

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE  
REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS IN ZIMBABWEAN SPECIAL SCHOOLS  
FOR THE DEAF**

**BY  
CHEGOVO REWARD WEDZERO**

M146996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

IN THE DISCIPLINE

**SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION**

In the

JAIROS JIRI CENTRE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION,  
ROBERT MUGABE SCHOOL OF HERITAGE AND EDUCATION

At

**GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY**

MAIN SUPERVISOR: Dr. MARY RUNO

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof. MARTIN MUSENGI

SEPTEMBER 2023

## DECLARATION

I, CHEGOVO REWARD WEDZERO, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and that it has never been produced before in any other institution. All the sources that have been used have been acknowledged through referencing.

Signature R. Chegano

Date: 22 December 2022

CHEGOVO REWARD WEDZERO

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My first and foremost appreciation goes out to God the Almighty for giving me the strength and determination to complete this thesis. Without His guidance, it would not have been possible to complete this academic work.

I would also like to sincerely thank my supervisors, Dr. Mary Runo and Prof. Martin Musengi. If it were not for your encouragement, guidance and constructive criticism, I would not have written this acknowledgement.

Many thanks also go to my family, which provided me a lot of invaluable support throughout my PhD studies. Specifically, I am grateful to my son, Kudzi Chinhanu, my sisters, Sopheh Chegovo and Fungai Gwenzi, my mother, Mrs. Olita Gwenzi, my father, Junior F. Chegovo, my sisters-in-law, Mrs. Tsitsi Prince Chegovo and Mrs. Cecilia Precious Chegovo, and my brother, Prince Chegovo. To my nieces Tendai and Etwin Chegovo, thank you for all the encouragement.

I am also thankful to my friends Dr. James Maizere, Mr. Steve Marumisa and Mr. Edmond Webster Foya, for encouraging me not to give up on my doctoral studies. They always reminded me that there was light at the end of the tunnel. I am also greatly indebted to my friends, Mrs. Henry Chikafu and Mangirazi Nancy for their words of encouragement. Special thanks go to Memory Mapingure and Collen Nyawodza. Thank you very much for the constant supply of solar power when ZESA failed to provide electricity. To Mr. Blessing Murwisi, thank you very much for being my telephone technician. Mrs Kufakunesu and Mrs Mugura for your unwavering service, thank you.

Very special thanks also go to my friends, Cathrine Matope Masaka and Oppah Nyarugwe, for providing me with accommodation during my research. Thank you for the support.

To the participants, thank you very much for your co-operation and patience during the process of data collection.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my late husband, Regis Kwashira. I know that if you were here, I would not have walked this road alone. This thesis is also dedicated to all the Deaf people out there. Stand up for your rights.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to examine factors that influence the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The main objectives of the study were four-fold. Firstly, the study sought to examine how Zimbabwean Sign Language (ZSL) laws and policies were being implemented in the special schools. Secondly, it sought to analyse the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language legal frameworks. Thirdly, it sought to find out the extent to which the teachers were equipped in the profession to teach Deaf learners. Finally, the study sought to explore the strategies that could be proposed to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in the special schools for the Deaf. The study was a phenomenological multiple case study of four special schools for the Deaf. In-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation were used to generate data from 29 participants who were 17 Grade One to Grade Three Special Needs Education specialist teachers, the heads of each of the four schools, four district schools inspectors and four educational psychologists responsible for each of the school-districts. Data were coded and deductive thematic analysis employed through Atlas. ti and presented in Network View diagrams. The study revealed that several factors influenced the implementation of sign language policies in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. It emerged that Sign Language policy goals and the means of achieving Sign Language policy goals were ambiguous, hence, this created some misunderstandings. Policy implementers were not capacitated on the meaning of Sign Language policies and how the policies were supposed to be implemented. Furthermore, there was a lack of implementation monitoring mechanism by the Ministry of Education and the district officers as they were not competent in Sign Language, resulting in the policies largely remaining just on paper. Based on the findings, the study proposed strategies to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in the special schools for the Deaf. Key among these strategies included adoption of Chegovo's (2022) Administrative Sign Language Policy Conflict-Ambiguity Resolution Model. It was also recommended that the Ministry of Education needed to actively promote Sign Language policies for effective implementation. Teachers and other Ministry of Education officials also needed to be fluent in Sign Language and so they could be given priority for in-service training in Sign Language.

**Key Words:** Sign language policies, medium of instruction, Deaf, Zimbabwean Sign Language, mother tongue, special schools, policy implementation, total communication

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Background to the Study.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Statement of the Problem.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.4 Main Research Question .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.5 Research Sub-questions.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.7 Delimitations of the Study.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.8 Limitations of the Study .....	12
<b>1.9 Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.10 Conceptual Framework.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.10.1 Model of Implementation Conceptual Bases.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.10.2 Policy Ambiguity.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.10.3 Administrative Implementation .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.10.4 Political Implementation .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.10.5 Experimental Implementation.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.10.6 Symbolic Implementation .....</b>	<b>23</b>

1.11 Definition of Terms.....	25
1.12 Summary.....	27
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 Unpacking of Key Concepts of Sign Language.....	28
2.2.1 Sign Language Overview in Zimbabwe.....	28
2.2.2 Overview of Deaf Community and Education .....	29
2.2.3 Overview of Sign Language Interpretation Services.....	29
2.2.4 Difference between Spoken Languages and Sign Language.....	30
2.2.5 Sign Language .....	31
2.2.6 Benefits of Using Sign Language for Deaf Learners .....	33
2.3 International and Regional Regulatory Frameworks on Sign Language.....	34
2.4 Regulatory Framework for Sign Language in Zimbabwe .....	37
2.5 How Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks Are Implemented in Special Schools	41
2.5.1. Human Rights .....	43
2.5.2 Education Rights.....	43
2.6 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks.....	47
2.7 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners.....	51
2.7.1 Competencies that Teachers of the Deaf Need to Teach Deaf Learners Using Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction .....	52
2.8 Strategies that Could be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....	54
2.8.1 The Implementation Strategy .....	54
2.8.2 Use of Qualified Personnel as Teachers of the Deaf .....	55
2.8.3 Following Special Education Staffing Requirements .....	56
2.8.4 Development of Communicative Skills .....	57
2.8.5 Availability of Specialized Personnel in Deaf Education .....	58

2.8.6 Availability of Financial and Human Resources .....	60
2.8.7 Role of the Department of Learners' Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education.....	61
2.8.7 Role of the School Head in the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks.....	62
2.8.8 The Role of the Teacher in Reinforcing Sign Language Learning in Special Schools for the Deaf .....	63
2.8.9 Role of the Deaf Community.....	65
2.9 Summary of Gaps in Literature .....	66
2.10 Summary.....	68
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>70</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	70
3.2 Research Paradigm.....	70
3.3 Qualitative Research Approach .....	73
3.4 Research Design: Phenomenological Case Study .....	74
3.5 Target Population .....	75
3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques .....	76
3.6.1 Sample Size.....	76
3.6.2 Sampling Techniques.....	76
3.7 Research Instruments.....	77
3.7.1 Interviews .....	77
3.7.2 Non-participant Observation in Special Schools for the Deaf.....	81
3.8 Pilot Study .....	82
3.9 Trustworthiness .....	83
3.9.1 Credibility.....	83
3.9.2 Transferability .....	84
3.9.3 Confirmability .....	84
3.9.4 Dependability .....	85



<b>3.10 Ethical Considerations .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.10.1 Informed Consent .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.10.2 Confidentiality.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>3.10.3 No Harm to Participants .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>3.11 Data Collection Procedures.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>3.12 Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>3.12.1 Getting Started in Atlas.ti .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>3.12.2 Atlas.ti First Stage.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>3.12.3 Atlas.ti Second Stage .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>3.12.4 Atlas.ti Third Stage.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.3 Theme 1: Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>4.3.1: Policy Clarity and Consistency.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>4.3.2 Interpretation of Policy Causal Theory .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>4.3.3 Adequacy of Implementation Process Structure .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>4.3.4 Commitment of Implementing Officials.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>4.3.5 Support from Stakeholders and Interest Groups .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>4.3.6. Barriers to Effective Use of Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>4.4 Theme 2: Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>4.4.1 Forms of Sign Language.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>4.4.2 Functions of Sign Language.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>4.4.3 Teachers' Sign Language Knowledge and Competencies.....</b>	<b>134</b>

4.4.4 Teachers' Sign Language Beliefs and Practices .....	136
4.4.5 Sign Language Agents and Other Resources .....	142
<b>4.5 Theme 3: The Extent to Which Teachers Are Equipped in Teaching Deaf Learners</b> .....	<b>149</b>
4.5.1 Sign Language Proficiencies .....	149
4.5.2 Sign Language Teaching Skills.....	151
4.5.3 Attitudes towards Sign Language .....	153
4.5.4 In-service Training .....	157
4.5.5 Support from School and External Agents .....	164
<b>4.6 Theme 4: Strategies That Can Be Used to Enhance the Implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf</b>	<b>165</b>
4.6.1 Ensuring Qualifications of Teachers Are Relevant to Sign Language .....	165
4.6.2 Improving Resources at the School Level.....	168
4.6.3 Identification of Training Needs by District Officers.....	169
4.6.4 Challenges Faced in Staff Development and In-service Training .....	170
4.6.5 Use of Sign Language as the Only Language of Teaching and Learning for Deaf Learners .....	172
4.6.6 Collaboration with the Deaf Community .....	172
4.6.7 Importance of the Deaf Community in Zimbabwean Special Schools .....	175
4.6.8 Shortcomings of the Existing Language Policy .....	176
4.6.9 Suggestions to the Ministry of Education Policy Makers .....	178
4.7 Summary.....	181
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>184</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	184
<b>5.2 Implementation of Zimbabwe Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>184</b>
5.2.1 Policy Clarity and Consistency .....	184

5.2.2 Adequacy of Implementation Process Structure .....	196
5.2.3 Commitment of the Implementing Officials.....	199
5.2.4 Barriers to Implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....	202
<b>5.3 Challenges Facing Teachers in Implementing Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks for the Deaf in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>205</b>
5.3.1 Forms of Sign Language.....	206
5.3.2 Functions of Sign Language.....	209
5.3.3 Teachers' Sign Language Knowledge and Competencies.....	211
5.3.4 Teachers' Sign Language Beliefs and Practices.....	212
5.3.5 Ambiguity of Mother Tongue Status of Sign Language in the Curriculum .....	217
5.3.6 Sign Language Agents and Other Resources .....	221
<b>5.4 Teachers' Level of Preparation Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>225</b>
5.4.1 Sign Language Proficiencies .....	226
5.4.2 Language Teaching Skills .....	226
5.4.3 Attitudes towards Sign Language .....	228
5.4.4 In-service Training .....	229
5.4.5 Support from School and External Agents .....	230
<b>5.5 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>231</b>
5.5.1 Ensuring Qualifications of Teachers Are Relevant to Sign Language .....	232
5.5.2 Improving Resources at the School Level.....	233
5.5.3 Identification of Training Needs by District Officers.....	235
5.5.4 Challenges Faced in Staff Developing and In-service Training for Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....	236

5.5.4 Use of Sign Language as the Only Language of Teaching and Learning for Deaf learners.....	238
5.5.5 Collaboration with the Deaf Community .....	238
5.5.6 Focusing on the Shortcomings of the Existing Language Policy .....	242
5.5.7 Suggestions to the Ministry of Education Policy-Makers .....	244
5.6 Summary.....	248
<b>CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>6.2 Review of the Research Problem.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>6.3 Summary of Review of Related Literature.....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>6.3.1 Practices in the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks ...</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>6.3.2 Regulatory Frameworks Supporting the Use of Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction in Special Schools .....</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>6.3.3 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>6.3.4 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>6.3.4.1 Competencies That Teachers of the Deaf Need to Teach Deaf Learners Using Sign Language .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>6.3.5 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf ....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>6.3.5.1 Use of Qualified Personnel as Teachers of the Deaf .....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>6.3.5.2 Adhering to Special Needs Education Staffing Requirements .....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>6.3.5.3 Development of Communicative Skills .....</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>6.3.5.5 Availability of Financial and Human Resources as a Strategy for Effective Implementation of the Policy .....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>6.3.6 Use of the Deaf Community in the Teaching of the Deaf Learners .....</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>6.4 Summary of Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>260</b>

<b>6.5 Summary of the Research Findings .....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>6.6 Conclusions.....</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>6.6.1 Implementation of Zimbabwe Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf.....</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>6.6.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf .....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>6.6.3 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners.....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>6.6.4 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf ....</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>6.7 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>6.7.1 Policy Formulation .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>6.7.2 Policy-Makers.....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>6.7.3 The Ministry of Education .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>6.7.4 District School Inspectors and Learners Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education .....</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>6.7.5 School Heads and Specialist Teachers .....</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>6.7.6 A Proposed Model for Enhancing the Implementation of ZSL Policies in Zimbabwean Special Schools.....</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>6.7.7 Recommendations for Future Research .....</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>6.8 Contribution of the Study .....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>6.9 Final Comments .....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: APPLICATION LETTER TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY.....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION .....</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE .....</b>	<b>304</b>

<b>APPENDIX D: APPLICATION LETTER MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: APPLICATION LETTER MASVINGO PROVINCE.....</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: APPLICATION LETTER MIDLANDS PROVINCE PROVINCE .....</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: APPLICATION LETTER BULAWAYO PROVINCE.....</b>	<b>308</b>
<b>APPENDIX H: APPROVAL LETTER MASVINGO PROVINCE .....</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: APPROVAL LETTER HARARE PROVINCE.....</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>APPENDIX K: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET .....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>APPENDIX L: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>313</b>
<b>APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST .....</b>	<b>315</b>
<b>APPENDIX N: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR School Heads .....</b>	<b>317</b>
<b>APPENDIX O: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS.....</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>APPENDIX P: PROOF OF EDITING BY PROF RUGARE MAREVA .....</b>	<b>325</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix Policy Implementation Processes .....	15
Figure 3.1: Age Bracket of Teachers and Administrators of Deaf learners in Zimbabwean Special Schools.....	90
Figure 4.1: Age Bracket of Teachers and Administrators of Deaf learners in Zimbabwean Special Schools.....	93
Figure 4.2: Network View: Gender of Administrators and Teachers of Deaf learners .....	94
Figure 4.3: Participants' Teaching Experience.....	96
Figure 4.4: Network Understanding the Nature and Requirements of the Current Language in Education Policy .....	99
Figure 4.5: Support from the Schools Psychologists .....	164
Figure 4.6: Qualifications of Specialist Teachers of the Deaf Relevant to Sign Language .....	166

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Showing That Majority of the Teachers Were Trained in Special Needs Education. .	95
Table 4.2: Themes and Sub-themes Which Were Used to Analyse the Data.....	97
Table 4.3: Cross Case Analysis of Availability of Resource Materials in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf.....	122
Table 4.4: Professional Development of Specialist Teachers of the Deaf.....	158



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASL	American Sign Language
BICS	Basic Inter-personal Communicative Skills
BoSL	Botswana Sign Language
CALP	Cognitive academic language proficiency
CHED	Commission of Higher Education
DEAFSA	Deaf Federation of South Africa
DEC	Deaf Education Council
DSI	District Schools Inspector
DZT	Deaf Zimbabwe Trust
EIPA	Educational Interpreter Performance Test
(EthSL)	Ethiopian Sign Language
FNSF	Federation Nationale des sourds de France
GHSL	Ghananian Sign Language
ISL	Ireland Sign Language
KG VI	King George VI
KMOE	Kenya Ministry of Education
KSL	Kenyan Sign Language
(KMOE)	Kenya Ministry of Education
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
(MSL)	Malawi Sign Language
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
(REB)	The Rwanda Education Board
RSL	Rwanda Sign Language
SASL	South African Sign Language
(SLPI)	Sign Language Proficiency Interview
(SNAs)	Special Needs Assistants
SNE	Special Needs Education
SPS	Schools Psychological Service

SSL	Swedish Sign Language
UCE	United College of Education
(USL)	Ugandan Sign Language
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNZA	University of Zambia
USA	United States of America
VQAS	Virginia Quality Assurance Screening
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf
(ZAMISE)	Zambia Institute of Special Education
ZEPARU	Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis Research Unit
ZSL	Zimbabwe Sign Language
ZASL	Zambia Sign Language

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Curriculum implementation is the act of translating curriculum documents into actions in the classroom (Obilo & Sangoleye, 2010) and such ‘translation’ is not always a straightforward matter. This complexity is evident in the case of Sign Language, which, despite recognition as an important language for teaching and learning (Musengi, 2014), still has a lot of uncertainty regarding its role in the curriculum, thereby making implementation an even more uncertain process. In light of this uncertainty, this study examined hearing implementers’ experiences of Zimbabwe’s Sign Language regulatory framework that includes relevant acts of parliament, statutory instruments and policies regulating the field of education. The research examined factors that influence the implementation of the sign language regulatory framework in special schools for the Deaf<sup>1</sup> as experienced by school-level and district-level educators mandated to implement the framework. This first chapter provides a background to the study, a statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, limitations, delimitations, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, as well as definition of key terms used in the study. The second chapter uses the study’s objectives to discuss related literature and identify gaps in the existing literature. The third chapter discusses and justifies the methodology used to collect and analyze data from research participants. The fourth chapter presents and analyzes data, while the fifth chapter utilizes literature to discuss the findings. Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarizing it and drawing conclusions from its findings, before making recommendations.

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Language is a crucial vehicle through which the curriculum is delivered. Language of instruction is that which is used in the teaching and learning process. In the case of Deaf learners, Sign Language has increasingly been recognized as an important language for teaching and learning. Mandyata (2018) observed that the use of Sign Language alone as a medium of instruction has

---

<sup>1</sup> This study follows the convention established by Woodward (1972) and followed by other authors (Ladd, 2003; Parasnis, 1998) whereby the capitalised form ‘Deaf’ is used to refer to people who share a Sign Language and associated cultural values that are distinct from the hearing society. The lowercase ‘deaf’ is used to refer to the audiological condition of deafness and this study recognises this latter term as encompassing children to whom Deaf culture is a birthright by virtue of having been born deaf or having become deaf in childhood, even though they may not yet have decided to become members of the Deaf culture.

significant effects on learning and that the use of total communication or oral language often leads to confusion in classroom communication among Deaf learners.

According to Ngobeni and Rankmise (2020), Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction because when the teacher and learner do not understand the language being used for teaching and learning, a communication breakdown takes place. Sibanda (2015) recommends that Sign Language should be used as the primary language of instruction for Deaf learners. This is based on the fact that, as a matter of efficiency and efficacy, only the language that teachers and learners understand can effectively function as the language of instruction.

Ngobeni and Rankmise (2020), in their study on the effect of limited Sign Language as a barrier to teaching and learning among Deaf learners in South Africa, argue that spoken languages do not benefit Deaf learners in terms of future development and that it is better if these learners are allowed to learn in schools for the Deaf. For Sign Language to be used as a language of instruction for Deaf learners, it requires the highest level of competency at the earliest age levels to provide the child with the best opportunity to develop his/her language at an early and appropriate age of 0 to 3 years (Fitzgerald & Associates, 2010). In addition to this complication, El-Zraigat (2009) observes that the learning process of Deaf learners is affected by factors such as a lack of qualified and skilled teachers, poor services, and curriculum inaccessibility. Sibanda (2015) argues that the majority of the teachers of the Deaf in schools operate at either the non-functional skills or novice levels of Sign Language proficiency. These and many other factors that potentially influence the use of Sign Language for teaching and learning in schools need to be researched. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine those factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language in Zimbabwean special schools.

My observations, based on personal experiences as a primary school teacher in Zimbabwe, revealed that although there were policies that stipulated that the mother tongue should be used as a language of instruction, especially in the early years of schooling, there was great uncertainty about what this meant for Deaf learners. Some of my colleagues in special schools for the Deaf were using Zimbabwean Sign Language (ZSL), while others were not. They had various reasons for using or not using ZSL.

This scenario, therefore, motivated me to find out what factors influence the implementation of Sign language as a language for teaching and learning in Zimbabwean special schools. I sought to find out how ZSL regulatory frameworks were understood and implemented in the schools, as well as what challenges were being faced by the teachers in implementing the frameworks. It was important for me to find out the extent to which the teachers were being equipped to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks. I was convinced that, in addition to this information, I could also come up with appropriate strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. With this motivation, I then augmented my observations with relevant literature on similar studies which I have discussed below.

Globally, the legal recognition of Sign Language differs widely since in some countries it has a protected status in certain areas such as education, whilst in others, Sign Language is an official state language (De Meuler, 2015). Article 24 of the CRPD recommends that Sign Language should be used for Deaf learners and that primary school instructors of Deaf learners be qualified in Sign Language competencies. This study concentrated on Deaf learners, namely those who are identified as culturally Deaf and consider Sign Language to be their first language (L1). According to Khadka (2018), the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) recognises the need to tailor primary education to reach those belonging to linguistic minorities such as those who are Deaf (UNESCO, 2000).

Some studies on Deaf learners have been conducted on the international scene, including Trovato (2013), Poelani (2017), and Van Staden, Badenhorst, and Ridge (2009). Trovato's (2013) experimental study investigated the Deaf community's right to Sign Language in America. The experimental inquiry found that Deaf children of Deaf parents acquire Sign Language at an early age (0-3 years), as it is their first language. The same study discovered that Deaf children of hearing parents joined school without any structured language skills and must, thus, enrol in special schools for them to acquire Sign Language, which becomes their first language but at a later age than their Deaf counterparts from Deaf parents.

In Japan, a socio-linguistic approach study on establishing Sign Language in Deaf Education in Japan, by Kato and Honna (1995), found that Deaf people have played an important part in informing hearing people of the legitimacy of their language and their way of life. They wanted Japanese Sign Language installed as a subject in the curriculum of Deaf education. They assumed that by learning Sign Language as a subject, the learners would be introduced to various aspects of Deaf culture embedded in their language. In Japan, they have a guidebook for Deaf Education (Ministry of Education, 1995). Sign Language is also used as a medium of instruction in Japanese schools. Therefore, the textbooks for Japanese hearing people are translated to Sign Language to provide adequate reading resources for the Deaf learners. Schools for the Deaf are taught by Deaf teachers. In Brazil, the Brazilian Law Decree No. 5.626 (2005), according to Lodi (2013), regulated the use of Brazilian Sign Language in education. Teachers, instructors and translators of Sign Language are recognized professionals by this law in the country.

Hiskey (2010) postulates that people who are pre-lingually deaf are not capable and will never be adequate to fully comprehend spoken language. He argues that it is extremely difficult for Deaf people's brains to penetrate spoken language, which is why Sign Language is the most suited language that can be used to meet their needs.

In some African countries, Sign Language is an official national language as well as a recognised subject in their education system. In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) recognises Kenya Sign Language (KSL) as one of the national languages and states that the government shall endeavor to promote the development and use of KSL in education and the country, generally. It is further recognised, in Article 120 (1) of the constitution, that the official languages of parliament are Kiswahili, English and KSL and the business of parliament may be conducted in these languages. According to a study by Pakata (2015), on the factors influencing the use of KSL in teaching and learning in public primary schools in Kenya, the use of KSL has risen and developed in the country. Pakata (2015) also found that Sign Language is the medium of instruction for Deaf learners in both pre-school and lower primary school levels.

Similarly, the Zimbabwean government supports the use of the mother tongue from pre-school to lower grades (Grades 1-3). The mother tongue for Deaf learners in this case is Sign Language.

In Kenya, according to Pakata (2015), the Ministry of Education (2004) recognised the use of Kenya Sign Language as an effective medium of instruction for Deaf learners. Kenya Sign Language was also developed as an examinable subject in schools for Deaf learners in (2010) by the Kenya National Examination Council. Several studies show that most countries have policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction. The purpose of this study was to examine factors that influence the implementation of policies in special schools in Zimbabwe. Chapter 2 of Zimbabwe's Sign Language Bill of Rights (2015) was drafted by a Deaf advocacy group. This was designed to put pressure on the government and advocate that everyone should have the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public education institutions.

Related studies have been carried out in various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Rwanda Education Board (2018), Rwandese Sign Language (RSL) is not recognized as an official language in the Constitution (Article 8). While RSL is not officially recognised by the Government of Rwanda or its Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) as a means of instruction, Rwanda's Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy aims to provide standardized RSL skills and related teaching materials to enable schools to accommodate learners with hearing and spoken language difficulties. Nevertheless, schools for Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners are given the choice of communication mode for teaching and learning since RSL has not been standardized. The Rwanda Education Board (REB) is responsible for adapting the national regular curricula to the needs of learners with disabilities, including those who are 'Deaf and hard of hearing', as the policy refers to them. MINEDUC recognizes the need for the provision of RSL teaching and learning materials (Cooper et al., 2021).

In Malawi, Malawi Sign Language (MSL) is not recognised as a language in the Constitution (Malawi Constitution Ch.4, number 26). MSL is not recognized as a medium of instruction in schools by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. However, the education sector plan recognizes the need for materials in Sign Language. Still in Malawi, there is also a translation of textbooks into all Malawian languages (including MSL).

Chimdi (2015) carried out a case study on Ethiopian Sign Language and educational accessibility for the Deaf community. Although Ethiopian Sign Language (EthSL) is not recognised as a language in the country's constitution, EthSL is recognized as a language of instruction for Deaf children up to Grade 4 (Tedla & Negassa, 2019). According to Tedla and Negassa (2019), Deaf learners in Ethiopia learn EthSL skills up to Grade 4. In Ghana, according to Oppong and Fobi (2019), all special schools for the Deaf use signing in communication, using the Ghana Sign Language (GhSL) as the language of instruction and socialisation for both academic and nonacademic activities. Over 60% of all teachers in special schools for the Deaf in Ghana are professionally qualified to teach the Deaf. About 5% of the professional teachers are themselves Deaf. `

In the Southern African region, a few studies have been carried out, including Mpuang, Mukhopadhyay and Malatsi (2015) in Botswana, Mandyata and Kamaukwemba (2018) in Zambia, Poelane (2017) in South Africa. Mpuang, Mukhopadhyay and Malatsi (2015) carried out a study on Sign Language as a medium of instruction in Botswana primary schools. The descriptive phenomenological study investigated the teachers' experiences of using Sign Language for Deaf learners. From the study findings, four themes emerged, which were teaching Deaf learners, teachers of Deaf learners, use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction, and teachers' preference to use total communication. Although Sign Language was explored as a possible medium of instruction for the Deaf, the study revealed that the majority of the teachers preferred total communication when teaching the Deaf as most of them believed that spoken languages were superior to sign languages. The current study focused on the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools only.

Another study carried out by Mandyata (2018), on stakeholders' views on the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for the hearing impaired in Zambian primary schools, found that most teachers did not use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Instead, they preferred total communication and oral communication. This was done even though Zambia has a literacy policy of Zambia's Ministry of Education (2001), which emphasises the use of familiar language in the early stages of learners' education, which in this case is Sign Language for Deaf learners.



The use of total communication and oral communication, according to learners who participated in the study, confused them because they could not comprehend speech.

In South Africa, a study carried out by Poelane (2017), on the effect of Sign Language barriers among Deaf learners during the teaching and learning process, found that the lack of trained teachers in Sign Language was a barrier to learning by Deaf learners. The study found, from observed lessons, that there was a communication barrier between the learners and teachers because most of the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language. Consequently, Deaf learners were unable to participate in learning activities due to communication breakdowns (Poelane, 2017). This is contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which the majority of countries have signed. UNCRPD (24:3b), recommends that teachers of Deaf learners should be qualified in Sign Language. Poelane's study further found that despite the progress that has been made in promoting and establishing South African Sign Language as the first/natural language for Deaf people, in practice, many Deaf learners were still not educated through the medium of SASL. Many teachers in schools for the Deaf could not sign and they still believed that Deaf learners must learn the spoken languages of the area. The study concluded that Deaf learners were handicapped in this way by teachers and a system that failed to recognise language as a basic human right.

Although the majority of countries have signed conventions and declarations and have policies supporting the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, their implementation is yet to effectively take place as shown by most of the findings. A descriptive survey research study was conducted by Sibanda (2015), on sign language proficiency among teachers of the Deaf in primary schools in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The findings indicated that teachers of the Deaf in Bulawayo lacked Sign Language proficiency. The study concluded that learning by Deaf learners in primary schools in Bulawayo was significantly compromised owing to a lack of effective communication between teachers and the learners. The study also concluded that learning by Deaf learners in schools would remain a dream as long as the teachers were not proficient in Sign Language, which is their first language. The current study intended to find out the extent to which teachers were equipped to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. According to Saetern (2005), the government clearly and carefully

formulated policies that could help provide the support, direction, parameters and guidelines needed to implement an effective Deaf education policy in the country.

The Zimbabwe Constitution Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013, Chapter 1, Section 6, Subsection 1, recognises Zimbabwean Sign Language as one of the sixteen official languages of the country. Meanwhile, the language policy in Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Amended Act (2006), Section 62, states that, prior to the 4th Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best and Section 62:5 states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf and hard of hearing students. According to the Zimbabwean Sign Language Bill (2015), the government's ministries and departments responsible for education at all levels in Zimbabwe shall ensure that all public and private institutions responsible for, or involved in, Deaf education in Zimbabwe shall use Zimbabwean Sign Language (ZSL) as the medium of instruction in Deaf education. It also states that ZSL shall be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for Deaf learners, which is in line with Article 24: 3(b) of CRPD (2006). On December 13, 2006, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stated that Deaf people are entitled to communicate using Sign Language. Since international policies are employed at the state level, Zimbabwe becomes a signatory of this Convention.

In Zimbabwe, some studies have been conducted concerning Deaf learners, including Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (2017), Musengi, Ndofirepi and Shumba (2012), Mutswanga and Sithole (2014), Fungai (2017), and Musengi and Chireshe (2012). However, none of these studies addressed the area of the factors that have influenced the implementation of Sign Language in the country. The Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (2017) produced a paper on the situation of Deaf learners in Zimbabwe's schools by focusing on the implementation of Sign Language in teaching Deaf learners in Zimbabwean schools. However, the Deaf Trust focused on Zimbabwean resource units and special classes, whilst the current study examines the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. This is because special schools are considered centres of excellence in Deaf education, since they are expected to provide excellent approaches to providing quality education services to Deaf learners.

