of learners who are hard of hearing, and they used the narrative inquiry of an English teacher and three hard of hearing learners in a special needs school. The material used included video observation, photographs, field notes, documents and interviews with the teacher and students. Findings show that multimodal texts built with diverse modes and semiotic resources such as colour, motion, written text, and gesture help the students to perform better in reading comprehension. Moreover, these researchers affirm that the use of multimodal texts encourages the students to actively participate in the classroom activities.

Findings indicate that teachers use official texts as part of the reading materials in the English Language lessons. Worth noting is that all these texts are also used in the mainstream schools, and their use by the teachers is driven by the top-down dynamics demanding that teachers cover

content. Unfortunately, these official texts do not accommodate the use of informal communication channels (bottom-up dynamics) that allow the free interactions that support learning in order to meet learners needs (individual dynamics). T3: *"the prescribed texts are a little bit harder for the learners to understand. As a result, we go to the library to try and find materials they (learners) can use at their level."*(T1, T2, T4, T5, and T6 agree). The planned texts do not match the cognitive level of learners with deafness, thus they are unable to address learners' needs. Teachers are then compelled to consider other reading materials in the school's library. In so doing, they use their own criteria informed by personal judgement to identify the texts relevant to support the learners' individual needs. Therefore, this study argues that friendlier learning texts that encourage social construction of knowledge (bottom-up dynamics) should be promoted.

Also, data analysis and findings suggest that the school is well resourced in terms of its infrastructure and teaching aids. However, teachers seem to be using mainly the hardware resources. Even video observations of the lessons showed teachers using the whiteboard on which they were seen writing using a marker. The classroom walls had many visual images placed on charts and cards which also displayed the signed version of alphabets. According to Dzulkifli (2021), it is necessary for teachers to use teaching aids in order to attract and capture in the lesson the interest of learners with deafness. The researcher argues that when these teaching aids are appropriate for learning content and students' ability, they help in improving the achievement of the learners in teaching and learning. Khoza and Mpungose (2020) remind us that resources, of which teaching aids are examples, are divided into three categories: hardware (machines and tools used in teaching), software (materials used with hardware), and ideological-ware (ideas that motivate people to use hardware/software). Teachers may therefore be encouraged to use more multimedia to cater for the social factors (bottom-up dynamics).

4. 2. 5 Planned assessment of content

Findings from the data analysis reveal that teachers at the school utilise the planned assessment to evaluate the learners' mastery of the intended content. This is because the success of the curriculum implementation process is gauged on the learners' performances in the content after instruction.

T1: *"I give them class works, home works, class presentations…as a way of assessing or evaluating my learners' achievement of learning objectives…"*

T2: *"I observe them during a lesson, conduct one on one interviews, give a quiz at the end of the lesson, or a test at the end of a month or an examination at the end of a term or use exit cards with a few questions at the end of a lesson or ask random questions during the lesson"*.

T3: *"I look at what they write to see if they have met the objectives but you need to be patient with them because some objectives may not be achieved on the same day. So I also ask questions and give them time to respond during the course of the lesson. Otherwise they (learners) do try their best because they have a lot of potential..."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that their use of planned assessment was mainly driven by the top-down dynamics of ensuring that the learners mastered the intended content. In doing so, teachers are guided by the teaching/planned objectives which are short-term goals. This assessment, also called summative assessment and assessment of learning, is conducted at the end of the lesson after learning has already taken place (Muller & Hoadley, 2019; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021b); its focus sees mainly on what students should have achieved (Khoza, 2016a; Khoza, 2019). The assessment places a high level of expectations on both teachers and learners, such that a hundred percent mark is the demand. Anything less than that is considered a failure in this vertical curriculum. Evidence from the external examinations in Form Three suggest that learners' performances still leave a lot to be desired. Therefore, teachers ought to be encouraged to consider other forms of assessment that encourage learner involvement and peer critiquing. Here assessment becomes a way of learning, and assessment for learning, otherwise known as formative assessment. These two additional forms of assessment take care of both bottom-up and individual dynamics aimed at addressing learners' needs (Ndlovu & Khoza, 2020).

4. 2. 6 Pedagogy as expected

Findings from the analysis of data suggest that teachers have criteria for selecting teaching methods they use to teach English to learners with deafness. Their choice of teaching method is informed by the learners' prior knowledge, visual orientation to learning, the need to conduct practical classroom engagements, and what is easy to explain and understand. T6: *"If I still pick up their prior knowledge and realise that the vocabulary is lacking, then that is what will influence my choice of teaching method. If they have the vocabulary I need for the topic, there is no need to waste time looking out for papers and pictures because its time consuming. But if the vocabulary is lacking, I look out for stories that have pictures, the words and, etc."* (T1 and T2 agree). T5:

"Visual and graphic informative strategies used in class are influenced by the learners' ability to take in information better through visual presentation. Also, methods that engage learners to practically take part during the teaching process, where they work out answers on the white board, ensure engagement." T3: *"It depends on what I think learners will easily understand when I explain. In other words, I choose how to explain content."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that the learners' prior knowledge is considered vital in the learning process. Learners who come to the lesson with the relevant prerequisite knowledge make things easier for the teacher. To this end, Khasawneh (2021) contends that linking learners' previous experience with the lesson to be taught requires qualified and very skilful teachers. Some teachers may still encounter some challenges in not only accessing the learners' prior knowledge but also in skilfully utilizing what the learners already know, to benefit the learning process. This poses questions about the teachers' individual/pragmatic dynamics which they need to display when interacting with the learners. This includes awareness that learners with deafness learn better when they are practically engaged, and making use of visual and graphic informative engagements as noted by T6. This is consistent with the findings of Dewi et al. (2019).

At a glance, the teachers' accounts of the actual teaching strategies they use to instruct learners give the impression that they focus on and prioritise the learners' needs and strengths. However, close scrutiny of their submissions suggest that teachers exercise particular control over what the learners should learn as well as on how they should learn it. For instance, T3's account suggests that he chooses what learners should know and how to explain it. In other words, teachers are driven by the top-down dynamics and what works for them specifically. This is such that the teachers are the ones who identify and gather teaching materials such as thematic topics and stories, all of which inform the content. Shoba (2018) describes such actions as being authoritative. Also, the teachers' accounts suggest that they use the traditional methods of teaching and learning such as rote learning and drilling (Mpungose, 2019; Muller & Hoadley, 2019). T5 and T6 posit that learners are allowed to practise writing the correct words on cards for a prolonged time, they then copy the correct version of the words on their sentences (T5 and T6). The following accounts illustrate the pedagogical practices of the teachers:

T1: *"...one may think that all learners would have a lot to share on the topic, 'A busy day at the bus rank'. For students who are deaf, however, the teacher would first need to show them a picture*

of the place called bus rank, help them with vocabulary for the different people who are in the bus rank such as vendors, beggars, bus conductors, rank marshals, and vocabulary for the different shops in the bus rank like restaurants, kiosk, café, butchery, bakery, mini-supermarket and salon".

T5: *"...The English department uses thematic topics to practice all the skills learners need to be tested on (note making, summary writing, form filling etc). This helps in using one set of vocabulary for a prolonged time so that learners get full meaning and practice of the thematic words. I ensure learners gain confidence and are competent before moving on. However, when given a random passage with new words learners face difficulties and some just fail to comprehend and cannot display competence on the skill tested".*

T6: *"We also use cards where we write the words and allow the learners to interchange them and write the words using non-permanent markers. The learner is given the opportunity to practice writing the correct word spelling until s/he gets it right. It's then that they can copy it into their exercise books if it has been properly written. So basically, you try anything that will make them not feel discouraged especially when they face difficulties. Sometimes we spread the cards with words on the teacher's desk so that they choose the appropriate one, and in the process they would be assisting one another to select the correct card."*

T3: *"Since I know the learners' strengths and weaknesses, I know how to teach particular concepts or topics. Most of the time, for instance when it comes to compositions, learners do not like them because they are not able to write them. It then calls for the teacher to write the composition and give it to them. They really can't create because of the language barrier. So you can write the composition and leave gaps to be filled by the learners but even then it's very difficult for them. In some cases it requires me to write and complete it then I give it to learners to read. Afterwards, give the same composition to the learners without seeing it and find out if they are able to write it. Most of them are able to cram word for word and to recall what they read because they were given the chance to see it."*

The accounts suggest that teachers direct the learning processes in the classroom. They provide learners with the vocabulary they need for each lesson, selecting the topics and content to be taught and learnt. Also, findings indicate that teachers use traditional methods of teaching that involve rote learning and drilling. This is such that they allow learners to use repetitive vocabulary for prolonged spells and make them practise writing words on cards until they master the correct

spelling. This is in line with the findings of researchers such as Hoadley (2018), Muller and Hoadley (2019), and Zhu and Shu (2017), who contend that learners are given passive and reactive roles in which they are restricted to simply memorizing and reproducing what the teachers feed them. A case in point is the pedagogical practice conducted by T3, who writes some compositions for the learners to read and then regurgitate. In such cases, the teachers' goals are met at the expense of the learners' needs (Mpungose, 2019). Accordingly, these practices suggest that teachers are driven by the top-down dynamics. Teachers thus do not promote informal interactions among learners to encourage collaborations (bottom-up dynamics) and critical thinking skills that support learning to meet learning goals (individual dynamics).

Unfortunately, the practice of doing work for the learners has resulted in teachers having the perception that learners with deafness cannot write compositions. The impact of this is so severe that even the learners themselves do not like compositions, a sign of demotivation and frustration. This has implications for the pedagogical practices that teachers use, and amplifies the need for teachers to reflect and critique their experiences in order to improve learning outcomes. In this study I argue that learners with deafness are capable learners with the potential to achieve excellent results provided that teachers use pragmatic teaching methods that would support and meet their learning needs/goals. As Khoza (2021a; 2021b) argues, these learners have their own unique natural identity which is their main strength. Therefore, instead of drawing false conclusions about them, teachers have to engage them in active and engaging learning using appropriate methodologies.

According to Glewwe and Muralidharan (2015) and Muller and Hoadley (2019), teacher-centred practices impact negatively on learner performances. This is because learners are not trained to be independent learners who can manage to unlock complex learning situations. This may explain why these learners are still low achievers in their academic goals. For this reason, it is incumbent upon teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogical practices with the aim of helping learners to meet their learning goals (Hoadley, 2018; Mpungose, 2019; Khoza, 2021b). This includes making effective use of their experiences (social and individual needs) to meet learners' needs.

4. 3 THEME TWO: EQUITY AS A FUNCTION OF BOTTOM-UP DYNAMICS

The second theme, equity as a function of bottom-up dynamics, is derived from the operational "how" questions which were intended to ascertain how teachers at the school actualise or put into action the top-down dynamics discussed in the previous section. Much as teachers are said to premise their classroom operations on similar policy prescriptions, contextual factors influence them to behave in particular ways during the curriculum implementation. This is echoed by Oakley (2018, p. 12) who argues that, "even though teachers have the curriculum resources in their hands, they still have to think through and reflect on their instructional delivery. This is where the autonomy is, the art of teaching." This researcher also acknowledges that teachers have power. Much as curriculum policies have a host of prescriptions to be adhered to by the teachers regarding the curriculum implementation, the reality is that teachers, as actual curriculum implementers, have the power and autonomy to implement the curriculum in accordance with their respective interpretations and beliefs. This implies that there is a tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics.

Categories to be discussed under this theme include: adjustment of content according to context, social media sites for learning, extended knowledge base, learner-driven assessment, facilitation as a teaching mode, and learning outcomes.

4. 3. 1 Adjustment of content according to context

Findings from the data generation reveal that as much as teachers at the school use the planned/official curriculum to teach English to learners with deafness, they adjust the intended content according to their context in an attempt to meet the learners' needs. The adjustments that teachers make suggest that the intended content is non-contextual, and therefore poses access challenges for both teachers and learners which impact on the implementation/learning process. These adjustments also speak to the curriculum design and packaging, and they are influenced by the teachers' perceptions of the content as articulated by the teachers. For instance, T1: *"The curriculum is too broad and very difficult for learners who are deaf. For example, reading passages are too long and sometimes characterised by figurative language. Students who are deaf have challenges just mastering the literal meaning of a word, using words figuratively can be very confusing for them"* (Supported by T3, T5, T6, and T7). T2: *"...the way the curriculum is designed is way above my learners in terms of their cognitive development."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that the curriculum's design is broad and difficult for learners with deafness. The difficulty in the curriculum content points to the language used which is perceived to be not commensurate with the language and cognitive development level of the learners. These teachers' perceptions/opinions (group dynamics) about this curriculum are first and foremost influenced by their knowledge of the learners in the classroom. Such knowledge, as much as they would argue that they spend most of their time with the learners at the school than probably any other person including their parents, may be said to be common perceptual knowledge. For instance, teachers describe the learners to be facing challenges in dealing with long passages, literal meaning of words, and figurative language which is thought to be confusing the learners. Much as these observations might, to a certain extent, hold water as confirmed by other researchers such as (Csizer & Kontra, 2020; Xiang, 2018; Rahmatunnisa et al., 2019), this study argues that there is still a need for teachers and learners to reflect on their experiences in order to take care of the individual dynamics. As things are, the top-down dynamic that influenced the design and use of the language make-up of the content poses many challenges for the learners. Even the teachers' voices and the subsequent efforts they put into adjusting the curriculum content still fall short of enabling the learners to achieve their learning goals and improving their academic performances.

In the light of the complex nature of the intended content, teachers revealed the procedure they follow in adjusting the content according to context. They elaborate: "*...we take the curriculum and syllabus and take the learners' needs and place them at the centre and then determine what exactly is given in the prescribed syllabus that is suitable for my learners. How can I twist it such that at the end of the day I eventually cover all that is required but at the level and standard of the learners before me...*" (T2, supported by T1). Also, *"... because we want learners to use what they are familiar with, then we go out there to look for what will make our work productive and allow them to learn from it. They use mainly their experiences and what they are exposed to because if the curriculum talks about hockey and an Africa they have not seen, it does not help the learner. So I go out to look for what will benefit them and be appropriate for my learners even in terms of context so that they can also be encouraged that they know something about what is written."* (T6, supported by T3, T4, and T5).

T1: *"Most of the time I use information that is relatable to the learners' experiences...because there are times when they actually have no experience or knowledge about what we are learning*

about. While some topics may look familiar for the ordinary person, this is not always the case with learners who are hearing impaired…"

The teachers' accounts suggest that, while the teachers seem to uphold learners' needs (individual/pragmatic dynamics) in their consideration of what and how to adjust the intended content according to the context, the actual adjustment practice is driven by bottom-up dynamics (societal perceptions/opinions/factors) and top-down dynamics (professional forces). As they scrutinize the planned content, teachers select what they deem to be relevant for their learners. However, worth noting is that the teachers do not use the selected aspects of the content as presented in the syllabus. Instead, they twist or adjust it in such a way that it meets their teaching goal which is to cover the content at the level of the learners. The adjustments that these teachers make on the planned content have implications for the value and quality of the overall content which, after the alterations/adjustments have been made, differ extensively from the original one set up by the professionals in the top-down dynamics. In such cases, there is a huge possibility of misinterpreting the content. When misinterpretations occur, including discarding some aspects of the content that are deemed not suitable for the learners, there are possibilities of distorting the intended content, leading to what Hoadley (2018) referred to as "the demise of knowledge to be taught" (p. 127). Such a reality has a bearing on learners' output during planned/summative assessments, such as in external examinations where learners are expected to demonstrate that they have mastered the intended content. However, in English Language, being a skill-based subject, learners are actually assessed for their competence in the different skills. Therefore, this action research argues that the teachers' efforts to adjust and modify the curriculum are pragmatic moves to identify what works for them and the learners in teaching and learning of English Language in the classroom. For this reason, such teachers' efforts ought to be encouraged as long as they are aimed towards addressing the individual needs.