A study by Musengi, Ndofirepi and Shumba (2012), focused on challenges and opportunities for trainee teachers in special schools in Zimbabwe. However, they did not evaluate those factors that influence the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks. Mutswanga and Sithole's (2014) study focused on hearing people and their views on Sign Language learning in Zimbabwe. Another study by Mashawi (2017) was on factors affecting the acquisition of Sign Language by learners with hearing impairment in Zimbabwe's regular primary schools. The study found that learners with hearing impairment performed poorly due to communication problems. The study findings further indicated that teachers lacked requisite Sign Language proficiency and, hence, the learners faced problems in grasping the structure of language and concepts taught by teachers who were not competent in Sign Language. The study focused on regular primary schools but ignored special schools. The study also focused on factors that affected the acquisition of Sign Language by learners with hearing impairment but did not say anything about the existing policies. These gaps in the reviewed literature indicate that there is a need for further research, specifically on what influences the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. Musengi and Chireshe (2012) observed that specialist teachers in Zimbabwe were unable to sign many abstract concepts and, as a result, they ended up using the wrong medium of instruction. The researcher of the current study, therefore, sought to determine the factors that influence the implementation of policies promoting the use of Sign Language as a medium of teaching for Deaf learners.

Sign Language was yet to be introduced as one of the main subjects to be taught even though the curriculum policy in primary and secondary schools (Secretary for Education, 2002) identifies Sign Language as one of the languages that should be taught in schools (Musengi, 2014). Many indigenous languages that have been introduced in Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution were also introduced as academic subjects, unlike Sign Language. A study by Mashawi (2017) found that there was no syllabus for Sign Language in the schools, so planning for teaching and using Sign Language in the schools was difficult. Studies by Musengi and Chireshe (2012), Musengi et al. (2012), Mutswanga and Sithole (2014), and Mashawi (2017), among others, focused on a few isolated factors. It is against this background that the current study deemed it necessary to cover various unknown factors by conducting research that establishes what influence the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the Zimbabwe Government having recognized Sign Language as a legitimate language, elevated its status in education and its adoption of international conventions, declarations and policies on the rights of people with disabilities, the process of integrating Sign Language into the official curriculum is yet to be completed. As demonstrated in the reviewed studies, Sign Language was rarely used in Zimbabwean special schools, despite the government's circulars on its implementation in education, which were sent to the schools in the country. For instance, a policy directive was issued by the Secretary for Education, through Circular 3 of 2002 to all primary and secondary schools which recommended that sign language should be taught in all schools in the country. Additionally, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment Act No. 15 (2019) Section 62:1a, states that every school shall endeavour to teach all the officially recognized languages in schools, while Section 62: 1c states that all schools should ensure that the mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction in the lower grades. Therefore, since ZSL is one of the 16 officially recognized languages in Zimbabwe, it should also be taught like any other officially prescribed language and be used as a medium of instruction in schools. According to Zimbabwe National Disability Policy (2021), in order for ZSL to be taught as a subject and to be used as a medium of instruction, there should be qualified ZSL teachers. Despite all these regulatory frameworks which support the use of ZSL as the medium of instruction, nothing appears to be happening yet to fulfil the requirements of the circular policies. ZSL is neither a formally taught curriculum subject nor medium of instruction in Zimbabwean schools, including in the schools for the Deaf, and yet Deaf learners are expected to learn the same materials and perform the same as their hearing counterparts (Matende et al., 2021). According to the Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT), while the Primary and Secondary Education Ministry in its Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 (CFPSE) has made the syllabi for Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Tshivenda, Kalanga Nambya, Sotho, Shangani and many other local languages, the CFPSE is conspicuously silent on the implementation of ZSL regulatory frameworks (DZT, 2018).

### **1.4 Main Research Question**

What are the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf?

## **1.5 Research Sub-questions**

The study sought to answer the following research sub-questions:

1.5.1 How are Sign Language regulatory frameworks implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf?

1.5.2 What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf?

1.5.3 To what extent are teachers equipped in their profession to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf?

1.5.4 What strategies could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf?

## **1.6 Objectives of this Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1.6.1 Examine how Sign Language regulatory frameworks are being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

1.6.2 Analyze the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

1.6.3 Find out the extent to which the teachers are equipped in their profession to teach Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

1.6.4 Explore the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

## **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

This empirical study sought to examine the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks only in formally registered special schools with relatively large populations of Deaf learners, whose ages cut across from early childhood to teenagers. These schools were established before independence in 1980 in four provinces, which are Harare, Masvingo, Midlands, and Bulawayo. The selected special schools for the Deaf did not include the many country-wide resource units for Deaf learners and early childhood development centers for the Deaf, such as Nzeve in Mutare, that were established post-independence and are, therefore, relatively new and may, therefore, have shorter Sign Language traditions. The focus was on capturing how the rich

and long Sign Language traditions in formally registered special schools for the Deaf may be influencing implementation of current Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Therefore, this research was limited to formally-registered special schools with a long history of enrolling Deaf learners, since before independence in 1980. The researcher chose Grades One to Grade Three teachers because the Amended Education Act of 2006, Section 62, requires that learners in those classes should be taught using their mother tongue. In addition, many researchers, including Ngobeni, Maimane and Rankhumise (2020), Stemela-Zali, Kathard and Sefotho (2022) and Alzahrani (2022), argue that the most sensitive period for language learning is when children are young.

### 1.8 Limitations of the Study

Due to the small sample used in the study, the results might not be adequate to be generalized beyond the specific population from which the sample was taken. The findings of the study may, therefore, not be generalized to all the resource units and early childhood development centres for the Deaf since the delivery of teaching and learning Sign Language may have been influenced by the critical mass of Deaf learners in the large schools. In addition, this study was restricted to national language laws, language-in-education policies, specifically the use of mother tongue instruction, with special reference to natural Sign Language.

### 1.9 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by two theories, which are Cognitive Theory by Spillane, Reiser and Remer (2002), and Communication Theory by Goggin, Bowman, Lester and Toole (1990). Spillane, Reiser and Remer (2002) believe that Cognitive Theory plays a significant role in policy implementation. Since policy aims to bring about behavioural change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers on the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks at local and individual levels, it is required that the cognitive dimension should also be understood. The success of implementation of the policies ultimately depends on the way people perceive, make sense of, and act on, policy provisions. In this case, it depends on how teachers and other policy implementers understand the Amended Education Act (2006), and other policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners since their beliefs and attitudes may affect how they implement the policy.

According to Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002), before acting, agents make sense of policy signals. The more this sense-making is aligned with the policy intention, the more the policy will achieve the envisaged outcomes. Spillane et al.'s (2002) Cognitive Theory argues that teachers and other stakeholders get confused by unclear policy goals and unspecified means of implementation. These experiences may affect how they implement the policy. Teachers will get confused by the policy goals and by the means of achieving the goals. After all, they are not stipulated in the policy.

According to Spillane et al.'s (2002) Cognitive Theory, local implementing agents do not simply act on policy provisions like docile bodies; rather, they interpret the policy and try to work out the practical demands that the policy puts on them before actually acting on it. Interpretation and understanding of the policy provisions is a cognitive process in which implementing agents must first understand what it is that the directive is asking them to do (Spillane et al., 2002). The above quotation seems to suggest that policy implementation is only possible if the responsible authority knows what is needed before they implement the policy; otherwise, they will face a lot of challenges in implementing the policies. In this scenario, implementers should be aware of their roles in the implementation of the policy. Strategies used by the government to formulate ZSL policies and ensure their implementation need to be supported by teachers and others who need to be knowledgeable about what they are supposed to do. Teachers and other stakeholders could only be knowledgeable about what they were supposed to do through capacity development by the government such as training in Sign Language.

Besides the Cognitive Theory, Goggin, Bowman, Lester and Toole (1990) also observe that the use of Communication Theory was important in the process of policy implementation. Goggin et al. (1990) observe that if attention was given to how a policy message was communicated then local discretion, interpretation, and appropriation became an active part of the system rather than obstacles to be overcome.

According to Goggin et al. (1990), education must be designed to be coherent, justifiable, and legitimate. The policy must be coherent in that it should make sense and be easily understood for

it to be implemented. Without coherence, individuals may inappropriately interpret and comprehend the policy. Lack of coherence in the Amended Education Act of 2006 can lead to different interpretations of the policy and this will result in its being implemented differently in Zimbabwean special schools. However, a significant change was realized in how teachers were able to make sense of the curriculum, not by imposing it and expecting them to implement it (Banegas, 2019).

Goggin et al. (1990) observe that policy should be justifiable in that there must be a good reason why schools and teachers should implement the given policy. They argue that, if a teacher asks why they should do something, the content of the policy needs to provide that answer, and the answer needs to be more than because it was the government's mandate. Without justification, teachers would ignore the implementation of the policy. Lack of justification on why teachers should use Sign Language in teaching Deaf learners instead of employing total communication may lead to non-implementation of the policy.

The policy must be legitimate in that it should be perceived as credible and the right thing to do. The idea that a policy must be legitimate is related to Goggin et al.'s (1990) use of Communication Theory to explain the policy implementation process. They point out that the credibility of policy requires that how the policy message is communicated be written in law or regulations. The Amended Education Act of 2006 has a referential goal, whose recommendation is the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. However, how the goal should be achieved is not communicated in the policy and this may lead to failure in the implementation of the policy.

Goggin et al. (1990) observe that to facilitate the communication of policy, time and resources must be provided for individuals to talk about, and understand, a given policy. In this study, the time and resources for teaching Sign Language should be provided since the learners are visualizers who cannot learn through abstract presentations. This concurs with Spillane et al.'s (2002) Cognitive Theory which states that implementers should, first of all, understand what they are supposed to implement. Without their understanding of the what, the why and the how they should implement the policies, it will remain unlikely that the Sign Language regulatory frameworks will effectively be implemented in the Zimbabwean Education system. These two

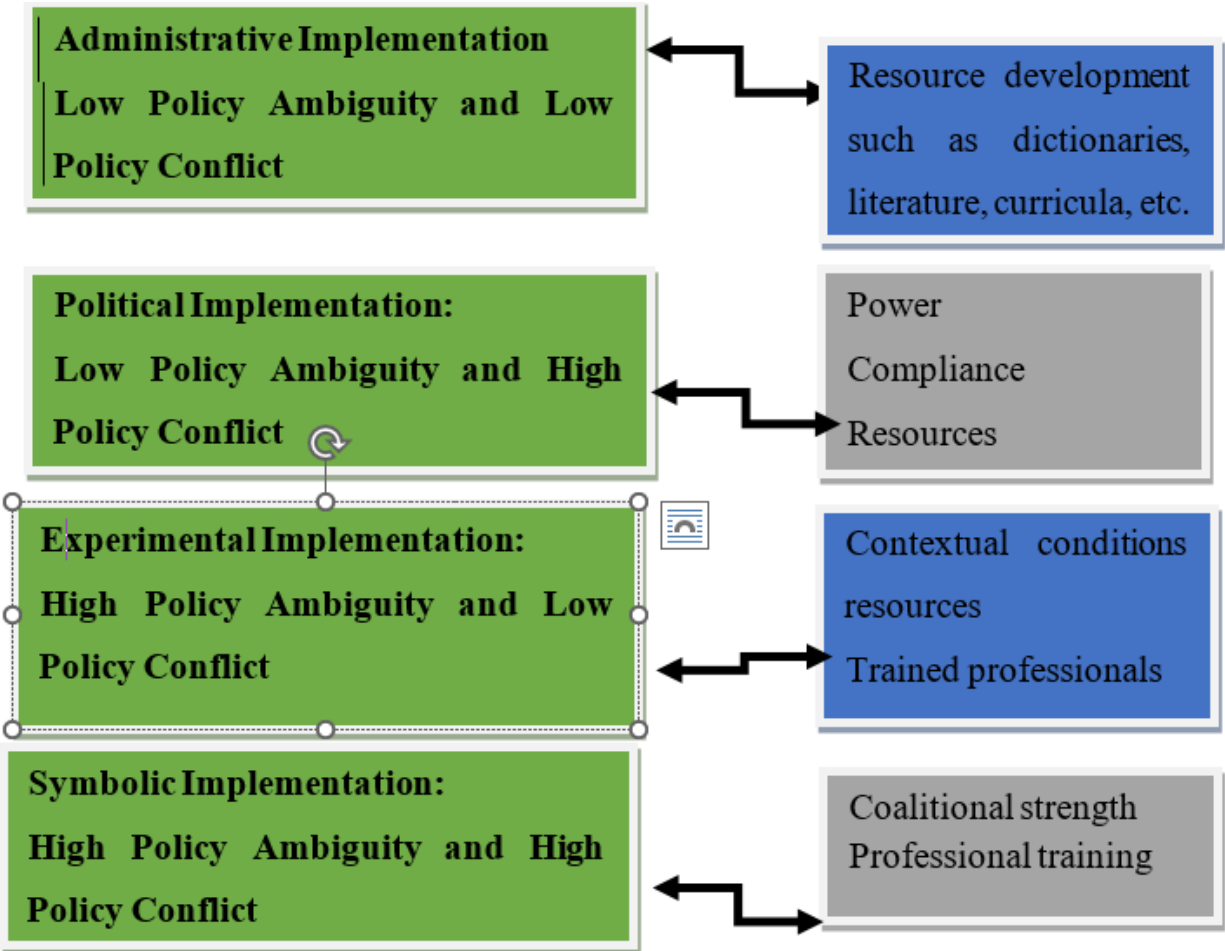


theories were relevant to this study in the sense that they enabled the researcher to find out if the policy implementers were knowledgeable of what they were supposed to implement (Spillane et al., 2002). The foregoing arguments demonstrate that policy implementation is only possible if the responsible authority knows what is needed before they implement the policy; otherwise, they will face a lot of challenges in implementing the Regulatory Frameworks

## **1.10 Conceptual Framework**

### **1.10.1 Model of Implementation Conceptual Bases**

Building an effective model of implementation requires a careful evaluation of a policy's characteristics. The current study was guided by Matland's (1995) Ambiguity - Conflict Model of Policy Implementation. Matland (1995) proposes that to assess policy success, it is necessary to understand the goals of those developing a specific policy and the extent to which those goals are based on explicit expressions of values. The model classifies policies along two axes: conflict and ambiguity. Conflict refers to the potential and actual conflict between goals as well as how goals are met. Ambiguity refers to how far the goals and means of achieving them are clear. Based on this, Coleman et al. (2020) argue that approaches to the implementation of public policy are dependent on the nature of the goals of the specific policy. This study focused on four models of implementation paradigms, which are low conflict, low ambiguity (administrative implementation), low policy ambiguity and high policy conflict political implementation, high policy ambiguity and low policy conflict (experimental implementation) and high conflict high ambiguity (symbolic conflict). Before considering the four perspectives individually, the attributes by which policies are to be differentiated, ambiguity and conflict need to be discussed. The Ambiguity-Conflict model is presented in Figure 1.1 as a contingency model that attempts to provide a comprehensive and coherent basis for understanding policy implementation.



**Figure 1.1: Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix Policy Implementation Processes**

Conflict in Matland’s model does not necessarily mean conflict in its everyday sense of overt opposition or political disputes (Coleman et al., 2020). Here, conflict according to Coleman et al. (2020), refers both to potential conflict between goals, and conflict in how the goals are met. As most policy programmes have multiple associated goals, this element refers to how far the stated goals are incompatible with each other. For example, if one goal is achieved, another becomes impossible or the means of achieving those goals are incompatible with each other (Coleman et al., 2020). Therefore, a policy might have broad political support but still have a high incidence of conflict because the goals set out are incompatible with one other. For example, Hordern (2015) notes that ‘when different parties need to work together and do not see mutual benefit, or agree on a vision, then conflict may arise’. The MoPSE recommends that specialist teachers of the Deaf should use ZSL as a medium of instruction in teaching the Deaf but the specialist teachers might

not see the mutual benefit of teaching the Deaf learners using ZSL. These differences might result in conflict between the MoPSE and the specialist teachers for the Deaf.

According to Matland (1995), conflict plays a central role in distinguishing among decision-making models. When a conflict exists, actions change and actors resort to bargaining mechanisms such as side payments, log rolling, and oversight, to reach agreements and hold coalitions together. Coercive methods of ensuring compliance are used. Actions tend to be the result of a long bargaining process. The bargaining process does not lead to an agreement on goals; rather, it focuses entirely on reaching an agreement on actions (means). Often the process culminates in no action because actors are unable to reach an agreement.

For a conflict to exist, there must be interdependence of actors, an incompatibility of objectives, and a perceived zero-sum element to the interactions. Disputes over policy means can develop over jurisdictional issues or over the substance of the proposed means for reaching the goals. For example, mother tongue instruction may be an agreed-upon goal. Nevertheless, the administrators and the teachers may prefer very different means to carry out the agreed-upon policy. The intensity of conflict increases with an increase in the incompatibility of concerns, and with an increase in the perceived stakes for each actor. Policy conflict directly affects the ease of access to the implementation process. At low levels of conflict, access is relatively easy, while at high levels of conflict barriers to entry are higher. Intensity also rises with conflict levels.

### **1.10.2 Policy Ambiguity**

Policy ambiguity in implementation arises from several sources but can be characterized broadly as falling into two categories: the ambiguity of goals and the ambiguity of means. Ambiguity refers to how far the goals of a policy are not clear (Coleman et al., 2020). Where policy goals are clear, messages sent regarding the policies are easily interpreted, and their implementation is more likely (Cairney, 2022). Thus, the clarity of a policy implementation is critical. Goal ambiguity is seen as leading to misunderstanding and uncertainty and, therefore, is often culpable in implementing failure, misunderstanding and creating uncertainties of how to implement the policy. Policies are unlikely to be implemented when policy implementers are unable to interpret the goals of the policy (Cairney, 2022). In the Amended Education Act of 2006, there is only the referential goal,

which is mother tongue instruction, and nothing is said on how to implement the policy. Therefore, this might lead to misunderstandings on how to implement the policy and result in implementation failure. Matland (1995), however, argues that ambiguity should not necessarily be seen as a flaw. He suggests that ambiguity can be useful, enabling agreement both at the legitimation and the formulation stages. Two types of ambiguity are suggested: ambiguity of goals (what is being aimed at) and ambiguity of means (different ways of achieving the goals).

Ambiguity is not limited to goals; it also affects policy means. An ambiguity of means appears in many ways, perhaps most obviously in cases where the technology needed to reach a policy's goals does not exist. In the policy of Amended Education Act (2006), the technology needed to implement the policy might not exist in special schools and this might lead to policy implementers facing challenges in implementing the policy. Policy means are also ambiguous when there are uncertainties about what roles various organizations are to play in the implementation process. For example, what role should administrators and teachers play in the implementation process of the mother tongue instruction? If workshops were not done to capacitate teachers and administrators on their roles in implementing the policy, then it remains unlikely that the policy will be effectively implemented in Zimbabwean special schools. There have been calls to avoid ambiguity in policy means by limiting policy to those areas with an understanding of how actions occur and those areas with known instrumental means to attain desired goals. In the 2006 Amended Education Act, the teachers and administrators can face difficulties in understanding the means to attain the policy requirements since the policy is silent on the means to be used to achieve the goals. The implementation process not only provides an opportunity to learn new methods but also an opportunity to reach a new goal.

Politicians react to the demand for action by producing action, for instance, involving reacting to the demand by Deaf organizations to make the government recognize Zimbabwean Sign Language as a language for the Deaf. However, they do not consider the feasibility of policy implementation. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that public policy will have a wide range of degree of ambiguity. The ambiguity inherent in a policy directly affects the implementation process in significant ways. It influences the ability of superiors to monitor activities, the likelihood that the policy is uniformly understood across the many implementation sites, the probability that local

contextual factors play a significant role, and the degree to which relevant actors vary sharply across implementation sites.

### **1.10.3 Administrative Implementation**

Low levels of ambiguity mean it is clear which actors are to be active in the implementation. The transparency of the technology makes clear which resources are required, and resource procurement is built into the implementation process. The central principle in administrative implementation is that the outcomes are determined by resources.

#### **1.10.3.1 Low Policy Ambiguity and Low Policy Conflict**

In decision-making theory, choice opportunities where ambiguity and conflict are low provide the prerequisite conditions for a rational decision-making process. Policy implementation is virtually assured, given that sufficient resources are appropriated for the program. The availability of resources such as human and material resources will lead to the implementation of the policy. Deaf learners are visual learners, hence, they cannot learn abstract concepts. In this case, without resources for visualization, implementation of the policy will not take place.

Matland (1995) compares the implementation process to a machine. At the top of the machine is a central authority. In this case, the central authority is the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. This authority has information, resources, and sanction capabilities to help enact the desired policy. Information flows from the top downwards. Implementation is ordered hierarchically, with each underlying link receiving orders from the level above. The policy is spelt out explicitly at each level, and at each link in the chain, actors have a clear idea of their responsibilities and tasks. Information should flow from the national level down to the teacher in the classroom. Policy implementers from the national, provincial, district and school levels should be aware of their responsibilities in implementing the directives of the policy. Successful implementation of the policy relies heavily on the role of policy implementers who directly come into contact with Deaf learners. If the policy implementers, including the teachers, the head teachers, and the District Schools Inspectors are not aware of their roles in the implementation process, then it is unlikely that the policy will be effectively implemented.

When a policy is characterized by a high degree of consensus and the means for reaching the policy goals are known, the implementation process becomes dominated by technocratic questions of compliance and follow-up. In this study, an example of such a policy is the implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction from Grade One to Grade Three. For the Deaf learners, the mother tongue is Sign Language. This means that the training of Sign Language teachers and the use of Sign Language in the teaching of Deaf learners should be done. If the teachers are not trained on how to teach Deaf learners using Sign Language, they will end up using the wrong medium of instruction. Furthermore, the success of implementation will be determined largely by the amount and quality of resources available and the efficiency of the program that is developed to implement the policy.

#### **1.10.4 Political Implementation**

The central principle in political implementation is that implementation outcomes are decided by power. In some cases, one actor or a coalition of actors have sufficient power to force their will on other participants. In other cases, actors resort to bargaining to reach an agreement. Policies whose outcomes are determined by power, for instance, involving forcing their will on the participants, are likely to be faced with passive resistance from the participants.

##### **1.10.4.1 Low Policy Ambiguity and High Policy Conflict**

Low ambiguity and high conflict are typical of political models of decision making. Actors have clearly defined goals, but dissension occurs because these clearly defined goals are incompatible. It is often precisely indicated in the designing of the implementation policy that conflicts develop and vigorous battles erupt.

For policies of this type, compliance is not automatically forthcoming. While there is an explicit policy, essential resources are controlled by sceptical actors outside the implementing organization or by actors actively opposed to the proposed policy. Often both conditions exist. Such a system is more open to influences from the environment than from administrative implementation. The implementation program consists of securing the compliance of actors whose resources are vital to policy success and ensuring that the process is not thwarted by opponents of the policy. Since some of the actors whose cooperation is required may disagree with the policy goals, successful

implementation depends on either having sufficient power to force one's will on the other participants or having sufficient resources to be able to bargain an agreement on means. If the teachers and administrators are to disagree with policy goals, even if power is exerted on them, non-implementation of the policy may occur.

The greater the implementer's authority to require agent action, the more likely it is that the agents will comply with the principal's requests. Agents, however, often are not in a direct line relationship with the implementer, and coercive mechanisms fail to bring about compliance. Many actors have independent bases of power and can refuse to participate without having their missions threatened. This is likely to happen even where there are relatively strong sanction opportunities. Under these conditions, activities are directed toward reaching a negotiated agreement on actions. Agreement on goals is unnecessary; agreement on actions is sufficient. Many bargaining techniques commonly found in the legislative forum reappear. Disputes are resolved through side payments, logrolling, oversight, or ambiguity. Questions that cannot be resolved can be buried in the ambiguous text and left for later resolution.

The opposing sides of a policy question may have previously caused conflict at the policy adoption stage. Supporters agree to vote for a policy in response to political pressure, or simply because it appears to be a sensible policy. The acceptance of Sign Language as one of the legitimate languages in Zimbabwe might be due to pressure from Deaf organizations. Many of these supporters have little interest in the implementation stage.

### **1.10.5 Experimental Implementation**

Outcomes depend heavily on the resources and actors present in the micro-implementing environment. These are likely to vary strongly from site to site. Therefore, broad variations in outcomes will occur. The crucial element is: Which participants are active and what is their intensity of participation? Participants' level of activity in a choice situation depends on the intensity of their feelings, the number of other demands on their time, their physical proximity to the place where decisions are made, and a host of other the policy. Low ambiguity ensures that

monitoring of compliance is relatively easy; attempts at subversion are likely to be caught and swiftly punished.

#### **1.10.5.1 High Policy Ambiguity and Low Policy Conflict**

If a policy exhibits a high level of ambiguity and a low level of conflict, outcomes will depend largely on which actors are active and most involved. The central principle driving this type of implementation is that contextual conditions dominate the process variables.

As a result of policy ambiguity, the implemented policy differs from site to site. The implemented policy may differ from one special school to another. The categories of actors participating, the pressures on the actors, the perceptions of what the policy is, the available resources, and the possible programmed activities vary widely across policy settings. The lack of conflict is likely to open the arena for a large number of actors to participate and to provide those who have intense interests, or substantial resources, with an opportunity to mould policy significantly. The opportunities are excellent for bureaucratic entrepreneurs to create policies to deal with local needs. For policies that have clear goals, it is possible to carry out and use summative evaluations that explicitly determine whether or not the policy has reached its appointed goal. For policies with unclear goals, it is far more useful to use formative evaluations that describe the process and describe the way outcomes are arrived at without an explicit stamp of approval or disapproval.

Policies where both goals and means are unclear naturally fall into the category of experimental implementation. In addition, policies with clear and widely supported goals but with unclear means of implementation take on experimental characteristics. According to the 2006 Amended Education Act, mother tongue instruction should be used prior to Grade Four, whereby Sign Language for those who are deaf becomes their mother tongue. For many policies, the goals are agreed upon and known, for instance, the goal of the 2006 Amended Education Act was to use mother tongue instruction prior to Grade Four. On the other hand, ambiguous policies can breed limited accountability.



### **1.10.6 Symbolic Implementation**

The central principle is that the local level of coalitional strength determines the outcome. The policy course is determined by the coalition of actors at the local level, who control the available resources. Matland (1995) postulates that policies with high ambiguity and high conflict require more involvement of the policy implementers, who include the teachers, School Heads, district school administrators, and psychologists.

#### **1.10.6.1 High Policy Ambiguity and High Policy Conflict**

Policies do exist that appropriately are characterized as having both high levels of ambiguity and high levels of conflict. Policies that invoke highly salient symbols often produce high levels of conflict, even when they are vague. Symbolic policies play an important role in confirming new goals, reaffirming a commitment to old goals, or emphasizing important values and principles. The high level of conflict is important because it structures the way resolutions are developed. The high level of ambiguity results in outcomes that vary across sites. Implementation of the policy may vary across all the special schools. The central principle is that the local level of coalitional strength determines the outcome. The policy course is determined by the coalition of actors at the local level, who control the available resources. Alsubaie (2016) and Jawabreh and Gündüz (2021) point out that for curriculum development to be effective and schools to be successful, teachers must be involved in the development process. An effective curriculum should reflect the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources, and assessments that comprise a specific educational program (Merfat, 2016).

For a policy with only a referential goal, differing perspectives will develop as to how to translate the abstract goal into instrumental actions. The 2006 Amended Education Act has a referential goal of using mother tongue instruction as a medium of instruction, whereby in this study, the use of Zimbabwean Sign Language in special schools for the Deaf is the mother tongue. However, the means to achieve the goal are not mentioned in the policy. The inherent ambiguity leads to diverse interpretations of the policy. The strength of these actors will vary across the possible sites.

Professions are likely to play a particularly important role in symbolic policies. Professional training, such as the training of Sign Language teachers, provides a strong set of norms to legitimate activities and effective problem-solving actions. When faced with a vague referential goal and an ambiguous program of activities, such as unclear means of implementing the policy, actors with professional training are likely to step in quickly with proposals grounded in their professions. In this way, there will be no challenges in implementing the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Professions with competing claims over an area and different standard programs for attacking problems often form the core of competing coalitions. For example, a language policy may have an official goal of improving the learning opportunities of Deaf learners through the use of their language. This policy has a referential goal that may include any of the following sub-goals: use of mother-tongue instruction in teaching the Deaf, increased educational opportunities among actors with different training, and substantially different proposals for implementing this policy.

Policy goals often provide little information to a policy designer about how to proceed. For example, there is little information on how to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks, yet the symbols are sufficient to create significant opposition before any plans are promulgated. The 2006 Amended Education Act does not provide information on how to implement the policy, besides the well-stated goal. This is likely to result in teachers and other policy implementers facing challenges in implementing the policy.

For policies to be successful, there should be low levels of ambiguity and low levels of conflict. Low levels of ambiguity mean that it is clear which actors are to be active in the implementation of the policies. In the implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act, it should be clarified as to who should be involved in the implementation process and the roles that each one should take in the implementation process. Additionally, transparency of the technology makes clear which resources are required, and resource procurement is built into the implementation process.

### **1.11 Definition of Terms**

#### **d/Deaf**

Deaf with the lower case 'd' implies a medical condition, a hearing loss that will compel one not to be able to function within the Deaf community and use oral communication (Munoz- Baell & Ruiz, 2000). On the other hand, Deaf with the capital letter 'D' refers to people who belong to the Deaf community with their own culture and sense of identity, based on a shared Sign Language. Deaf people communicate in Sign Language as their preferred language. In this study, Deaf refers to those learners who have pre-lingual deafness, and who prefer the use of Sign Language rather than spoken language.

In Zimbabwe, the Sign Language of the Deaf community is called ZSL and it is a language that is recognised in the 2013 Constitution as one of the 16 languages that should be used in education (Musengi, 2019). ZSL is the visual and gestural language that is the first or preferred language in Zimbabwe as the distinct linguistic and cultural group of people who are Deaf. In this study, ZSL is the visual-gestural language preferred by Deaf learners in the special schools for the Deaf in Zimbabwe.