Also, the teachers' accounts suggest that most of the planned content includes aspects that are foreign to the learning context. This is in line with the findings of researchers such as Shoba (2021) and Makumane (2021) who argue that learners struggle in their learning because the reading materials promote foreign knowledge which conflicts with learners' background and context. Such occurrences demotivate and demoralize the learners, and result in poor performances (Shoba, 2021). For this reason, teachers at the school are compelled to search for much familiar reading

material. This is influenced by the need to equip learners with social skills and competencies that benefit their communities (Makumane & Khoza, 2020; Shoba, 2021). Communities play a vital role in influencing the lives of people in and around them. To this end, the teachers revealed that they make use of learners' relatable knowledge and experiences as a way of simplifying the content. Bernstein (1999) calls this common sense knowledge while other researchers refer to it as every day knowledge.

The use of such knowledge, however, does not suggest that the intended content be out-right replaced. Instead, it means that such knowledge plays a crucial role in supporting and contextualizing the content. It breaks the rigidity and inflexible nature of the content thereby allowing learners to freely express themselves on familiar information while negotiating their way to fully comprehending the assessed content (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Therefore, teachers attempt to bring balance to the intended content. Otherwise using familiar knowledge in isolation and outside the parameters of the school knowledge would suggest that teachers completely reject the use of the intended content. However, the revelation that teachers seek what makes their work productive gives the impression that they consider what is convenient for themselves.

The findings on curriculum adjustments are influenced by the individual need (pragmatic) to maximize the learners' potential and to help them acquire competences (Khoza, 2021b; Shoba, 2021). However, this need is impeded by the inflexible curriculum which is driven by the professional force. Teachers are compelled to socially construct a friendlier curriculum that is aimed to meet the learners' needs (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2021; Khoza, 2021a; 2021b; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Makumane et al., 2022). Researchers such as Aglazor (2019) and Hildago and Abril (2018) refer to the adjustment of the intended content as curriculum modification. Aglazor (2019) defines curriculum modification as tailoring all the experiences and activities in pursuit of occupational preparation (bottom-up/societal factor) under the direction of a school (top-down dynamic) to meet the unique needs of the individual learner (individual dynamics). This definition takes into account the three main dynamics which are the top-down, bottom-up and individual/pragmatic dynamics. The modifications/adjustments are to compensate for the deficiencies in the curriculum so that the learners' specific needs are addressed.

4. 3. 2 Social Media Site (SMS) for learning

Findings of the study reveal that teachers at the school use social media sites such as WhatsApp and YouTube to deliver content to the learners. Teachers' use of social media sites is thus content-driven (top-down dynamic) in order to ensure that learners master the intended content. T5: *"I share some information and notes through WhatsApp. We've also used WhatsApp with some learners for feedback. However, discussion proved to be difficult"* (T3 agreed). T1: *"during the time of lockdowns I used social media platforms because I always gave them some homework. Hence, we would communicate on WhatsApp if they needed assistance on any of the given work. Post lockdown, we don't use social media".* T6: *"We only used WhatsApp during lockdown. But because we don't have dictionaries, in class I only allow them to use their phones to look out for word meanings and pictures say with a butterfly, its parts, or find a picture of a car and its parts, etc".* T2: *"...we* are *planning to use such platforms in the near future as a medium of exchanging ideas with learners or explaining content further after lesson hours to ensure in-depth understanding of content at the end of the day".*

The teachers' accounts suggest that, while they use WhatsApp mainly as a site for delivering content to learners with deafness, this site is normally considered when learners are away from school. The WhatsApp site was commonly used during the lockdown period; and upon return to the school after lockdown, teachers ceased to use it as a learning platform. The content shared on this social media site during this time includes notes, information, home work, and receiving of feedback. Extended social interactions to assist in the construction of knowledge seem to be very minimal on social media sites. Teachers are thus influenced/driven by the top-down dynamics to deliver content to learners (Nhlongo, 2020; Ndlovu & Khoza, 2020; Makumane et al., 2022). The only teacher who allows learners to bring cellphones to class, T6, permits learners to search for word meanings which are still part of the intended content. Therefore freedom of expression in the classrooms is still restricted and confined to physical interaction and not extended to the full use of digital and social media spaces. This study argues that such learning spaces be fully embraced and utilized particularly because, first and foremost, most learners seem to own cellphones, and secondly, we are in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) where such platforms are the order of the day. Such moves would support learning with the aim of enhancing learning outcomes.

The findings suggest, and are worth noting that during their use of WhatsApp during the lockdowns, some teachers had difficulty in engaging learners in discussions (T3 and T5). This could be attributed to the language challenges between teachers and learners. Nevertheless, one teacher, T1, freely communicated with the learners during this time such that, in addition to giving them homework through this learning space, she also gave them clarifications in instances where they needed such. This teacher, being a natural user of sign language herself, and her learners were able to deal with any language challenges. The teacher was driven by the social need to interact (bottom-up dynamics/factors), the professional force to cover content (top-down dynamics), and the innate/natural understanding of the language dynamics involved in communicating with learners with deafness. As noted by researchers such as Csizer et al. (2020) and Xiang (2018), learners with deafness are motivated by teachers who understand them and can effectively use sign language to interact with them.

It was interesting to ascertain that, as articulated by T2 in her account, teachers have seen the need to continue using the social media sites to extend interactions beyond the classroom hence the plans that are ongoing at the school. However, as it turns out from the submission, the top-down dynamic to cover content seems to be the driving force behind such plans. This calls for the teachers to consider the social needs/factors of using social media sites to support the learning process. According to T1 and T2, YouTube is mainly useful for its videos which help learners to understand concepts better, since they are visual and colourful. You Tube is used mainly as a teaching aid rather than a learning space for interactions that assist both teachers and learners to elicit ideas from one another. Watching videos on You Tube is made easier by the availability of the internet service at the school. This is in line with Mpungose's (2020b) observation that the internet has since become a very important teaching and learning tool to answer the operational "how" question of education.

The internet, if properly and effectively used, also allows teachers and learners to browse through various websites, as highlighted by T6. This could prove useful in encouraging further interactions on other social media sites such as Facebook, which are motivated by the need to communicate and socialize with other people. The horizontal curriculum allows the use of social media sites to promote social interaction and the construction of knowledge in order to achieve learning outcomes (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Khoza, 2020b; Khoza, 2021a; Khoza, 2021b). However,

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there is still a need for the recognition of individual dynamics as far as learning spaces is concerned, so that strengths of social media sites (bottom-up dynamic) are combined with physical spaces (top-down dynamic) to offer blended learning spaces (individual dynamic). Thus, the tension existing between these learning spaces will be averted, and the learning goals will be achieved.

4. 3. 3 Extended knowledge base

Findings from the data suggest that teachers at the school have an open or extended knowledge base that allows them to utilise knowledge/content from various subjects when teaching English Language to learners with deafness. In other words, teachers are not restricted to only using subject knowledge as presented in the intended content brought by the top-down dynamics. They speak highly of the benefits that are presented by the availability of the extended knowledge acquired from other curricula domains particularly for purposes of English learning. T1: *"some subjects provide more details and vital information on a given topic than is available in English Language books"* (T2 and T4 supported). T3: *"...we use knowledge from other subjects. For instance, the signing of words used in other subjects is helpful in learning vocabulary used in English".* T5: *"...Knowledge on broad topics gives background knowledge on reading passages in Paper 1 of the exam thus aiding comprehension. Also gives learners points to expand their writing especially in discursive compositions in Paper 2".* T6: *"...we asked from Consumer Science whether they teach vitamins and in Science so that when I give them short paragraphs to write, say about health, at least they have learnt it in the other subjects. Even in Agriculture, we use the vocabulary and signing they use in that subject to help them in English".*

The teachers' accounts indicate that they look beyond the subject boundaries of the English Language in search of useful information that enhances the learning process (Hoadley, 2018). As it turns out, such integrated knowledge keeps the learners' learning in check while complementing what they have previously learnt, irrespective of subject area (Ndlovu & Khoza, 2020; McPhail & McNeill, 2021; Khoza & Fomunyam, 2021a; 2021b). T1, supported by T2 and T4, explained that some subjects provide more details and vital information on a given topic than is available in the official English Language books. The official books they use are not detailed on some topics hence the need to supplement them with knowledge from other subjects. These shortfalls in the official books and subject content (top-down dynamics) are compensated for by drawing knowledge from

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other knowledge bases/subject areas (bottom-up dynamics/factors). This is particularly vital because as Mpungose and Khoza (2020, p. 4) observe, "Subject knowledge is always changing over time". Having an extended knowledge base enables learners to cope with any reading comprehension passage, be it in examinations as noted by T5 and T6, or for self-improvement (individual dynamics). Accordingly, having a curriculum content that draws from a wide-range of complementary knowledge base leads to the creation of what other researchers such as Niemela (2021) call a "powerful knowledge".

Moreover, this wide knowledge base allows teachers to determine the extent of signs (signing) used for particular words in different subject areas, including those that are spelt the same (T3 and T6). Worth noting is that the extended knowledge base overriding subject boundaries that teachers use is mainly driven by the need to prepare learners for examinations, which is a feature of the top-down dynamics. Since English Language by its very nature is skills-based, teachers ought to be more particular about the competence in these skills in order to promote life-long learning (Hoadley, 2018; McPhail & McNeill, 2021; McKernan, 2008). English Language lessons should thus aim to meet the learning goals and enable the learners to self-actualise (individual dynamic).

By extension, the analysis of the data generated suggests that teachers have a prearranged class, which they call a bridging class, where all learners coming from the primary school for the deaf are made to sit for a test that assesses the extent of their knowledge base. The test determines whether they are ready to proceed to Form One, the first class of junior secondary level, or whether they will remain in the bridging class for a year while the teachers assist them to make up for the areas in which they may be lagging. This test is locally set, administered and marked by the teachers using a particular rubric that assesses among other things, the cognitive abilities and extent of the language limitations of the learners. Thus T3: "…*For us no learner can proceed to the next class after failing. These learners arrive from primary with below par performances. That is why we then take them to bridging class and give them tests to determine who can proceed to Form 1. Some learners cannot even write their names during the test, and those with extreme challenges and cannot make it to Form three are taken to the vocational stream"*. T6: "*We also search for primary school materials which are still used in bridging class and Form 1 because you still teach what a capital letter and small letter is, teach them that a proper noun begins with a capital letter. So we bridge the gap between primary and secondary school…"*

The submission that no learner is allowed to proceed to the next class after failing suggests that the teachers are driven by top-down dynamics. It was interesting to note that learners coming from the primary school arrive at junior secondary level having not attained the performance standards of the vertical curriculum in the examination in Grade Seven, the exit-point grade. As asserted by researchers like Khoza (2019) and Ndlovu and Khoza (2020), the performance curriculum emphasises the attainment of a hundred per cent pass mark. Focus on what learners should have achieved still points to the loopholes of the top-down dynamics-driven curriculum. It therefore calls for both teachers and learners to reflect on and critique their teaching and learning experiences in order to attain learning goals. That will take care of the individual dynamics of both teachers and learners.

Moreover, the teachers' accounts indicate that they use primary school materials in both the bridging and Form one classes. This implies that, while the pre-assessment in the bridging class is an attempt by the teachers to assist learners to master the intended content which they failed, using the primary school materials suggests that teachers have already made a judgement about the cognitive abilities of the learners. This is such that the teachers' perceptions and opinions of the learners' academic abilities make them believe that these learners still need to continue using the primary school materials even in Form One. Therefore, the need for reflection on experiences and practices cannot be overemphasised. I argue that this pre-assessment administered in the bridging class also discriminates between the learners, when some, especially those with severe learning challenges, are taken to the vocational stream while those that pass the test are allowed to proceed to Form One (academic stream). All learners are capable of achieving positive learning outcomes irrespective of their academic challenges (Dewi et al., 2019; Hildago et al., 2018). Besides, the fact that this test/assessment is prepared and administered by the teachers does not rule out any biases. This is because if these two groups of learners (those who preferred to learn in the vocational and academic streams) could sit for the same test, and/or a different one set by someone else, in a different setting and instruction, they could probably perform better. Therefore, there is a need for both teachers and learners to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences respectively in order to ascertain individual/pragmatic practices.

Analysis of the data further revealed that the bridging class actually had a one-year duration, an arrangement that further extended the duration of the junior secondary level at the school for the

deaf. In fact, T7 revealed that unlike in mainstream schools where the junior secondary level has a duration of three years, at the school for the deaf the junior secondary level is covered after a five-year cycle. *"Junior Certificate (junior secondary) level is done in five years instead of the three years taken by hearing learners in the mainstream schools. The first year is the bridging year where learners land after coming from the primary school, and the additional year is added in Form Three where two classes are prepared, with learners taking a year in each, that is Form 3A and Form 3B."* (T7). The administrator's account suggests that learners with deafness take longer to complete the three-year junior secondary level than the hearing learners. From Form Two, learners get to Form 3A for a year before proceeding to Form 3B where they eventually sit for the external examinations. When asked further on the reasons for such an extended time, T7 reported that this was as a result of the use of sign language to teach English since it has a different language structure. According to her, the sign language structure was not aligned to that of the Standard English and therefore posed communication challenges in writing.

Moreover, T7 cited the unique learning style of learners with deafness as one of the reasons for the slow pace in teaching/learning. *"When teaching reading comprehension to hearing learners, a teacher may ask any learner to read a passage aloud but this is not the case with deaf learners. If these learners (with deafness) do not understand a passage, they face down and do not lift up their heads to look at the teacher. The teacher should then use other alternatives to try and make them understand it but this is challenging."* (Others agreed). This account suggests that teachers are confronted by identity challenges during the teaching and learning of learners with deafness. While the efforts to assist the learners to improve their English Language proficiency are appreciated and lauded, this study contends that both the five-year duration of the junior secondary level at the school and the reading comprehension challenges promote bottom-up dynamics at the expense of the unique individual and natural/innate dynamics of the learners. Understanding the natural identity is key in addressing learners' unique learning needs, therefore through this action research, teachers were sensitised about the need to continually reflect on their practices and experiences in order to better understand more effective and efficient ways of helping the learners.

4. 3. 4 Learner-driven assessment

Findings from the data generation suggest that teachers at the school use learner-driven assessment to evaluate learning. This is a socially motivated assessment that allows learners to evaluate one

another's work. Worth noting is that this mode of assessment is used as a teaching strategy: it translates into peer teaching whereby the learners help one another to better understand the lesson. T5: *"I use peer assessment often. As a teacher you ask yourself a lot of questions when learners have not understood anything. Could the challenge be as a result of my signing or what? But surprisingly, you find that there is one or two who 'heard' and understood after posing a question. I then ask that student to help explain to the others. So peer assessment helps in that this particular learner who understood explains to the others using sign language until they understand. In the process, this becomes peer teaching…"* (T2, T3, T4 agree). T1: *"actually, learners love to see one of their own getting things right and the added advantage is that when they communicate with one another as natural signers, ideas are expressed more explicitly than I would express them (in SSL)"* (T2, T3, T5, and T6 agree).