#### **Medium of Instruction**

Cummins (2009) postulates that the medium of instruction is the language used by the teacher to teach the learners during the teaching and learning processes. In this study, the medium of instruction is the language used by the teacher and student during the teaching and learning process.

#### **Mother Tongue**

Dekker (2010) asserts that the mother tongue is the language which the child acquires first. The term 'mother tongue' in this study is used to refer to Sign Language because it is the preferred language of communication for, and by, Deaf individuals. Congenitally, persons who were deaf at a young age assert that they belong to a language group, and that Sign Language is appropriate for them, just as spoken language is appropriate for hearing people.

## **Policy**

Petrie (2013) states that a policy is a decision-making process that helps address identified goals, problems and concerns. This implies that a policy should represent the result of a decision as to how best to achieve a specific objective. In this study, policies are the declared objectives that the government seeks to achieve and the principles by which the government and other implementers are guided in achieving them.

## **Preferred language**

In this study, preferred language refers to the language one identifies with and uses the most.

## **Regulatory Framework**

To ‘regulate’ is to control something through rules and regulations, while a ‘framework’ is a basic structure underlying a system or concept (Oxford Dictionary, 2023). In this study, ‘regulatory framework’ refers to the basic structure comprising acts of parliament and statutory instruments, that is, legislation, as well as other national policies that underlie and control the use of sign language in the education of Deaf learners in special schools for the Deaf.

## **Special School**

A special school is a school that provides specialized services to learners with particular educational requirements and is staffed with professionally qualified teachers, for example, a Deaf school (Munoz-Baell, Alvarez-Dardet, Ruiz, Ferreiro-Lago & Aroca-Fernandez, 2008). Special schools are defined in this study as those that educate Deaf learners in Zimbabwe. In this study, the term refers to a residential school that enrolls Deaf learners.

## **Total Communication**

Total communication is when speech and signing are used together. It is used to manually represent English using a sign system known as signed English (Mweri, 2016). In this study, total communication refers to the use of a spoken language such as English, and a signed language, for example, signed English.

## **1.12 Summary**

This chapter focused on the general introduction to the study which sought to examine the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The background to the study has put the issue of Sign Language into perspective and foregrounded the statement of the problem articulated by the researcher's concerns. The research problem highlighted specific issues based on the topic. The purpose of the study outlined the main objectives of carrying out this study. The assumptions section presented the premises held by the researcher in line with the research questions and objectives. In the significance of the study section, the researcher indicated potential beneficiaries and how they may benefit from the study. Limitations focused on the shortcomings of the study and how they were overcome. Delimitations gave the geographical and conceptual confines within which the study falls. Lastly, definitions provided operational definitions of the key terms in the study. The next chapter, Chapter 2, presents a review of literature related to the problem under study, that is, the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on reviewing literature related to the study problem. Since the main purpose of the study is to assess the factors that influences the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, the chapter starts by focusing on the unpacking of key concepts related to the Regulatory Framework for Sign Language in Zimbabwe that supported the implementation of Sign Language in special schools, both locally and globally. The review has been done against the study objectives. However, before engaging in the literature review using objectives, the researcher starts by reviewing the background information about Sign Language.

### **2.2 Unpacking of Key Concepts of Sign Language**

The first modern linguistic analysis of a signed language was published in 1960 (Stokoe, 1960). Stokoe's work formed a solid base for what was to become a new field of research: Stokoe's ground-breaking work on the structure of ASL has led to an acceptance of signed languages as autonomous linguistic systems that exhibit the complex structure characteristic of all human languages (Mcburney, 2001). Kamukwamba (2017) notes that since the famous work of William Stokoe in 1966, Sign Language has come to be accepted as a natural language. Kamukwamba (2017) noted that until then, educators of the hearing impaired had refused to recognize Sign Language as a true language and tried numerous other methods of educating the hearing impaired. It was common knowledge that Sign Language was banned and emphasis was placed on oral methods to train the hearing impaired in speech, while others tried to come up with unnatural systems of signing, such as pure signed English and signed exact English. These systems were manual representations of the English language (Kamukwamba, 2017).

#### **2.2.1 Sign Language Overview in Zimbabwe**

There has been very little research on ZSL. Regional variation is also reported as clearly present, with influences from ASL, BSL, SASL, and ISL. The individual schools apparently developed their own forms of signing that differs from the signing used in the community (African Languages Resource Center, 2022). In the North East, the influence of English is reported and in the South

West of Masvingo, Shona influence is apparent. This variation causes problems of comprehension. The first dictionary of ZSL Vol. 1 was produced in 1990 and then Vol. 2 in 2010. The most recent dictionary (hardcopy) was created in 2011, with the purpose of creating some standardization. There are vocabulary charts of signs for the police, and for HIV/AIDS. DVDs are also present at the King George VIth School (Hammarstrom et al., 2016, Mhlanga, 2011, Musengi, 2014, World Federation of the Deaf and Swedish National Association of the Deaf, 2008). The use of outdated Sign Language dictionaries has led to variations in Sign Language even for users at the same school and when the learners move to other grades they will have to learn new signs for the same word. These variations in Sign Language affect the academic performance of Deaf learners. It is the obligation of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to update the Zimbabwean Sign Language dictionaries in the same way they update regular primary school textbooks, so as to avoid variations in Zimbabwean Sign Language.

### **2.2.2 Overview of Deaf Community and Education**

There are four pioneering, pre-independence schools for Deaf learners in Zimbabwe. The Loreto Mission School (Gweru, Midlands) was founded by Dominican sisters in 1947 and another school at Pamushana by the Dutch Reformed Church. Masvingo School, currently Henry Murray School for the Deaf, was also founded by the Dutch Reformed Church around the same time (Chimedza, 1995, Hammarstrom et al., 2016, Mhlanga 2011, Musengi, 2014, World Federation of the Deaf and Swedish National Association of the Deaf 2008). The Jairos Jiri Naran Centre for the Deaf was also established in Ascot Suburb of Gweru in 1969, while the King George VI Centre for the Deaf was established in Bulawayo in 1971.

### **2.2.3 Overview of Sign Language Interpretation Services**

In 2000, interpreter training was provided as part of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Sign Language Interpreting project offered by the Finnish Association of the Deaf. However, since then, there have been no trained interpreters, but only volunteers. Teachers are sometimes used for interpreting (Chimedza, 1995, Hammarstrom et al., 2001). There is need for a register of persons entitled to perform the Zimbabwean Sign Language interpretation services (Mhlanga 2011, Musengi, 2014, World Federation of the Deaf and Swedish National Association of the Deaf, 2008). However, recently in Zimbabwe the National Disability Act which was enacted in 2021.

According to National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.33.3, persons who intend to provide Sign Language interpretation shall submit their application to the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, who shall issue them with a Zimbabwean Sign language License. Section 3.33.4 states that the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare shall establish and maintain a register of persons entitled to perform the Zimbabwean Sign language interpretation services. According to Section 3.33.8, the use of Zimbabwe Sign Language interpretation service may be requested from the Sign Language interpretation service providers that are financed by the state. While provision of a Sign Language interpreter may be viewed as facilitating inclusion, an interpreter cannot provide direct instruction in Sign Language or opportunities to study Sign Language as a school subject with signing teachers and peers (Kauppinen & Jokinen, 2014). Rather, an interpreter is “a compensatory tool for accessing the dominant hearing classroom environments” (Hult & Compton, 2012, p. 612). However, in Canada, many Deaf children attend school without access to qualified interpreters. School boards who decide that a student requires an accommodation of this nature are more likely to hire an educational assistants with inadequate proficiency in Sign Language (Russell & McLeod, 2009). Despite having policies that support the use of qualified interpreters, Zimbabwe still misses it on implementation as most of the special schools use interpreters who are not qualified since it is not mandatory for the interpreters to produce the relevant certificate as required by the policy. Most of the interpreters do not have the certificate as they are not trained interpreters. The use of unqualified interpreters does not help to improve the academic performance of Deaf learners. Some of the special schools do not use Sign Language interpreters, for they are financially incapacitated to pay for the service, as this is not done by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), despite Section 3.33.8 of the National Disability Policy (2021) stating that the use of Zimbabwe Sign language interpretation services may be requested from the Sign Language interpretation service providers that are financed by the state.

#### **2.2.4 Difference between Spoken Languages and Sign Language**

The difference between Sign Language and spoken language is in the way they convey information. In the modern world, a number of languages are in use. Some of these are spoken



languages, while others are signed languages. These two types of languages are different from one another and should be viewed as natural languages (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972).

A spoken language can also be considered as an oral language. This is because it uses various sound patterns to convey a message from one person to another (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972). These sound patterns are referred to as vocal tracts. In spoken language, there are many linguistic elements such as vowels, consonants and tone. In the spoken language, grammar plays a key role in conveying the message to the listener (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972). According to Bellugi and Fischer (1972), Sign Language is different from a spoken language. It is a language where gestures and facial expressions are used in order to convey information, instead of using vocal tracts to do the same. This is one of the key differences between Sign Language and the spoken language (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972). In every country, there is one or more sign languages used by people. Studies that have been conducted on Sign Language have emphasized that just as oral languages, sign languages are not mere gestures but are complex systems that have specific linguistic properties (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972). Furthermore, most people believe that sign languages have derived from spoken languages. This is a gross misconception. They have to be considered as independent and natural languages that have evolved over the time, just as any spoken languages (Bellugi & Fischer, 1972).

### **2.2.5 Sign Language**

Sign Language is a natural language for many Deaf people. It has its own structure, grammar and rules (Krausneker, Plaza-Pust & Morales-Lopez, 2008). Furthermore, in many countries, Sign Language has the status of first language for the Deaf. Fischer (2015) argues that sign languages arise almost any place where there are Deaf people. Fischer (2015) asserts that sign languages are communicated through gestural/visual rather than a vocal/auditory channel. Since the vast of majority of Deaf children are born to hearing parents, many Deaf children learn sign languages not from their parents, but from peers.

Bragg et al. (2019) suggest that if you want to see the first language of the Deaf, see what they use when they are out of school or when they are on their own; that is their first language. Mutswanga and Sithole (2014) concur with the above sentiment. However, Marshsack and

Spencer (2010) argue that primary school level is a critical period for Sign Language acquisition for Deaf learners. Their study did not, however, focus on the entire primary school grades but only on Grade One to Grade Three levels. Early Sign Language acquisition is the best way to help them achieve success academically (Luft, 2017).

Hiskey (2010) points out that people who are completely Deaf are not capable, and will not be adequate, to fully comprehend spoken language. According to Hiskey (2010), it is difficult for their brains to penetrate spoken language, which is why Sign Language is the most appropriate instrument that will cater for their needs. Mulonda (2013) notes that Sign Language is different from spoken language as it is suited to visual modality, hence it is important to subject Deaf learners to learning in signed rather than oral languages that may not be helpful to them.

Sign Language is mostly presented through signing but it also has manual features, such as facial expressions, eye movement and body features. Many studies have demonstrated that Sign Language is like any other language. Chimedza (1997), in a study on Deaf Culture in Zimbabwe, asserts that Sign Language is a complete language with syntax, semantics and lexicon that differ from other languages, hence it meets the language requirements set by general linguistics. Almost every country has its Sign Language. Although sign languages are not universal languages, there are universal features in sign languages which help make it possible for users of different sign languages to understand one another far more quickly than users of unrelated spoken languages can be (Chimedza, 1997).

Sign Language gives a sense of identity and security to Deaf learners since for most of them life in a hearing world is unclear. They communicate much easier in Sign Language and in a way gain confidence in their learning. Before 2013, sign languages were not seen as proper languages but as crude systems of mime and gesture. This was despite the fact that sign languages had been used for many years by Deaf people. Despite knowing that Sign Language gives Deaf learners a sense of identity, specialist teachers of the Deaf still prefer to use oral methods in teaching the Deaf learners as they claim that Sign Language is not their language, thereby denying the Deaf learners their right to a language.

### **2.2.6 Benefits of Using Sign Language for Deaf Learners**

In a study conducted by Sambu, Otube and Bunyasi (2018), on the assessment of academic performance of Deaf learners in Selected Special primary schools in Kenya, the findings revealed that the use of Kenyan Sign Language to instruct learners who were Deaf led to an improvement in their academic performance. The study was carried out in 5 special schools in Kenya and targeted a population of 369 participants, who included 5 head teachers, 111 teachers and 253 learners. The head teachers and teachers who participated in the study felt that learners' performance, after the official introduction of Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) in 2004, was better compared to performance before that. Additionally, Kenyan Sign Language as a subject was found to be the best performed. According to Chupina (2006), in countries that have adopted to use of Sign Language as the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf, an unprecedented success has been achieved in the education of the Deaf.

Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:2, states that school curricula shall as far as possibly reflect the culture of the people of every language used or taught. Deaf adults are able to teach about Deaf culture since it is their language. This can be achieved through the use of Deaf parents and Deaf teachers as ASL storytellers in the classroom (Leigh et al., 2018). In the same scenario in Zimbabwe, Deaf culture can also be achieved through the use of Deaf teachers or the Deaf community.

In a study by Mandyata (2018), on the views of stakeholders on the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in Zambia's three special schools, it was evident, from the study findings, that most teachers of the Deaf learners did not use Sign Language as a medium of instruction; instead, they used total communication. The above assertion was supported by more than half of the hearing teachers and Deaf learners who participated in the study. The participants observed that learners who were Deaf understood lessons taught by Deaf specialist teachers who used mainly Sign Language than when being taught by hearing teachers who heavily depended on total communication. Deaf learners face a lot of challenges when specialist teachers of the Deaf use total communication as the grammatical structures of the two languages (sign and spoken English) are different.

Sibanda (2018) carried out a mixed method study on the awareness of the benefits of sign bilingual education in the education of Deaf learners which involved 100 teachers and 30 administrators from the schools that used sign-bilingualism. The study found that sign bilingual education brings about better recognition of Sign Language, increases participation and facilitates communication. This implies that there are benefits in the use of Sign Language in the education of the Deaf. The only challenge is that when learners come from home, they will experience different forms of ZSL. This implies that there will be ZSL variance. These variations contribute negatively to learning during instruction in the classroom (Chibwe, 2015). Most studies reveal that the use of Sign Language in education benefits Deaf learners. However, the implementation of Sign Language in the curriculum is still to take place in most countries, resulting in poor academic performance for Deaf learners.

### **2.3 International and Regional Regulatory Frameworks on Sign Language**

Policy documents are very essential, as they provide a reflection of a government's decision-making process, and hold governments accountable for services delivered. Having policies in Special Needs Education is a significant milestone towards achieving various global initiatives to ensure equal educational opportunities for people with special needs, including those who are Deaf. According to De Meulder (2017), the Deaf Association Scotland (2017) reported on how to empower teachers and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education. The main focus was the status and recognition of the Deaf Community and British Sign Language in the United Kingdom. Deaf Association Scotland (2017) recognised that sign languages were equal in status to spoken languages and should be respected and promoted in educational settings by helping Deaf learners to exercise their right to their own language, which is Sign Language (De Meulder, 2017). However, the policy background, according to the study, was not favourable to the maintenance of British Sign Language for Deaf learners. The standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000) made it clear that the local schools were presumed the best place for all learners. However, the Deaf Association Scotland did not support isolation of Deaf British Sign Language users in their local schools. Deaf Association Scotland (2017) argues that everyone has the right to develop their first language (De Meulder, 2017). This principle was agreed on internationally by the UN in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education emphasised the significance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction.

De Meulder (2015) conducted research on the legal recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of the Deaf community and found that Finland was one of the first countries in the world to have adopted Sign Language in its constitution 1995. The constitutional act of Finland (1995) was renewed in 1999. According to Section 17 of the constitution, the rights of those who use Sign Language shall be guaranteed by the act of parliament. In Section 10 of the constitution on basic education (628/1998), it is stated that the language used in a school should be Finnish Sign Language (Report drawn by Timmermans in co-operation with the committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities). In Sweden, the Swedish Sign Language became the language of instruction as well as a teaching subject in 1995 (Chupina, 2006). Since then, special schools as well as mainstream schools do study Sign Language as well as written Swedish.

According to Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO (1994), educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for the Deaf, for example, should be recognised and provision made to ensure that all Deaf persons have access to education in their national sign languages. Owing to the particular communication needs of the Deaf persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or units in mainstream schools (Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO 1994). This study focused on Sign Language as a medium of instruction in special schools. The Deaf Association Scotland recommended that the Deaf Education Policy should be consistent across Scotland. It emphasized that the National Deaf Education commissioning would ensure fair and equal treatment for all Deaf learners across the country. De Meuler (2015) conducted a research on the legal recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of the Deaf community and found that Finland was one of the first countries in the world to have adopted Sign Language in its constitution 1995. The constitutional act of Finland (1995) was renewed in 1999. According to Section 17 of the constitution, the rights of those who use Sign Language shall be guaranteed by the act of parliament. In Section 10 of the constitution on basic education (628/1998), it is stated that the language used in a school should be Finnish Sign Language (Report drawn by Timmermans in co-operation with the committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities).

In India, according to the report by Zeshau, Vashita and Seltna (2005) right from the beginning, the Indian Sign Language programs and training Signed Language teachers had been a matter of high priority in the Indian Sign Language cell. The medium of instruction in the teacher training program was Sign Language. According to the report, the administration of the program has expressed some positive views and plans for future developments. Some of the goals were to recognize Indian Sign Language as one of the modes of communication that the majority of the Deaf use and also to recognize Indian Sign Language as one of the government's approved languages. The other goals included to prepare curriculum material in Indian Sign Language that could be used for subject teaching in the schools. Planning and implementing strategies to increase Indian Sign Language use by the Deaf and teachers of the Deaf and also working towards making Indian Sign Language a medium of instruction in Deaf schools were some of the goals, according to Zeshau, Vashita and Seltna's (2005) report. If all countries could achieve these goals, then teachers would not face any challenges in implementing policies that would ensure the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in Deaf schools.

Through the use of Filipino Sign Language, Deaf persons can acquire an equal and high-quality education. Deaf people can obtain equal education with high quality through the use of Filipino Sign Language (Okabe, 2013). The "K to 12" program and reform of Philippine's Basic Education Discussion Paper No. 425 by Okabe (2013) found that Philippine's Department of Education which was launched in 2011 indicated that the system of education became law only in 2013. Native languages were used as the medium of instruction from kindergarten to Grade 3. Deaf learners also had the chance to use their mother tongue, Sign Language (Commission on Higher Education CHED Memorandum Order No 20, 2013). The Deaf Education Council (DEC) of the Philippines normally consults with Deaf educators in developing the Filipino Sign Language curriculum for Deaf learners.

Amoak (2019), in a study on "Sixty Years of Deaf Education in Ghana", found that Ghana had no national policy document on Deaf Education to serve as a guide for the recruitment, teaching, assessments and learning for the Deaf, although the Special Education headquarters did have a policy statement on inclusive education. However, the policy did not recognise the Ghana National

Association for the Deaf and schools for the Deaf as key stakeholders with key responsibilities needed for successful implementation of Sign Language programs, despite having schools for the Deaf, some of which were established as early as 1957 and the latest in 2012. The study was focused on the years 1957 to 2018. The article used published articles, books, reports and the author's personal experience and knowledge of the Deaf Education system. According to Matland (1995), for a conceptual framework for policies to be successful, there should be low levels of ambiguity and low levels of conflict. Low levels of ambiguity mean it is clear which actors are to be active in its implementation. In this scenario, the Ghana policy did not recognize the actors such as the Ghana National Association for the Deaf and schools for the Deaf as key stakeholders with key responsibilities needed for successful implementation of Sign Language programs. Policies can fail when policy implementers feel they have limited influence on policy implementation (powerlessness) or that policy has little or no personal meaning (meaninglessness) – they become alienated from the policy (Tucker, Hendy & Chrysanthaki, 2022).

In Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) recognises Kenya Sign Language (KSL) as one of the national languages and states that the government shall endeavor to promote the development and use of KSL in education and the country, generally. It is further recognised, in Article 120 (1) of the constitution, that the official languages of parliament are Kiswahili, English and KSL, and that the business of parliament may be conducted in these languages. According to a study by Pakata (2015), on the factors influencing the use of KSL in teaching and learning in public primary schools in Kenya, the use of KSL has risen and developed in the country. Pakata (2015) also found that Sign Language is the medium of instruction for Deaf learners at both pre-school and lower primary school levels. Globally, most countries have accepted Sign Language as a mother tongue and Deaf learners through Sign Language regulatory frameworks. However, most countries are yet to put those regulatory frameworks into practice, which is affecting the academic performance of Deaf learners.

#### **2.4 Regulatory Framework for Sign Language in Zimbabwe**

Policy documents are very essential as they provide a reflection of a government's decision making process, and hold governments accountable for services delivered. Having policies in Special Needs Education is a significant milestone towards achieving various global initiatives to ensure

equal education opportunities for people with special needs, including those who are Deaf (De Meulder, 2017).

Policies and procedures should be regularly reiterated and discussed with staff at meetings to ensure the policy implementers remain aware of the importance and advantages of the policies and procedures (Vilches, 2018). The government should be consistent in the policy implementation. Supervision should always be done to ensure that the policies and procedures are being properly implemented by all policy implementers. It is essential to make follow-ups to ensure that any failure to implement the policy is addressed. All supervisors must 'lead by example' in implementing the policies. Once policies and procedures have been implemented, they need to be enforced. The simpler the system, the easier it is for policy implementers to understand and implement the policy (Shahriar & Khan, 2016). Furthermore, the issue of poor policy awareness among policy implementers is the core problem in policy implementation, mostly in developing countries.

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf has taken responsibility and continued advocating for Sign Language as their birthright language, resulting in the specific mention of Sign Language in the 2013 constitution. On September 23, 2013, Zimbabwe ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities. In 2001, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, through Department of Learners Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education 'Director 's Circular No. 2, had directed that sign languages be taught in primary schools in Zimbabwe. The constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a states that the state shall ensure that all languages are treated equitably and 6:4 states that the state must promote and advance the use of all languages in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language, and must create conditions for the development of those languages.

The language policy of Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Amended Act (2006), Section 62, states that, prior to the Fourth Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best, whereas Section 62:5 of the Amended Act states that Zimbabwean Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf and hard of hearing. The Language policy amendment of 2006 allows teachers to use the learners' first



language in education from the Early Childhood Education phase (Pre-school up to Grade 3). The intriguing question that leads to my exploring of the issue is, why is the government reluctant to implement a language policy which facilitates learning through a familiar language for learners to access the curriculum with ease? According to Acton (2012), Sign Language is a first language, that is, the mother tongue for the Deaf children. This provision, therefore, suggests that for the Deaf learners, Sign Language should be used and, consequently, that primary school teachers of the Deaf learners should be proficient in Sign Language.

The Zimbabwean Sign Language Bill (2015), which was crafted by an advocacy group for the Deaf to put pressure on government, pointed out that the government's ministries and departments responsible for education at all levels in Zimbabwe should ensure that all public and private institutions responsible for, or involved in, Deaf education in Zimbabwe, should use Zimbabwean Sign Language (ZSL) as the medium of instruction, which implies the full implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks. The Zimbabwean Sign Language Bill (2015) also states that ZSL should be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for Deaf learners. The National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.9.10 states that the state should ensure the learning of the Zimbabwean Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community which is in line with Article 24:3(b) of CRPD (2006), which promotes the right to learn Sign Language. The Convention, Chapter 24:3b, states that the state shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community. Chapter 24:4 also states that the governments shall also ensure that teachers of learners with hearing impairment shall be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe also has a policy document guideline on staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that states that there is need to staff centres for learners with Special Needs Education learners, including those with hearing impairment with appropriately qualified teachers. According to the National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.9.22, the state should ensure the employment of teachers and staff, including teachers and staff with disabilities who are qualified in the Zimbabwean Sign Language. The Convention's Chapter 24:3b states that the states shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community. Chapter 24:4 states that the governments shall also ensure that teachers of learners with hearing impairment shall be qualified in Sign Language.

Zimbabwe also has a policy document guideline to ensure the staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a). The Zimbabwean Language Policy of 2006, according to Nhongo (2013), in the study of the national language policy in the 20th Century, lacked enforcement on the teaching in mother tongue for the first 3 years of primary education. The Zimbabwean government and the Ministry of Education have added another amendment Act, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a, which states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and 62:1c states that schools should ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction at early childhood education level. The National Disability Act, Section 3.9.9, states that standard Zimbabwean Sign Language, which is governed by a Sign Language authority, in collaboration with the government, must be established. Despite all these provisions, Sign Language is neither a curriculum subject, nor is it formally taught in Zimbabwean schools, including in the schools for the Deaf, and yet Deaf learners are expected to learn the same material and perform the same as their hearing counterparts (Matende et al., 2021). While the Primary and Secondary Education Ministry in its new Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 (CFPSE) has made the syllabi for Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Tshivenda, Kalanga, Nambya, Sotho, Shangani and many other local languages, the new programme of study is conspicuously silent on the indigenous language for the Deaf (Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT), (2018).

According to Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO (1994), educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction among the Deaf, for example, should be recognised and provision made to ensure that all Deaf persons have access to education in their national sign languages. Owing to the particular communication needs of the Deaf persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or units in mainstream schools (Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO, 1994). This study focused on Sign Language as a medium of instruction in special schools. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education emphasized the significance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction. The Zimbabwean government has a lot of Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for the Deaf and is still enacting more Sign Language regulatory frameworks. However, when it comes to implementation, the Zimbabwean government

is found wanting. Besides enacting more and more Sign Language regulatory frameworks, the Zimbabwean government needs to show some commitment in implementing the enacted regulatory frameworks.

## **2.5 How Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks Are Implemented in Special Schools**

In most countries, the development and recognition of sign languages are influenced by language advocates from different minority groups (WFD, 2003). In agreement with WFD (2003), a study which was done by Honna and Kato (2005), on establishing Sign language in Deaf Education in Japan and that focused on seeking Sign Language in Deaf Schools, found that in 1983, an Osaka group initiated a movement to urge the use of Sign Language in Deaf schools. The proposal they came up with was specific. They wanted Japanese Sign Language to be installed as a subject in the curriculum of Deaf Education. They assumed that by learning Japanese Sign Language as a subject, learners would be introduced to various aspects of Deaf culture embedded in their language. According to the study, the Osaka group did not intend to ask for Sign Language to be employed as a medium of instruction in Deaf schools because they thought that the situation was not ripe enough. Yet by demanding that their language be taught at school, the Osaka Association of the Deaf wished to reject an oralist way of life which was relentlessly forced on them. The effort of the Osaka Association showed that there was hope for establishing Sign Language in Deaf education and, indeed, Deaf Education in Japan is moving toward the use of Sign Language. Furthermore, free schools for Deaf learners were established throughout the country, where Sign Language is the main means of instruction and communication. Whilst policies advocate for the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, this study focuses on factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools.

Swanwick et al. (2007), in their study on Sign Bilingual Education Policy and Practice in Denmark, assert that Denmark does not officially recognize the Danish Sign Language (DSL) as a minority language in the law. However, DSL is included in different official guidelines, documents and curricula. This means the use of Sign Language in Deaf Education, and the use of interpreters in education, are generally accepted and financed by the government. Deaf schools in Denmark have found it important to involve Deaf teachers and Deaf assistants in Deaf Education. It is required

that each class should have at least one Deaf teacher. Sign Language is a medium of instruction in Deaf schools. According to the study, some teachers are now creating new curriculum guidelines for Deaf Education.

Wang (2015) asserts that teachers who are involved in developing a curriculum are better able to align what they do in the classroom with its aims. They understand how a curriculum is shaped and are able to act locally on their understanding that they know how to use and adapt it and to create their own variations (Wang, 2015). Teachers, as the people in the frontline of curricular policy implementation, have a significant influence on how these changes disseminate to individual classrooms and as a result, they are the most important people in curriculum implementation (Villiena, Reyes & Dizon 2015, Adarlo & Jackson, 2017). Hunkins (2017) notes that in spite of the key role that teachers play in curriculum implementation, it fails in many occasions because the people factor is often neglected in the adoption and implementation of the policies. Norris and McCrae (2013) argue that policies formulated at national level may face the challenge of ensuring some degree of consistency in delivery at the sub-national level.

According to Hlatywayo (undated), Sign Language has never been a curriculum subject in Zimbabwe because it was assumed that it develops naturally, a belief which was wrong. Trovato (2013) notes that Sign Language is not transmitted via the family as spoken languages are. Trovato (2013) also argues that Deaf children of Deaf parents are very few, just 5% of the total population. The author further notes that the majority (95 percent) of Deaf children are children who are growing up in hearing families. Section 1, Sub-section 4 of the Constitution stipulates that the state must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language, and must create conditions for the development of those languages. The Zimbabwean government acknowledges Sign Language as a language for the Deaf and also as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, through its Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks. However, the problem is in the implementation of the many Sign Language regulatory frameworks. There is a lack of political will in the implementation of the Zimbabwean Regulatory Frameworks.

### **2.5.1. Human Rights**

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death (UNICEF Finland, 2015, WFD, 2008). They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life. All individuals are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each human person (UNICEF Finland, 2015, WFD, 2008). All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as on the basis of race, colour, sex, ethnicity age, language, religion, birth or other status as explained by the human rights bodies (UNICEF Finland, 2015, WFD 2008). Everyone born in this world has human rights that must be protected by law. According to UNICEF Finland (2015), and WFD (2008), the seven of the most fundamentals are: the right to life, the right to marry and have a family, the right to equal treatment before the law, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of thought, religion, opinion and expression, the right to work, and the right to education. Education is a basic human right for all and every person is entitled to a quality education without discrimination.

### **2.5.2 Education Rights**

Education rights for Deaf learners are a basic necessity for all people. Through education, an individual can gain independence, citizenship rights, appropriate employment, economic power, and self-empowerment (WFD, 2008). WFD (2008) supports the United Nation's (UN's) position that all people, regardless of origin, gender, age, disability and creed, have the right to a meaningful education. The UN and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) advocate for provision of education as a human right for all people. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) (2008) promotes and safeguards the rights of all Deaf people to quality education, starting at birth and throughout life. As for all learners, Deaf learners have the same right to education and full access to quality education. The right to education in Sign Language for the Deaf people is safeguarded by the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities. There have been many studies of attainments of Deaf learners, a number of which have indicated that Deaf children of Deaf parents were more successful academically than those with hearing parents. A study by Chimedza (1997), on Deaf Culture in Zimbabwe, established that Deaf children of Deaf parents have linguistic and psychological advantage over Deaf children of hearing parents. As a result, they have higher academic achievement. The study established that by the end of their

schooling, Deaf children of Deaf parents read about one grade higher than the Deaf children of hearing parents. Chimedza (1997), in the study, argues that the fact that Deaf parents have a Deaf child is no big deal since they also possess it, so this gives Deaf children of Deaf parents an advantage over their peers who have hearing parents. They enjoy normal child rearing by their parents and, as a result, they develop more normally in psychological, cognitive and linguistic areas. On the other hand, the hearing-impaired children born of hearing parents are deprived of any form of language during the most critical phase of language development between the ages 0 to 3 years and, as a result, they need longer time to learn their natural language to compensate for the period they had no access to any meaningful language which they were supposed to use to form concepts (Wakumelo, 2010). This can be achieved if the Deaf learners are taught in their mother language, which in this case is Sign Language.

These results emerged in a study on reading, writing and academic achievement and, in some instances, spoken English. Attributing this to the early use of Sign language in these families, the study concluded that sign language could be beneficial in the education of Deaf children. This study focuses on what influences implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. Jokien (2005), in a study on linguistic rights, found that in France, the FNSF (Federation Nationale des Sourds de France) promotes the use of French Sign Language (FSL) as a first language, with written French as a second language for the purposes of written communication. According to the FNSF, LSF should be available and used in everyday communication with Deaf people, beginning at nursery school, right through the professional life of Deaf people (Jokien, 2005). LSF was the first Sign Language that received a great deal of attention and recognition because of the work of Charles Michel de l'Épée who, in the 1800s, who established the first public school for the Deaf in the world. Today, academic research clearly shows that LSF is a complete language with its own grammar and vocabulary (Jokien, 2005).

In Ireland, the most prominent practical measures to promote ISL have taken place in the education system. It is a recognition of the Education Act (1998), which requires interpreter support services to be provided to learners or their parents, schools or centres of education and include provision for learners learning through Irish Sign Language or other sign language, the provision of in-service training in ISL for all teachers in the special schools for Deaf learners, and the

provision/employment of Deaf people as Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) in classes in certain schools to act as communication workers and assist the hearing class teachers to mediate parts of the curriculum for the Deaf sign language dependent learners. The Centre for Deaf Studies, which was established by the government in November (2001), was to focus on training ISL tutors and ISL/English interpreters. This was an important development, as there were few professional ISL/English interpreters in the country.

The right to education is clearly and explicitly stated in the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention, Chapter 24:3b, states that all states shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community. Chapter 24:4 also states that the governments shall also ensure that teachers of learners with hearing impairment shall be qualified in Sign Language. Also, Zimbabwe has policy document guidelines on staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that state that there is need to staff centres for learners with special needs, including those with hearing impairment, with appropriately qualified teachers. Reports have also indicated that 90% of children with disabilities, including those who are Deaf, were not attending school due to lack of human and material resources. Due to lack of Sign Language in public institutions, Deaf people have continued to lose out socially, politically and economically.

Nyangairi (in press) argues that access to services and opportunities through the use of Sign Language would make the Deaf equal to all. This is particularly important as the country strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The author observes that Zimbabwe has progressive constitutional provisions through which, if implemented, people who are Deaf will live more fulfilling and prosperous lives. Nyangairi (in press) also discloses that the Deaf Zimbabwe Trust was pursuing legislative changes and has been courting legislators and other members of the executive in its push to have legislation on Zimbabwean Sign Language introduced in parliament. The Executive Director of the organization adds that, the Disability Act is under review, creating an opportunity for more progressive changes to be done. Statistics indicate that Zimbabwe had 85 964 Deaf children and over 90 percent of these children were not in school. In September 2013, Primary and Secondary Education Minister Dokora said that only 2 261 Deaf children were receiving education in the country. Deaf Zimbabwe Trust joined the global Deaf

Community in commemorating the International Week for the Deaf under the theme "With Sign Language, I Am Equal" during the period 19-25 September.

The theme drew attention to Sign Language as a vehicle through which the Deaf could fully participate as citizens equal to all. Sign Language was increasingly taking centre stage in Deaf issues globally. Most notable was the move by the Deaf Community in South Africa to take to the streets in a peaceful protest to have Sign Language recognised as one of South Africa's official languages. DZT advocates for the right to quality education for Deaf learners, arguing that educational outcomes of Deaf learners are poor as a result of a number of factors, such as language barriers and lack of appropriate accommodations in assessments. Deaf learners must have access to equal and quality education, like all children. Deaf learners have the right to expect that their needs and human, linguistic and educational rights are respected and supported by educational authorities, in full compliance with international policy statements, national legislation and national curricula. Deaf children are born with the same basic capacities for learning and language as all children; they can, and should, reach their full potential with appropriate, visual, quality educational programmes and support.

Education Amendment Act of Zimbabwe (2006) describes the languages to be taught in schools. Sub-Section 62.5 of the Amendment Act states that Sign Language should be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf and the hard of hearing. Wakumelo (2009) observes that sign language gave Deaf learners normal academic development, hence teachers who were assigned to teach the Deaf learners needed not only to be trained in Special Education as in most cases, but also Sign Language, to enable them to communicate effectively with learners. According to Wakumelo (2009), sign languages bridge the communication gap and creates an emotionally-secure social and learning environment. In this respect, the Zambian government in 2003 embarked on a language policy. According to the instructional policy, learners are supposed to be taught literacy in their familiar language between Grades 1 and 4, in this case Sign Language for Deaf learners, before their exposure to a new language.

WFD (2008) advocates, promotes and safeguards educational rights for all Deaf people of all ages. The term 'Deaf people' includes a wide spectrum of people with hearing differences, from



moderate to profound, from various backgrounds, races, ages, creeds, ethnicities, and philosophies, and with different levels of linguistic variables. WFD (2008) emphasizes respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity as humanity as stated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Deaf children are part of human diversity and are entitled to respect for their evolving capacities and for their right to preserve their identities. These principles shall include, in all spheres of education of Deaf learners: school legislation, curricular, learning materials, teacher education, school subjects and school practices. Regardless of the age of the learner, there are some common denominators that must be considered in planning and implementing successful educational programmes for, and with, Deaf learners.

## **2.6 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks**

In order to better understand how to improve policy support, it is, first of all, instructive to appreciate the nature of policy failure logically and the reasons why things go wrong. This should help to guide the search for potential solutions (Hudson, Hunter & Peckham, 2019). In the same vein, the MoPSE and the government should identify the challenges faced by policy implementers to enhance the effective implementation of the policies. Akoth (2021) notes that hearing teachers at Uganda School for the Deaf, though they have UgSL skills, lack competency and fluency. Similarly, in Kenya, according to Mweri (2016), most teachers for the deaf are mostly competent in their various teaching subjects but handicapped in terms of the language to use so as to pass the knowledge to the Deaf children. The teachers, therefore, need to be equipped with KSL skills for them to be effective in their job. As a result of the challenge of being linguistically handicapped, specialist teachers of the Deaf prefer the use of oral language or a combination of oral and visual communication in classroom instructions. In the classroom situation, such educators fail to effectively explain concepts to Deaf learners and to ensure that they have an understanding of the course material, due to communication breakdown. Mweri (2016) notes that in Kenya, the teachers approach their teaching responsibilities through oralism, an approach that stems from a negative view of deafness and the Deaf. People who hold this school of thought have always seen the Deaf as a people who have a deficit in that they cannot talk. Thus, the oralist approach insists on teaching them how to talk. Garton and Graves (2014) argue that teachers should be taught on how to adapt the curriculum according to who their students are, the resources they have, and the culture of their classrooms. In this scenario, it implies adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of Deaf learners.

However, most teachers are not taught how to adapt materials (Graves & Garton, 2014). The participants in the above authors' study postulated that most teachers do not know Sign Language. They only write notes on the board and ask learners to copy without explaining them. Very few teachers show knowledge of Sign Language. Kamukwemba (2017) explains that there were inadequacies in the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction, a situation which led to failure by teachers to operate effectively in Sign Language. Many research findings also revealed that students can perform better at school when they learn through their mother tongue or first language (Heugh et al., 2017).

According to Banda (2021), these students who are hearing impaired are also taught by hearing teachers who are also not native signers. They do not get exposure to Deaf role models who are native signers. The concern was attributed to teacher training institutions preparing teachers of the Deaf. Most teacher participants in Banda's study complained that Sign Language courses offered at two key teacher education institutions, the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE), lacked content as well as practical skills related to activities in Sign Language. It was this situation that led to graduate teachers failing to effectively use Sign Language alone as a medium of instruction. The lack of Sign Language qualifications for specialist teachers of the Deaf led to them using oral or total communication for the Deaf learners, resulting in poor academic performance for the Deaf learners.

Carpenter and Fewell (2014) suggests that there are knowledge, skills and experiences that teachers of the Deaf need to be aware of. Khumalo (2014) asserts that teachers' lack of competencies in using Sign Language as a medium of instruction was a major deterrent to effective implementation of sign language policies due to lack of training. This was because teachers who did not receive training in Sign Language struggled to equip Deaf learners with necessary learning skills. Mandyata (2018) observes that teachers of the Deaf learners much depended on learners, whereby they wrote words on the chalk board and learners gave those signs; thus, the learners who were supposed to be the learners became the teachers due to inadequate Sign Language skills among teachers. Chifinda (2017) postulates that there was an acute problem of lack of enough knowledge in Sign Language among teachers and learners solely depended on it as a medium of classroom instruction. Policy implementers argue that Sign Language could only be used as a

bridge to connect the Deaf learners with those around them and vice versa. It is only a means of communication. The educational challenges for Deaf learners tend to be related to language and communication barriers (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). This is caused by teachers' lack of competencies in the use of Sign Language.

Similarly, in Zambia, according to Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013), some of the minority specialist teachers of the Deaf also viewed ZASL as a means of communication, not as a subject. This might be attributed to lack of competency in the language. Musengi and Chireshe (2012) conducted a qualitative study on the inclusion of Deaf learners in mainstream rural primary schools, whereby twenty-seven participants (2 School Heads, 2 specialist teachers, 8 mainstream teachers and 15 Deaf learners) participated. The study focused on challenges that are faced by the few rural primary schools that include Deaf learners. The study found that all 8 mainstream teachers were incompetent in Sign Language, unlike the specialist teachers. The mainstream teachers faced challenges in teaching the Deaf learners because of a lack of training in Sign Language although, according to the study, specialist teachers conducted workshops in sign languages. According to Chifinda and Mandyata (2017), the poor performance of pupils with hearing impairment was associated with challenges in medium of instruction and inconsistencies in modes of communication by specialist teachers of the Deaf. According to the results of the study, training in Sign Language is a prerequisite in teaching Deaf learners, as only specialist teachers could teach Deaf learners. Whilst that study focused on inclusion in rural primary schools, the current study mainly focuses on special schools for the Deaf in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean Constitution Amendment Number 20 (2013) recognises Zimbabwean Sign Language as one of the 16 official and legitimate languages of the country. Meanwhile, the Language Policy in Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Act (2006), Section 62, states that before the 4th Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best. Section 62.5 states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction. This provision suggests that for the Deaf learners, Sign Language should be used and, consequently, that primary school teachers of the Deaf learners should be proficient in Sign Language. The challenge is that most specialist teachers of the Deaf do not believe that ZSL is a real language. In the same vein, a study by Musengi (2015) revealed that all specialist and non-

specialist teachers believe that ZSL is a defective language. This being the case in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean Sign Language is yet to be given that status similar to other Zimbabwean indigenous languages.

Teachers in Zimbabwe were given the mandate to teach learners with hearing impairment in their mother tongue through the Language Policy Amendment of 2006, which allowed teachers to use the first language in education from the early childhood education phase (Pre-school up to Grade 3). Thus, it is important to investigate what challenges teachers face in implementing a language policy which could facilitate learning through a familiar language for learners. ZSL is placed low in the hierarchy of languages and other subjects as it is perceived as having little or no academic value for Deaf learners because it is not an examinable subject. The government should show its political will by supporting the policy in terms of making available a Sign Language curriculum and the Sign Language syllabus for effective implementation of the policy. It should also examine the Deaf learners in Sign Language as a subject, which is in line with Amendment 62, Section 1(c), which states that the state shall ensure that the language of instruction shall be the language of examinations.

Variation in Sign Language impacts learner engagement and hinders teacher-student and student-student communication (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2013, Werts, Carpenter & Fewell 2017). Chibuwe (2015) notes that the performance of Deaf learners was affected negatively by the teachers' signs which were not the same with the signs used by learners. Furthermore, the study indicated that most learners did not follow instructions due to communication barrier. Chibuwe (2015) notes that the most important factors that lead to Sign Language variations in schools were environment, culture, teachers' competencies, and the type of training institutions the teachers attended. Furthermore, the study revealed that most of these learners faced a lot of challenges at school due to variations in sign language. Teacher-student and student-student communication are major ways of learning in the classroom, especially for Deaf learners. Learners who have difficulty communicating in a classroom setting may likely not take part in classroom activities, which may also affect their learning. According to Forlin, Kawai and Higuchi (2015), teachers who are inadequately trained in Sign Language fail to use it effectively as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners.

Lack of resources is one of the challenges which are faced by specialists of the Deaf in effectively implementing the sign language policies. Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) postulate that policy implementation is affected significantly by the extent to which resources are committed to the policy. They note that one of the excuses that the government of Zimbabwe has given for not promoting and developing indigenous languages, including ZSL, include the lack of financial resources. Financial resources are an important means by which implementers are enabled to initiate, promote and manage the implementation of the policy. Shahriar and Khan (2016) note that the greater the budget and the more efficiently it is used, the greater the chance of implementation success. In the same vein, the above assertions show that financial constraints and lack of political will are some of the challenges that are militating against the successful implementation of the language policy (Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013). Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) assert that the provision of resources distinguishes between language policy implementation and formulation. Allcock et al. (2015) point out that those who work on the frontline know more about the challenges of delivery than national policy-makers. A crucial task for implementation support is, therefore, to tap into the perceptions and experiences of those whose behavior will shape the implementation process. They argue that this support is not so much about explaining legal obligations or the requirements of statutory guidance, though this is important. It involves assessing existing capacity to deliver, knowing what is being done well, what needs improving, and how best to build new capacity.

## **2.7 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners**

Wakumelo (2009) observes that Sign Language gives Deaf learners normal academic development and, therefore,, teachers who are assigned to teach Deaf learners need not only to be trained in Special Education, but also in Sign Language, to enable them to teach Deaf learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Nelson (2015) asserts that the school, educational settings, in-services training, administrative support and availability of support services contribute significantly to the competencies that teachers need in the teaching of Deaf learners.

Deng and Noblitz (2017) observe that those who develop the curriculum are generally separate from those who use it. Developers are responsible for developing a sound curriculum and

materials. Policy implementers are responsible for realizing the aims of the curriculum by transforming it into educative experiences in the classroom. Nelson (2015) states that in-service training courses should be taken into account. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to access diverse expertise in the Deaf world. Their language and training should focus on hands-on experience to enable teachers to acquire the competencies needed in teaching Deaf learners. A study by Yabbi (2013) found that most teachers were not sufficiently skillful in Sign Language. Another study by Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando, (2013) revealed that teachers try to overcome these challenges by learning from the learners, consulting more experienced teachers of the Deaf, and creating new signs for words which are new to both the teachers and the pupils. Specialist teachers for the Deaf should have training in Sign Language and similar proficiencies and competencies. They should also be holders of certificates, diplomas or degrees in Sign Language for them to be competent in the use of ZSL.

### **2.7.1 Competencies that Teachers of the Deaf Need to Teach Deaf Learners Using Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction**

Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) assert that there has been evidence to suggest that teachers who attended teacher training programmes in sign languages and become qualified are more successful in using Sign Language than their counterparts who did not attend teacher training programmes in Sign Language. The goal of teacher training programmes in sign languages is to provide the pre-service teachers with the professional knowledge, skills and disposition needed to assist Deaf learners (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013).

In Zimbabwe, there are policies that support the use of Zimbabwean Sign Language as a medium of instruction as well as a taught subject, such as the 2006 Amended Education Act which states that before the 4th Grade, Sign Language should be used when teaching Deaf learners, the 2001 Education Act which states that Sign Language is one of the academic subjects to be taught, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment Act No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a which also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c, which states that the state should ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction at early childhood education. Despite all these provisions, Sign Language is neither a curriculum subject nor formally taught in Zimbabwean schools, including in schools for the Deaf, yet Deaf learners

are expected to learn the same material and perform the same as their hearing counterparts (Matende, Sibanda, Chandavengerwa & Sadiki, 2021). Chupina (2006) sees the need for the introduction of Sign Language as an academic subject in schools as well as teacher training institutions. Chupina (2006) argues that such a move would enhance the Sign Language literacy skills of teachers and learners. This will be in line with the Zimbabwean Amended Education Act and the 2001 Education Act. Stein (2013) feels that increased use of Sign Language as the sole medium of instruction in the formative stage of Deaf learners has the potential of improved academic performance among Deaf learners. According to the results of a study by Sambu, Otube and Bunyasi (2018), in an assessment of the academic performance of Deaf learners in selected 5 special primary schools for the Deaf, as a subject, the Kenya Sign Language was the best performed subject compared to other subjects. The study found that there was a tremendous improvement in Mathematics and Science performance, which was attributed to the use of Kenya Sign Language in classes to explain concepts. The study targeted a population of 369 participants: 5 head teachers, 111 teachers, and 253 learners. A sample size of 112 participants was selected: 5 head teachers, 57 teachers, and 50 learners. The study by Sambu, Otube and Bunyasi (2018) in Kenya also revealed that the higher the number of years a teacher has used Kenya Sign Language as a medium of instruction, the higher the likelihood that they would come across a varying academic performance of Deaf learners.

Although Sign Language is recognised as an official language, only a few learning institutions offer it as a subject. There are no official facilities to teach professionals like teachers, lawyers, nurses, doctors and police officers to communicate in Sign Language. Training colleges must come up with programmes that train the teachers to deal with Deaf learners and use their mother tongue as a medium of instruction, which in this case is Sign Language. Zimbabwe has only one college, namely the United College of Education (UCE), where teachers specialise in practical communication, while most colleges concentrate on Special Needs Education in general. It is, therefore, important to find out the extent to which the teachers are equipped in their profession to implement Sign Language policies in the school curriculum.

According to Pakata (2015), in Kenya, the Kenya Sign Language (KSL) was adopted in 2004 as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners after various modes were tested out but failed to fulfil the

communication needs of the learners (Kenya Ministry of Education (KMOE), 2004). The absence of a national policy document on Deaf Education in Ghana, according to Amaoko (2019), means that no legal principles guide the recruitment of teachers into schools for the Deaf. Thus, teachers who are not skilled in Ghananian Sign Language (GhSl), or who have no training in special or Deaf Education, are posted in Deaf schools. Such staff postings affect the quality of teaching. According to UNESCO (1991), problems that lead to poor quality education persist because of a shortage of both qualified and properly-trained teachers. UNESCO (2004) postulates that teaching styles and high quality of education depends on the quality of the human resource available and this can be found in teachers. The teacher factor is important as a basis for academic achievement for Deaf learners. Even though Ghana has a National Disability Act Policy document formulated in the year 2000 that acknowledges the lack of adequate facilities for Sign Language programs, little has been done to ensure that the teaching of Sign Language in teacher training colleges is implemented.

## **2.8 Strategies that Could be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

The following sub-section is going to focus on the strategies that can be used to enhance implementation of the policy.

### **2.8.1 The Implementation Strategy**

Implementation strategies can be defined as methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption, implementation and sustainability of a policy (Proctor, Powell & McMillen, 2013). Most often, a number of strategies are combined to form a multi-faceted strategy, such as training, consultation, audit and feedback. Strategies can also be called intervention strategies (Proctor et al., 2013). The implementation strategy refers to the operational plan that guides the process to make policy happen in effect. In line with this, Fischer (2015), confirms that a clear separation of policy formation from policy implementation lists six criteria factors for effective policy implementation. Policy strategies can only be effective if the following attributes exist in the policy: the policy objectives are clear and consistent, the program is based on a valid causal theory, implementing officials are committed to the program's goals and interest groups, and (executive and legislative) sovereigns are supportive. Many public policies do not get successfully implemented, and the



reasons for failure include absence of incentive structures (Béland & Howlett, 2016) and poor communication or policy support (Borrelli, 2018, Hudson et al., 2019).

### **2.8.2 Use of Qualified Personnel as Teachers of the Deaf**

Musengi and Chireshe (2012) noted that specialist teachers who acted as sign language interpreters could not sign many of the abstract concepts suggesting that there was a need to examine the sign language proficiency levels among teachers of the Deaf. Recently in Zimbabwe, the National Disability Policy was enacted in 2021. According to the National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.33.3, persons who intend to provide Sign Language interpretation shall submit their application in the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, who shall issue them with a Zimbabwean Sign language License. Section 3.33.4 states that the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social welfare shall establish and maintain a register of persons entitled to perform the Zimbabwean Sign Language interpretation services. Whilst the National Disability Policy was launched, what remains is the political will to implement the policy.

There is a high possibility that a primary school teacher who is proficient in the learners' first language (L1) will facilitate more effective learning among the learners. Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012) observe that, internationally, the single most important contributing factor to poor literacy acquisition in Deaf people has been identified as the language of teaching and learning. In many schools for Deaf children, this language was, historically, a spoken language, for example French, rather than the Signed Language of that particular country, that is, French Sign Language.

In general, teachers of the Deaf in Africa, most of whom are hearing, lack appropriate training and certification to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with Deaf learners. In South Africa, according to Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012), and DEAFSA (2009) only 14% of the teachers of the Deaf are proficient in South African Sign Language (SASL), and most of them are not trained specialists. As a result, expectations are low and standards inferior. Textbooks and other materials are in short supply. In the same vein, Mulonda (2013) notes that the majority of the specialist teachers did not receive adequate training in Sign Language. According to Mugarura, Ssempala, and Nachuha (2022), in-service training is very important in the life of a

teacher and general performance of the learners. Teachers of the Deaf should be given competency tests to evaluate their expressive and receptive sign skills. Teachers should be interviewed in sign language. Most specialist teachers of the Deaf are not taking any Sign Language proficiency interviews in teaching the Deaf. This results in specialist teachers of the Deaf not being proficient in teaching the Deaf learners.

### **2.8.3 Following Special Education Staffing Requirements**

Different countries have different requirements concerning the staffing of teachers who will be responsible for teaching Deaf learners. In Virginia, the following are the qualification requirements for personnel providing services for Deaf learners or hard of hearing: The personnel providing educational interpreting services for learners using Sign Language shall have a valid Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) Level III, or have a passing score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Written Test, along with a minimum of a Level 3.5 on the EIPA Performance Test or any other state qualification or national certification (excluding Certificate of Deaf Interpretation) recognized by the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as equivalent to/or exceeding the VQAS Level III. Each student shall receive special education services from special education personnel assigned following the Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel (8VAC20-22). Special education teachers who are the teachers of the Deaf shall be highly qualified.

Under no circumstances shall local educational agencies or private special education schools hire interpreters who hold qualifications below a VQAS Level II, EIPA Level 3.0 or the equivalent from another state. The question now is: Does Zimbabwe have any strict staffing requirements when staffing teachers for learners with hearing impairments who use Sign Language as their mother tongue?

In Zimbabwe, this qualification requirement will be in line with the UNCPRD, to which Zimbabwe was a signatory in September 2013. Chapter 24:4 states that the governments shall ensure that teachers of Deaf learners shall be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe has policy document, the Guidelines to Staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education, 2007a) that states that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs with appropriately qualified teachers.

This implies that teachers for Deaf learners should be qualified in Sign Language. However, the circular, unlike other frameworks in other countries, is quiet on how it will test the proficiency of teachers in Sign Language. A previous study at KG VI Memorial School by Mpofo and Chimhenga (2013) showed that there was a need for the schools to appoint a Sign Language interpreter at the school where hearing impaired learners were enrolled and that there was need for King George VI Memorial school to increase the number of teachers with Sign Language skills so that they could complement the other teachers who were not skilled in using Sign Language. The study also suggested that teachers who were not skilled in Sign Language, but teaching hearing impaired learners should be encouraged to get staff development courses on Sign Language. This goes against CRPD, Chapter 24:4, which states that teachers of learners with hearing impairment should be qualified in Sign Language and Zimbabwean's Policy document on Guidelines to the Staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) states that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs with appropriately qualified teachers. Whilst the study focused on one special school in Zimbabwe, the current study focuses on all the special schools in Zimbabwe.

Sign Language teachers and interpreters must be certified by a professional body set up by the Ministry of Pimary and Secondary Education, as is done in other states like Virginia. Nyangani (2013) recommendss the prioritization of funding of Sign Language training programmes, setting up a centre for Sign language research and development, capacitating all educational settings enrolling Deaf learners to become centres of excellence for Sign Language in their communities, and offering free Sign Language training to parents of Deaf children.

#### **2.8.4 Development of Communicative Skills**

Sign Language proficiency among teachers of the Deaf forms the basis for effective learning of the Deaf (Sibanda, 2015). The Department of Learners' Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education has to ensure that a program on Sign Language instruction runs regularly at a convenient centre for the participants to attend. Previous studies and literature have equivocally confirmed that young children who are Deaf learn more effectively when taught using Sign Language. The knowledge and skills of the Deaf adults and the use of a Sign Language dictionary should be enlisted to ensure the success of the program. Kwamuramba (2017) asserts

that the *Zambian Sign Language Dictionary* was introduced by the *Zambia National Association of the Deaf (ZNAD)* as a result of the rejection of oralism in favour of manualism. Foley (2008) contends that in addition to the training of teachers, it would also be necessary to upgrade the competence levels of those teachers who are already in practice, in this case specialist teachers of Deaf learners. Mulondo (2013) notes that the majority of the teachers felt that they had not received adequate training in Sign Language. As a result, they did not have the sign language communicative skills. Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) assert that there has been evidence to suggest that teachers who attend teacher training programmes in Sign Language and become qualified are more successful in using Sign Language than their counterparts who did not attend teacher training programmes in Sign Language. This implies that without workshops, specialist teachers of Deaf learners will not be able to work and communicate effectively with the Deaf learners using sign language in all the activities. Corresponding with the study's findings, the goal of teacher training programmes in sign languages is to provide pre-service teachers with the professional knowledge, knowledge, skills and disposition needed to assist Deaf students (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013). Andrews and Covell (2007) and Wakumelo (2009) observe that Sign Language gives Deaf students normal academic development as teachers who are assigned to teach them need not only to be trained in Special Education, but also in Sign Language, to enable them to teach Deaf students using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Chifinda and Mandyata (2018) postulate that there is an acute problem of lack of enough knowledge in Sign Language among teachers and yet pupils solely depend on it as a medium of classroom instruction. Likewise, Khumalo (2014) notes that teachers' lack of competencies in using sign language as a medium of instruction is a major deterrent in the effective implementation of sign language policies due to lack of training. Lack of training in Sign Language leads to lack of communicative skills in specialist teachers for the Deaf. Chikopela's (2013) study indicated that teachers teaching the Deaf were incompetent as they had inadequate signing skills.

### **2.8.5 Availability of Specialized Personnel in Deaf Education**

Deaf education is the education of learners with any manner of deficit in hearing which addresses their differences and individual needs. This process involves individually-planned, systematically-monitored teaching methods, adaptive materials, accessible settings and other interventions designed to help learners achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency and success in the school and

community than they would achieve with typical classroom education. Adaptation is a natural and needed part of the process of classroom teaching (Garton & Graves, 2014). The authors argue that teachers should adapt the curriculum according to who their students are, the resources they have, and the culture of their classrooms. In this scenario, this means adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of Deaf learners. However, most teachers are not taught how to adapt the materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, Graves & Garton, Mann & Walsh, 2019). This should not be the case. New teachers can learn, for example, how to adapt activities or sequences in the same textbook for different kinds of learners or for different contextual constraints (Graves, 2021). Mandyata (2018) notes that curricula content and textbooks used in Deaf education are the same as those used in the regular schools and, therefore, do not consider the needs of the Deaf learners. Making and adapting the curricula helps them to see curriculum as a tool they can use to support their learners. Many countries focus on training teachers to teach Deaf learners with a variety of approaches and have organizations to aid Deaf learners (McCarty & May, 2017).

As has been stated earlier, previous studies and literature have equivocally confirmed that young Deaf learners learn more effectively when taught using Sign Language. The previous studies indicated that most of the teachers of the Deaf in Zimbabwe lacked sign language proficiency. What teachers at times mistook for Sign Language were mere finger spelling and some distorted signed systems. As a result, the learning of the Deaf learners was heavily compromised due to a lack of effective communication between teachers and the learners (Musengi, Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2012), Musengi & Chireshe, 2012).

In Zimbabwe, a teacher can be called a specialist teacher of the Deaf not because the teacher is proficient in Sign Language, but because the teacher holds a degree or diploma in Special Needs Education. Likewise, in Zambia, according to the UNZA, Sign Language is taught only as a component of SNE, without specialisation in sign language and, as a result, teachers will not be fluent in Sign Language. In the same vein, in Zimbabwe, most of the degree programs do not have a component in Sign Language. Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012) [A3] observe that, internationally, the single most important contributing factor to poor literacy acquisition in Deaf people has been identified as the language of teaching and learning. In many schools for Deaf children, this language was, historically, a spoken language, for example French, rather than the Signed

Language of that particular country, that is, French Sign Language. According to El-Zraigat (2009), the specialist teachers of the Deaf should possess or develop expert skills in the language and should become an important element in the learning environment of the learners. El-Zraigat (2009) points out that the learning of Deaf learners is affected by factors such as lack of qualified and skilled teachers, poor services, and curriculum inaccessibility. The majority of the teachers of the Deaf in schools operate at either the non-functional or novice levels of Sign Language proficiency (Sibanda, 2015).