The teachers' accounts suggest that learners with deafness enjoy classroom learning when one of them who has understood the lesson better is called upon to explain concepts to the rest of the learners. This makes things easier for the teachers who then find relief in the explanation of some concepts to learners. This shortens the amount of time that it would have taken the teacher to teach that lesson. When learners share knowledge and experiences, they engage in assessment as learning (Khoza, 2021a) which other researchers, like Dlamini (2022), refer to as informal assessment. The use of learner-driven assessment caters for the social needs of the learners and makes them enjoy the lesson (Makumane, 2018; Dlamini, 2018). As witnessed in the teachers' responses that learners who understand lessons more readily assist those who lag behind, this demonstrates that learners are capable teachers in their own right much as they are capable learners with much potential. In such cases where learners participate in assessment as learning, it motivates them to pay attention and also serves as evidence that they are following the lesson and can therefore make constructive contributions that shed some light in areas that were otherwise challenging. This was effectively demonstrated in T6's classroom lesson, as observed in the video recording, where she called upfront a learner who had understood the lesson to come up front and explain to his peers. During this time, the rest of the learners in the classroom seemed to be motivated by their colleague who had now assumed the teaching role. When learners are encouraged to learn from each other, they therefore also gain the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and make adjustments where possible that allow them to achieve deeper understanding (Mabuza, 2018; Lee, 2019). Learner/peer-driven assessment enables learners to

critically evaluate what they learn including each other's work (El-Senousy, 2020; Mabuza, 2018; Makumane et al., 2022).

By extension, learner-driven assessment also exposes the glaring loopholes of the teacher-driven top-down dynamics of the learning process. For instance, as seen in the teachers' responses, only a minority of the learners succeed in understanding the lesson during the teacher's explanation of concepts. While this happenstance has implications on the choice and effective use of pedagogies, it also points to the urgent need for the consideration of individualised/pragmatic modes of assessment that seek to ensure that all learners in the classroom benefit equally from the lesson. Thus the kind of assessment that supports the learning process and addresses the individual needs of both teachers and learners is crucial to the attainment of teaching and learning goals (Dlamini, 2022; Van Eeden et al., 2018; Makumane et al., 2022). Such will ensure that no learner is disadvantaged or marginalised during lesson delivery. Therefore, in order to successfully achieve this goal, strengths of assessment of learning (planned assessment) and assessment as learning (learner-driven assessment) should be combined to break the tension that exists between them. Subsequently, the assessment for learning, also known as formative assessment, will be realized after reflection and critiquing of experiences have taken place.

4. 3. 5 Facilitation as a teaching mode

Findings suggest that teachers at the school use facilitation as a teaching mode during English Language lessons at the school. In so doing, they place the learners at the centre of the learning process thereby allowing them to take active roles in the lesson and discussions. T1: *"...it is important to mention that learners who are deaf are practical learners, they learn better when they do… The challenge is the language limitation. So, as a teacher there are times when I have to explain things first before giving them the opportunity to do"* (T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 agree). The teachers' account suggests that learners with deafness by their very nature are practical learners who learn better when they act and when involved in hands-on experience during the lesson. Such an assertion alludes to the individual dynamics of the learners, and suggests that when learners are practically engaged in the lesson, the lesson becomes interesting for them and contributes to the achievement of learning goals. This was echoed by T4: *"my teaching is learner-centred as it motivates and empowers learners by giving them some control over learning processes"*.

However, as noted by T1, teachers cite language limitations as a major let down that affects classroom interactions and seems to suggest that class work or learning cannot be left entirely to the learners to take charge of despite their practical nature. While the language limitation is seen to be a deterrence in the classroom engagements, it is also interesting to note how T1 maneuvered in such cases where learners needed language assistance during the lesson. As noted in her submission, she first explains certain concepts and assist learners with the appropriate language required to understand the content. The teacher is compelled by the situation to become both an instructor and a facilitator (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Dlamini, 2022). Besides, as noted earlier in the discussion of the intended content, teachers cited language incompetencies particularly in their use of SL. Therefore, it is interesting to note that their citation of language limitations during classroom facilitations is seemingly more pointed to learners than to teachers (Ntinda et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding the language challenges, the teachers still believe in learner engagement in the lesson. T2: *"Interaction, engagement and active participation of all learners is highly promoted in my classroom. Learners are allowed an opportunity to ask question…, work in pairs… and give feedback from group works or paired work"* (T5 agrees). T6: *"my teaching approach is more learner-centred because if I am to feed them with information, they may struggle to cope for the entire lesson…"*

The teachers' accounts suggest that they are driven by individual/pragmatic reasoning (dynamics) in their use of facilitation as a mode of teaching. The teachers consider the learners' strengths and allow them to be actively engaged in the lesson **(**Makumane et al., 2022; Shoba, 2021; Pinar, 2012). Such pedagogies also inculcate values of personal responsibility in learners who take every classroom activity very seriously (Dlamini, 2022). Learners know when to engage in discussions (whether in pairs or in groups), to make presentations, ask questions and to give feedback during the lesson, as noted by T2. Group work and pair work discussions enable learners to collaborate, socially construct, and share knowledge/information (Mpungose, 2019; Sahib et al., 2021; Khoza, 2020a; 2020b; Ndlovu & Khoza, 2020), and they give learners some sense of control over the lesson as noted by T4. However, this control should not be confused with totally taking over from the teacher. The teacher monitors every action and activity within the classroom to ensure that learners do not digress from the lesson's goals. Thus learners enjoy lessons where they are allowed to freely interact among themselves and work out lesson-based solutions in the classroom.

The competence/horizontal curriculum encourages the teacher to assume the role of a facilitator rather than an instructor so that there is social interaction not only between the teacher and the learners but also among the learners. The teachers serve to guide the learners, thereby assisting in the construction of knowledge in order to achieve learning outcomes (Khoza, 2021a; Khoza, 2021b; Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). The observation that learners with deafness are practical learners who learn better when they do things touches on their natural identity (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). These learners always have to be engaged in hands-on activities that will keep them actively involved during the lesson. T3 concurs and posits that teaching and learning has to involve interaction between the teacher and the learner: *"...we interact with the learners. It's a two way process"*.

T2 demonstrated awareness of the diverse ways of engaging learners which even extend beyond the confines of the classroom. T2 argues that her teaching is mainly learning-centred. T2: *"My teaching is...learning-centred. Learning is now directed by the...learner's needs and preferred style of learning to determine how much the learner will be able to know, understand and do at the end of the lesson unlike previously where learning was more focused on how much the teacher delivers. Learning is now everywhere, and no longer confined in the classroom or the teacher's bowl of knowledge."* This suggests that T2 takes into account the natural identity of the learners and is particular about the learners' individual dynamics which cater for the learners' needs and learning style. Such an assertion is supported by (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2021; Ndlovu & Khoza, 2020; Coastley, 2015).

4. 3. 6 Learning outcomes

Findings of the study suggest that teachers' practices during the lesson are influenced by learners' goals which are outcomes. Teachers seek to ensure that by the end of the learning experience learners have acquired the relevant competencies and language skills open to them. The official English curriculum is skills-based and outlines competencies that learners should have acquired at the end of the learning process. However, since teachers, from time to time, make particular content adjustments, the level at which they help learners acquire the skills/competencies leaves a lot to be desired. This is particularly because, as they revealed in their accounts, teachers raised concerns about the complexity and difficulty of the language used in the intended content. Thus the implication is that the level of learner engagement is lower than the expected standard. Based

on this evidence, I argue that the learner engagement in the classroom is not commensurate with the grade level they are in. Consequently, learners eventually struggle to deal with the assessed standards. This inevitably results in their poor academic performance.

In their attempts to ensure that they assist learners to achieve their goals, which are the desired skills and competencies, teachers gave the following submissions:

T4: *"I emphasise on the acquisition of a skill so that it helps learners even in the near future."* T1: *"We focus on acquisition of a skill because the time we have is limited."* Also, T6: *"I emphasise on both content coverage and acquisition of skill because if I am administering a test, I will take a passage I have taught where they can skim and scan. Also look out for form filling and find out whether they can fill it…"* T5: *"I personally study the learners' strengths and channel learners on what they are able to do. For instance, in writing compositions, I discovered creative stories prove to be challenging and stuck to ensuring learners are competent in factual, discursive and argumentative writing…"*

The teachers' accounts, particularly T1 and T4, suggest that their focus on skills acquisition is influenced by time limitations and the need to equip learners for future competence in society, respectively. This is an indication that these teachers are driven by the individual and societal (bottom-up) dynamics. Teachers are aware that the little time available should be maximized to inculcate relevant skills that will also be useful in the long-term. However, while T6 also emphasizes skills acquisition, the teacher equally focuses on content coverage. This is proof that T6 is driven by individual and top-down dynamics. The latter demand that teachers become technicians who teach to cover the content, thereby ensuring that learners master it. Worth noting is that during the administration of a test on reading skills, T6 takes a reading passage already taught for learners to skim and scan. This suggests that learners are assessed on familiar/revised passages. However, this also implies that teachers do not promote critical learning skills (high-order skills such as application) in their learners including dealing with new passages. Instead, their assessment is limited to what they have seen and done. Similarly, as much as T5 appears to be taking care of the learners' strengths, which account for possible individual learner dynamics, T5 concedes that she channels the learners on what to do. This suggests that T5 is driven by the top-down dynamics. When she discovered that writing creative stories (narrative compositions) was challenging for the learners, she opted to focus on factual, discursive and argumentative

writing. The study, therefore, argues that there is a need for teachers to reflect and critique their practices and experiences in order to promote positive learning outcomes.

Mpungose (2018) defines learning outcomes as "statement(s) of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning" (p. 137). Khoza and Biyela (2019) contend that both teachers and learners ought to be aware of their learning goals so that they use them as their guiding frameworks for teaching and learning. This highlights the operations of the teaching and learning process. In this particular curriculum, teachers felt compelled to follow the competence-based curriculum which is driven by the achievement of the learning outcomes by learners in order to pass the external examinations (Mpungose & Khoza, 2020). Evidence from the lesson plans, reflective activities and actual teaching indicate that teachers give learners several opportunities to learn and master the content. This is such that if specific teaching objectives are not met in a particular lesson, the teachers either repeat the lesson in the following period(s) or engage them in a remedial lesson(s). Even though this practice eventually helps the learners to master content and learning outcomes, it takes its toll on the teachers who have to repeat the same content for protracted periods of time. This also puts pressure on teachers to complete the content before examinations (professional force/top-down dynamic). Besides, this in a way also disadvantages the learners in that they take time to master particular topics/concepts in class, something which has a bearing on their performance in the examinations.

4. 3. 7 Chapter summary

This chapter sought to discuss the descriptive "what" and operational "how" aspects of the dynamics of implementing mainstream English Language curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Findings of the study presented here demonstrate that teachers at the school are mainly influenced by the top-down and bottom-up dynamics during their implementation of the intended curriculum. However, there were some instances in which teachers seemed to be influenced by individual dynamics except that they were not aware of their existence. These individual dynamics play a crucial role in harmonizing the apparent tension that seems to exist between the two giants (dynamics), namely the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. The dynamics also allow teachers to reflect on their experiences so that they can better understand their individual identities. That being the case, the next chapter, Chapter Five, brings in the discussion of the individualised dynamics and the reason(s) for teachers to be driven by these dynamics.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATURALISING THE DYNAMICS OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

5. 1 Introduction

This chapter is a follow up on chapter four which focused on the exploration of the descriptive "what" and operational "how" questions of the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. It was discovered that there is a tension that exists between the top-down dynamics and bottom-up dynamics of curriculum implementation which could be relieved by shifting focus to the individual dynamics which consider the "who" questions. The present chapter, therefore, seeks to ascertain the justice of curriculum implementation by focusing, first and foremost, on the individual "who" questions, ultimately offering the reason(s) that allow teachers to be driven by these dynamics. By focusing on the latter, this chapter responds to the philosophical third research question: Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are?

In light of the practices of both professionals (top-down dynamics) and society (bottom-up dynamics) still not producing 100% learning success, the suggestion is that both parties are not aware of reality. Teachers do what they do as a result of the pressure exerted on them by the top-down dynamics as well as by the influence of their common perceptual knowledge (bottom-up factors). As revealed in the previous chapter, teachers' practices do not result in the realisation of learning goals. The current position suggests that teachers are teaching learners according to the opinions of society; teachers still fall into the trap of top-down dynamics (professionals). The latter suggests that teachers do not know who they are, and that they take everything they are given by professionals. This heightens the need for teachers to approach reality/objectivity by reflecting and utilising their original experience. The present study argues that, whatever is working, whether top-down or bottom-up dynamics, should produce 100% performance. Therefore, there is a need for teachers and learners to reflect on and take stock of their experiences/actions to understand their individual dynamics and subsequently what works for them (pragmatic) so that justice is done to the curriculum implementation process as discussed in the following theme.

**5. 2 THEME THREE: JUSTICE AS A FUNCTION OF INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS**

This theme has been derived from the individual/personal "who" questions which attempt to describe the teachers for who they are. The previous chapter described and discussed what teachers are given by professionals through the top-down dynamics (equality) and how they are operationalised through the bottom-up dynamics (equity). Justice in this study considers specific values that each of the teachers exhibit which are perceived to be part of their internal intelligence. These values are often overlooked and unrecognised yet they are an important part of the teachers' unconscious and subconscious mind and therefore influence their conscious decisions. Thus these individual teacher's values constitute the individual dynamics of curriculum implementation. Awareness of the individual teachers' values is realized after engaging in self-reflection as discussed in the following subsection.

5. 2. 1 Reflection

In order to reach a point at which both teachers and learners understand their identity or who they are, there is a need for them to reflect on their actions. According to Mlaba (2020), reflection involves 'zooming in' on some experience/action and asking pertinent questions such as what happened, when, and why it occurred. Mlaba (2020) further adds that, through reflection, teachers are able to gain informative insights into whether the actions/experiences helped them attain learning goals. Reflection also allows them to utilise the newly acquired knowledge to inform future practices. Reflection gives teachers the opportunity to take stock of their actions and to evaluate their effectiveness, making up for what is not working, so that subsequent actions/practices are well informed. Other researchers refer to this as reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-for-action (Mpungose, 2020b; 2021; Mabuza, 2018; Khoza, 2019).

The newly acquired knowledge derived from the teachers' experiences as observed by Mlaba (2020) becomes their individualised or personalised knowledge. That is to say, reflection gives birth to the realisation and acknowledgement of teachers' individual values or beliefs which inform their practices and ultimately drives the curriculum implementation process. In order to better understand these individual teachers' values which account for the individual dynamics, I had to interrogate the teachers' beliefs which inform their present actions. This followed Khoza's (2021b) examination of reflection as the conscious mind activity that interrogates subconscious experiences

to elicit or evoke new actions. Through this process, teachers are able to relate stories which were previously unknown (hidden in the subconscious mind) and yet important in driving curriculum implementation actions. During the interrogations, teachers gained the opportunity not only to reflect on, in and for their actions; they also critiqued their own actions (Khoza, 2021a; Khoza. 2021b). As action research and pragmatism demand, there is always a need for teachers to improve their practices, and ascertain what works best in their respective domains (the classroom/lesson). In so doing, teachers strive to reach maximum effectiveness, thus addressing learning needs. I argue that the teachers' individual values (dynamics) motivate them to engage in particular actions thus increasing their level of joy or satisfaction. These dynamics permit teachers to deal with situations from their own perspectives and reasoning coming from the conscious mind. Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2021) refer to this as the realisation of the cognitive presence. Therefore, knowledge of these individual values is critical for effective practices and curriculum enactment.
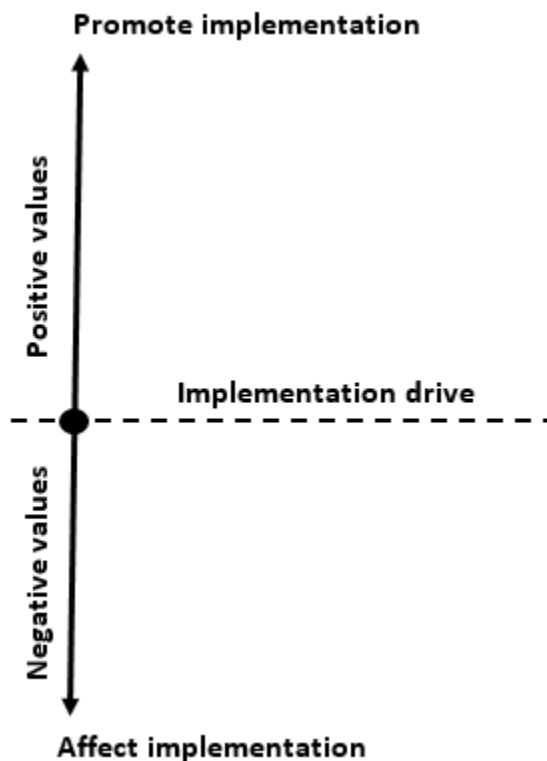
Figure 4: Implementation drive

When I interrogated the teachers through the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions, teachers revealed some critical specific individual values which influence their decision-making processes during the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom. These values drive or influence them to implement curriculum in particular ways. For purposes of this study, I have referred to the point of departure as the implementation drive – the dominant values that drive curriculum implementation (see Figure 4). These values are categorised into two: those leading to teachers' satisfaction and those leading to dissatisfaction. It is important to clarify from the outset that the satisfaction referred to here is the extent to which actions by individual teachers during the lesson allow them to gain more personal fulfilment and positivity, increasing their level of happiness. These values thus keep teachers motivated to teach, and subsequently to contribute to successful curriculum implementation. In this study, I call such values as the positive values (dynamics). Conversely, those values/dynamics that lead to dissatisfaction demotivate and discourage teachers' efforts during the teaching process. They are the kind of values that lead to teachers' unhappiness and thereby contributing to an unsuccessful curriculum implementation. I refer to these values as negative values (dynamics).

The individual values/dynamics of implementation (both positive and negative) could be used as a yardstick for the measurement of curriculum implementation effectiveness. Teachers' actions could be said to be either driven by the positive or negative values (dynamics). The more the curriculum decisions are influenced by the positive values, the closer the teachers are to objective reality. For this reason, the aim should be to deal with the negative values so that teachers could reach a point of self actualisation and navigate through uncertainties (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b).

5. 2. 1. 1 Positive values/dynamics of implementation

Data generated suggest that there are specific positive values that drive teachers during the curriculum implementation process in the classroom, leading to a successful curriculum implementation at the school for the deaf. These values include: patience, diligence, independence, consideration, acceptance, and objectivity.

5. 2. 1. 1. 1 Patience

Patience is one of the values that teachers exhibit in their dealings with learners with deafness in the classroom during teaching and learning of English. By its very nature, patience is a virtue that

one exhibits during times of difficulty or challenges and in persisting to do justice to the learning process with the aim of meeting learning needs. T6: *"if you don't have patience, there is nothing you can do as a teacher. You take learners step by step, and few sentences from a reading passage at a time"* (T3 and T5 agree). T5: *"I take them (learners) gradually through the years we are given because you cannot rush a child/learner who has had a developmental delay in language. So the language limitations together with time of arrival at the school have a bearing on the learning of the child with deafness…"*

The teachers' accounts suggest that if they were not exercising patience when teaching learners with deafness, they would have long since become discouraged. Patience is what sustains them in the midst of the glaring challenges they face. Researchers such as Mailool et al. (2020) count patience as one of the critical soft skills that influence positive curriculum implementation. This could be because the teachers firmly believe in these learners' potential and that if given enough time to learn and the necessary attention they deserve, their academic performance could improve.

5. 2. 1. 1. 2 Diligence

Findings of the study suggest that teachers exercise diligence in their teaching of learners with deafness as a way of doing justice to their learning goals. Teachers do this by giving individual learner attention in the classroom, a practice they referred to as differentiation and one informed by the different learners' capabilities. T5: *"…some learners do not respond at all so we do differentiation in class because they (learners) are different but we want all of them to benefit. In the prescribed objectives there is no such practice (differentiation), so I do it out of my own choice knowing that each learner has to benefit and not be left behind lest they become discouraged that they cannot cope in class…"*

The above account suggests that T5 is highly pragmatic and driven by the achievement of learning needs for each of the learners. Teacher satisfaction during the lesson is derived from seeing that no learner has been left out and neglected during the learning process. T5 is not restricted to adhering to the dictates of the prescribed objectives. Instead, T5 goes out of her way to utilise differentiated objectives to accommodate all learner differences. Mavidou and Kakana (2019) call this practice differentiated instruction, and they define it as an innovative teaching and learning approach that provides a context to adjust sufficiently several aspects of the curriculum in order to address effectively the needs of learners. This definition is highly pragmatic and gives special

attention and consideration to individual learning needs. It accepts that the curriculum design may not always favour the different learner characteristics hence the need to take these into consideration by making certain adjustments to the curriculum. For this reason, these researchers contend that any instruction cannot be similar for all learners, otherwise this would lead to the failure of most learners. In this regard, T5 shows herself to be a diligent teacher who, despite the weight of having to attend to each learner's specific needs, is determined still to give careful attention to each learner. Hoadley (2018) supports a differentiated pedagogy since it offers a much broader scope for evaluating/assessing individual learners' range of abilities and needs. Therefore, such practices are acts of diligence and contribute to the success of curriculum implementation.

5. 2. 1. 1. 3 Independence

Teachers at the school seem to enjoy a certain amount of independence or autonomy during the teaching/learning in the classroom. This is particularly in terms of the pedagogical issues taking place in the classroom. To this end, all the teachers agreed that "*each teacher is responsible for how best to teach learners with deafness. Otherwise there is no prescribed way of teaching them.*" Teachers in this case are no longer under the stern dictates of either the top-down or bottom-up dynamics which usually capture them. Instead, they are at liberty to explore their own natural capabilities and intelligences in driving the curriculum with the whole resolve of achieving learning needs. Each teacher is able to plan and execute their lesson plans in the way they see fit. T1: *"...what eventually goes on in the classroom rests with the individual teacher."* T3: *"As a teacher you know the strengths and weaknesses of each learner and that makes you to be better placed to know the suitable method to teach them."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that teachers are at liberty to make their individual cognitive presence felt during the lesson (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2021). Teachers are able to engage in self-direction by exercising independence of thought and action (Schwartz, 2016). This is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their individual skills and competencies. Such also enables the teachers the liberty to use teaching methods/strategies they deem appropriate to enhance the learning outcomes. However, while teachers doubtless spend most of their time with learners in the classroom, whether they could be confidently said to fully know learners' strengths and weaknesses, as highlighted by T3, remains debatable. This is especially because, so long as personal needs (and educational goals) are not met, such teachers' claims leave a lot to be desired.

5. 2. 1. 1. 4 Consideration

Findings of the study suggest that teachers' awareness of the learners they teach is an important value that helps them not only to interact with learners during the lessons but also to work towards meeting their learning goals. What would otherwise be difficult for other professionals to understand about learners with deafness, teachers at the school easily understand because of their daily interactions and experiences with the learners. T2: *"For me, it's my learners first then content. I prefer to move with my learners towards the intended goal with strict consideration of their needs rather than rushing to cover the content while ignoring the needs of the learners."* T5: *"as teachers, we are familiar with the learning and writing of the learners. If we had our way, we would also be the ones tasked with the assessment of their external examinations because even though they (learners) use different sentence structures, we can at least follow what they were trying to say in their writing"* (Other teachers agree).

The teachers' accounts indicate that these teachers are very considerate and aim towards ensuring that they prioritise their learners' learning needs ahead of anything else including the content coverage. Therefore T2 reveals that rather than rushing to cover the content, she would rather take her time because she derives satisfaction from seeing her learners' needs being met. T2 is thus driven by individual learning needs (pragmatic) and seems to refuse to be content-driven (top-down dynamics/forces). Also, the teachers' accounts reveal that they are much more familiar with the learning and writing of learners with deafness such that they believe that they should be considered in the assessment/marking of external examinations for learners with deafness. Presently, these examinations are assessed/marked by examiners consisting of teachers from the mainstream schools with little or no experience and exposure to the writing and learning of these learners. For this reason, teachers at the school believe that this situation disadvantages their learners such that they eventually do not perform well in these examinations.

Based on these submissions from the teachers, an important suggestion is offered that experts in the education of learners with deafness should be summoned to assess learners with deafness, thereby boosting their learning achievement. Professionals specialising in special education, particularly in the area of deafness, can motivate and help learners to reach their full potential. However, since the goal of teaching English Language using the mainstream curriculum is to produce competent second language users of English, and in order to avoid cases of bias and

favouritism in the assessment and moderation of the learners' external examinations, I argue that the marking could be done by any expert in the field, and not necessarily only by the teachers at the school. Therefore, all that the learners with deafness need is adequate support in every way possible for them to reach their full potential.

5. 2. 1. 1. 7 Objectivity/acceptance

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers at the school are objective in their dealings with learners with deafness. They appreciate and embrace reality that is, what they can change and what they cannot change. T2: *"...it is important to work towards getting to a stage where education offered to these learners meets their needs. At the moment it does not meet their needs because everyone still assumes that we know their needs. Truth is we don't know them because we don't live with their disability."* T6: *"you cannot short change the learners. Instead, I accept them as they are."*

The teachers' accounts suggest that learners with deafness should be accepted for who they are instead of attempting to change them. The value of acceptance amplifies the importance of recognising and promoting individual natural strengths and abilities (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). Both teachers and learners should be encouraged to reflect on their experiences and practices, thus meeting individual needs. By extension, this points to the need of professionals who understand and know what it is to live with deafness. Such would enable teachers to use pragmatic methods to teach learners with deafness.

5. 2. 2. 2 Negative values/dynamics of implementation

These are individual teacher values that often lead to their dissatisfaction and unhappiness during the curriculum implementation. As such, I contend that these dynamics could be behind the unsuccessful implementation of the curriculum. Teachers, in general, seek to do that which satisfies them on an everyday basis. Therefore, if there are obstacles that negatively impact on their efforts to derive pleasure from their normal practices, they elicit negative values which, if not promptly attended to, result in unsuccessful curriculum implementation. Such values include: frustration, attitude challenges, lack of confidence, and avoidance/defence.

5. 2. 2. 2. 1 Frustration

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers, especially those that are newly posted, at the school are left frustrated by the reality of having to teach learners with deafness at the school for the deaf. This is because despite being armed with qualifications accrediting them as fully fledged teachers, they soon discover that they are actually more oriented to teaching hearing learners than learners with deafness. In other words, they are not fully equipped with the arsenal and communication tools that would allow them to easily adapt and acclimatise to teaching these learners. According to T2: *"during the first three months of their posting to the school, new teachers feel lost, have no sign language, no knowledge of appropriate teaching methods and intervention strategies. As a result, you find that there is zero participation and engagement in the classroom. In such cases, you are just thrown into the deep end and do what you think you can do."* T1: *"None of us have been trained in Education for the Deaf. We all received training to be teachers in mainstream schools. We got here and found that all the college training we were armed with doesn't fully apply here. Sadly, we all learn sign language here at the school. Depending on how fast one is at learning it may take three weeks to a month to learn basic sign language."*

The teachers' accounts indicate that there is a misalignment of training and qualifications in the work-place. This is such that the teachers who are posted to teach at the school are not trained in the education of learners with deafness. Instead, they are trained to teach in the mainstream schools. Carothers et al. (2019) argue that such anomalies are often caused by acute shortages of suitably qualified teachers, which eventually leads to the recruitment of unqualified teachers who are tasked with teaching disadvantaged learners. Ultimately, these teachers are frustrated, feel lost and without the necessary communication tool which is the sign language. Inevitably, this results in their dissatisfaction and unhappiness in their working environment, thus contributing to ineffectiveness and unsuccessful curriculum implementation. Suitably qualified teachers armed with appropriate and relevant qualifications in the education of learners with deafness should be posted to teach at the school for the deaf.

5. 2. 2. 2. 2 Attitude challenges

Findings of the study also suggest that there are attitudinal challenges shown by some teachers at the school which affect the curriculum implementation process. A teacher with a negative attitude simply expresses this unhappiness at the school, and therefore falls short of the capacity to motivate

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the teaching and learning process. T1: *"Another determining factor as to how fast one can learn sign language is attitude, both to sign language and towards people who are deaf. One with negative attitude may work here for 5-10 years and still be unable to communicate in sign language. Unfortunately and very sadly, the teacher with the negative attitude in sign language may also take that attitude to class. Expectedly, no meaningful teaching or learning will go on because sign language is the main medium of communication with someone who is deaf."*

The teacher's account suggests that a teacher with attitude problems is a less productive teacher. This affirms the truism that "you can take a horse to the water but you can't make it drink." A teacher should not be compelled to teach at the school if not enthusiastic to do so or if inappropriately qualified. As alluded to by T1, a teacher with an attitude problem may work at the school for 5 -10 years and still be unable to communicate in sign language. Such an occurrence could be said to be an expression of discontentment over being posted to teach at the school when in fact trained to teach in the mainstream schools. Unfortunately, this has implications for classroom practices and learning outcomes. It could arguably be one of the reasons that account for the low academic achievement of learners with deafness at the school. Thus a poor attitude, as a negative value, could result in unsuccessful curriculum implementation. This finding was corroborated by Keirungi (2021) in his study in two special schools for the deaf in Uganda.

According to Zongozzi (2020), teachers' attitude is a very important factor to be taken into consideration, especially with the rapid increase in numbers of learners with disabilities, some of whom are learners with deafness. For this reason, Barton-Arwood et al. (2016) recommend that teachers be trained through training programmes and empowered to extend their experiences and improve attitudes about teaching these learners. However, these researchers also concede that changing teachers' attitudes from negative to positive is no child's play. Teachers who exhibit negative attitudes are in fact demonstrating resistance, on the one hand, to the pressure exerted on them by the professionals who advocate for the top-down dynamics to teach at the school. On the other hand, these teachers are resisting working together with other teachers who have adapted to the demand to teach learners with deafness in the form of bottom-up dynamics. For this reason, these teachers need to be allowed to utilise their individual dynamics.