#### **2.8.6 Availability of Financial and Human Resources**

Financial and technical resources, along with quality human resources, are key factors that contribute to the proper implementation of any policy. Low education funding is, thus, considered a major obstacle to realizing the implementation targets of education policy in Pakistan's educational policies (Majoka & Khan, 2017). A unique problem of education policy in developing countries like Zimbabwe is their dependence on foreign aid and loans to bridge the budget deficit and finance their development plans. The success of implementation of policies ultimately depends on the way people perceive, make sense of, and act on, policy provisions. If teachers can make sense of the policy, they will be able to use it confidently (Banegas, 2019).

Human and material resources are other handicaps in Zimbabwe that could hinder the full implementation of the 2006 mother tongue education policy. Shortages of relevant materials such as Sign Language dictionaries can critically undermine implementation of the requirements of education policies. Thus, it is useful to ask whether the resources necessary for the implementation of the 2006 mother tongue education policy are available. According to Banda (2021), inadequate teaching and learning materials can be seen through limited literature in terms of books that are provided to Deaf learners. For example, the schools under study revealed that there were no learners' books in Sign Language and the signed English form in all the subjects at infant level and that all the books that teachers and learners could use were in word print. It is difficult for Deaf learners to read books in word print. Mapepa and Magano (2018) assert that there is great importance in support services for successful addressing of the barriers to learning for Deaf learners. Mapepa and Magano (2018) also argue that support services need to address barriers to learning for Deaf learners, including provision of appropriate teaching materials. Visual materials

appropriate for Deaf learners include pictures, diagrams and illustrations that are used to enhance their understanding. They also include slides and DVDs (Mapepa and Magano, 2018). It emerged from Mapepa and Magano's study that the resources were not adequate since the schools were not being financially helped by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Another study which was carried out by Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013) confirmed the above findings, that there were limited resources and facilities in special schools to cater for Deaf learners. Lack of adequate resources impacts negatively in the learning of the Deaf learners. According to Birinci and Saricoban (2021), Deaf learners tend to struggle with understanding abstract concepts when the explanation is not linked to something visual, such as drawing or photo. The specialist teachers' explanations should be accompanied by visual materials and visual interactive methods. Correspondingly, Nyawinda (2015) states that the central role of learning materials is to support teaching by making ideas and concepts clear, and learning interesting and vivid. Haitembu (2014) notes that without relevant materials, Deaf learners will always face challenges in their learning. Despite the importance of the visual materials, the special schools are still relying more on donors than the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, for the visual materials.

### **2.8.7 Role of the Department of Learners' Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education**

The Department of Learners Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education in of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is responsible for providing education for learners with disabilities, including those Deaf learners. Appropriate qualifications are required for school psychologists who work with Deaf learners. These include, but are not limited to, fluency in the learners' primary language. A school psychologist's professional role is to help learners, including those who are Deaf, for example, in the assessment of an individual student and designing of interventions that teachers will implement. As for the government, it should move the notion of responsibility by channelling funds such as per-capita grants, tuition and funds from non-governmental organizations to the SPS for purchasing essential materials and equipment. These

visual equipment and materials augment the students' understanding of linguistic skills which in this case are Sign Language skills.

A school psychologist also functions in a supervisory and administrative capacity. School psychologists have other roles, such as the supervision of specialist teachers. They also perform various administrative functions necessary to run a psychological services unit. Additional tasks undertaken by many psychologists involve staff development or in-service training. As school psychologists travel from school to school and consult with administrators and teachers, they might be able to identify training needs common to a school or the whole district, such as recommending training of teachers in the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners. The school psychologists might also get requests from teachers and administrators about their training needs. Such requests may provide excellent opportunities for in-service workshops in which information on these topics is shared and discussed. Sometimes the school psychologist may be the presenter at such in-service workshops. At other times, the school psychologist may be involved in planning the workshops and locating speakers from outside the district.

### **2.8.7 Role of the School Head in the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks**

According to Carol and Chau (1996), as cited by Kalya (2020), the head teacher has a role in enforcing the use of Sign Language in special schools since these are considered the best places for learning Sign Language for Deaf learners. Carol and Chau also postulate that the head teacher has an important role in making sure that the teachers under him/her have mastered Sign Language. The authors also argue that most teachers will not use Sign Language unless they are supervised by their head teacher. Codally and Nystrand (1983), as cited by Kalya (2020), point out that the head teacher should also master Sign Language and teach lessons for the teachers to emulate, and should also draw work plans or schedules among others. The quality of the head teacher is very crucial in determining the use of Sign Language outcomes in his/her school. Carol and Chau (1996), as cited by Kalya (2020), observe that the head is the most important influential individual in a school. Therefore, he/she must have good managerial skills. The head teacher should ensure that the school follows signs agreed upon to be used for teaching in the curriculum and that Sign Language is effectively implemented for the school to achieve its goals (Kalya, 2020).



School Heads for Zimbabwean special schools should be familiar with policies that support Deaf learners. According to Hilligoss (2014), the principals who understand Deaf learners, their requirements and effective practices are better prepared to provide learners and their teachers with appropriate classroom support. The author argues that those principals are able to recognize the importance of comprehensive academic planning, on-going monitoring of progress and data-based decisions regarding student programs. According to Lasky and Karge (2012) principals who have knowledge and skills are committed to facilitating implementation policies and structural integrity in classrooms so that Deaf learners and their teachers can work effectively. How the principal addresses and perceives Deaf learners in special schools have an important influence on how services are delivered in that school.

Curriculum implementation cannot be achieved unless it has been made possible through the supervisory function of the School Head (Bediako, 2019). Furthermore, Bediako (2019) points out that the head can do supervision through allocating time to subjects taught at the school, in this case ZSL for the Deaf learners, providing teaching and learning materials, and creating an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning. Effective curriculum implementation does not take place in a school where the head is incapable of executing supervisory functions. Teachers in schools for the Deaf need School Heads who know more than they do and who are able to lead them toward achievable and sustainable goals through the provision of support and training (Parkin, 2010). Most principals of schools for the Deaf, according to Parkin (2010), have no more knowledge and training than their teachers have, and are, therefore not adequately equipped to guide or empower their staff with expertise in appropriate and effective teaching and learning methods. As a result, the education of Deaf learners is encumbered by a lack of effective communication, as well as appropriate teaching and learning methods.

### **2.8.8 The Role of the Teacher in Reinforcing Sign Language Learning in Special Schools for the Deaf**

Without doubt, the most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher. With their knowledge, experiences and competencies, teachers are central to any curricular development effort (Toghyani, Khorasgani & Rahmani, 2021). Furthermore, Bediako (2019)

argues that better teachers support better learning because they are the most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the curricular in the classroom. The role of the teacher remains instrumental in the success or failure of the curriculum implementation (Loflin, 2016). According to most researchers, there is need to thoroughly train the teachers on their role in the implementation of the policies. The teacher involved in curriculum organization has many roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, teachers want to enjoy teaching and watching their students develop interests and skills in their preferred areas (Khorasgani, 2021). As a result, teachers need training and workshops which are geared toward professional development for them to be able to contribute to curriculum development. Alsubaie (2016) notes that curriculum development can be challenging. Therefore, the involvement of all stakeholders, especially individuals who are directly involved in students' instruction, is vital for successful curriculum development and revision.

Furthermore teachers' involvement in the process of curriculum development is important to align the content of the curriculum with students' needs in the classroom. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) note that, in spite of the key role that teachers play in curriculum implementation, the process of implementation fails in many occasions because the people factor is often neglected in the adoption and implementation of the policies. Without such an opportunity of sharing, policy implementers will continue to interpret policy, but they will do so individually, based on their own experience and this will result in implementation failures. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) also indicate that teachers are among the many factors that determine successful curriculum implementation. Furthermore, teachers, as the people in the frontline of curricular policy implementation, have a significant influence on how these changes disseminate to individual classrooms (Villiena, Reyes & Dizon 2015, Adarlo & Jackson, 2017). In the same vein, Jesse et al. (2016) argue that teachers need capacity development for effective implementation of the policy.

Recent studies have shown that administrative support and professional development opportunities for specialist teachers determine whether or not teachers feel supported to implement the policy (Bakir, Fevers & Hug, 2016). Administrative personnel who present a negative attitude towards the implementation may cloud the perspectives of teachers and may hinder the onset of the implementation. Over the years, many studies have determined the contributions to success and

failure for curriculum implementation and have found that the administrative staff's attitudes and perspectives influence the teacher (Derring & Campbell, 2015). Derring and Campbell also argue that an administrator who presents a negative attitude towards the implementation may cloud the perspectives of the teachers and hinder the onset of implementation. In this case, the use of ZSL as a medium of instruction for the Deaf becomes central in the implementation of the policies of the government in schools.

### **2.8.9 Role of the Deaf Community**

Logsdon (2020) asserts that the Deaf community has a strong cultural component, and some families feel that Deaf Culture should be part of their child's experience from the start. Schools for the Deaf provide an opportunity to be immersed in Deaf Culture. The Deaf community gives the learners the opportunity, from an early age, to form friendships that are not limited by the communication gap and develop friendship that can follow them after they are finished in the school setting (Logsdon, 2020). Teacher-pupil rapport and pupil-pupil rapport contribute to Sign Language acquisition. According to Humphries et al. (2013), the interaction in sign language is promoted by competent teachers and specific language policy. Deaf people often feel a close bond with each other because they face similar problems and share a similar way of communicating, like Sign Language. In the same vein, Kamukwamba (2017) notes that Deaf learners from the urban areas tend to have good experience in signing due to exposure to Sign Language in their environment because they interact with many Deaf people. This helps them to learn many concepts that help them to perform well in class. Furthermore, the situation is even better for children whose parents manage to learn Sign Language in order to communicate with their hearing-impaired children at home. This shows the importance of the Deaf community to Deaf learners. Nieman, Greenstein and David (undated) note that Deaf people play a very important role in the learning of the Deaf learners. Nieman et al. also observe that Deaf learners feel very comfortable in being taught by other Deaf people, for there will be no language barrier. Deaf adults are of great help in the learning of Deaf learners because they understand their needs and their challenges (Nieman et al., undated). When children come to school, they will be having home signs, and the Deaf adults will help them to learn the correct signs at school because it is their language, which is in line with National Disability Act, Section 3.9.9, which states that the state shall ensure that standard Zimbabwean Sign Language which is governed by a Sign Language authority must be established,

in collaboration with the Zimbabwean Deaf community. Szmanski, Lutz, Shahan and Gala (2013) note that there is a lack of qualified teachers and professionals who understand and can meet the diverse needs of Deaf students. Deaf learners also feel comfortable in meeting and communicating with Deaf adults who work at the schools and this boosts their self-esteem (Nieman et al., undated).

## **2.9 Summary of Gaps in Literature**

The literature on factors influencing the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf has several gaps. These include:

Limited research is one of the gaps. There is a scarcity of studies specifically focusing on the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. More research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors involved. The scarcity of studies specifically focusing on the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf suggests a need for more research in this area and conducting research studies that specifically address the implementation challenges, successes and strategies can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders.

Lack of empirical studies is another gap, which shows that existing literature lacks empirical studies that provide in-depth insights into the factors influencing implementation. Thus, more research is required to gather data through interviews, surveys, or observations to understand the challenges and facilitators in the implementation process. Empirical research involving data collection from multiple sources, such as interviews with teachers, students, parents, and administrators, as well as observation of classroom practices, can offer a more nuanced understanding of the realities and complexities involved.

There is a gap of insufficient perspectives, that is, the literature may predominantly focus on the perspectives of educators or policymakers, while neglecting the voices and experiences of students, parents, and other stakeholders. Including diverse perspectives in research studies can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation process.

Cultural and contextual factors constitute another gap. Zimbabwe's unique cultural and linguistic context can significantly influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. However, there may be a lack of literature exploring the specific cultural and contextual factors relevant to Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. In other words, Zimbabwe has a rich cultural and linguistic context, and understanding the specific cultural and contextual factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks is essential. Research should explore how cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes, and language use impact the implementation process. Additionally, acknowledging the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf is crucial for effective implementation.

There is also a gap in policy analysis. There is a dearth of literature critically analyzing the existing policies and regulations related to Sign Language in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, hence conducting comprehensive policy analyses can provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the regulatory frameworks and their impact on implementation. In other words, a comprehensive analysis of the existing policies and regulations related to Sign Language in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf is necessary. Such analyses can identify gaps, inconsistencies, and areas for improvement in the regulatory frameworks. Additionally, understanding how these policies align with international standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, can inform policy development and implementation.

Furthermore, there is a gap in long-term impact evaluation. The literature may lack studies that assess the long-term impact of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Evaluating the effectiveness of these frameworks and identifying areas for improvement can contribute to evidence-based policy and practice. In other words, evaluating the long-term impact of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf is vital for evidence-based policy and practice. Longitudinal studies that assess the outcomes and effects of the frameworks on students' academic achievement, language development, social integration, and overall well-being, can provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators.

Addressing these gaps in the literature is crucial to gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Further research efforts are needed to fill these gaps and inform policy and practice in this area.

## **2.10 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed literature that is related to factors that affect the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. It has discussed the concept of Sign Language and examined policies that support the use of mother tongue in schools. The chapter has also discussed how other countries in the world have implemented the use of mother tongue instruction in the teaching of Deaf learners. The teachers' experience, competencies and professional qualifications in the use of Sign Language as mother tongue instruction in Zimbabwean special schools have been presented in the chapter. Furthermore, the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf have been discussed. The review showed that although most studies focused on Deaf learners and the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction, they did not focus on factors that influenced the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in special schools. Thus, the current study focuses mainly on policies that support the implementation of Sign Language in Zimbabwean special schools, unlike some of the reviewed studies that focused on inclusive education. A review of the literature showed that most of the studies focused on the implementation of Sign Language in regular primary schools and in other education settings but did not focus on policies or special schools. Some of the studies in the literature review focused on the challenges faced by teachers in teaching the Deaf learners and perceptions or attitudes of teachers towards Deaf learners and the benefits of Sign Language in teaching Deaf learners, while this study mainly focuses on the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. The review showed that other studies did not focus on all special schools for the Deaf in Zimbabwe, but on resource units and mainstream classes. This study focuses on all four special schools in Zimbabwe. Although many studies were conducted concerning Sign Language, the researcher found that the studies focused on perceptions, views, challenges and benefits of Sign Language, but ignored the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks component. Whilst other

studies used the mixed method, qualitative and quantitative research approaches, this study employs the qualitative research approach rooted in the interpretive paradigm not the positivist paradigm, as discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study on assessing the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. Research methodology is the science of the various steps that are generally adopted in studying a research problem, alongside the logic behind such steps (Baker, 2016:7). The chapter discusses the logic behind the steps that were taken in studying practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks, the challenges that teachers face and how equipped they are to overcome those challenges. The chapter begins by discussing the research paradigm and follows this up with an analysis of appropriate research approaches and the research design utilized in this study. The chapter also discusses the sample and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, validity and reliability, trustworthiness, data analysis plan and ethical issues that were considered in this study.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

Research paradigm is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used. Denzin and Lincoln (2008), who are the gurus of qualitative research, define paradigms as human constructions which deal with research principles, indicating where the researcher is coming from so as to construct a meaning embedded in data. A paradigm constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how the researcher sees the world, and how s/he interprets and acts within the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Two major paradigms are identified in the literature, namely positivist (sometimes called scientific) and interpretivist, also known as anti-positivist (Smith, Flowers & Lankin, 2009). Positivists, according to Smith, Flowers & Lankin (2009), believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint, without interfering with the phenomenon being studied. They contend that phenomena should be isolated and that observations should be repeatable.

According to Smith et al. (2009), interpretivists contend that only through the subjective interpretation of, and intervention in, reality, can that reality be fully understood. The study of a phenomenon in its natural environment is key to interpretive paradigm. This research used the



interpretive paradigm as it focuses on factors influencing the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks as an unstable reality that cannot be described from an objective viewpoint in its natural environment. These factors could not be isolated and observation of them was to gain an in-depth understanding and empathetic insight into why the participating educators acted in the way they did in relation to Sign Language regulatory frameworks implementation. In light of this focus, the researcher preferred to adopt interpretivism rather than positivism because the former enabled visualization of the world through the eyes of the participating educators who were dealing with Deaf learners. The researcher preferred interpretivism because it allowed close interaction with participants. Therefore, the researcher managed to interact with the teachers and administrators of learners who were Deaf in relation to the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

The central focus of the interpretivist paradigm is to enable the researcher to understand the subjective world of human experience (Smith et al. 2005). This approach, according to Lincoln and Guba (1989), is meant to enable the researcher to get into the minds of the subjects being studied and understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning within the context of the study. The researcher managed to understand what the participants were thinking about the factors that influence the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in special schools for the Deaf. Every effort made in the interpretivist paradigm is to try to understand the viewpoint of the subject being studied rather than the viewpoint of the observer. The researcher managed to understand the viewpoints of the participants on the challenges they were facing in implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools. The study employed interpretivism because social phenomenon cannot be studied like physical objects; they cannot be measured or predicted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Willis, 2007). It is not possible to quantify the subjectivity and individuality of human beings, their thoughts, ideas and perceptions. Teachers' challenges in implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks could not be measured or quantified, but required one to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences. With interpretivist perspective, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context (Cresswell, 2012). In the same vein, the researcher managed to have a deeper understanding of

practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

Interpretivism emphasises the ability of the individual to construct meaning. Interpretivists advocate for the need to consider human beings, subjectivity interpretation, and their perceptions of the world (their life worlds) as the starting point in understanding social phenomenon. Interpretivists seek subjective views of individuals to construct reality (Shah & Al-Bargi,2013). Creswell (2017) explains that interpretivists allow for multiple individuals (participants) who experience similar events to tell their stories without any distortions and/or prosecutions; hence, in this case, the teachers of Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools. The participants in this study managed to tell their stories on practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The ontological assumptions of interpretivism are that social reality is seen by multiple people and these multiple people interpret events differently, resulting in one getting multiple perspectives of an incident. These multiple people comprised the teachers, headmasters, district inspectors of schools and schools psychologists, who interpreted the factors affecting policy implementation differently. Through the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher was also able to explore the strategies that would be proposed by administrators and teachers to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in special schools for the Deaf.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out that the other key tenet of interpretivism is the argument that reality is socially constructed. In this paradigm, theory does not precede research, but follows it so that it is grounded on the data generated by the researcher. The researcher generated data from the informants who were involved in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. This paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology and a naturalistic methodology. Creswell (2014) is of the opinion that reality is best understood from the perspective of the participant; hence, the study sought the views and conceptions of participants on how they were implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Researchers in the paradigm seek to understand rather than explain; hence, the researcher used the interpretivist paradigm to understand the extent to which the teachers were equipped in the

profession, to teach the Deaf learners. This interpretivist research used a qualitative research approach as discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research Approach**

A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study because it enables research in a natural environment of social factors. In this study, the natural environment was the special schools for the Deaf. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that human learning is best researched by using qualitative data. In selecting a research methodology, it is proper to select the paradigm whose assumptions are best met by the phenomenon being investigated. Golafshani (2003) views qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Rather than using a single source, this qualitative research strived to use multiple sources of evidence, so it was a multiple case study. The researcher obtained data from teachers, School Heads and school psychologists through in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation.

A qualitative approach was undertaken in conducting the study. The method enabled the researcher to conduct a research study in a natural setting, which in this case involved the special schools where the policies were being implemented. Smith, et al. (2009) emphasize the point that the primary purpose of qualitative research is, firstly, to try and understand and thereafter, to describe the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. The researcher sought to understand how ZSL policies were being implemented by the participants, through participant observation, before describing the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. This implies that the researcher studied participants in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, the phenomenon, in terms of the meaning the participants brought to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research has been described as naturalistic. The researcher interacted with the participants in a natural manner. The qualitative research provided the researcher with more insight and an understanding of multiple realities of teachers' experiences in the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in special schools for the Deaf. The researcher sought to tell a story about how ZSL regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean special

schools for the Deaf. Through studying people qualitatively, the researcher experienced what the participants experienced in their daily struggles of implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Livesey (2006) postulates that qualitative research helps a researcher to explore the reality people experienced in implementing policies, in this case Sign Language policies in Zimbabwe.

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because the researcher desired to gain a thorough understanding of how teachers and administrators perceived the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools, and to provide details on the perspectives of the research participants. Therefore, the researcher managed to gain a better understanding of practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks by identifying the factors that influence the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools.

### **3.4 Research Design: Phenomenological Case Study**

A research design is a strategy for answering a research question using empirical data (McCombes, 2021). Creating a research design. A well-planned research design helps to ensure that the methods match the research aims and that the right kind of analysis is used for analyzing the data (McCombes, 2021).

Phenomenology is a study that is designed to understand the subjective, lived experiences and perspectives of participants. These participants' personal, first-hand knowledge provides descriptive data which provides the researcher a firmer understanding of the "lived experience" for a particular event (Merriam, 2009). This phenomenological approach, fused with the case study method, to allow the researcher to come to an understanding or make sense of intricate human experiences and "the essence and the underlying structure of a phenomenon".

A case study is a methodological research approach used to generate an in-depth understanding of a contemporary issue or phenomenon in a bounded system. Case study research requires in-depth investigation conducted into an individual or group, or event to gain an understanding of a real-life phenomenon (Coombs, 2022). According to Coombs (2022), a case study may involve

multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, or documents. This research used multiple methods such as observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants in a multiple case study. The researcher selected multiple cases to illustrate the one issue or concern (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used a multiple case study design to illustrate how Sign Language regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The goal of a multiple case study is to compare cases to identify common patterns, relationships, or similarities. In a multiple case study, the cases may be similar in nature, or they may be diverse, but the researcher is looking for patterns or relationships across cases (Yin, 2018). In this research, I compared how Sign Language regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Multiple cases permit cross-case analysis. In multiple cases, the sites or locations where a phenomenon is examined are different. In this research, the phenomenon was examined in four different provinces (locations), which made it a multiple case study. In this study, the researcher was able to come to an understanding of the phenomenon through the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences as well as a search for the cruxes of those experiences.

### **3.5 Target Population**

According to Creswell (2014), a target population is a group of individuals or a group of organizations with some common definitive characteristics that a researcher can identify to study. The target population for this study comprised 80 professionals responsible for special education, namely 48 Grade One to to Grade Three special school teachers of the Deaf, 4 School Heads, 16 district school inspectors, and 12 school psychologists in Harare, Masvingo, Midlands and Bulawayo Provinces. At the time that this study commenced, Zimbabwe's language-in-education policy was clear on the use of mother tongue as language of instruction only for Grade One to Grade Three classes, hence the choice of teachers of these grades and schoolheads who were supposed to implement the policy. The mother tongue regulatory framework at that time focused only on the first three grades of primary school education. The district school inspectors and school psychologists were also chosen as they were supposed to oversee the implementation of the language-in-education policy.

### **3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Sampling is a technique or procedure employed by a researcher to systematically select a relatively smaller number of representative individuals (a subset) from a pre-defined population, to serve as subjects (data source) for observation or experimentation as per objectives of one's study (Sharmar, 2017). Sharmar (2017) asserts that although a sample is a subset, it is representative of the population and suitable for research in terms of cost, convenience and time. Sampling methods are divided into two distinct approaches, namely probability and non-probability sampling (Sharmar 2017). In qualitative research, according to Sharmar (2017), non-probability sampling is used. In this study, purposive sampling was used. The researcher used purposive sampling as recommended for phenomenological case studies.

#### **3.6.1 Sample Size**

The sample comprised 29 participants selected from the target population. This sample size was determined by data saturation, that is, by the time the researcher purposively selected the 29<sup>th</sup> participant, no additional issues or insights about Sign Language implementation were identified as data began to repeat, hence, further data collection became redundant, signifying that an adequate sample size had been reached. Seventeen teachers were selected from Grade One to Grade Three teachers since the regulatory framework focused on lower grades. The 17 teachers were selected from 4 special schools for the Deaf, 4 School Heads who were selected from the 4 special schools for the Deaf, 4 district school inspectors and 4 school psychologists. Purposive sampling was used to select specialist teachers, School Heads, district school inspectors, School Heads and school psychologists. Teachers, School Heads, district school inspectors and school psychologists were included in the sample as they were in a position to influence policy change and implementation at the school and district levels. Four special schools for the Deaf in four provinces were represented in the sample.

#### **3.6.2 Sampling Techniques**

Purposive sampling was used to select Grade One to Grade Three specialist teachers for the Deaf, district school inspectors and school psychologists. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate and suitable because of what McCombes (2019) and Rai and Thapa (2015) highlight. These scholars note that purposive sampling focuses on particular characteristics of a population

that are of interest to a researcher to enable one to answer the research questions. The type of purposive sampling that was used was what Rai and Thapa (2015) call homogeneous sampling. Selected participants such as the hearing teachers shared similar teacher-training traits and job experiences of more than five years in the special schools for the Deaf. The idea was to focus on this precise similarity, analyzing how it relates to the implementation of the Sign Language regulatory framework. In Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), homogeneity refers to a probable shared perspective upon the phenomenon of interest (Larkin, Shaw & Flowers, 2019). The 17 teachers were purposively selected out of the 48 in the target population, as the other teachers had less than five years experience teaching in a special school for the Deaf. Five teachers at one special school for the Deaf and four teachers from each of the other three special schools for the Deaf met the selection criteria. All the four head teachers of the chosen special schools for the Deaf were purposively selected for their job experience with Sign Language at their schools. Similarly, the four District Schools Inspectors (DSI) and four school psychologists were purposively sampled since the special schools were within their districts. The special schools for the Deaf fall under the respective jurisdictions of the district school inspectors and the four school psychologists. Each sub-sample was, therefore, purposively selected for its homogeneous job experience.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

These are the fact-finding strategies and tools for data collection (Annum, 2017). They include questionnaires, interviews and observations. Whatever procedure one uses to collect data, it must be critically examined to check the extent to which it is likely to give the researcher the expected result. It was important for the researcher to find out which instrument or tool would better serve the purpose of the study (Annum, 2017). This research used semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation as research tools to obtain data and the data were audio recorded from the informants in order to obtain the right information that would answer the research questions. Each of the research instruments is described in detail in the next sub-sections.

#### **3.7.1 Interviews**

The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. Interviews are commonly used in survey designs and in exploratory

and descriptive studies (Fox, 2009). According to (Fox, 2009) there is a range of approaches to interviewing, from completely unstructured, in which the subject is allowed to talk freely about whatever they wish, to highly structured, in which the subject responses are limited to answering direct questions. The researcher had face-to-face interviews with all the participants.

The interview questions were developed based on the reviewed literature and the sub-research questions. The quality of the data collected in an interview will depend on both the interview design and on the skill of the interviewer (Fox, 2009). The researcher established rapport with participants by making them feel comfortable, a strategy which could generate more insightful responses. The researcher selected in-depth interviews as they allowed each participant to communicate much more freely and to provide detailed descriptions about practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The researcher had the opportunity to raise follow-up questions, probed for additional information, and circled back to key questions later on in the interview, to generate a rich understanding of the participants' attitudes and perceptions. In-depth interviews provided detailed information. Each interview took about 60 minutes. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted as discussed in the following sections.

### **3.7.1.1 In-depth Interviews for School Teachers**

In in-depth interviews, the aim is to obtain a more detailed and rich understanding of the topic of interest (Morgan, 2016). In-depth interviews usually complement participant observation. In this study, the researcher sought to obtain a detailed understanding of the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks from the implementers themselves. The in-depth interviews involved direct one-on-one engagement with individual participants. According to Morgan (2016), in in-depth interviews, the participant's experience, behaviour, feelings, and/or attitudes may be probed deeply to identify the underlying concepts that the researcher analyses to generate a theory surrounding the research topic. The researcher allowed the participants to communicate freely and to provide detailed descriptions about the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.



Because in depth interviews are insightful, it was possible to identify highly valuable information easily. The in-depth interviews were more structured. The research questions were divided into four thematic themes. The first theme, on the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks, was divided into six sub-themes, namely policy clarity and consistence, interpretation of policy causal theory, adequacy of implementation process structure, commitment of implementing officials, support from stakeholders and interest groups, and barriers to implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

The second theme, on the challenges faced by specialist teachers of the Deaf, was sub-divided into six-themes, namely forms of Sign Language, functions of Sign Language, teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies, teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices, ambiguity of mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum, and Sign Language agents and other resources.

The third theme, which was on the extent to which teachers were equipped to implement Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, was divided into six sub-themes, namely sign language proficiencies, language teaching skills, attitudes towards Sign Language, in-service training, and support from school and external agents.

The last theme was on the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The theme was divided into eight sub-themes, namely ensuring qualifications of teachers are relevant to Sign Language, improving resources at the school level, identification of the training needs by the district officers, challenges faced in staff development and in-service training, use of Sign Language as the only language of teaching and learning for Deaf learners, importance of the Deaf community in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, and shortcomings of the existing language policy

### **3.7.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews for School Heads**

A semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The authors further explain that the semi-structured interview is generally based on a guide and that it is

typically focused on the main topic that provides a general pattern. In this study, the main topic was factors that influence implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. In addition, Megaldi and Berler (2020) argue that the semi-structured interview enables a researcher to go deep for a discovery, in this study discovering how Sign Language regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Semi-structured interviews were used to corroborate data gathered from teachers and through non-participant observations in this study. The research questions were divided into four thematic areas. The first theme, on implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks, was divided into six sub-themes, namely policy clarity and consistence, interpretation of policy causal theory, adequacy of implementation process structure, commitment of implementing officials, support from stakeholders and interest groups, and barriers to implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

The second theme, on the challenges faced by specialist teachers of the Deaf, was sub-divided into six-themes, namely forms of Sign Language, functions of sign language, teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies, teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices, ambiguity of mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum, and Sign Language agents and other resources.