5. 2. 2. 2. 3 Lack of confidence

One teacher revealed that teachers at the school were not confident about whether some changes introduced into the teaching and learning of learners with deafness would work for them. Participant T6 wondered whether online learning would work for them, especially having heard that it would soon be introduced at the school. T6: *"...we don't use online learning. Yes we have heard that it is about to be introduced but we don't know if it will work for us…"*

This teacher's account seems to suggest that teachers had become used to the physical learning platforms such that as much as they have heard about digital/online learning platforms, they doubted whether their introduction at the school would actually work for them. This is a sign of a teacher(s) who lacks confidence and therefore seems to indicate that she has been captured by the top-down dynamics such that any new innovation that is introduced is met with some resistance. According to Maslow (1970), teachers who lack confidence usually prefer to stick to safer paths instead of trying new things; and in the process fall short of self-actualising. Maslow (1970) argues that teachers should be flexible and be ready to explore new paths and ideas, including identifying their defences and being ready to give them up. Chimbunde (2021) contends that lack of confidence in most teachers is caused by their lack of readiness to migrate their teaching to online platforms. Readiness comes with capacitating teachers to be acquainted with such technological innovations. To try and assist all the teachers to dispel all fears and doubts they may have about the usefulness of online learning platforms at the school, this action research sensitised them about the value of such platforms particularly when effectively used for teaching and learning purposes, and most importantly to embrace change. Mpungose (2021) reminds that most teachers do not perform to the expected level technologically, and in particular to online learning because of insufficient training. For this reason, Chimbunde (2021) urges teachers to be fully committed to the cause of e-learning (online) spaces, adapting to this use. Chimbunde (2021) adds that even teacher training programmes need to be redesigned to align with the teaching/learning innovations imposed by COVID-19. Therefore, teachers should welcome any positive change so long as it stands to improve and help to achieve the learning goals.

5. 2. 2. 2. 4 Avoidance/Defence

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers at the school tended to show elements of being defensive in certain aspects of the interviews, and tried to avoid opening up to certain issues

pertaining to their classroom practices. Part of the explanation for this is the unpalatable experiences and criticism from external forces that these teachers are often subjected to. Pak et al. (2020) refer to such cases as "nondiscussables" that is, issues that people tend to avoid discussing. Such issues are also commonly known as "privy information". Pak et al. (2020) observe that nondiscussables are a common feature during the curriculum implementation process, and that those that are pronounced have to do with "deficit-oriented beliefs about students" (p. 3) such as those with disabilities. According to Howard (2019) it is part of human nature to shy away from talks that make us uncomfortable, such as gaps in equity and implicit bias, among other issues. Nevertheless, this researcher concedes that avoiding such conversations only worsens situations that could otherwise have been addressed amicably.

I argue that such cases are evidence of teachers who have been captured by the bottom-up dynamics and have come to believe that their everyday practices are acceptable. Thus culture influences the teachers' values, beliefs, and behaviours on which they operate on a daily basis (Mayfield, 2020). Teachers believe that external forces have no right to criticise them nor to impose anything on them. Thus the situation leads to the tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Mayfield (2020) therefore advises that teachers should embrace the fact that "you can learn something from everyone you meet, from anyone with whom you interact, and from daily experience" (p. 33). Through this action research, teachers were encouraged to open up to new possibilities that were brought by engaging in self-reflection and self-evaluation. By so doing, they would not only be critiquing their own actions and experiences, but they would also be learning from them with the aim of improving their practices. As much as teaching and learning are taking place at the school, which translates to curriculum implementation, there is still a need for more radical values that will enhance positive learning outcomes. This then calls for teachers to re-reflect and re-critique their actions and experiences.

5. 3 THEME FOUR: NATURE AS A FUNCTION OF INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS

5. 3. 1 Re-reflection

During the second phase of the action research, teachers were afforded the opportunity to re-reflect on why the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English Language curriculum were the way they are. In Chapter 4, teachers' practices were seen to be driven mainly by the two giants, namely,

the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Only in a few instances were some teachers seen to be driven by the individual (pragmatic) dynamics, owing to a lack of self-reflection. During the one-on-one interviews and focus-group discussions, teachers were able to give reasons which informed their practices, subsequently helping to ascertain the sources of their respective individual values.

Quality education at the school for the deaf seems to be defined predominantly on the basis of what teachers have become used to (bottom-up dynamics). When teachers re-reflect and re-critique their practices, they increase the chances of understanding objective reality. In so doing, they become aware of who they really are. According to Khoza (2021a; 2021b) when professional identity (top-down dynamics), societal identity (bottom-up dynamics), and personal identity (individual dynamics) fail to produce the desired learning outcomes, the natural identity ought to be considered. According to Khoza (2021a; 2021b), awareness of this identity can enable teachers to adapt to any unforeseen situation/circumstance by allowing and working with natural actions. Teachers reach a point at which they are naturally driven by their internal intelligence. Thus when natural actions are at play, they are driven by innate dynamics. Through re-reflection and re-critiquing, teachers were able to realise the need and/or value of the following: specialized training and competences, technological use as a mode of teaching, teaching and learning support, improvisation, teacher flexibility, and language exposure.

5. 3. 1. 1 Specialised training and competences

Findings of the study suggest that teaching learners with deafness is highly specialized and requires expert knowledge and competences from teachers, a field of study which most teachers are lacking in. According to T1: *"Teaching learners with deafness has its own kind of 'science'…There are so many things that you need to put in place because they are visually-oriented…"* (Other teachers agreed). Teachers must be trained on how best they can teach these learners and understand the nature of their disability. Evidence drawn from the teachers' responses shows that, at the time of their posting to the school, teachers are not relevantly trained to teach learners with deafness. For instance, as discussed in the negative values, *"during the first three months of posting, teachers feel lost with no sign language, no knowledge of the appropriate method and intervention strategies to use. We are thrown in the deep end and we need to find our way out."* (T2). T3: *"We do not know sign language ourselves because it is not our natural language.*"

The teachers' accounts suggest that there is a misalignment of qualifications with the demand to teach learners with deafness. These teachers are trained to teach in mainstream schools not special schools such as the school for the deaf. This situation confirms what Ntinda et al. (2019) calls lack of professional competences to teach learners with deafness. These learners, like all other learners, have common pedagogical needs specific to them (Kimani, 2016; Keirungi, 2021). Learners therefore need to be taught using approaches that are suitable for them. The use of sign language as the primary mode of instruction is still part of the pedagogic considerations for the English Language teacher of these learners (Kimani, 2016). If, then, teachers are not fully conversant with Sign Language which is the medium of instruction, this has implications for classroom engagements, delivery of content, and arguably the learning outcomes. Therefore, specific knowledge by the teacher of the unique individual differences is still needed so that such differences are effectively acknowledged and addressed (Norwich & Lewis, 2005).

Teachers' limitations in the sign language competencies and expert training also suggests that they are bound to encounter challenges in their interpretation of the curriculum for learners with deafness. According to Ntinda et al. (2019), adapting and interpreting mainstream curriculum to teach these learners requires highly competent teachers, since it has implications for their academic achievement. The chances of witnessing curriculum misinterpretations are very high in cases where teachers lack in the professional competencies and skills. That being the case, there is a possibility of teaching incorrect content to the learners as result of the probable misinterpretations. Teachers cannot entirely bank on their habitual practices in the classroom/school (bottom-up dynamics). Accordingly, this points to the need for sign language interpreters and experts in the field of deaf education to assist with curriculum interpretations.

 Also, through re-reflection, the teachers seemed to indicate that they need to be capacitated on how best to use social media sites (SMSs) to promote teaching and learning of learners with deafness. *"…The question then is how are you going to bring all the things they (learners) need to visualise on WhatsApp? It is very difficult! You will hardly manage to send and discuss, for instance, an argumentative essay on WhatsApp because they will still have a question of what an argument and essay are, you see… and it is difficult to ascertain who is for or against in debates. Therefore, you need to be with them to explain and show them how you see different arguments…It takes a very long time."*

The teacher's account suggests that most teachers are driven by the top-down dynamics which promote formal learning over informal learning (bottom-up dynamics). It is clear that these teachers believe that learners with deafness learn and understand concepts better when they are explained within physical spaces. The reality is that these learners have their own preferences for learning which have to be respected and promoted. This is in line with the findings of Chimbunde (2021) who reported that in some cases, students are ahead of their teachers as far as technical knowledge of technological devices is concerned, a situation that can strain student-teacher relationships. The researcher adds that when such happens, teachers become stressed and uncomfortable. This study, therefore argues that some teachers ultimately exercise control over their learners by compelling them to follow the formal/prescribed way of teaching and learning. Therefore, adequate training in all forms of learning (formal, informal and non-formal) should be given to both teachers and learners, so that there will be a balance and consideration of all learning needs (Mpungose, 2021; Chimbunde, 2021; Dube, 2020). Thus social justice, emancipation and consideration of learners will prevail in order to improve the academic achievement of learners with deafness (Dube, 2020).

5. 3. 1. 2 Technological use as a mode of teaching

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers at the school are aware of the benefits of using technological tools to teach learners with deafness. Some teachers even portrayed some sense of positivity about technology. However, what seemed to emerge from the teachers' responses was the dire need for capacitation in order to improve their present practices with the view to achieving long-term learning outcomes. Regarding the use of technology to promote the teaching and learning process, T2 observes that *"technology to be honest with you, you will swear that it was made for people with disability. It was meant to improve their life. Everything is right before them and they can access it in whatever way possible but because we are a developing country, it's a bit of a challenge. So due to the economic reasons, we are forced to rely on face to face learning. From what I have observed in other developed countries using technology/online learning to teach these learners is that as the teacher teaches, the gadgets convert spoken language to Sign Language. The machines do that on their own so communication is not a problem. You are assured that the learner gets the content. At the end of the day the learner has to learn independently and not rely on the teacher."*

T5: *"I think we can obviously manipulate the available technology and use it at different levels of our teaching. However, the level of explaining concepts using technology could be difficult because you need quick feedbacks which require that you are physically there. Nonetheless, when, say, we are done explaining/teaching a particular concept, we can then assess to ascertain whether there is some understanding and give feedback after writing. Otherwise, in this day and age technology has to be utilised in learning of which it is something we need to be encouraged to use in teaching ...."*

The teachers thus see some positives in the use of technology to promote the teaching and learning of learners with deafness. Teachers are ready to explore and manipulate technology for the betterment of the learning process. T2 even sees technology as made to improve the lives of people with disabilities. However, the main draw back for developing countries like Eswatini is the lack of funds to purchase high quality gadgets, programmes, and software that would enhance the learning of learners with deafness (Dube, 2020; Keirungi, 2021). In this era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) many technological advancements have been put in place with easy access for all kinds of people irrespective of disability (Khoza, 2021a; Chimbunde, 2021; Mpungose, 2021). There are also technological programmes that have been specifically designed to accommodate people with deafness, facilitating their teaching and learning. These programmes would allow such people to participate in online learning, thereby ensuring that teachers eventually make use of blended learning. At the moment there is no blended learning taking place at the school because teachers either are not aware of it or they are not capacitated and acquainted with it. T1: *"I am not using blended learning because I am not acquainted with it. Otherwise, the way I use technology is that if I see that there is concept that is difficult to explain in SL, even if it is a story they (learners) read in reading comprehension but encounter challenges with the content which is difficult to explain, I go to You Tube to learn more about that particular story/concept. It also helps to also watch such videos with the learners..."*

Teachers have to be exposed to blended learning as one of the transformative measures to assist learners to meet their learning needs. This would widen the range of learning spaces instead of restricting learning to physical spaces which seem to favour teachers more than the learners. A study conducted by Keirungi (2021) in two special schools for the deaf in Uganda on the perceptions of teachers on the use of information communication technology (ICT) to teach

learners with deafness revealed that some teachers are reluctant to transform from their old practices. It also reported that some teachers were not interested in learning using ICT in teaching and learning since they believed that it was too time-consuming. Such perceptions, including seeing ICT as difficult to use in teaching (Keirungi, 2021), stifle the learning progress and academic achievement of learners with deafness. This suggests that some teachers are only comfortable with using face-to-face learning platforms, a sign of being captured by top-down dynamics. Technology has arguably come to improve everyone's lives, including the teaching and learning of learners with deafness. Therefore, it is high time that teachers maximize its use when teaching these learners.

5. 3. 1. 3 Teaching and learning support

Findings of the study suggest that both teachers and learners at the school require teaching and learning support from the relevant stakeholders. T3: "*another challenge we have is that Inspectors rarely visit us to see the reality of the situation we find ourselves in at the school.*" T1: *"In recent years, from 2019 to be exact, we have numerous cases of learners who have multiple disabilities. Most of them are Deaf and Dyslexic. Hence, we always have a challenge deciding where to start."*

It would therefore seem that teachers need regular support and visits from stakeholders such as inspectors. As noted by T3, inspectors rarely visit the school to see how the work is effected, leaving teachers to persevere on their own. In such situations where teachers are left to their own devices in the curriculum implementation they promote bottom-up dynamics more than the top-down dynamics. The disparity between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum could be remarkable thus increasing the tension between the two giants. By extension, T1's account that there are numerous cases of learners with multiple disabilities, with the majority being either deaf or dyslexic, implies that special attention must be given to each learner as per his/her learning needs. The revelation that this situation always gives teachers a challenge about where to start suggests that urgent attention and support needs to be given to them in order to properly monitor all learners and to ensure that no learner is neglected. Mapepa and Magano (2018) contend that putting in place support services for the teaching and learning of learners with deafness cannot be overemphasised. These services go a long way in addressing the learning barriers of learners with deafness. In their study aimed at identifying educator reflections on support services needed for them to address learning impediments for learners with deafness, Mapepa et al. (2018) reported

that there was deficiency of curriculum support in special schools and insufficient teaching and learning materials. Teachers and learners in these schools are often isolated and neglected, particularly on curriculum challenges. For this reason, teachers then have to work themselves out of every curriculum challenge they face. Such a situation has implications on the learning outcomes.

Findings of the study suggest that some teaching and learning support, particularly in instances involving certain difficult words used in sign language, comes from deaf adults. T1:

"...we have academic sign language, it's really rough with this. Teachers and students struggle equally. We rely on deaf adults to help us with the academic sign language. It happens, though that even the deaf adults have no sign language for some words. For example, students do not know sign language for noun, verb, adjective, adverb, conjunction. Teachers learn these from the deaf adults and then teach the students. In some cases, we make our own signs because neither the students nor the deaf adults have them…."

There are apparently deaf adults used as resource persons specifically in assisting with the mastery of academic sign language. Academic sign language is the sign language used for teaching and learning purposes. However, in her account, T1 conceded that even the deaf adults have no sign language for some words. As a result, teachers are compelled to create their own signs. Both the use of deaf adults and the creation of new signs are evidence of bottom-up dynamics at play. This is contrary to the tendency of utilising a prescribed medium of instruction usually spelt out in the policy documents including the syllabus (top-down dynamics). I argue that when teachers create their own signs, they use more of their individual dynamics in the form of their respective cognitive abilities which eventually drive the curriculum implementation process.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the finding that teachers at the school are forced by the circumstances they live under to adjust the curriculum content according to their context is evidence that both teachers and learners need curriculum support from policy makers. Accordingly, Mapepa and Magano (2018) assert that curriculum adaptation is an important support system that ensures that there is effective curriculum implementation. I propose that, in order to be effective and enhance the entire adjustment process, there should be collaboration between teachers and policy makers. This would then inform the curriculum design process for curricula used to teach learners with deafness. That being the case, it is critical for special education

inspectors to frequently visit the school to gain first-hand experience of the teaching and learning situation at the school for the deaf. Teachers decried the distant relationship they had with the inspectors from the Ministry of Education. When such relations occur, they inevitably create gaps between the top-down and the bottom-up dynamics. Ntinda et al. (2019) reported that teachers experience gaps in their professional competencies to teach the mainstream curriculum for which they needed further education. This suggests that there is a remarkable misalignment between the teachers' academic qualifications and skills that teachers posted to the school possess.

Learners with deafness equally need family support for them to learn effectively. While raising learners with disabilities in general, some of whom are those with deafness, is not an easy feat (Thwala et al. 2015), family members remain central to their support system and educational attainment. According to these researchers, some of the challenges that parents face are emotional stress, difficulty accepting their children's disability, and financial challenges. This was echoed by T7 who revealed that: *"Parents are used to relying on government for everything their children need. They even say that these children (learners with deafness) belong to the Deputy Prime Minister's (DPM) office who have been taking care of them from primary school."* This revelation suggests that most parents have shifted their responsibility of taking care of and raising their children with deafness to the Deputy Prime Minister's office which is responsible for taking care of orphaned and vulnerable children including those with disabilities. Thwala et al's. (2015) study also highlighted the problem that confronted parents, particularly on educational decision-making for their children. Parents were also not trained on how to work with teachers. There is thus a need for collaboration between parents and teachers on how best the learners with deafness can be assisted. Government should offer training programmes to parents, and also help learners with disabilities financially (Thwala et al. 2015). As noted by T1, some of the learners with deafness come from indigent backgrounds. As a result, they experience challenges in securing cellphones, let alone data bundles to help them promote informal learning. This could be one of the reasons that compel teachers to adhere to the dictates of top-down dynamics.

5. 3. 1. 4 Improvisation

Findings of the study suggest that teachers at the school are able to utilise a plan B strategy of improvising resources/materials in cases where planned resources are falling short during the lesson. Teachers are thus able to decide on what works best for them under the prevailing

circumstances/challenges. T1: *"...sometimes you find that the content is very difficult for our learners. So, we are sometimes compelled to improvise."*

This teacher is not captured by the top-down dynamics which demand internal intelligence, enabling teachers to seek materials that promote learning. This is evidence of individual dynamics at play and driving the curriculum implementation, save that the teacher was not aware of their existence. Dlamini (2022) and Allen (2016) refer to such improvisations as resourcefulness on the part of the teacher, a value that enables teachers to self-actualise. According to Dlamini (2022), a resourceful teacher has the ability to navigate any classroom challenge that impacts negatively on the learning process. While Dlamini (2022) asserts that resourceful teachers are driven by their personal voices, Allen (2016) contends that, through their resourcefulness, teachers are able to create their identities which assist them better to lead the learning session as facilitators. In so doing, non-formal learning is seen to be driving the curriculum implementation.

Teachers who improvise or prove to be resourceful are typical examples of educators who are self-actualised. They can think out of the box and they refuse to be captured by the top-down dynamics. Teachers are aware of what it takes for learners to meet their learning needs. Thus teachers are driven by individual dynamics which enable them to reflect in, on, and for learning.

5. 3. 1. 5 Teacher flexibility

Findings of the study suggest that teachers are aware of the various teacher roles they need to adopt during the lesson. A teacher who seeks to meet learning goals is one who engages in multiple roles in the classroom. For instance, teachers agreed that *"we take so many roles in the classroom because we have to involve the learners so that they meet us halfway and that they are actively involved. But then we cannot move away from the fact that your role as a teacher has to first begin from being an instructor before you can guide and involve them."* (All teachers agreed).

Teachers at the school appear flexible and adaptable as the need and occasion demands in the lesson. Other positions they take in the classroom during the lesson include that of facilitator, assessor, and researcher (Budden, 2016; Mabuza. 2018; Khoza, 2020a). Each of these positions is informed by the learning needs and this calls for a high level of understanding and adaptation (Khoza & Biyela, 2019). When such happens during the teaching and learning process, all learners stand to benefit holistically from the lesson since teachers are driven by the individual values and

beliefs. This results in a satisfying learning atmosphere that is capable of improving the learning outcomes. However, learners have to "meet us halfway" because teachers still insist on having a fair share of control in the classroom. This is evidence of teachers being influenced by the top-down dynamics.

5. 3. 1. 6 Language exposure

As noted in the previous chapter, teachers often cited the language deficiencies of learners with deafness as the main challenge in the learning of English Language as a second language (ESL).

"Most of the learning challenges in English of these learners are as a result of their language limitations and the fact that sign language has a different language structure from that of English." (T7, and all the others agreed). This finding was also confirmed by some scholars in the review of literature. Learning another language, let alone a foreign one like English, is a huge challenge for learners with deafness, owing to their weak first-language base/foundation which is the language acquired from birth by interaction with close family members (Csizér & Kontra, 2020; Ristiani, 2018). Marschark et al. (2014) observe that over 95% of children with deafness are born to hearing parents. They grow exposed to a spoken language which unfortunately they cannot hear or from which they can only perceive very little (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). They also cannot learn this language spontaneously (Mayberry, 2002). Further compounding the situation is that some family members cannot use sign language which is the main language accessible to learners with deafness. All these learners need is exposure to accessible language such as sign language in infancy and early childhood (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). Mayberry (2002) contends that the lack of such exposure causes remarkable delays in the acquisition of syntax and morphology. A strong foundation in L1 is very important because it assists in the transfer of skills to a second language (L2) (Marschark et al., 2014). This is in line with Cummins' (1981) theory of interdependence between language proficiency in bilingual learners. His linguistic interdependence hypothesis best describes the relationship between the mastery of L1 and its subsequent contribution in enhancing the transfer of skill towards the proficiency of L2. He elaborates:

"To the extent that instruction in Lx (Sign Language) is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx (Sign Language), transfer of this proficiency to Ly (English Language) will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (English Language) (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Lv (any other additional language)" (Cummins, 1981, p. 29).

This hypothesis suggests that proficiency in the first language is significant in the transfer of skills to the learning of a second and even a third language. In the case of learners with deafness, their mastery and proficiency in the sign language which is their L1, and constant use of it, can help them to transfer these skills to the learning of an L2 (such as the English Language) and L3 (any other additional language). However, Cummins admits that this can only take place if the conditions at home, school, and in society at large are favourable enough to motivate learners to learn another language like English. Some learners with deafness are born to hearing parents who use spoken language instead of sign language. However, some learners have parents with deafness who naturally use sign language as their main mode of communication in the family. These two language backgrounds are certainly different; and can either lead to sign language (L1) proficiency or lack of proficiency resulting from late acquisition (Marschark & Spencer, 2010). Those who interact using Sign Language at home easily transfer their L1 skills to their learning of English at school; while those born to hearing parents will have a very weak L1 foundation (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). As a result, their transfer of skills to the learning of English will be very poor. Similarly, at the school level, if the teachers of these learners are proficient in sign language, classroom interactions are easy and motivating, thus leading to an easy transfer of skills to the learning of English. Notably, schools for the deaf have become the main transmitters of sign language as well as Deaf culture (Marschark et al., 2014). However, if the English Language teachers of learners with deafness and the learners themselves are not proficient in sign language, or one of them is not, classroom engagements become minimal and motivation levels necessary for learning English language become low.

Studies by Marschark and Spencer (2010) also indicate that there are remarkable effects of late L1 acquisition on the learning of L2. These authors assert that the effects of late L1 acquisition are greater than those for learning L2. According to the above researchers, the effects include difficulty in processing and comprehending some forms of language. Also, late L1 acquisition may adversely affect the children's capacity to learn and use other languages and may impact on their reading development (Marschark & Spencer, 2010). These findings are in line with those of Mayberry (2002), who noted that people with deafness who are not exposed to an accessible language, either signed or spoken, ultimately suffer two permanent handicaps: failure to hear sounds and inability to readily comprehend any language in any mode, signed, spoken, or written. The latter handicap, however, can be prevented or overcome (Mayberry, 2002). In the Eswatini context, learners with

deafness use an unstandardized Swazi Sign Language (SSL) as their L1, and learn English as an L2. This is because English is taught as a second language (ESL) in Eswatini schools using the mainstream curriculum.

Vygotsky (1978) discusses the concepts of language, thought, and cognitive development which are important in understanding a child's language development. Early exposure of a child to accessible language contributes to their cognitive development; correspondingly, the absence and lack of such exposure may affect the child's cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). In light of Vygotsky's notions/concepts, under normal circumstances, age appropriate development of a sign language is vital in advancing language interactions between children with deafness and their families, as well as between the children with deafness and their peers and teachers at school (Kimani, 2016). These family and school engagements or interactions in sign language and other accessible languages also contribute to the learners' cognitive development, and subsequently facilitate and motivate their learning of English. Marschark et al. (2010) further clarify that there is a relationship between a child's language proficiency and the age at which the child begins learning the language. This is called the critical period of language, a stage during language development when learning is at its peak (Marschark et al., 2010). Inevitably, children with deafness fall short in language development when compared with hearing children (Dewi et al., 2019). By the time they (children with deafness) start attending school, they have not yet fully acquired Sign Language which is their common mode of communication.

The main contribution of the study to the body of knowledge is the emergence of the innate dynamics realised after re-reflecting and re-critiquing teachers' experiences and current practices. When top-down, bottom-up, and individual dynamics fail, innate dynamics (inborn skills, competences and natural instincts remain). These allow every teacher and learner to start operating based on their natural identity (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). Thus this study was able to produce the innate dynamics model of implementation illustrated in Figure 5.

As with individual identities, dynamics of curriculum implementation are driven by assessment (Makumane et al., 2022; Khoza, 2021a). Planned assessment mediates between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Also, learner-driven/peer assessment or assessment as learning mediates between bottom-up and individual dynamics. Progressive/formative assessment or assessment for learning mediates between top-down and individual dynamics. These findings suggest that some

teachers were careful to utilise progressive assessment to meet learning needs. In the context of this study, progressive assessment is one that a teacher uses to carefully evaluate the entire learning process from the beginning of the lesson until the end in order to see to it that all learners benefit from the lesson. T6: *"From time to time I assess my learners during the lesson to ensure that no one is left behind."* T5: *"mostly I evaluate if they can independently read and understand a question. I look at their ability to execute the work bearing in mind all the steps towards a successful criteria discussed in class".* Also, T4 revealed that *"I assess the achievement of learning objectives or outcomes by using formative assessment."*
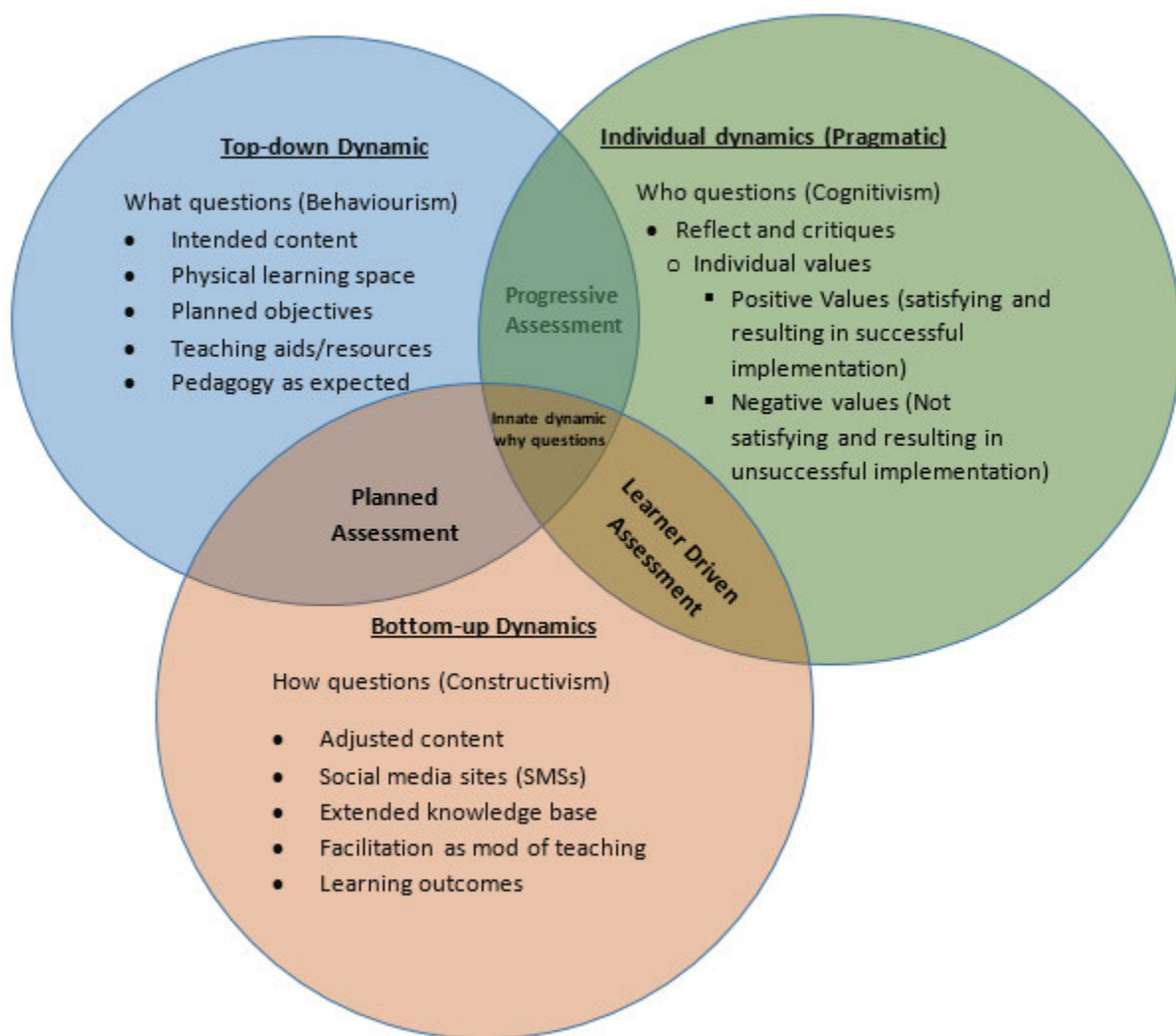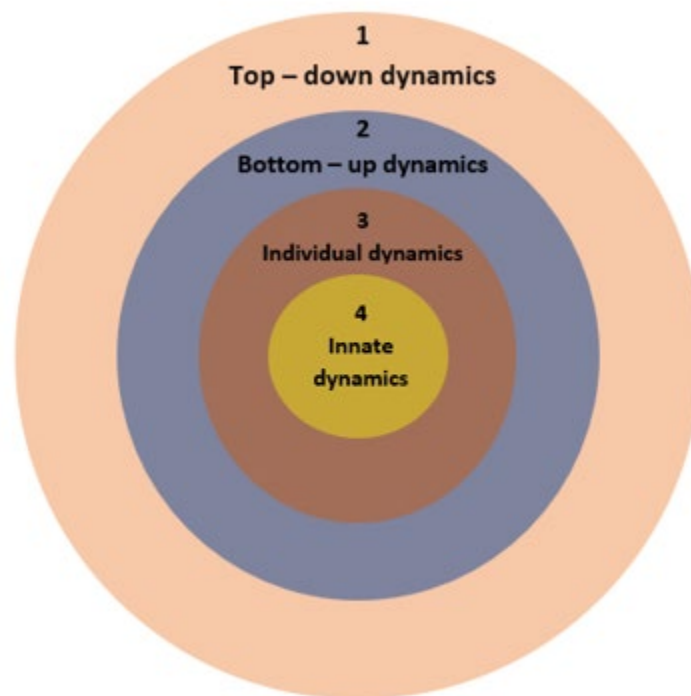
Figure 5: Dynamics of implementation model

These teachers are obviously driven by the individual dynamics which help them to take care of the learning needs of all learners with deafness. As T5 and T6 noted, all learners should be assisted eventually to be in a better position to apply what they have learnt to their everyday lives, such as the ability to independently read and understand a question. These teachers promote life-long learning, a competence that is useful in society. Such efforts by the teachers are evidence that these teachers are progressive thinkers (Hoadley, 2018). Progressive assessment is also called formative assessment or assessment for learning: this assists the teacher to monitor the learners' progress and understanding (Budden, 2017; Mabuza, 2018; Khoza & Biyela, 2019). It also helps to know the identities of the teachers and learners involved in the teaching and learning process (Khoza 2020a). Teaching and learning is thus accomplished according to the strengths of everyone involved; hence it is possible for the teachers to keep track of the learning progress of all learners. That being the case, it is easier for the teacher to notice when some learners are experiencing learning challenges or difficulties in understanding the lesson.