The third sub-theme which was on the extent to which teachers are equipped to implement Zimbabwean sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf was divided into six sub-themes, namely Sign Language proficiencies, language teaching skills, attitudes towards sign language, in-service training, support from school and external agents.

The last theme was on the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The theme was divided into eight sub-themes, namely, improving resources at the school level, ensuring qualifications of teachers are relevant to Sign Language, identification of the training needs by the district officers, challenges faced in staff developing and in-service training, use of Sign Language as the only language of teaching and learning for Deaf learners, importance of the Deaf community in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, and shortcomings of the existing language policy. Guiding questions were used and each semi-structured interview took 60 minutes.

### **3.7.1.3 Semi- structured Interviews for Schools Inspectors and Schools Psychologists**

District school inspectors and school psychologists are responsible for the deployment of specialist teachers in the schools. They are also responsible for the assessment of specialist teachers and to ensure special needs policies and circulars are implemented. The only difference between their roles is that the school psychologists are responsible for the assessment and placement of the learners in the special schools and the district schools inspectors are responsible for learners with disabilities as well as the mainstream classes, whilst the psychologists are only responsible for learners with disabilities, including those who are Deaf. In terms of implementation of the policy, their roles are the same. The semi-structured interviews were used with the district schools inspectors and schools psychologists to corroborate data from teachers, School Heads and data that was obtained through nonparticipant observation from special schools. The in-depth interviews for DSI and school psychologists were divided into two themes, namely implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, and the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The first theme consisted of eleven interview questions, while the last had seven interview questions.

### **3.7.2 Non-participant Observation in Special Schools for the Deaf**

According to Annum (2017), observation is one of the very important methods for obtaining comprehensive data in qualitative research, especially when a composite of both oral and visual data become vital to the research. By the use of observation strategy, researchers are able to obtain first-hand information about a phenomenon. The possibility of distorting facts and records is reduced to the barest minimum (Annum, 2017). Non-participant observation provided the researcher with the chance to learn things that people were not willing to discuss in an interview and also to triangulate data collected through interviews at the four special schools for the Deaf in Masvingo Province, Midlands Province, Bulawayo Province and Harare Province. This was done by observing the lessons taught by Grade One to Grade Three specialist teachers of the Deaf. According to Annum (2017), in this approach, the researcher does not live as a member of the subjects of the study. Annum (2017) notes that in non-participant observation, the researcher watches the subjects of his or her study, with their knowledge of his/ her status as a researcher, but

without taking an active part in the situation under study. The researcher carried out the role of a visitor, with the only right being to observe their behaviour and environment without participating in their activities. The aim of the observation was to develop sets of notes that described the phenomenon as much as possible. The observation was tied to the research questions which acted as a guide. Data emerged during the process. The observation was structured observation, as it was guided by the research questions: The observation checklist consisted of Part A and Part B. Part A consisted of 10 guiding questions, whilst Part B consisted of thirteen guiding questions. Each observation took 30 minutes, as each lesson in Zimbabwe's schools takes an average length of 30 minutes. Prior to lesson observations, the researcher interacted extensively, for three to four days, with teachers and learners in order to put them at ease. The observations that were done following this extensive interaction, therefore, did not affect the naturalness in classes, as the learners and teachers had become used to the presence of the researcher, who sat quietly at the back of the class. The observations were not video-recorded, to protect the learners and the teachers, but the researcher wrote notes on the observation checklist.

### **3.8 Pilot Study**

The term 'pilot studies' refers to mini versions of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule (Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott & Guillot, 2018). Pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design. The pilot study was conducted on a smaller scale than the main or full-scale study. The pilot study was important for improvement of the quality and efficiency of the researcher's main study. The interview research questions were checked by my supervisors and the Great Zimbabwe University's Ethics Committee to ensure that its questions addressed the focus of this study. The pilot study was done with a special school for learners with disabilities that also included Deaf learners. At this special school, all the specialist teachers of the Deaf and the School Head participated in the pilot study. The special school for the pilot study was chosen because the special school was not part of the special schools that were involved in the actual research, but the teachers of Deaf learners have the same characteristics as those involved in the study. Grade 1 to 3 teachers were purposively chosen to participate in the pilot study as they are the implementers of the Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks. One teacher from each grade and the School Head were interviewed in the pilot study. The researcher also observed the selected

teachers teaching in class. The pilot study predicted difficulties that could have arisen during subsequent data collection that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, for example, repetition of questions. The researcher managed to find out that the research took more than 60 minutes of having too many probing questions and had to adjust by eliminating some of the probing questions. Through the pilot study, the researcher managed to remove questions that were repeatedly asked in different ways. Through the sentiments of the pilot study participants, the researcher managed to find that the interview questions were not harmful or sensitive to the participants.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

Pilot and Beck (2014) note that the trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. According to Amankwaa (2016) in each study, researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers. It is pertinent to address how the researcher will establish that the research findings are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable. Trustworthiness is about establishing these four concepts as discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Credibility is concerned with whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the original data. This criterion of trustworthiness examines if readers of the research believe what the researcher is reporting (Kyngas, Kaariainen & Elo, 2020). According to Kyngas et al. (2020), credibility involves two aspects, carrying out the study in a way that ensures that readers will believe the presented findings, and taking steps to demonstrate credibility in research reports. A researcher's confidence that they are presenting truthful results has a large impact on credibility. The credibility of a study can be improved by making sure that the study participants are appropriate in terms of the research questions and that the data saturation is reached during data collection (Kyngas et al., 2020). Furthermore, Kyngas et al. (2020) argue that researchers can mitigate the risk of hurting the credibility of the study by pre-testing interviews to gain an understanding of what types of responses the questions will yield and whether these responses are relevant to the research aim. In this study, the study credibility was attained through a pilot study. In addition, for the research to be credible, according to Kyngas et al. (2020), any

interview should be taped and recorded. In this study, the interviews were recorded and then, transcribed by the researcher. In addition, triangulation during data, that is gathering data from different sources such as interviews and observations, may increase credibility. Triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility of a research study's findings. Triangulation by combining different methods to collect data can help ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method are overcome. Triangulation is also an effort to help explore and explain complex human behaviour using a variety of methods to offer a more balanced explanation to the reader (Noble & Heale 2019, Heale & Forbes, 2013). There are many types of triangulation, but the researcher used methodological triangulation which, according to Helen and Roberta (2019), promotes the use of several data collection methods such as interviews and observations. The researcher used different sources of data or research instruments such as interviews and observations and utilised different informants to enhance the quality of the data from different sources as suggested by Helen and Roberta (2019). Data were collected from teachers, school administrators, District Schools Inspectors and schools psychologists who were involved in dealing with Deaf learners. The data analysis phase is another key factor to credible research. In this study, the researcher described the research in a transparent manner so that the readers can make an informed decision about the credibility of the study findings.

### **3.9.2 Transferability**

Transferability is how the researcher demonstrates that the research study findings can be applicable to other contexts such as similar situations, similar populations and similar phenomena (Kyngas et al., 2020). All special schools were used in the study so as to find out if the study findings were applicable to similar population or similar phenomenon. Transferability was also obtained through detailed description of the data and context as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Quotations from the interview transcripts were used to illustrate the results so as to make sure that the reader has access to part of the original data, to justify the interpretation of sub-themes.

### **3.9.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability is a measure of how well the study findings are supported by the collected data. This aspect of trustworthiness is concerned with the connection between the data and the results (Kyngas et al., 2020). The findings of this study reflected the participants' voice and conditions of

the inquiry and not the researcher's biases, motivations or perspectives. To establish conformability, the researcher, according to Kyngas et al. (2020) provided an audit trail which highlighted every step of data analysis that was made in order to provide the rationale for decisions made. Each transcript was given to each interviewee concerned in order to crosscheck its accuracy, to test the conformability of the researcher's interpretation and to invite the participants' reflection, feedback, comments and corrections. This helped to establish that the research's findings accurately portrayed the participants' responses.

### **3.9.4 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time (Polit & Beck, 2014). Dependability involved participants evaluating the findings and the interpretation and the recommendations of the study, to make sure they were all supported by the data received from the informants of the study. In this study, the participants were given the opportunity to evaluate the findings, their interpretation and the recommendations of the study.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations in research refer to guidelines and principles which researchers must adhere to as they conduct their research (Dzastia, 2022). According to Dzastina (2022), research often involves face-to-face interaction with people as researchers study behaviors and test the effects of certain phenomena on a target population. Ethical considerations dictate the nature of such interactions to ensure research is done per the set rules and principles. Dzastina (2022) notes that unethical research practices invalidate the research findings and cause grave physical, social, and psychological harm to the research participants. This section highlights the following ethical guidelines and how they were considered in the research: informed consent, confidentiality, trustworthiness, harm to participants, and privacy.

#### **3.10.1 Informed Consent**

The cornerstone of ethical research is 'informed consent' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the term consists of two important elements, with each requiring careful consideration, that is, 'informed' and 'consent. Participants must be fully informed of what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and what (if any) consequences there could be. The participants must provide explicit, active, signed consent to taking part in the research,

including understanding their rights to access to their information and the right to withdraw at any point (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The informed consent process can be seen as the contract between researcher and the participants. The aspects of ‘informed’ should include clear explanation on who the researcher(s) is/are, what the intent of the research is and also what data will be collected from participants, The aspect of informed consent, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), also includes how the data will be collected from participants, what level of commitment is required from participants, how this data will be used and reported, and also the potential risks of taking part in the research.

In this study, the participants were informed of the nature of the study and what would become of the findings once the study had been completed. All participants were provided with written information about the study and the researcher ensured that the participants understood what the study was about and what participation meant prior to gaining consent. Participants were informed and were reminded, throughout the study, that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher asked the participants to read and sign an informed consent form as a way of guaranteeing their willingness to freely participate in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **3.10.2 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality indicates the researcher’s obligation to keep the respondent’s identity and responses private. Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong (2009) state that a respondent’s anonymity is guaranteed when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. On the issue of confidentiality, the researcher ensured that appropriate confidentiality procedures were followed. The privacy and confidentiality of participants were maintained at all times; no names of participants were linked to any responses. Participants were allocated a participation number and all data were identifiable by this number only. This number was used to label data. The research report, therefore, did not mention any person by name. Subsequent to data analysis and publication of the research report, all the documents would be destroyed by the researcher after five years. All documents were to be kept under lock and key.



### **3.10.3 No Harm to Participants**

Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong (2009) postulate that harm to participants may include embarrassment, irritation, anger, emotional stress, invasion of privacy, damage to personal dignity, loss of self-esteem, and negative labeling. For example, if participants are asked to provide information on private and sensitive issues, they may experience psychological harm. The researcher ensured that the informants were not asked sensitive questions. Through the pilot study, the researcher was able to identify if there were any sensitive questions that could cause harm to the participants. The researcher guaranteed the participants that no participants would be put in a situation where they could be harmed as a result of their participation, physical or psychological.

### **3.11 Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher applied for permission to carry out the research from the Ethics Committee of the Great Zimbabwe University (see Appendix A). The researcher completed the ethical clearance application form of Great Zimbabwe University to secure permission to carry out this study in special schools for the Deaf in four different provinces where the special schools were located, namely Bulawayo, Masvingo, Midlands, and Harare (see appendix B). The researcher was issued with an Ethical Clearance Certificate number 2020/1 from the university (see Appendix C). The researcher then applied for permission from the Head Office of the MoPSE of Zimbabwe (see Appendix D) and permission was issued from the Permanent Secretary of Education (see Appendix E). The researcher used an Ethical Clearance Certificate from the Ethics Committee of Great Zimbabwe University and the permission letter from the MoPSE. Then the researcher visited the provincial and district education offices in Masvingo, Bulawayo, Gweru and Bulawayo provinces, where she requested for permission to carry out the study in their special schools for the Deaf (see appendices F to I). Permission was granted, whereby both the provincial and district offices provided their stamps for approval (see Appendices 1 to 4). Before data were collected, participants were asked to read and sign the informed consent form after being told about their rights in the study. Rapport was developed with participants by engaging in small talk on the need for more research in the field and providing assurances that collected data would only be used for research purposes. Lesson observations were then conducted in the various classes. Observations were followed by interviews. Most of the interview sessions were audio- recorded after the participants signed the informed consent forms which sought permission to audio record the

interview sessions. Three participants were not willing to be audio-recorded and so answers for unrecorded interviews were written on the guided question form. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed so as to allow for Network thematic analysis. The researcher allowed the participants to communicate freely and to provide detailed descriptions about the factors that influence implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

### **3.12 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using theoretical or deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis was driven by the researchers' analytic interest in implementation of Sign Language policies in special schools for the Deaf. Following Frith and Gleeson (2004), analysis was done at the semantic level, where themes were identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data. Observation data were analyzed using cross-case analysis to compare what had been observed on language of instruction that was used in various classes. Data from teachers were coded Tr A<sup>1</sup> to Tr D<sup>18</sup>, with 'Tr' representing 'teacher', the letter of the alphabet representing the school and the numeral representing specific individual teachers. Similarly, School Heads were coded H<sup>A</sup>, H<sup>B</sup>, H<sup>C</sup>, and H<sup>D</sup>, while the District School Inspectors were coded as DSI<sup>A</sup>, DSI<sup>B</sup>, DSI<sup>C</sup>, and DSI<sup>D</sup>, and data from schools psychologists were coded as Psy<sup>A</sup>, Psy<sup>B</sup>, Psy<sup>C</sup>, and Psy<sup>D</sup>. The researcher used Atlas.ti, which provided the ability to make chains of multiple codes and linking of quotation which was vital for third stage coding. Atlas.ti allowed co-occurring codes to be retrieved and visualized through network and mapping tools.

#### **3.12.1 Getting Started in Atlas.ti**

The first step in using Atlas.ti to conduct a systematic review was to load into the software all the documents that were to be included in the systematic review. Atlas.ti accepts many different file formats, including text files, PDF files and Excel tables, as well as audio files. Loading and

assigning documents into Atlas.ti was an easy process (Silver & Lewins, 2014). If all the documents are in a single folder, they would all be assigned at once. Assigned documents are called primary documents. After assigning all the documents, the researcher created a copy bundle file to save the documents as a simple project.

### **3.12.2 Atlas.ti First Stage**

The researcher transcribed the audio data from interviews into texts and then the data were loaded into Atlas.ti computer software. Data were then classified. In classifying data, the researcher was guided by the research objectives. Classification of data was done through coding. The researcher managed to mark texts by topic, that is, by highlighting the quotations then coding the quotations using open coding, code by in Vivo and also code by list. After all the data were coded, the researcher managed to create code families (themes) using Atlas.ti, which is called Thematic Network Analysis, according to Attride-Stirling's (2001). Codes were compared and similar incidents were grouped together and given the same family label (themes). When codes are meaningfully grouped together, the groupings are known as themes (patterns) in qualitative research. Codes which were related to each other were, thus, clustered together and given a descriptive name. In Atlas.ti, themes are known as groups. The researcher used family manager to group the codes into meaningful units. The themes emerged from the data and were guided by the research questions. First stage coding resulted in mere indexing, a first attempt at systematically gathering together segments that are instances of the aspects of interest to the research (Silver & Lewins, 2014).

### **3.12.3 Atlas.ti Second Stage**

In the second stage of analysis, similar codes were grouped, merged into higher order categories, and continually compared and revisited (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Codes which were similar or related were merged. Little-used codes which were dead ends or irrelevant were eliminated during the second stage of coding. The merge code functions of Atlas.ti were extremely useful during the second stage of coding. In reviewing first stage codes, it often became apparent that two or more codes had different names but essentially represented the same concept. To merge the codes in Atlas.ti, the researcher selected the desired code then right-clicked and selected merge codes from the menu. All the available codes popped up. The researcher selected the code to be merged and

clicked 'ok'. This merged codes into one code name. All existing comments were kept under the merge code and this associated text.

### 3.12.4 Atlas.ti Third Stage

Selective coding was used during the third stage of analysis. During this stage, the data and the codes were revisited in searching for themes, concepts and relationships (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Atlas.ti provided the ability to make chains of multiple codes and link quotations to create networks which were vital in third stage coding. These network diagrams were qualitative visual representations of the data and this facilitated the third stage coding. Concepts, themes, and patterns emerged from network diagrams. Atlas.ti allowed co-occurring codes to be retrieved and visualized through network and mapping tools. Once the third stage coding was completed lines of arguments were expressed for these overarching themes and patterns. The following is the network view diagram and the linking networks.

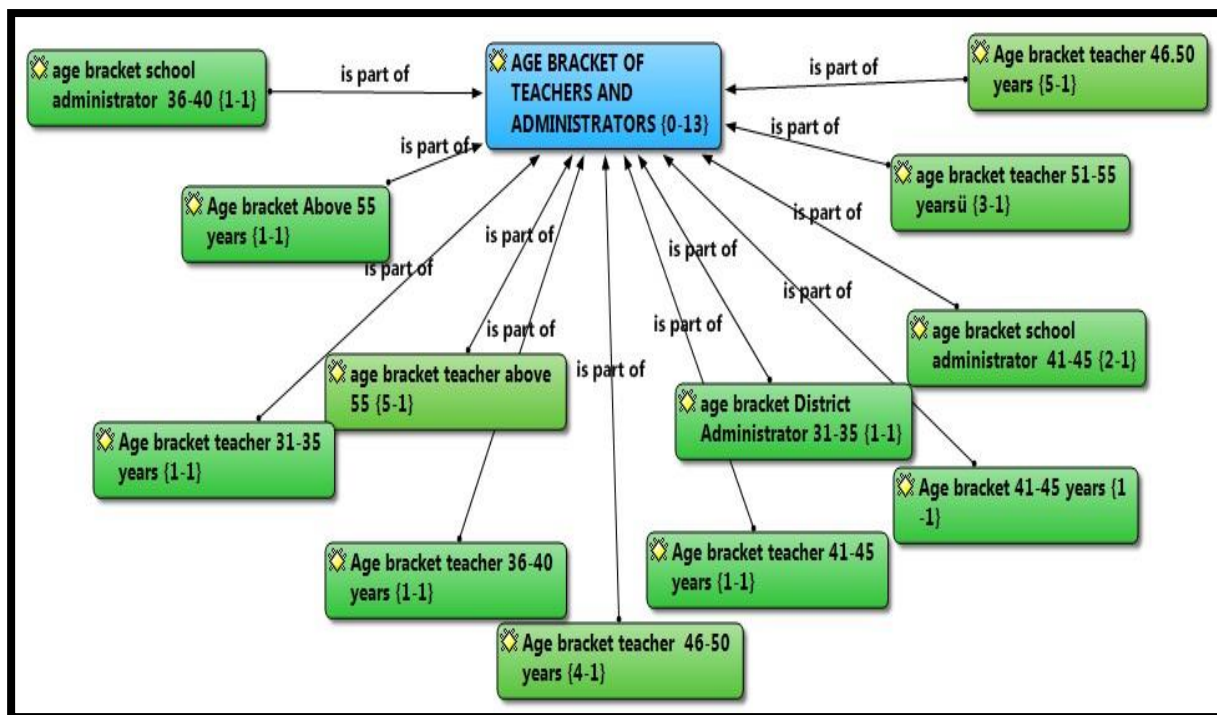


Figure 3.1: Age Bracket of Teachers and Administrators of Deaf learners in Zimbabwean Special Schools

### **3.13 Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methodology and design that were used in the study. It discussed the research paradigm, in this case, interpretivist paradigm, and the research approach which was used, which was the qualitative approach. Multiple case study design, sample size and the sampling techniques were presented in this chapter. The chapter also provided the detail and justified the research instruments used to collect data, which were semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. The chapter explained how the pilot study was carried out in the study and addressed how the researcher established the credibility, transferability, conformability and dependability of the study. Ethical considerations, data collection procedures and Atlas.ti data analysis procedures which were used in this study were also described in detail. The next chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis.

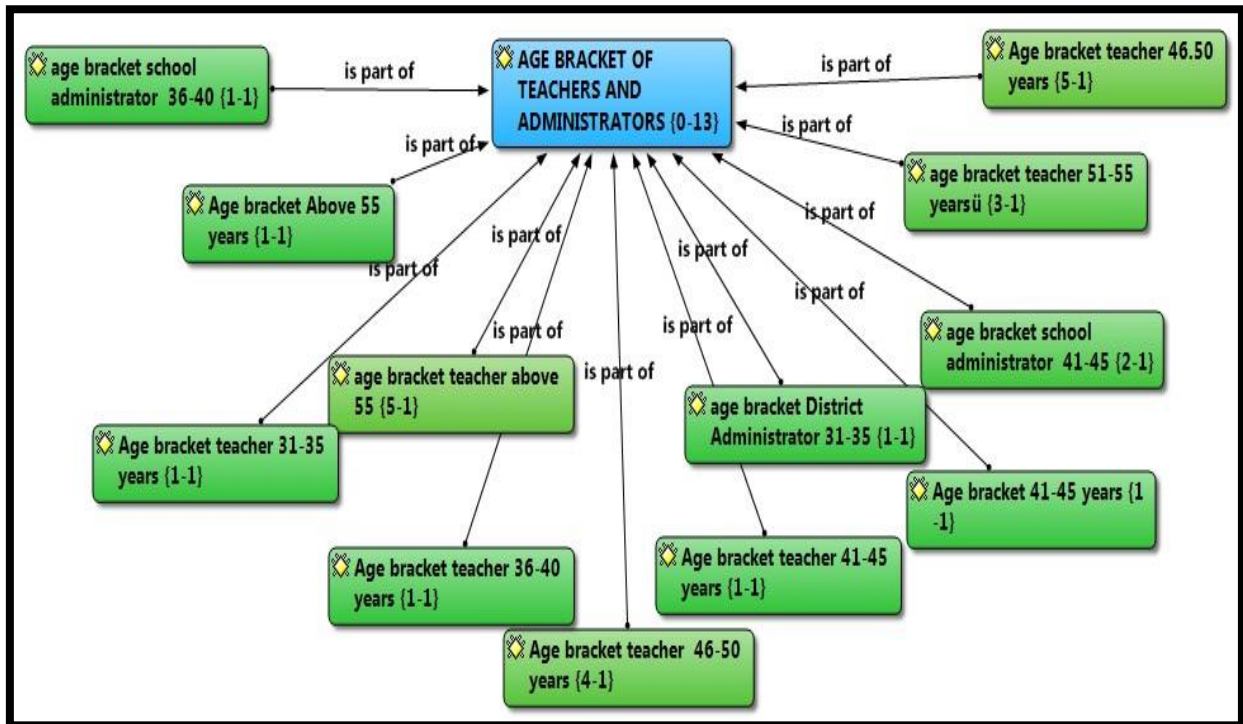
## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The study aimed at examining factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Data were generated from teachers, school administrators, school inspectors and psychologists, as discussed in the previous chapter. Atlas.ti was used to analyse the data and this generated 24 emergent sub-themes which are presented under each of the four main themes derived from the sub-research questions posed in Chapter 1, Section 1.4, guiding the study. The four themes are: The implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, challenges faced by teachers in implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks, the extent to which the teachers were equipped in the profession to implement Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks, and the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Data for each theme were shown through Network view graphical files and quotations from the participants. Pseudonyms were used in reporting the data to ensure the anonymity of the participants and schools. Data from teachers were coded Tr A<sup>1</sup> to Tr D<sup>18</sup>, with Tr representing ‘teacher’, the letter of the alphabet representing the school and the numeral representing the specific individual teacher. Similarly, School Heads were coded as HA, HB, HC, and HD, while the District School Inspectors were coded as DSI<sup>A</sup>, DSI<sup>B</sup>, DSI<sup>C</sup>, and DSI<sup>D</sup>, and data from school psychologists were coded as Psy<sup>A</sup>, Psy<sup>B</sup>, Psy<sup>C</sup>, and Psy<sup>D</sup>.

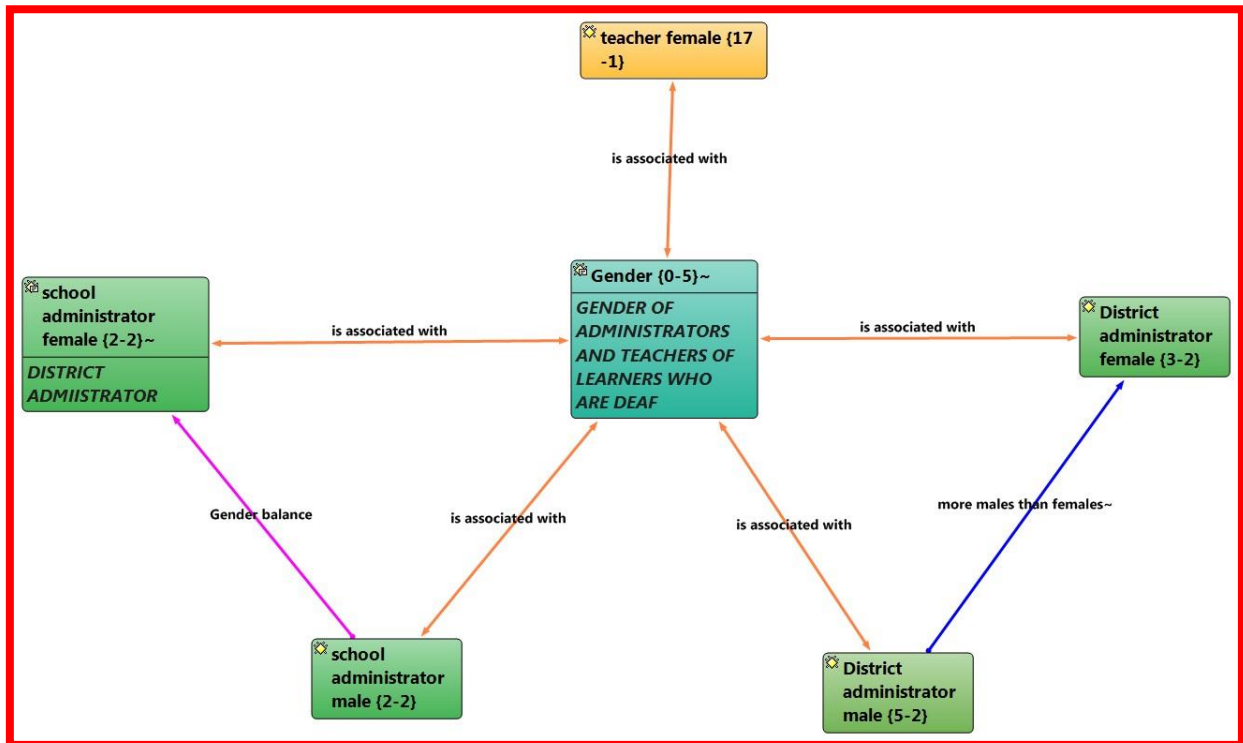
### **4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

The demographic information of teachers, School Heads, district school inspectors and school psychologists includes their ages, professional qualifications relevant to Sign Language, and their experience in dealing with Deaf learners, as shown in Figures 4.1 to 4.3.



**Figure 4.1: Age Bracket of Teachers and Administrators of Deaf Learners Who Are in Zimbabwean Special Schools**

The majority of the teachers and administrators of the Deaf involved in the study was above 45 years old. Those who were below forty-five were few and no participant was below thirty years of age.



**Figure 4.1: Network View: Gender of Administrators and Teachers of Deaf Learners**

There were more females than males who dealt with Deaf learners. All the teachers who were interviewed were females, since there were no male teachers in the infant department. However, there were more male administrators than females. In one province, all the teacher participants were females but there was a gender balance among the school administrators.



**Table 4.1: Participant Qualifications**

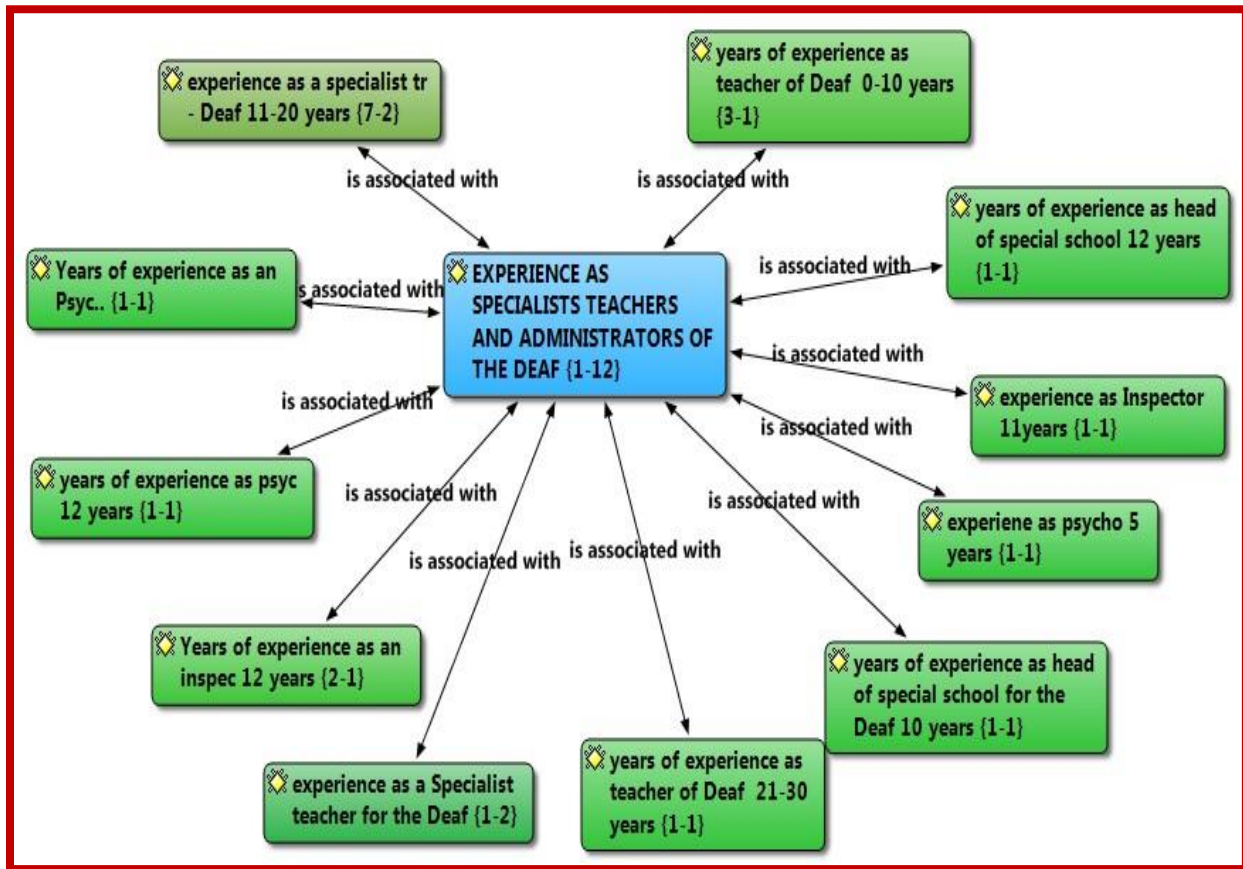
<i>Diploma / Certificate in Education</i>	<b>Diploma in Special Needs Education (Dip. In SPED)</b>	<b>B. SC. In Special Needs Education</b>	<b>B.Ed. in Special Needs Education</b>	<b>B.E.D Sign language</b>	<b>Certificate in Sign language</b>	<b>M.E.D Special Needs Education</b>	<b>M.E.D ECD</b>	<b>B.A</b>
<b>C18, HB, B13</b>	<b>D<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>8</sup>, D<sup>9</sup>, C16, C15, B10, B<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>B<sup>12</sup> B11 „A<sup>5</sup>, A<sup>4</sup>, H<sup>A</sup></b>	<b>C15 A3, A2, C14</b>	<b>D<sup>8</sup>,</b>	<b>C<sup>17</sup>, D<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>H<sup>C</sup>, A<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>D<sup>6</sup>,</b>	<b>H</b>

Table 4.1 shows that majority of the teachers were trained in Special Needs Education.

Most of the teachers had bachelor’s degrees as well as diplomas in Special Needs Education. However, the challenge noticed was that most of the degrees did not have a component on Sign Language, such that once the teachers were deployed at special schools for the Deaf, they would need to be oriented on how to deal with Deaf learners. In the current study, the few teachers who had trained in Special Needs Education confirmed that they did not take a course in Sign Language.

Results of the study also revealed that only 1 participant had a degree in Sign Language and 2 participants had a certificate in Sign Language. Three participants did not have additional qualifications besides having a Diploma or Certificate in Education. Some of the teachers at school D had gone to South Africa to be trained on how to teach Deaf learners using the Fitzgerald Key method of teaching the Deaf learners.

Figure 4.1 below shows the experience of teachers of Deaf learners in teaching the Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools.



**Figure 4.3: Participants' Teaching Experience**

Most of the teachers in the current study had been teaching in special schools for more than nine years, as shown in Figure 4.3. The teaching experience helped the researcher to understand the professional maturity of policy implementers with regard to the implementation of the language-in-education policy in Zimbabwean special schools.

**Table 4.1: Themes and Sub-themes Which Were Used to Analyse the Data**

Themes	Sub-themes
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf</p>	<p>Policy clarity and consistence</p> <p>Interpretation of policy causal theory</p> <p>Adequacy of implementation process structure</p> <p>Commitment of implementing officials</p> <p>Support from stakeholders and interest groups</p> <p>Barriers to implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools</p>
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Challenges faced by teachers in implementing sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf</p>	<p>Forms of Sign Language for the Deaf</p> <p>Functions of Sign Language</p> <p>Teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies</p> <p>Teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices</p> <p>Ambiguity of mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum</p> <p>Sign Language agents and other resources</p>
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> The extent to which teachers are equipped in teaching Deaf learners</p>	<p>Sign Language proficiencies</p> <p>Language teaching skills</p> <p>Attitudes towards Sign Language</p> <p>In-service training</p> <p>Support from school and external agents</p>

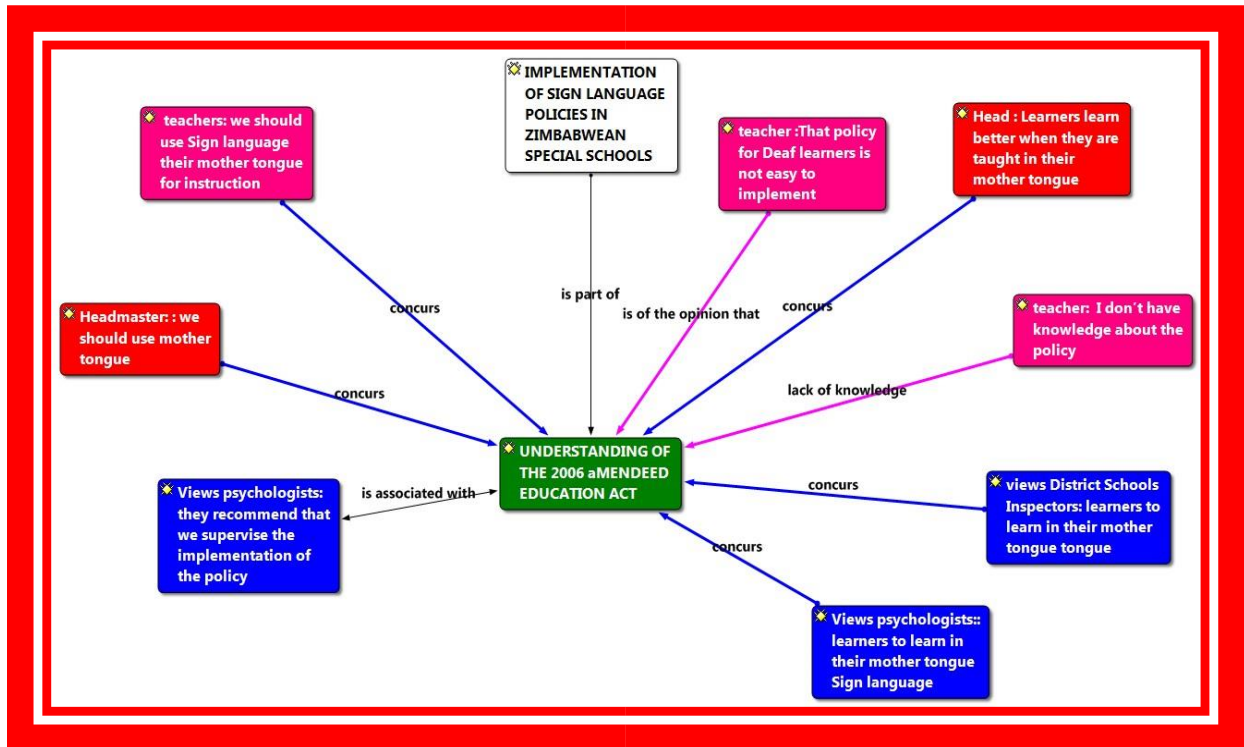
<p>Theme 4: Strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf</p>	<p>Ensuring qualifications of teachers are relevant to Sign Language</p> <p>Improving resources at the school level</p> <p>Identification of the training needs by the district officers</p> <p>Challenges faced in staff developing and -in-service training</p> <p>Use of Sign Language as the only language of teaching and learning for Deaf learners</p> <p>Importance of the Deaf community in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.</p> <p>Shortcomings of the existing language policy</p> <p>Suggestions to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education policymakers</p>
---	--

### **4.3 Theme 1: Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

In Chapter 1, Section 1.4, the first sub-research question focused practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Participants had varying views of practices in the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks. These varying views were grouped into six sub-themes: Policy clarity and consistency, interpretation of policy, implementation process structure, commitment, and support from stakeholders and interest groups. Sub-theme 1 on policy clarity and consistency is presented in the following section.

#### **4.3.1: Policy Clarity and Consistency**

The study found that participants viewed the lack of policy clarity and consistency as a major issue that negatively affected the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. The lack of clarity and consistency in policies was evident in the varied interpretations from the participants, of the Amended Education Act (2006) as illustrated in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Network Understanding the Nature and Requirements of the Current Language-in-education Policy**

The hyper-link diagram, Figure 4.4, generated through Atlas.ti, summarises the teachers’, school administrators’, School Heads’, District School Inspectors’ and schools psychologists’ understanding of the meaning of the 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Participants had different views on the meaning of the 2006 Amended Education Act. Some participants believed that the policy meant that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction, while the others said that it was unclear as it did not relate to Sign Language. These participants, therefore, felt that sign language should just be used as a social language for communication. One teacher said:

*Sign Language is a social language. It is only used for communication and you cannot write in Sign Language; so, the policy seems to be deviating from how academic issues are run. I have never seen a book written in Sign Language. When I sign, even when I am teaching, eventually the child has to write. What I sign is different from what the child*

*writes so I think there is a contradiction between education and Sign Language. I believe that Sign Language is a language that is just fit for social communicating (Tr B<sup>12</sup>).*

Lack of policy clarity was also evident as some participants said they were unaware of the policy on Sign Language. Teachers, head teachers and psychologists in the study areas were not aware of the existence of a policy on Sign Language. The following participants had this to say:

*I don't know about that policy. (Tr A<sup>4</sup> Tr C<sup>14</sup> Psy<sup>D</sup>).*

*May you please explain about the policy so that I know what you are talking about and how I can answer the question? (H<sup>B</sup>).*

Some participants viewed the policy's position on Sign Language as unclear, as the mother tongue of the Deaf learners was not consistent, as shown by the following participant response:

*You are saying it's their mother tongue, but they do not learn it at home. So, you have to teach them here by teaching the words and signs. When children come here for the first time, they do not have the Sign Language competence, hence, the teachers have to teach them every sign because at home the parents might be hearing ones; so, its mother tongue here at school but at home is not because the parents cannot sign. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*We use English and do not use mother language; it is only when I am teaching Shona that I use the mother language. Otherwise we usually use English since they do not do know Shona language. Here the Deaf learners so our main language is English. (Tr B<sup>10</sup>)*

Other participants were of the view that the Education Act did not address the issues of the Deaf learners because they did not have a language.

*It doesn't apply to these learners because they don't have any mother language. (Tr C<sup>15</sup>)*

*The school uses the policy because it's a government policy. One wonders what the policy makers are doing, when they say use Sign Language when there are no books written in sign language, when Sign Language is not written, it's just manually done. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

The participants pointed out that there were no modified books for Deaf learners to read on their own. This causes the Sign Language policy to be inconsistent with other language policies in which the provision of materials such as books was covered. Another inconsistency was that the Sign Language policy, unlike other language policies, was largely covering learners from a background

where the parents and siblings were not familiar with the language that was being used in school. As a result, they would be using speech instead of Sign Language. On this, School Head said:

*Parents do not know how to communicate in Sign Language at home because we have seen that when children are here, their parents usually come to look for teachers to interpret for them and we cannot understand why it is so. It is only now that a few parents are developing interest in Sign Language and they are learning it. However, some parents do not know how to communicate with their kids yet we are saying that Sign Language is the mother tongue of the Deaf children. This is because they are not even learning or using it at home, and it's not the actual Sign Language we use when we are teaching. It's the survival Sign Language which they use when they are at home. It's only considered mother tongue at school but not at home. For example, Shona is a language both at school and at home. We also want sign language to be a subject because it's only taken as mother tongue at school but not at home. AT home parents do not know the Sign Language. Children come without any language they've learnt at home. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*They have problems in that when they try to implement the policy there are parents who come with their languages and we cannot ignore them since they will not be able to communicate in Sign Language. They will have to resort to their local languages; so, it becomes difficult to help them. The parents themselves are also not aware that there is a policy for the use of Sign language. They normally come here and use Ndebele, Shona or any language they want. You cannot deny them from communicating, you have to accommodate them. (H<sup>M</sup>)*

Similarly, School Heads had variations in their understanding of the policy as shown in their explanations of why Sign Language should be used. The following excerpts illustrate the views of the school administrators:

*Sign Language has been indicated as one of the languages in our Constitution. Therefore, we should use Sign Language as the medium of instruction. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*It's there on paper. In special schools all teachers should teach in sign language as a medium of instruction but it is not on timetable. I have never seen it indicated on the school teaching timetable. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

Whilst participant HA believed that since ZSL was recognised as one of the sixteen languages in Zimbabwe and should be used as a medium of instruction, participant HC believed that ZSL was just there on paper but not included in the school timetable. As a result, it was not being taught in schools. This reflected the discrepancies in the way the policy implementers understood the policy.

District Schools Inspectors and psychologists had a different understanding from that of the teachers and the School Heads, as shown in the different explanations on how the policy should be implemented.

*The recommendation of the Education Act 2006 was that maybe the learners are supposed to learn in Sign Language or their L1 language up to Grade 3. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

*I support the directive that mother tongue Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction, for example, if we look at Shona, and Ndebele, such languages embody our culture. Most learners express themselves using their mother tongue. I would even go for all the languages to be taught up to form 6. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

The use of the word ‘maybe’ by the first policy implementer reveals that he/she was not certain about the function of the policy. The second policy implementer postulated that he or she was in support of the use of the mother tongue, just like Shona Ndebele. From the nonparticipant observation, nothing was being done to ensure that ZSL was being used as a medium of instruction in the schools under study.

Difference in understanding of the policy showed that the School Heads from different special schools were not given the opportunities to share their understanding on the policy so that the implementing officials would have the same understanding of the policy.

*I have never heard about that policy. May you please explain he policy so that I know what you are talking about. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*We were never given training on the implementation of the policy. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

If the policy implementers were capacitated on the meaning of the policy, then they should have been aware of the policy. The following extracts show the District Schools Inspectors' understanding of the goals of the 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in Zimbabwean special schools.

*The main goal is that, necessary infrastructure resources are provided. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

Due to lack of goal clarity, the District Schools Inspectors and school psychologists' (district officers) understanding of the goals of the 2006 Amended Education Act was different. Some of the officers were uncertain of the goals of the policy. One district officer believed that the goal was



to provide resources, as shown in the above quote. Another district officer thought that the goals were about hearing learners and Deaf learners learning in the same classroom (Inclusive Education). This is illustrated by the following excerpt:

*It is impossible to implement inclusive education if teachers are not knowledgeable about Sign Language. Every teacher and every child should be knowledgeable in Sign Language*  
**(Psy<sup>C</sup>)**

There were serious knowledge deficiencies in terms of the interpretation and understanding of the language-in-education policy. This variation in the understanding of the goals affected how the policy was being implemented. The district officials thought that the goals were about inclusive education since the Deaf learners were now learning in the same classes as the hearing learners or hard of hearing learners, even though some were still learning at Special schools for the Deaf. According to other district officers, the goal of the 2006 Amended Education Act was for schools not to prioritize foreign languages. This is clearly indicated in the following participant's response:

*The goals are very clear. They are trying to address or reverse the colonial imbalances whereby English was the official language and because of that we still have challenges of post-colonial features in the system. The system whereby we give priority to local languages is very important because languages carry our values. We should not prioritize foreign language at the expense of our languages. We are starting at the infant level whereby we direct that instructions should be in local languages so that we deal with the issues like identity, the issues of communication and understanding. We capture reality well using our language. So, I very much understand our language policy and where it is trying to drive us to.* **(DSI<sup>B</sup>)**

One of the district officials pointed out that for the policy to be effectively implemented, there is need for teachers to be knowledgeable about Sign Language, since without knowledge in Sign Language, no implementation will take place.

*The amended policy directs education institutions to be competent in using Sign Language to implement inclusive education. If every school has a teacher who is competent in Sign Language, it helps every learner to appreciate sign language through capacitation. If they are not knowledgeable about Sign Language it will be impossible to implement the policy.*  
**(Psy<sup>C</sup>)**

The study found that as a result of lack of unclear policy goals, there was also lack of clarity of the roles of the various role players who were supposed to implement the Sign Language policy. On

the aspect of the role of the teachers in the implementation of the policy, participants showed their different opinions through the following extracts:

*I am supposed to use total communication when teaching these Deaf learners. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

*There is nothing I can do as a teacher but we are telling the parents to come for lesson here. (D<sup>9</sup>)*

*If you are too passionate about these learners, you know where to start. You need to source for these learners, you need to be resourceful. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

*I am supposed to use total communication when teaching these Deaf learners. (D<sup>7</sup>)*

D9 was not aware of his or her role in the implementation of the LiEP. Participant B11 believed that his or her role was to source for resources, whereas participant

D7 believed that his or her role was to use total communication in teaching the Deaf learners. In total communication, the role of either language remains unclear and controversial. This shows that teachers were not capacitated on their roles in the implementation of the policy. When teachers are aware of their roles, they are more likely to do what they are supposed to do, in this case teaching learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Teachers had different views about the responsibilities of the schools in the implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Results of the study indicate that teachers did not have a shared understanding of their roles in the implementation of the policy. The policy did not clarify on the roles of the teachers in the implementation of the policy. Specialist teachers just stated the roles according to how they understood the policy as individuals. On the role clarity of the teachers, some of them had the following to say:

*The school has to provide relevant resources like charts, and Sign Language alphabets as the one I was using during the lesson. The school has to provide teachers with Sign Language Dictionaries so that there are many resources which the school should bring for learning to take place. (Tr A<sup>5</sup>).*

*They need to provide us with the resources so that we implement the policy; for example, we are supposed to have the Sign Language books, the dictionaries, sign language charts which the school has to provide. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

All the school responsibilities that the teachers suggested required a budget for the language-in-education policy in order to make it possible for the schools to provide the teachers with the relevant materials such as visual materials. Schools have a lot to do concerning providing the learners with appropriate facilities needed. However, the schools could not fulfill their responsibilities of providing modified instruments and visual equipment because they lacked financial support from the government. The policy did not clarify the relationship between the schools and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education or the roles of the schools, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the teachers in the implementation of the policy.

The study also found that district officers viewed their roles as monitoring, supervision and encouraging peer teaching among teachers. The following sentiments reflect how monitoring was done by the school Psy and the DSI.

*We do visit and we also receive reports from the schools and that's how we monitor them through field visits. As a province, we also do the monitoring. We are always at these special schools because they need support. So if we go there we will be monitoring and as you know no learner is accepted in our special schools without our placement, so we are always in contact with each other. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

*Education inspectors visit the schools to check the implementation of the policy and whether teachers are not forcing their languages on Deaf learners. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

*We do interviews when we go to schools to find out whether teachers are implementing or not but when it comes to supervision of the Sign Language it becomes difficult because we do not know Sign Language. So, it's a matter of being informed about it. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

The role of the district officers is to monitor on whether the policy is being implemented or not. They should have a shared understanding on how the policy should be monitored and the attributes they will be looking for when monitoring the implementation of the policy. Results of the study revealed that they did not have a shared understanding on how they were supposed to monitor the implementation of the policy. Different views were given on monitoring activities, such as interviewing the teachers or receiving the reports from School Heads. These results reveal that the role of the district officers was not clearly defined to them. Monitoring should mean more than inspection; it should involve feedback and this can only happen when the supervisors are aware of

their roles and if they are also qualified. However, most of the district officers were not well versed with Sign Language as illustrated in the following excerpt.

*We do interview the teachers when we go to schools to find out whether they are implementing the policy or not. But when it comes to supervision of Sign Language use, it becomes difficult because we do not know Sign Language; so it's a matter of being informed. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

Lack of Sign Language knowledge by district officers affected the implementation of the policy, for they had to rely on others to find whether the policy was being implemented. Some district officers pointed out that although they would like to go for supervision, it was difficult for them because they were not proficient in Sign Language and hence, even if teachers lied to them, the district officers would not be aware of it, because of a lack of Sign Language knowledge. Monitoring of policy implementation by district officers was one of the important aspects of role clarity of the district officers to enable them to identify the training needs of the policy implementers. Identification of the training needs would enable consistent implementation of the policy. The district officers who were supposed to monitor the implementation of the policy were not specialists in the field of ZSL and were also not specialist in the type of curricula needed for these learners. Despite that, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education ran down the schools for learners who were Deaf since it was not capacitating policy implementers on their roles for effective implementation of the policies.

Results of the study also revealed that the district officers were not following the same guidelines in deploying special education teachers of the Deaf who are implementers of the policy. The guidelines stipulate that teachers of the Deaf should be qualified in sign language.

The following extracts reveal the sentiments of the district officers:

*They always give us teachers who have not received any special training in Sign Language. The MoPSE try their level best but teachers who received training in Sign Language are very few and are nowhere to be found; hence, after amending the Act there is a need to update or review the policy. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*Even if they want to follow the guidelines which stipulate that teachers of the Deaf should be qualified in Sign Language, very few teachers are qualified in Sign Language since Zimbabwe has few institutions that train teachers to be qualified in Sign Language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*The problem with our universities is that they teach the theoretical aspect, when it comes to practical it's another thing altogether. There is need for individuals to pursue the practical part of it because one may have completed the degree in Special Needs Education but if there is no hands-on approach then nothing will benefit us here. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*The policy might be there but we don't have adequate human resources to teach the Deaf learners. Most of the teachers' don't have qualifications in Zimbabwean Sign Language. Lack of human resources is hindering the district officers from considering policies that require teachers of the Deaf be qualified in Sign Language (DSIP<sup>D</sup>).*

Policy guidelines on how teachers of Deaf learners were to be deployed were provided by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. However, there was lack of training of specialist teachers of the Deaf to reinforce what the policy covers and to include real-life scenarios such as teaching Deaf learners and those with residual hearing in non-inclusive settings.

It also emerged, from the present study, that there was lack of consistency in the implementation of the language-in-education policy in terms of the value the Zimbabwean Sign Language was given in the curriculum. The following excerpts reflect the above sentiment:

*I agree with the policy that Sign Language should be taught since it is a language for the Deaf. To be fair, just like the other languages being taught in schools, learners should also be taught language sign language. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*When children are learning the subject for the first time, then there is a need to include it as an academic subject. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

*It's a priority medium of instruction for students as it is not a standalone subject. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

Different views on Sign Language implied different methods of implementing the policy, leading to policy implementation inconsistencies. Some of the responses showed that Sign Language should be an academic subject that will be examinable, whilst others showed that Sign Language was only a medium of instruction. At the district level, participants argued that Sign Language was not an examinable subject but a medium of instruction. However, their sentiments below indicate clearly that they would want it to be examinable due to its importance to the Deaf learners.

*Personally, I have noted that Sign Language cuts across all subjects; so, it facilitates the academic subject. Therefore, it should be taught to children who are learning the subject*

*for the first time and then there is a need to include it as an academic subject for the primary school sector and be included on the timetable. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*Is it examinable? We teach for the exam. Why should we waste time on something which is not examinable? We want to concentrate on something examinable. As an official, I am saying that, for it to be important, let it be examinable because we place a lot of emphasis on the exams, thus, that which is not under exam system is merely considered a second grade. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

Sign Language should not be an academic subject as long as it is not an examinable subject; implying that subjects that are considered academic subjects are those that are examinable. The quotations above from the district inspectors of schools show that the policy was of no value because teachers teach for the exams, so, there was no point in teaching something which was not examinable.

Whilst some participants cited the unavailability of human resources as the main obstacle in considering the policy, others felt that teaching Sign Language in schools was of no use since it was not an examinable subject. These results reveal that there was inconsistency in the implementation of the policy since the policy. The available material resources and knowledgeable human resources were not matched with the reality of the unavailable material and human resources, compounded by the narrow focus on examination by the education system. Therefore, in terms of the Ambiguity-Conflict Model, there appears to be a conflict emanating from the means of meeting policy goals. In addition, there was also inconsistency across schools as some special schools implemented the policy, while others did not see the need to implement it. As a result, there was no uniformity on how the policy was being implemented.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretation of Policy Causal Theory**

The study found that participants interpreted the underlying rationale for the Sign Language regulatory frameworks in two different ways. This resulted in two different ways in which the policy was implemented. Some participants indicated that the reasons for having policies on Sign Language use were similar to those for having any other language policies. According to some participants, sign language regulatory frameworks were there to ensure that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction just like any other indigenous language.

*I would even go for all the languages (including Sign Language) to be taught up to Form 6 because if we look at English, we are talking of a colonial thing. It is illogical that during the post-colonial Zimbabwe we are still talking of English as a medium of instruction. Why don't we go for our languages? (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*It is good to use Sign Language as their priority medium of instruction since these kids have Sign Language as their mother tongue which is a language on its own just like Shona. They should be taught using their mother tongue. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*Learners understand better when they are taught using their mother language which is the Sign Language. They understand better than when taught using the second language. I was thinking that the government should help these children to write their exams in sign language. If the exams were designed using Sign Language, they were going to pass but because they have to use English language which is a second language to them, it becomes very difficult. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

Non-participant observation of the lessons revealed that those teachers who believed that Sign Language was an indigenous language would teach Sign Language during the lessons for indigenous languages through the help of other Deaf students. Some participants interpreted the need for Sign Language regulatory frameworks as arising from the fact that Deaf learners live in a silent world, so, they need Sign Language, as shown in the following excerpt.

*We must use Sign Language through and through with the Deaf. It's very much okay to use sign language even for the upper grades for the Deaf people live in the signing world, and their world is silent. For instance, if a Deaf learner has not seen a word, there is no way of figuring it out. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

One participant viewed Sign Language as a transitional tool needed for learning another language.

*For the Deaf, we are using sign language that is their mother tongue to help them to learn other languages although it's very difficult for them or some of them because they might be coming from a home where it is not their mother language. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

Other participants argued that sign language could not be the mother tongue for most Deaf learners as they had hearing parents; therefore, the reasons for having Sign Language regulatory

frameworks were unclear. It was argued that trying to equate other language policies to Sign Language regulatory frameworks made it difficult to implement the policies.

*That policy for Deaf learners is not easy to implement as most of them have parents and siblings who can hear and talk so the mother language is not Sign Language. For those learners who have Deaf parents their language is better than those without Deaf parents. On those with Deaf parents, we can say that their Sign Language competence is better compared to that of those with hearing parents. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

This implies that the participant did not believe in the use of Sign Language as the medium of instruction for most Deaf learners. The participant argued that the policy was difficult to implement because the learners came from a background where their parents and siblings were not Deaf and, as a result, they would be using speech instead of Sign Language. So, in this case, the underlying rationale for a Sign Language policy was unclear and possibly unjustified.

Although the policy states that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools (Section 62:5 of 2006 Amended Education Act), the majority of teachers did not agree for various reasons. Most of the specialist teachers of the Deaf preferred using total communication as they wanted the Deaf learners to talk so that they would use speech like their hearing counterparts.

*They augment Sign Language. They lip read, they sign and sometimes they use rudimentary signs (signs from home) because they are not proficient in Sign Language. They try to implement what the policy says but the problem is that they are not trained in Sign Language. So, they are not proficient in Sign Language and that's the major problem. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*They use total communication and are still learning on how to encompass the two: Sign Language and speech, because of the reverse inclusion. We want these children to fit in the society, hence, the need for aural/aural approach. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

From the non-participant observation, it was noted that teachers used total communication that involved talking and signing. However, sometimes teachers would forget to sign some of the words, which means that the Deaf learners would end up getting confused. In follow-up discussions, one participant argued that they used English because even Sign Language dictionaries were written in English.



*We use total communication, that is English and sign language. They encourage us to use English because English is easier to use. Even those who wrote the dictionaries wrote it in English. The American and British Sign Language Dictionaries are all in English. Even the Zimbabwean Sign Language Dictionary is also written in English. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*Sign Language is not our language, so it's not easy. In Sign Language dictionaries, some of the words are not there and also the kids at home do not use Sign Language, consequently, they are not proficient in Sign Language. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

The above extracts suggest that whatever underlying rationale there was for having Sign Language as the first language for many Deaf learners, it was faulty because the implementation process had human and material resource deficiencies. One participant attributed the deficiency to the learners' backgrounds. It was argued that teaching of Sign Language was a big challenge to those learners who did not come from Deaf culture because they had to learn two languages at the same time, that is English and Zimbabwean Sign Language. The following extract confirms the above sentiment:

*When you are teaching someone coming from the Deaf culture, they have the basics of sign language. Those coming from homes where there is no Deaf Culture, they do not have that language. So, I am starting afresh to introduce Sign Language and now you have the second language English language which you are also using. They get confused a lot. It will be also a disadvantage to me as the teacher to teach two languages at the same time. It affects me a lot because I am now teaching this child to know Sign Language as a mother tongue yet I am supposed to be moving forward in covering the school curriculum. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

In terms of the model, this suggests high conflict where the goal may be clear but there is a conflict between the speaking and signing goals of deaf education. The study also found that policy implementers were using total communication despite the hearing levels of learners. That is, those with profound deafness and those with mild to moderate deafness were both exposed to total communication.

*We use total communication and that's why you see that when I am talking, I remove this mask so that they can lip read. Those with pre-lingual deafness can lip read. Those with residual hearing benefit from lip reading but those who are completely Deaf do not benefit from lip reading and, therefore, they need sign language as their medium of instruction. (Tr C<sup>17</sup>)*

*If they are partially Deaf, they can benefit from lip reading because one can lip read and try to link what has been said. However, if they are completely Deaf then they will not benefit from lip reading. If one is completely Deaf it's difficult to get the voice of the speaker. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

These excerpts imply that the causal theory for a Sign Language policy was that Sign Language was a stand-by language to be used when lip-reading did not benefit those learners who were Deaf. The researcher observed that most of the teachers preferred using total communication during their lessons, even though in some of the classes there were more Deaf learners than hearing learners. The use of total communication shows that Sign Language was mostly used in conjunction with the spoken language. Although teachers had different views on the language used as a medium of instruction, some School Heads were unclear on the underlying reasons why a Sign Language policy was necessary, as evidenced in the following:

*We evaluated the use aural/oral approach last year and said that, instead of having oral/aural approach on its own or Sign Language, let's embrace the two and have total communication because Sign Language is good but its short-cut doesn't help children when they are writing their English. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

The way of thinking evident in the above excerpt implies that Sign Language by itself is deficient and therefore there is no justification for the current Sign Language policy.