Figure 6: Progression of dynamics

The dynamics of curriculum implementation (top-down, bottom-up, individual/pragmatic, and innate) follow a marked progression (Figure 6) in four stages. By their very nature, top-down

dynamics at policy level is the first stage at which most teachers operate, because of the way they have been trained and programmed (Biesta, 2015; Makumane & Khoza, 2020). It could be said to be a stage of indoctrination. This is, however, not to suggest that by occupying the first-stage position top-down dynamics are the main target during the teaching and learning process. Bottom-up dynamics seem to be occupying the second stage because teachers not only receive the prescribed curriculum from the policy/national level, but they are the main implementers in the classroom. Evidence drawn from the research findings suggests that the actual practices/actions witnessed during the teaching and learning do not strictly adhere to the prescriptions of the top-down dynamics (forces). Part of the reason is that at societal/school level there are marked traditions/habits which teachers have developed and become used to; teachers are thus influenced by their respective contexts. As a result, teachers feel safe when they conform to what they have agreed upon collectively.

Individual dynamics seem to be occupying the third stage. This is a stage that is close to reality in which teachers begin to reflect and critique their practices as informed by their experiences. At this stage teachers begin to be driven by their individual values and beliefs. The fourth stage focuses on the innate dynamics. This is a stage that demonstrates the true identity or nature of an individual thereby depicting objective reality. It could be said to be the stage of self-discovery in which teachers become aware of their natural drive to act according to the Creator's wiring. This is a stage that enables teachers to be joyful and at peace with their actions and the outcomes they bring (Khoza, 2021a; Khoza & Mpungose, 2020).

5. 3. 2 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the personal "who" and philosophical "why" questions in order to discover the individual values (identities) of the teachers, and the reasons that inform the present state of the dynamics at the school for the deaf, respectively. Findings of the study suggest that teachers at the school are driven by both positive and negative values. The former positively impacts on the mainstream curriculum implementation, whereas the latter negatively impacts on the implementation process. It was discovered that when top-down, bottom-up, and individual dynamics fail, teachers need to re-reflect and re-critique their practices and experiences in order to come closer to objective reality. After re-reflection and re-critiquing, teachers begin to be driven by their innate dynamics. This leads to the emergence of the innate dynamics model of curriculum

implementation which allows teachers to self-actualise and to navigate through uncertainties. The next chapter presents the summary of findings.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PROPOSITIONS AND CONCLUSION

6. 1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. The pragmatic paradigm using a qualitative approach guided this study. An action research design was employed where documents review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured and focus-group discussions were used to generate data. Data were analysed using thematic analysis and presented in Chapter Four which responded to the descriptive "what" and operational "how" questions. Chapter Five presented data responding to the philosophical "why" question.

The study was informed by the Natural Identity Framework propounded by Khoza (2021a; 2021b) and discussed in Chapter Two. The same chapter, Chapter Two of this study, also presented pertinent literature that sought to interrogate and conceptualise the dynamics of implementing a curriculum. The literature revealed two giant dynamics which drive curriculum implementation namely: top-down (professional) and bottom-up (societal) dynamics. These top-down dynamics speak to the performance-based/vertical curriculum; whereas the bottom-up dynamics speak to the competence-based/horizontal curriculum. What emerged from the review of literature is that tension exists between these two dynamics. Such requires a more neutral set of dynamics that would polarize the tension. The missing dynamics are personal and specifically referred to as individual dynamics in this study. I argue that individual dynamics must be considered, being those that drive curriculum implementation. This chapter presents the summary of the findings, propositions, implications of the study, recommendations, and conclusion.

6. 2 Addressing the title: Dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini

To meet the requirements of the study, the study was guided by the three research questions, namely:

1. What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini? (descriptive question)

2. How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (operational question)

3. Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf the way they are? (philosophical question)

To respond to these questions, I employed the pragmatic paradigm and utilized five data generation methods, namely: document review, reflective activity, video observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions. The methodological path taken for the purposes of this study is outlined and discussed in Chapter Three. During the review of literature, I discovered that curriculum implementation was driven and dominated by top-down and bottom-up dynamics. As a result, there was a remarkable tension between the two dynamics, leaving a gap that needed to be filled through the discovery of individual dynamics which help to pacify the tension.

6. 2. 1 What are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (descriptive question)

This research question was answered in Chapter Four by analysing and presenting data from the document review as well as from the reflective activities. This constituted the planning stage in the action research. The descriptive "what" question was addressed under theme one: equality as a function of top-down dynamics. These dynamics are the professional forces that are directed by the policy makers at the macro level (national) to the teachers at the micro level (classroom) where the curriculum implementation takes place. Teachers are expected to adhere to and conform to the policy expectations with the assumption that they all have similar and equal tools to help them cope with the demands of the curriculum.

Data from the reviewed documents, particularly the lesson plans, helped to give a written description of the dynamics used by the teachers to implement the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf. It was discovered that the curriculum was driven by top-down (professional) and bottom-up (societal/school) dynamics. Some teachers used the intended/planned content and objectives while some adjusted, simplified, and supplemented the content to meet learning needs. Findings revealed that the teachers used sign language as a medium of instruction, and they taught mainly within physical learning spaces/classrooms. Also, as much as teachers tried to ensure that the learners acquired sufficient competence in the language skills taught, they ensured that learners master the content that would enable them to sit for the external

examinations in Form Three which are part of the planned/summative assessment. Categories of themes representing curriculum prescriptions explored in the data analysis include: intended content for learners with deafness, physical learning spaces, planned teaching objectives, teaching aids/resources, planned assessment of learning, and pedagogy as expected.

6. 2. 2 How do the dynamics of the mainstream English curriculum influence its implementation at the school for the deaf in Eswatini? (operational question)

This question was addressed in Chapter Four using data generated from video observations, reflective activities and semi-structured interviews. The second theme, equity as a function of bottom-up dynamics, was derived from the operational "how" questions which were intended to ascertain how teachers at the school actualise or put into action the top-down dynamics. Much as teachers are said to premise their classroom operations on similar policy prescriptions, contextual factors influence them to behave in particular ways during the curriculum implementation (Oakley, 2018). The reality is that teachers, as actual curriculum implementers, have the power and autonomy to implement the curriculum in accordance with their respective interpretations and beliefs. This implies that there is a tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Categories to be discussed under this theme include: adjustment of content according to context, social media sites for learning, extended knowledge base, learner-driven assessment, facilitation as a teaching mode, and learning outcomes.

Data generated indicated that teachers were driven by both top-down and bottom-up dynamics. The bottom-up dynamics, on the one hand, manifest themselves in many ways such as through the medium of instruction, sign language. Although totally excluded from the syllabus including the prescribed textbooks, sign language is in fact created or contextualised at the school to create an understanding and communication for academic purposes. This results to the formulation of an academic sign language which is then used in class during teaching and learning. Also, the curriculum adjustments of the content made by the teachers are remarkable in the enactment process of the curriculum. Teachers revealed that the planned/intended curriculum content cannot be used in its present form (without adjustments) because it is too broad for the learners and uses difficult language. Moreover, some aspects of the content are not relatable to the learners, meaning that they are not within their context of knowledge. Therefore, this study argues that the teachers' efforts to adjust the intended content are in fact pragmatic moves that aim to recognise what works

best for the learners in attempting to address their unique individual needs. Moreover, findings reveal that there is a notable use of learner-driven assessment which also translates to peer teaching as well as evidence of facilitation as a mode of teaching. This is particularly because, learners with deafness are practical learners who are perform better when they are engaged in practical activities.

On the other hand, top-down dynamics at the operational level manifest themselves in the minimal and rigid use of social media site(s) (SMSs) especially WhatsApp which was used during the COVID-19 lockdown. WhatsApp was mainly content-driven; post lock down, teachers ceased to use these sites and relied heavily on the use of physical learning spaces (face to face). This is evidence of teachers who are captured by the top-down dynamics. Online learning was not used at all. The findings of the study suggest that teachers have been captured by the top-down dynamics to believe that physical spaces are the best learning spaces for learners with deafness. Teachers ought, however, to be mindful of lifelong learning that continues beyond the four walls of the classroom. In this Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) there are multimedia spaces that support learning of all learners, including learners with deafness. These include Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and Social Media Sites (SMSs) (Khoza & Mpungose, 2020; Khoza, 2021a; 2021b; Mpungose, 2021; Dube, 2020). However, as noted in their accounts, there is a dire need for the teachers to be exposed to and capacitated in the use of other learning spaces such as online and blended learning spaces. This would help teachers manage issues of time constraints, since learners would still be engaged in learning far beyond the classroom (Mpungose, 2020b). Subsequently, such considerations and flexibility would ease the tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Individual dynamics would thus help in addressing teachers' and learners' natural identities.

6. 2. 3 Why are the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf in Eswatini the way they are? (philosophical question)

This was the philosophical/theoretical question of the study, addressed in Chapter Five. Data used to answer this question were generated by means of the semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. First, the teachers were made aware of their identities through the individual/personal "who" questions after reflecting on their experiences and practices. This was also meant to uphold justice as a function of the individual dynamics which are crucial in pacifying the tension between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Specific values that each of the

teachers exhibited are perceived to be part of their internal intelligence. These values are an important part of the teachers' unconscious and subconscious minds and therefore influence their conscious decisions. The individual teacher's values constitute the individual dynamics of curriculum implementation. I interrogated the teachers' beliefs which inform their present actions by following Khoza's (2021b) definition of reflection as the conscious mind process or system that interrogates subconscious experiences in order to produce new actions. During the interrogations, teachers had the opportunity not only to reflect on, in, and for their actions; they also critiqued their own actions (Khoza, 2021a; Khoza. 2021b). Action research and pragmatism demand that teachers improve their practices and ascertain what works best in their respective domains (the classroom/lesson). I argue that the teachers' individual values (dynamics) motivate them to engage in particular actions thus increasing their level of joy or satisfaction. These values permit teachers to deal with situations from their own perspectives and reasoning from the conscious mind. Ngubane-Mokiwa and Khoza (2021) refer to this as the realisation of the cognitive presence. Therefore, knowledge of these individual values is critical for effective practices and curriculum enactment.

Teachers revealed some specific individual critical values which influence their decision-making processes during the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom. These values are categorised into two: those leading to teachers' satisfaction (positive values) and those leading to dissatisfaction (negative values). The individual values could be used as a yardstick for the measurement of curriculum implementation effectiveness. The more the curriculum decisions are influenced by the positive values, the closer the teachers are to objective reality. For this reason, it is important to work on the negative values so that teachers can self-actualise and navigate through uncertainties (Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). Specific positive values drove teachers during the curriculum implementation process in the classroom, leading to a successful curriculum implementation at the school for the deaf. These values included: patience, diligence, independence, consideration, acceptance, and objectivity. Negative values that drove teachers included: frustration, attitude challenges, lack of confidence, and avoidance/defence.

During the second phase of the action research, teachers were afforded the opportunity of re-reflecting on why the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English Language curriculum are the way they are, as discussed in the previous chapter. In Chapter 4, teachers' practices were seen

to be driven mainly by the two giants, namely, the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. There were a few instances in which some teachers were seen to be driven by the individual (pragmatic) dynamics owing to a lack of self-reflection. During the interviews and focus group discussions, teachers were able to give reasons that informed their practices and subsequently helped to ascertain the sources of their respective individual values. Findings of the study suggest that quality education at the school for the deaf seems to be defined predominantly on the basis of what teachers have become used to (bottom-up dynamics). Therefore, when teachers re-reflect and re-critique their practices, they increase the chance of understanding objective reality. Teachers thus become aware of who they really are. According to Khoza (2021a; 2021b), when professional identity (top-down dynamics), societal identity (bottom-up dynamics), and personal identity (individual dynamics) fail to produce the desired learning outcomes, the natural identity (innate dynamics) ought to be considered. All the teachers including the principal agreed that the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf are influenced by the unique identity of the learners. This is such that their way of learning, let alone language acquisition, is different from that of hearing learners in the mainstream schools. The major challenge that learners with deafness have is communication due to lack of auditory input, and this manifests itself in various ways in the classroom such as through their language limitations, slow pace of learning, and high visual-orientation (Ntinda et al., 2019; Csizer & Kontra, 2020). Moreover, these learners mainly access the curriculum through sign language, their natural language. Thus this language needs to be accommodated in these learners' curriculum.

Khoza (2021a; 2021b) emphasises that awareness of the natural identity can enable teachers to adapt to any uncertainty/novelty by allowing them to apply natural actions. Teachers thus reach the point at which they are naturally driven by their internal intelligence. When such natural actions are at play, they are driven by innate dynamics which come to the fore by re-reflection and re-critiquing. Ultimately, teachers were able to identify the need and/or value of the following factors: specialized training and competences, technological use as mode of teaching, teaching and learning support, improvisation, teacher flexibility, and language exposure.

6. 3 Propositions of the Study

I argue that the factors unearthed during the re-reflection and re-critiquing of the teachers' practices and experiences could potentially contribute to new possibilities in the implementation of the

curriculum at the school for the deaf when fully embraced. Thus I see these factors as propositions for the study. They have been specifically generated from the data coupled with the review of literature. These factors could also contribute to harmonising the tension existing between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics and deal with any arising uncertainties.

6. 3. 1 Proposition One: Identity

This study advocates for the recognition of individual identity after reflecting on present practices and experiences. Each person has unique attributes, qualities, and values which are capable of helping them to self-actualise. The unique individual dynamics of teachers and learners serve as significant drivers of curriculum implementation; and for this reason, these values must be upheld and promoted (Dlamini, 2022; Mpungose & Khoza, 2020; Khoza, 2021a; 2021b). Findings indicate that most teachers were not aware of their identities. Teachers seemed captured and driven by the top-down dynamics (professional identity). This was even where bottom-up dynamics (social identity) were expected to promote informal learning; teachers were nevertheless influenced by the top-down dynamics in being content driven. For instance, the only time WhatsApp was used was during the lockdown to deliver content to learners. No meaningful discussions took place in such spaces, teachers positing that this was difficult. Teachers therefore predominantly relied on teaching in the physical classroom. As such learners' needs were not met. Also, the teachers' complaints of inadequate time to teach content suggests that they have no time to reflect on their practices and experiences. Their cycle of teaching thus became habitual, contributing little to the academic achievement of the learners with deafness. Khoza (2021a) contends that teachers ought to reflect on their practices and experiences in order to better understand their identities prior to engaging in any educational move.

6. 3. 2 Proposition Two: specialized training and competencies

Findings of the study suggest that there is a misalignment of qualifications with the demand required to teach learners with deafness. This is particularly so when they are posted to teach at the school for the deaf. These teachers are primarily trained to teach in mainstream schools, not special schools like the school for the deaf. This situation confirms what Ntinda et al. (2019) calls lack of professional competencies to teach learners with deafness. These learners, as with all other learners, have common pedagogical needs specific to them (Kimani, 2016; Keirungi, 2021). These learners therefore need to be taught using approaches suitable for them. The use of sign language

as the primary mode of instruction is still part of the pedagogic considerations for the English Language teacher of these learners. If, then, teachers are not fully conversant with sign language which is the medium of instruction, this has implications for classroom engagements, delivery of content and arguably, the learning outcomes. Therefore, specific knowledge by the teacher of the unique individual differences is still needed so that they are effectively acknowledged and addressed (Norwich & Lewis, 2005).

6. 3. 3 Proposition Three: technological use as a mode of teaching

Findings of the study suggest that some teachers at the school are aware of the benefits of using technological tools to teach learners with deafness. However, from the teachers' responses there is a dire need for capacitation in order to improve their present practices with the view to achieving long-term learning outcomes. Participant T2 sees technology as a way of improving the lives of people with disabilities. All that is needed is funding. Developing countries such as Eswatini lack funds to secure high quality gadgets, programmes, and software that would enhance the learning of learners with deafness (Dube, 2020; Keirungi, 2021). The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has brought many technological advancements with easy access for all kinds of people, irrespective of disability (Khoza, 2021a; Chimbunde, 2021; Mpungose, 2021). Such technological advancements and programmes could enable both teachers and learners to participate in online teaching and learning, respectively, thereby ensuring that blended learning is recognized and used. Moreover, Mpungose and Khoza (2020) argue that the 4IR technologies assist learners to discover their natural identities. They accept their actions and the subsequent outcomes because that is how they were designed by the perfect Creator. At the moment there is no blended learning taking place at the school because, as the findings suggested, teachers were either not aware of such or they were not trained on or capacitated with such.

6. 3. 4 Proposition Four: Teaching and Learning Support

Teachers revealed that they need regular support and visits from stakeholders such as inspectors. Teachers lamented that inspectors rarely visited the school to see how the teachers were coping with their teaching methods. This implies that for most of the time, teachers are left to their own devices. In such situations where teachers are left on their own, the curriculum implementation promotes bottom-up dynamics more than the top-down dynamics. As a result, there are gaps between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum thus increasing the tension

between the two giants. Putting in place support services for the teaching and learning of learners with deafness cannot be overemphasized (Mapepa & Magano, 2018). These researchers observed that there was insufficient curriculum support in special schools by way of teaching and learning materials. Teachers and learners in these schools are often isolated and neglected particularly on curriculum challenges. Teachers then have to work themselves out of every curriculum challenge they face. Such a situation has implications for the learning outcomes. Parents should also be trained on how best to support the learning and overall education of learners with deafness.

6. 3. 5 Proposition Five: Improvisation

Findings of the study revealed that some teachers are able to utilise their individual dynamics, thus applying their cognitive presence/abilities (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2021). Such teachers are able to make up for missing and inflexible resources by improvising them. These teachers are not captured by the top-down dynamics; they are able to use their internal intelligence which enables them to look out for materials that promote learning. This is evidence of individual dynamics at play which drive the curriculum implementation, save that the teachers were not aware of their existence. Dlamini (2022) refers to such improvisations as resourcefulness on the part of the teachers, a value that enables teachers to self-actualise. Such resourceful teachers utilise their innate/natural abilities to achieve learning goals.

6. 3. 6 Proposition Six: Language Exposure

Findings of the study suggest that most of the learning challenges faced by the learners with deafness are as a result of language limitations emanating from lack of exposure first and foremost to Sign Language, their first language. Their weak first language foundation impacts on their learning of English Language (Csizér & Kontra, 2020; Ristiani, 2018) because they are mainly exposed to a spoken language, which unfortunately they cannot hear or from which they can only perceive very little (Csizér & Kontra, 2020). Most of the children with deafness are born to hearing parents who are not conversant with sign language. Therefore, there is a need for children with deafness to be exposed to their first language as early as possible. This also includes exposure to teachers who are competent in this language, the medium of instruction at the school for the deaf being sign language. In addition, upon discovery that a child is born with deafness, parents or guardians are advised to seek early intervention strategies that would promote both the cognitive and language development of these children.

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6. 4 Implications of the Study

Findings of the study suggest that there are theoretical, methodological and policy implications. There are also implications for future research.

6. 4. 1 Theoretical implications

The purpose of the study was to explore the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. The review of literature pointed to the tension between the top-down (performance-based/vertical) and bottom-up (competence-based/horizontal) curriculums. This tension affects the teaching and learning goals at the school thus failing to meet individual needs. A gap was identified suggesting the need for the identification and recognition of the more neutral individual dynamics which harmonise the tension. The individual dynamics achieve such by combining the strengths of both top-down (professional) and bottom-up (societal) dynamics. Accordingly, individual values (dynamics) are seen to be key drivers of curriculum implementation after reflection and critiquing of practices and experiences. Thus this study proposed individual dynamics as capable of meeting both teachers' and learners' individual needs. This eventually gave birth to the dynamics of the curriculum implementation model/theory which is a contribution to the body of literature. The proposed model emphasises the need for continuous reflection and critiquing of actions and experiences by teachers in order to achieve objective reality. This would enable teachers to use their internal intelligence to self-actualise and navigate through learning challenges by making good use of their individual values.

6. 4. 2 Policy Implications

The findings suggest that mastery of the content taught to learners with deafness is promoted by knowledge and competence in the sign language. Sign Language is a socially constructed language (societal factor) as opposed to the English Language which is the prescribed language (professional force). There is, therefore, a need for the practical recognition of the Sign Language in the intended English curriculum used at the school and the need to align the use of Sign Language at the school with the English Language content as found in the syllabus (Dissake & Atindogbe, 2019). However, findings of the study suggest that there are incompetencies and variations in the use of Sign Language by the teachers and learners at the school. While both teachers and learners

communicate in sign language in the classroom for instruction, most of the teachers are not natural signers or users of sign language. The teachers conceded that they face struggles with the use of sign language; this inevitably has implications for the delivery of instruction in the classroom. This points to loopholes in the top-down dynamics. Teachers with no specialised training and proficiency in sign language are posted to teach at the school; such ultimately highlights an unrecognised inequality in the use of sign language. Experienced teachers and Deaf Adults who are more proficient in this language are called upon to mentor those who are less proficient in Sign Language. This finding was corroborated by Ntinda et al. (2019) who reported that the variations in sign language impede learner engagement, subsequently affecting teachers' communication with the learners. Accordingly, Ntinda et al. (2019) recommend that the country should have a standardized sign language which could enhance positive teaching and learning outcomes.

Researchers such as Obilo and Sangoleye (2010) and Sumekto (2018) lament that teachers are often excluded from the curriculum design process, resulting in their difficulty in enacting the curriculum as intended by the policy makers. This results in implementation gaps and disparities. Therefore, it may be expedient for policy makers, inspectors and possibly teacher-training institutions to introduce teachers to the importance of individual dynamics as key drivers of curriculum implementation, educating teachers accordingly. This may endorse the value of reflecting on practices, and most importantly on re-discovering teachers' natural identity; ultimately leading to the awareness of their innate dynamics.

6. 4. 3 Implications for future research

This study explored the dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. Findings of the study suggest that further research must be conducted in the following area: studies that explore the reflections of learners with deafness on their learning experiences of mainstream English curriculum. This would help to gain learners' side of the story, and to give them a platform on which to state how they would like to be taught. Without doubt, as much as teachers are the front runners in curriculum implementation, learners are the recipients of whatever practices/actions that are decided upon by the teachers. Moreover, there is a need for action research that involves all stakeholders in the education of learners with deafness to reflect on the implementation of the mainstream English curriculum at the school for the deaf, with a view to bringing about a balanced and lasting solution.

6. 5 Recommendations of the Study

6. 5. 1 Need for continuous in-service training and capacitation of teachers

There is a need for continuous in-service and capacitation of teachers on the latest trends of teaching learners with deafness, including the use of technological tools and software. This also means that the school must be fully supported with the requisite devices in order to increase possibilities of using online and blended learning.

6. 5. 2 Need for a curriculum that is responsive to the learners' needs

Findings of the study revealed that the curriculum is too broad, rigid, and inaccessible (in terms of the nature of the English Language used) for learners with deafness. More specifically, the language used in the curriculum was said to be very difficult for these learners. A more flexible curriculum that is easily accessible to and considerate of the learning nature of learners with deafness should be put in place. More specifically, such a curriculum taught to these learners should aim towards meeting their learning goals and needs. This would take into account the individual dynamics of these learners and their natural identity. This is echoed by Ramrathan (2021), who contends that any curriculum used should be relevant, aiming towards combatting all challenges in order to address learning goals.

6. 5. 3 Need for frequent visitation to and supervision of the school

Frequent visits and monitoring by school inspectors should be conducted to reduce the gap between the top-down and bottom-up dynamics. Teachers lamented that they had a distant relationship with inspectors.

6. 5. 4 Need for the consultation of the school administration regarding the posting and transfer of teachers

The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that the school administration is engaged and consulted on issues relating to the posting of teachers to the school. As much as the final say on such matters rests with the ministry who are the hiring authority in the country, but it is high time that relevant teachers trained in special and deaf education are posted to the school. This would help in addressing the unique individual needs of learners with deafness. Moreover, there is need to motivate teachers groomed and capacitated to teach at the school by way of incentives and

recognition of their higher qualifications in order to limit their sudden transfer from the school. When such teachers are transferred to other schools other than the school for the deaf, it kills the momentum and motivation levels at the school, and this has a bearing on the learning outcomes.

6. 6 Conclusion

The study sought to understand the dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini. In so doing, the "dynamics of implementing curriculum" became the phenomenon of the study. Literature that was surveyed and scrutinized indicated that two main dynamics that drive the curriculum implementation are emphasized, namely: top-down (performance-based) and bottom-up (competence-based) dynamics. There is a notable tension between these dynamics either polarized or/harmonized by introducing a more neutral category of dynamics - the individual dynamics. These dynamics combine the strengths of top-down and bottom-up dynamics.

The study proposed the theory/model of the dynamics of curriculum implementation which not only deals with the tension between the two giants of curriculum dynamics, but also raises awareness of the individual/personal "who" dynamics which bring to the fore the individual values and cognitive presence. Through the use of action research and the pragmatic paradigm, teachers in this study were able to gain awareness and understanding of how their individual dynamics can help them drive the curriculum implantation process, thereby self-actualising. The use of the pragmatic paradigm and action research also helped to empower teachers, most importantly, on the need to reflect on their practices/actions and experiences. Data that were generated by document review, reflective activities, video observation, semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions revealed that individual dynamics were not catered for in the curriculum. Teachers are therefore still seen as technicians and instructors who need to adhere to laid down prescriptions during the course of curriculum implementation. Teachers' individual dynamics play a crucial role in driving curriculum implementation, and therefore these dynamics must be taken into consideration.

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Appendix A: Permission letter from the Ministry of Education and Training

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini

Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5
Fax:(+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39
Mbabane, ESWATINI

22 February, 2021

Attention:
Head Teacher:
The School for the Deaf

THROUGH
Lubombo Regional Education Officer

Dear Colleagues,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL STUDENT – MR. SABELO MLUNGISI KHUMALO

1. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Mr. Sabelo Mlungisi Khumalo, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal that in order for him to fulfill his academic requirements at the University he has to collect data (conduct research) and his study or research topic is: *"Dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at the School for the Deaf in Eswatini"*. The population for his study comprises of all teachers of English and the school principal of the above mentioned school. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Mr. Khumalo begins his data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study. Furthermore, you are expected to collect data for your study virtually.

2. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Mr. Khumalo collect data virtually from the above mentioned school in the Lubombo Region as well as facilitate for the support he needs in his data collection process. Data collection period is one month.

DR. NTOMBENHLE L. DLAMINI
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

cc: Regional Education Officers – Lubombo
        Chief Inspector – Primary/Secondary
        1 Head Teachers of the above mentioned schools
        Dr. Makhosi Shoba – Research Supervisor

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Appendix B: Permission letter from the Principal

HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

P. O. BOX 281

SITEKI L300

Email-hsdswaziland@gmail.com

TEL: 2333 3 461

FAX: 2550 9248

18 May 2021

Mr Sabelo Khumalo

Ngwane Teachers College

P.O.Box 474

Nhlangano

Dear Sir

**RE: PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF HIGH**

Following your request for permission to conduct a study in our school, the Principal hereby grants you permission to do your study. We hope this study will also benefit the school and help the entire country.

I wish you the very best in your endeavour.

Yours faithfully

MRS NOMSA MASEKO-DLAMINI

PRINCIPAL

HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
PRINCIPAL

2 MAY 2021

P.O. BOX 281, SITEKI
TEL: 550 9247

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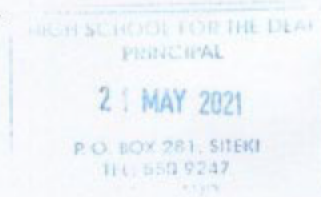
Appendix C: Letter of participants

<div align="right">

Curriculum Studies, School of Education,

College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Edgewood Campus,

</div>

Dear Participant

<div align="center">

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

</div>

I, Sabelo Khumalo, am a PhD student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and I am conducting research on the: **Dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini**. The purpose of this study is to explore how the mainstream English curriculum is implemented at the school for the deaf with a view to suggesting alternatives that could enhance the implementation of this curriculum. Participants will be interviewed telephonically due to the advent of the novel Corona Virus pandemic and will also be engaged in a focus group discussion via Zoom video conferencing. I also ask for your permission to review documents you use in the implementation/teaching of the English curriculum such as the English Language Syllabus, scheme book and lesson plans. Finally, I request to conduct some reflective activities and your permission to record a video of a classroom session for observation purposes.

All information collected will be treated in strictest confidence and neither the school nor the individual participants will be identifiable in any reports that are written. Instead of your actual names letter/number combinations will be used. Participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Data generated will be securely kept and destroyed after 5 years. As one of the sampled participants, I am requesting you to study and complete the consent form. If you are willing to participate, kindly tick the box indicating whether you permit the researcher to record the interview and to video record your lesson. Please also fill in the declaration form attached.

	YES	NO
Voice recording (interview)		
Video recording of lesson		
Zoom video-conferencing		

I can be contacted at:

Email: sabelokhumalom@gmail.com

Cell: +268 76274499

My supervisors;

Dr M.E. Shoba based at the School of Education, Edgewood campus,

University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: shobam@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: +27312603688

Prof. SB Khoza based at the School of Education, Edgewood campus,

University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: khozas@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 0312607595.

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You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ximba Phumelele

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 3587 E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION OF PARTICIPANT

I _____ (Full name of the teacher)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research
project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time and for any
reason, should I so desire.

_____   _____

Signature of the teacher

Appendix D: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

08 June 2021

Mr Sabelo Mlungisi Khumalo (220108409)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Khumalo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002743/2021
Project title: Dynamics of implementing mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 12 April 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 08 June 2022.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,
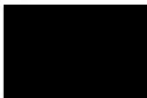
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Appendix E: Editor's certificate

Pinpoint Proofreading Services

40 Ridge Rd

Kloof

Durban

3610

7 January 2023

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled: Dynamics of implementing the mainstream English curriculum at a school for the deaf in Eswatini, by Sabelo Khumalo. I have made all the necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the destined authority.

Yours faithfully

L. Weight

Appendix F: Turnitin report