*I prefer Sign Language. It is only because when we are using total communication, we would be striving for them to understand but the truth is that Sign Language is their language and it's not easy especially at the ECD level. This is because they would not have the language so both of us will be struggling to teach them to understand it. However, these learners are better because they are now in grade two. At ECD level, they would not be having any language since they have the home language. When they start learning formal Sign Language at school from the teachers, it becomes difficult as the teachers are not experts in sign languages. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

From the above excerpt, there are several ambiguities. Firstly, the teacher indicates that Sign Language is the Deaf child's language but appears to contradict herself by also indicating that when they come to school, they do not have any language. A second apparent ambiguity lies in the teacher-centeredness of the preference for Sign Language even though the teacher says it is the child's language. The third ambiguity emanates from the view that the teachers only use total communication in order to make the deaf children understand, without making clear how using

both speech and Sign Language helps a child without any language to understand better. Taken collectively, the three ambiguities seem to suggest that it is the teacher himself/herself who understands better and, therefore, prefers the use of both speech and sign language.

Tr D6 observed that Deaf learners understood best when they were taught using Sign Language because it is their language. This was also evidenced by an observation which was done on Tr D7, whereby the learner responded correctly when asked a question through Sign language.

**Demonstration:** “What number are you writing?” The teacher used speech to communicate to the child.

The child did not respond. The teacher asked the same question using sign language and the child responded by signing the number two.

**The teacher explained:** “The child does not hear, so to compensate for all we use sign language.”

The teacher believed that the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction as required by the mother tongue policy benefited Deaf learners, as evidenced by the demonstration.

The researcher observed that most of the teachers who were trained in South Africa to teach without signing preferred using total communication when teaching the Deaf learners. This may suggest that they have realized the futility of oral-aural only approaches and, therefore, now prefer infusing Sign Language into their interaction with Deaf learners. Such teachers may believe that the underlying rationale for a Sign language policy is to liberate them to Sign Language alongside oral-aural methods of communication. Before 2020, the learners and teachers at school B were not allowed to use sign language and this was evidenced in the following extract:

*When the school started, it was for Deaf only, and there was no reverse inclusive education. Thus, sign language was used. Starting from the year 2000, it shifted to an aural/oral approach, as there were no gestures or signs or body language but only oralism was employed to develop spoken language in Deaf learners. From 2020, after the school realised that aural/oral approach was not helping the Deaf learners, the school shifted from aural/oral approach to total communication. (HB)*

Participants at School B did not believe in Section 62:5 of the language-in-education policy which states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf. They did not believe that ZSL could help Deaf learners in the learning process.

#### **4.3.3 Adequacy of Implementation Process Structure**

The study found that participants viewed the inadequacy of the implementation process as negatively affecting the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. In order to support the effective implementation of the language-in-education policy, there was need for provision of adequate support services. The lack of adequate implementation processes was reflected in the following participants' views:

*We went to South Africa to be trained on a programme called aural/oral approach. We were trained on how to teach without signing but unfortunately, the equipment that we have here is not good and our learners are profoundly Deaf and are different from the learners in South Africa. The school also takes learners who could hear a little bit and then from there they teach them. However, it's not easy for us here in Zimbabwe because we do not have the correct equipment (Tr B<sup>11</sup>).*

*Beginning end of last year up to now we are encouraging our teachers to use total communication because as we were evaluating the program operation taura mwana, "Operation speak child) it is difficult for other children, especially those with prelingual-deafness and this needs expensive gadgets. Furthermore, most of them are very poor and cannot afford to buy expensive gadgets which support operation speak child. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Results of the study reveal that neither the school nor the Ministry had the required equipment to implement the program. This is evidenced by the following extract:

*Whenever you do a program, there is need to evaluate the program. When we were doing the evaluation with the responsible authority, we found that the operation speak child works for a certain group of children while it is difficult for those with prelingual deafness. Also, it needs expensive gadgets but most of the children's parents are very poor, and cannot afford to buy the gadgets which support operation speak child. But we are not doing away with that operation. We are encouraging total communication for the learners. We have replaced aural/oral approach with total communication. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

The extract implies that the school was not prepared to implement the program for they did not have the required equipment. The teachers realised that because of the lack of required equipment, the Deaf learners were not benefiting from the system of aural/oral approach and, as a result, total communication was adopted at the school as a kind of compromise between oral/aural and Sign

Language. The compromise did not appear to be working well as the head of School B confirmed that teachers were yet to be capacitated on how to use total communication in teaching the Deaf learners. The following extract supports the above sentiment:

*They use total communication and they are still learning on how to encompass the two, Sign Language and speech (H<sup>B</sup>).*

During non-participant observation, the researcher noted that mostly teachers did not use total communication consistently. The researcher also observed that teachers used speech more often than Sign Language and, as a result, total communication did not meet the needs of all the learners.

Most of the policy implementers concurred that Sign language was the first language of the Deaf except participant A<sup>2</sup>, who believed that Shona was the first language of the Deaf except a few who believed otherwise.

During non-participant observation, the researcher observed that Deaf learners used Sign Language when communicating with peers, their teachers and in everything they did. Although teachers mentioned total communication, this contradicted with the researcher's observation, whereby Deaf learners used Sign Language. From the participant observation, the Deaf learners did not use total communication in their activities. This was also supported by a teacher of School A, who said:

*They use sign language because they are not be able to use total communication. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

The extract suggests that the process and structures for the spontaneous use of total communication were not in place for total communication, as the Deaf learners could only use Sign Language. It implies that the process of bringing together groups of visually-oriented Deaf learners in classes and schools ensured that adequate structures necessary for spontaneous communication in a visual rather than auditory language would be in place. These largely informal processes and structures are supported by formal Sign Language regulatory frameworks as found in the analysis of policy documents.

Documentary analysis revealed that Curriculum Policy for Primary and Secondary Education Director's Circular Number 3 of 2002 states that Zimbabwean Sign Language is a language for the hearing impaired. The goals of Circular Number 3 of 2002 appear to be internally inconsistent, as is evident in its reference to ZSL as a language for the hearing impaired. Calling deafness 'hearing impairment' suggests deficiency in the area of hearing and, therefore, speech, which, in turn, suggests the desirability of spoken language over Sign Language. Section 62:5 of the language-in-education policy also states that Sign Language is a medium of instruction for the Deaf. The Ministry is still to fulfil its obligation to implement the policies. This is evidenced by the following extract, which revealed that Sign Language is yet to be an academic subject:

*No, no, it is not an academic subject. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*I agree with the policy that Sign Language should be taught since it is a language for the Deaf. To be fair other languages are being taught in schools so, Sign Language should also be taught. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*At the moment, it's not yet examinable but it's a subject on the timetable, so we should teach sign language. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

The Ministry does not treat Sign Language like other indigenous languages, despite the fact that the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a states that the state shall ensure that all languages shall be treated equally. Deaf learners also did not have books adapted to meet the needs of the Deaf learners; consequently, the Deaf learners could study on their own like their hearing counterparts. This was observed by a teacher of School A, as shown in the following extract:

*Deaf learners cannot read on their own without the assistance of the teacher. (A<sup>2</sup>)*

Furthermore, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education does not view Sign Language as an indigenous language even though it was recognised by the Constitution of Zimbabwe as one of the sixteen languages in the country. Implementation structures related to the visual rather than auditory form of the language is not in place in schools and functions of the language are not clearly enunciated in the Constitution and related policy documents.

Although Sign Language is found on some of the school timetables, it was not recognised as one of the academic subjects as teachers teach different subjects during the lessons for ZSL.

Sign language being on some of the school timetables was just theoretical. Even though ZSL was not given its value in the school curriculum like other subjects, most teachers and School Heads observed that Sign language had a greater influence on the performance of the Deaf learners, as evidenced by the following excerpts from specialist teachers of the Deaf and the School Heads:

*They understand better when they are taught using their mother language which is sign language. They understand well than when the second language is used. The government should help these children to write their exams in Sign language. If the exams were designed using Sign Language, they were going to pass but because it is not it becomes very difficult for them to excel. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>, Tr A<sup>5</sup>)*

*It increases their performance because they will be using their language. I have observed that when we use the Red Star Method (Fitzgerald) most of the time, we will be using the sign language key whereby we use two colours red for English and blue for Sign Language. Learners understand better the blue colour when they will be signing. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

*Sometimes people have the wrong impression that Deaf learners do not understand concepts but it might be because they cannot understand the mode of communication that teachers are using. Thus, Sign Language, if used correctly will benefit the learners a lot (H<sup>B</sup>, H<sup>D</sup>)*

The excerpts show that the implementation structures, such as utilizing Sign Language for examinations, are not in place. Generally, correct functions for Sign Language in teaching, learning and examinations have not been done through status planning. It is, however, evident from one excerpt that bilingual education occurred when the Fitzgerald key was used in the Red Star method. For Sign Language to be effectively implemented, there is need for a lot of support from the Ministry. Support in terms of resources and adequate number of teachers who are qualified to use Sign Language fluently is required.

Deaf learners need a lot of resources to comprehend what is being taught, according to policy implementers. The following excerpts support the above notions:

*I might not be proficient in giving the correct Sign Language to an extent that learners might not understand it. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>, Tr B<sup>10</sup>, and Tr C<sup>15</sup>)*

*I want to know how to sign some of the words, and be able to sign some of these words for them to understand what is being taught. Maybe I will be making some mistakes and they*

*will be having problems to capture what I am saying because as a teacher, I should be well versed with the signing of the work I will be teaching (Tr D<sup>9</sup>, Tr C<sup>14</sup>)*

The excerpts above show that teachers were not able to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction for the Deaf learners. It was the responsibility of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to ensure that the government colleges trained teachers who would be able to use Sign Language fluently so as to implement mother tongue policy for Deaf learners in their schools. The following quotation also supports the above sentiment:

*I think it's necessary that colleges train teachers in such a way that when they meet Deaf learners, they're able to teach them. For example, that child over there (respondent points at direction where one child was seated) was at a regular school and the teachers were baby-sitting the child. I think it is ideal that when teachers are taught at colleges, they are taught on how to handle the learners with special needs. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

The colleges may not be properly training the teachers because of lack of Sign Language acquisition planning that recognizes the language as a mother tongue. It is likely that college lecturers are not conversant with Sign Language, but because of lack of adequate acquisition planning, they fail to bring in resource people who are fluent in the language.

Results reveal that there was lack of resources in special schools for the Deaf and that the special schools were relying on donors instead of the Ministry of Education. This shows lack of political will from the Government and the Ministry, as demonstrated below:

*No help in terms of materials or workshops or follow-ups from the government officials. They give us text books which are the same as those found in the mainstream. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*Unavailability of some resources like concrete objects. For instance, if I want to teach about fish, I need as much as possible to have a concrete fish, if I just sign it they won't understand the concept since they don't learn through abstract teaching. These learners need models and unless you have the real object, no learning will take place. We can get some of the materials from ICT. However, small children are not provided with ICT facilities (Tr B<sup>4</sup>)*

*We used to have donors whose funds enabled us to take our teachers to South Africa to learn more about this inclusive education policy, and teaching the Deaf and the hearing impaired in the same class. (H<sup>B</sup>)*



In general, the study found inadequate policy implementation process and structures, as there were inadequate trained personnel and material resources to implement the policy.

#### **4.3.4 Commitment of Implementing Officials**

Results of the study revealed that many teachers of the Deaf learners did not use Zimbabwean Sign Language as a medium of instruction; instead, these teachers were in favour of total communication. This is illustrated by what the teachers said:

*We use total communication which involve both signing and the talking. We use total communication to compensate for the lost words. If I speak and the child doesn't respond, then he or she will respond through Sign language. We use total communication in all the lessons. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>, Tr B<sup>11</sup>, Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*In primary schools, there is inclusive setting which involves Deaf learners and those with residual hearing; so, we are compelled to use total communication. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*I recommend that total communication be used whether they are completely Deaf or not. They also live in the community where other people use different languages, so, we can recommend that there should be total communication for them. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

It was evident, from the study, that the lack of commitment by the implementing officials was caused by factors such as the attitudes of the educators who seem to believe that Sign Language cannot stand alone, without the support of an oral language and the view that Deaf learners must also learn the oral language in order to fit into a largely hearing society. Other factors informing this lack of commitment are evident in the following extract.

*No help in terms of materials or workshops or follow-ups. They give us materials related to COVID-19 and textbooks which the same as those are found in the mainstream schools. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Lack of material resources, capacitation and supportive monitoring were suggested as factors that caused lack of commitment among the implementing officials. The kind of help indicated in the above excerpt has nothing to do with the policy and this shows a lack of commitment by MoPSE in terms of resources, workshops and follow-ups. The lack of commitment by the Ministry is elaborated on in the following quotes.

*We used to have donors so we send our teachers to South Africa to learn more about this inclusive education policy, teaching the Deaf and the hearing impaired in the same class.*

*The fact that they visit us here to see what we are doing, also makes them to learn because they also don't know how to teach children who are mixed like these ones. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*As a school, we are making disks in sign language for teachers to have but for learners, we don't have the teachers who will share with the learners. My Deaf friends are helping me with that. They are our former students. We gave them an office to operate from this school (H<sup>c</sup>).*

The above extracts show a lack of commitment by the Ministry in the implementation phase. Donors are being used to sponsor the implementation of the policy, while some schools are making their own discs in non-standardized Sign Language by using former students on voluntary basis. The schools are also given material not related to sign language.

However, some of the implementing officials were committed to using Sign Language as a medium of instruction as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*I am trying to use sign language but because it is not my language, I cannot say I am 100% perfect. Sometimes you might find me doing signed English because it's not my language. I make effort to use sign language, however. I might make mistakes here and there because it's not my language but I am making all the effort to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

*I prefer to use Sign Language to explain concepts because they understand better when you are signing. (Tr A<sup>5</sup>)*

The above implementing officials were committed to using Sign Language, even though they were facing challenges because Sign Language was not their language.

The study found that some of the School Heads were also committed to the policy implementation by sending their teachers to South Africa to learn about the Red Star and the Fitzgerald key methods of teaching the Deaf learners. The schools managed to send teachers to South Africa through the help of donor funds, but not from the Ministry. However, the skills learnt in South Africa were not directed to content or practical skills related to activities in Sign Language only, but also total communication.

Similarly, training in Zimbabwean institutions did not engender commitment to Sign Language use, as evident in the following extract.

*Most teachers have degrees in Special Needs Education but the problem with our universities is that they teach the theoretical aspect, but when it comes to practical it's another thing altogether. So, there is need for an individual to pursue the practical part of it because one may say that he/she has completed the degree program in Special Needs Education but if there are no hands-on approach, then nothing will be of benefit to us. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

The study further found that School Heads showed their commitment by orienting teachers on how to teach Deaf learners. The study found that teachers were being capacitated through school orientation programs, and the MoPSE was involved in the capacitation of the teachers to enable teachers to implement the policy.

#### **4.3.5 Support from Stakeholders and Interest Groups**

The study found that little support was being given from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, as shown from the excerpt below:

*I don't think that the ministry supports this because we could have seen the Ministry or the Minister funding this project or sending teachers to various institutions to learn Sign Language. However, we find that a teacher would go out on his way out of his pocket to pay for University or college education. No assistance from the Ministry or the Minister. No funding from the Ministry. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

School Heads complained that district officers were not giving them qualified personnel and, as a result, they were supposed to train the teachers themselves.

*They do very little, as they always give us teachers who have not received any specialized training in sign language. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

This was supported by what one district school inspector said:

*When we send teachers there, we can send a teacher who is not even qualified in Sign Language, or an English teacher but they are supposed to use Sign Language. (DSI<sup>B</sup>).*

The district officers argued that they could not give support to the schools because they were not getting any support from the Ministry.

*No clear budget is set up to be used to implement the policy because of financial problems and materials. Sometimes you may plan for workshops but you will not be able to do it because of the financial problem. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

They also argued that they could not organize workshops for the teachers because they were not proficient in Sign Language. They were even being trained in workshops on Sign Language by a certain special school. One participant said:

*Yes, we are the ones teaching them, but not them teaching us. We have officers from police stations who come here for Sign Language lessons. We also have lessons with United College for those who want to specialize in special Needs. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

This suggests that if the administrators were not capacitated on the policy, they would not be able to effectively monitor the implementation of the policy.

The district officers' responses showed that there was no support in terms of materials, workshops, human resources and financial support to carry out the workshops. There was also no budget in terms of finances to perform the workshops. The researcher observed that Deaf learners in special schools did not have adequate resources provided to them to help them in the learning process. It was observed that learners were not provided with adequate resources to enhance the implementation of the policy (Bediako, 2019), as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Cross Case Analysis of Availability of Resource Materials in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

Availability of learning resources			
School A	School B	School C	School D
Limited visual materials. No school projectors in the classroom one Television is found in the school head's office Teachers to source for their materials. No support from the MoPSE	Limited visual Material School projectors Still being installed in the classrooms Because of aural oral approach which was used there was lack of Sign Language dictionaries No support from the MoPSE Some of the charts are not Deaf friendly for they do not have visual materials	Limited visual materials School have computer lab which is meant for upper grades. Teachers use their computers to teach their Deaf learners. Teachers are to source for their materials No support from the MoPSE	Adequate resource materials The school make visual materials for the District and the police The school make Sign language Syllabus Projectors are installed in the classrooms Schools have to source for their materials from well wishers No support from the MoPSE

		Some of the charts are not Deaf friendly for they do not have visual materials	Some of the charts are not Deaf friendly for they do not have visual materials
--	--	--	--

The study found that the teachers were not supported with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to meet the learning needs of Deaf learners. Lack of financial support to enhance training workshops of teachers could be one of the causes of implementation failure. Many participants concurred that they received help more from well-wishers than from the Ministry, as shown from the quotations below:

*Usually, we receive funds from UNICEF but it is through the Ministry because as of now there is very little coming from the treasury. We are getting support though we might need more in terms of hearing aids. These schools have been benefiting from funds from UNICEF and school (SIG) to buy materials. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*Usually, we use partners who help us a lot. Some were done a long time ago but partners help a lot. Partners like King George Centre do help a lot. (DSI<sup>D</sup>)*

*I haven't attended any workshop from the Ministry, they never support us in terms of staff development. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

At present, the government is yet to come up with strategies to solve problems in implementing the language-in-education policy, since most of the help is coming from donors. It is, therefore, worth noting that, although Deaf learners were in special schools, the appropriate resources and equipment were not there to facilitate their learning of Sign Language. Overall, the study found that support from the government was not forthcoming and that this was hampering effective implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks in education. Support in terms of resources and training of policy implementers was sometimes availed by the donor community.

#### **4.3.6. Barriers to Effective Use of Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

The study found that a major barrier to policy implementation, as perceived by district officials, was a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation system. The following quotations reflect how monitoring was done by district officers:

*We conduct interviews when we go to schools to find out whether teachers are implementing the policy guidelines or not. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*We just visit our school and write reports and recommendations. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

The effectiveness of monitoring visits and conducting interviews, as cited in the above excerpts, is questionable. This is because the interviewers were not conversant with Sign Language, while the interviewees (teachers and School Heads) may have had barely rudimentary proficiency in Sign Language. In light of this, the reliability and validity of the interviews become questionable. This lack of knowledge and skills to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks and which hinders implementation is confirmed in the following extract.

*But when it comes to supervision of the sign language, it becomes difficult because we do not know sign language so it's a matter of being informed. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

The study revealed that poor governance system as well as lack of funding and resources affected the smooth implementation of the policies.

*Teachers were taught to scavenge. They are scavengers as they are the ones who prepare for the lessons, so, it is their responsibility to seek what is needed. The role of the school is to provide internet-connected computers for what is called E beam learning. Teachers will come with their flash discs with information for children to see. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*No clear budget has been put in place to implement the policy. Because of financial problems and materials, sometimes you plan for the workshops but you will not be able to do it because of the financial problems. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

Expecting individual teachers to take the initiative to seek necessary resources through scavenging is hardly likely to result in successful implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Teachers are requested to bring their flash discs, which in essence is a cost to the teachers. The

schools and the government in general appear to be abdicating their responsibility to provide implementing teachers with the necessary resources for successful implementation. School Heads also postulated that lack of funding was one of the barriers to effective implementation of the policy as evidenced by the following extract:

*I don't think that the ministry supports this policy because we could have seen the Ministry or the Minister funding this project or sending teachers to various institutions to learn sign language. We see that the teacher will go out on his way out of his pocket to pay for University or college education. No assistance from the Ministry or the Minister. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*They are normally very supportive when we plan for our workshops which they authorise. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

*We have here at King George where we used to offer sign language lessons for parents and the teachers. We used to have groups whereby a Deaf teacher from the secondary used to teach. There is also a part-time lecturer at GZU teaching Sign Language. He will be the one coming to teach us in our groups. So, we will be refreshed in Sign Language. Sometimes, there are workshops which will attend and even attend short courses just like the one I told you about on Sign language at ZOU. When they offer short courses during the weekends, we pay for those courses and avail ourselves. Maybe the good part or the unfortunate part of it is that we use our teachers to teach others on those short courses. Some of our teachers who are here are Deaf. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

As shown from the above verbatim quote, ZSL workshops are done at school levels by other Deaf teachers. In-service workshops are also done at universities by the Deaf teachers who are lecturers at some of the universities. As indicated in the first extract, teachers do go out of their way to fund their Sign Language training and this is a big barrier to the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. This is because it will only the few teachers who have some extra income who will undertake such training. The other extract shows that the School Head has been reduced to extolling the very low standards whereby government support is only limited to authorizing school workshops on Sign Language.

The study also revealed that the use of total communication was a major barrier to learners with profound hearing loss and those with pre-lingual deafness. According to sentiments of the participants, total communication benefitted those with residual hearing. Those with pre-lingual deafness did not benefit from total communication. This is shown in the following extracts.

*We use total communication because some of them can understand and read the lips, especially those with residual hearing. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*We want these children to fit in the society hence the aural/oral approach. Sign Language only is good but learners do not write using Sign Language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

By using total communication and aural/oral approach specialist teachers of the Deaf were denying Deaf learners' access to Sign Language, despite the fact that Curriculum Policy for Primary and Secondary Education Director's Circular Number 3 of 2002 states that Zimbabwe Sign Language was a language for the hearing impaired.

#### **4.4 Theme 2: Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

In Chapter 1, Section 1.4, the second sub-research question sought to find out the challenges which were faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Participants had varying views on the challenges which were faced in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. These varying views were grouped into six sub-themes: forms of Sign Language, functions of Sign Language, teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies, teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices, ambiguity of mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum, and Sign Language agents and other resources. Sub-theme 1 on forms of Sign Language is presented in the following section:

##### **4.4.1 Forms of Sign Language**

The study revealed that when learners come to school for the first time, they will be having different forms of Sign Language. When learners come from home, they will be having different home signs, as evidenced by the following extracts:

*When children come here for the first time, they do not have the language. Teachers have to teach them every sign because at home the parents might be hearing so its mother tongue here at school but at home it is not because the parents cannot sign so learners use home signs. It's the survival/home sign language which they use when they are at home. Its mother tongue at school not at home for example Shona is a language both at school and at home. (H<sup>B</sup>)*



*At home they have their own signs which are completely different from what we do here at school. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

All the participants concurred that when most of the Deaf learners enter schools from their homes, they will be having different sign languages. Learners who come from homes in which ZSL is not the primary language face a lot of challenges in communicating with other learners and the specialist teachers for the Deaf.

*They might be coming from home where Shona, Ndebele, or even English is the mother tongue and there is no Sign Language. The father is not Deaf, the mother is not Deaf, and so the child comes to school without any language. This child is going to meet the mother tongue here at school through the teacher. Compared to that other child from the Deaf culture, the child will have the mother tongue. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

It was reported that most learners would have home signs and they will only learn formal Sign Language at special schools for the Deaf through the teachers. Whilst specialist teachers of the Deaf are supposed to teach the Deaf Sign Language, it was revealed, in the study, that some of the teachers were not competent in using Sign Language. This lack of fluency is a challenge that is revealed in the following quote.

*Teachers cannot communicate well with Deaf learners. This is a barrier in terms of communication, the students find it difficult to understand what the teacher is saying and also the teachers are confused with the rudimentary signs that the learners have brought from home to school. Rudimentary signs are signs that are created at home to enable them to understand each other, the parents and other siblings. When they come to school the teacher has his way of signing certain words thus, we find that the child is confused which is a challenge that the learners faces. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

It is a vital role of specialist teachers for the Deaf to promote Sign Language learning throughout the school years. However, the challenge is that the specialist teachers are not competent in Sign Language. This might be due to lack of capacity development in Sign Language.

The study also revealed that teachers used English and signed English in teaching Deaf learners as illustrated by these excerpts:

*The challenge will be especially with the new curriculum. Sign Language is broken English. Deaf learners do not follow English language sequence, for example, Deaf learners instead of saying “How do you start?” they say “Start how?” and instead of saying “How is your family? They say, “Family how”. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

*I use English and Sign Language (total communication) as they do not do Shona. When I am doing Shona, I separate them (from hearing learners). They will be doing something else, and we might be reinforcing them in English, Mathematics or Heritage studies. That's why we have assistant teachers. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

*For the Deaf, they use Sign Language but they also learn English Language since they don't do indigenous languages for the hearing people. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

Participants argued that they could not use Sign Language alone because learners did not write in Sign Language since their books were not written in sign language but in English. Participants argued that Deaf learners would learn how to read and write through signed English but not Sign Language. According to the participants, signed English would help in the development of English literacy among the Deaf learners. These sentiments generally reveal that specialist teachers of the Deaf did not view ZSL as a real language.

The study further revealed that Sign Language was not uniformly used by specialist teachers of the Deaf from the 4 special schools of the Deaf. as shown from the following extract:

*I am not well versed in Sign Language. This Sign Language depends on the region where the child comes from. It's not one common language like you are talking English. Thus, there are so many sign languages, for example, when I sign the word I like or the word I love its different from how they sign in other regions. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

*As a district, we presented to the chief director a request to allow us to have universal Sign Language. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

*During our schools' exchange programmes, I once visited School D and School C and noticed that the word used to name something like boy could be signed differently, while some words are signed differently. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

*The challenge is that of trying to have standard Sign Language in all schools. We only try to supervise here and there but we are not specialised in sign language. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

The above excerpts continue to reflect the attitude that ZSL was not a real language. This is evident in the request for a government official to have a universal Sign Language as it shows a lack of acceptance of variations such as dialects, which are normal and natural in any other language. Even though standardization of Sign Language for educational purpose is beneficial, it becomes a challenge when any variations are viewed by teachers as being problematic. This is evident in the

following quotes, where teachers from the same schools were using different signs and this was perceived as a problem:

*As they are young, they fail to understand when they change to the next teacher. They may face the challenges if the signs used are different. (Tr C<sup>18</sup>)*

*Their role is to assist in Sign Language. You will find out that there are many sign languages so their role is to assist learners in the use of proper sign language. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

The above extracts confirm the position that there are different forms of sign languages, depending on the child's background or the region where the child comes from. These differences are not in themselves challenges, but the view that they are a problem may be indicative of an underlying attitudinal challenge by the participating educators. The attitudinal challenge easily leads to the view that variations in Sign Language could impact learner engagement due to communication breakdown between the teachers and the learners, and that this hinders the teaching and learning process. The challenge here is that the weak academic outcomes of Deaf learners can be justified in this way, with no attempt to find the real causes and solutions. Different signs may negatively impact on the performance of the learners, as the learners might not understand the concepts in class that are put across to them through different signs.

#### **4.4.2 Functions of Sign Language**

The study found that the functions assigned to Sign Language had a great impact on the manner in which Sign Language regulatory frameworks were implemented. The status of Sign Language determined whether Deaf learners got an education similar to their hearing counterparts. It was a challenge when in implementation, Sign Language was not properly assigned a status equivalent to spoken languages. This is evidenced by the following excerpts:

*They have to understand Sign Language instruction to carry out the learning activities (Tr A<sup>5</sup>)*

*If you do not sign to these learners, it will seem like you are talking alone. When children understand what you have explained in sign language their performance becomes good. (Tr D<sup>8</sup>)*

The above extracts show that Sign Language has a supplementary role to spoken language. That supplementary role is subordinate and this has a negative impact on the learning of Deaf learners,

who may begin to think that they cannot go very far through the use of Sign Language alone. On the contrary, Deaf learners can go to a higher level through the use of Sign Language, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

*Sign Language is very important to Deaf learners as they can go very far because we have qualified Deaf teachers who have degree qualifications and some have master degree achievements. Some of the successful Deaf people achieved this when Sign Language was still fully used. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

Likewise, the school administrators also postulated the same view that Sign Language was very significant and needed clear status planning in order to enhance the learning of Deaf learners. The study revealed that Sign Language was not being accorded its rightful status in implementation. These sentiments are illustrated in the following excerpts.

*Sign Language is very good because sometimes if you don't sign for them you can assume that they don't understand or they don't know but when you sign for them then you realise that these children can answer questions. Sometimes they are wrongly judged, since we assume that these children do not understand yet the problem will be ours for failing to communicate in sign language. (H<sup>D</sup>, H<sup>B</sup>)*

*Sign Language is very important, because it is not possible to communicate with Deaf learners without using Sign Language, therefore, teaching without Sign Language is impossible. It helps us to improve the grade seven results and even the way of life in the Deaf community. Sign Language helps them a lot, since it enables them to interact and share their problems or even further their education. For example, here we have a School Chaplin who is Deaf and who went to South Africa to get a degree. If it was not for Sign Language, he would not get that far. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

The above excerpts show that in policy implementation, Sign Language was not being accorded its rightful high status as teachers were under the wrong impression that learners did not understand concepts, whilst it would be due to the language that was being used to teach them. It is the oral language used to teach which was causing a communication barrier between the teacher and the learners.

The study further revealed that there were long-term consequences of continually underplaying the functions of Sign Language by forcing Deaf students to receive instruction in spoken language as this led to illiteracy. Although the language-in-education policy stipulated that education should be provided through the medium of Sign Language, the implementation was generally non-existent

and not monitored because of insufficient Sign Language skills among the teachers and school inspectors. Sometimes Deaf students had to teach their hearing teachers Sign Language, as shown in the following quote.

*Teachers are taught Sign Language by the kids and if you spend two to three days with the kids, they will teach you more. What we have is bookish Sign Language. These learners, because they were born deaf and were brought here when they were still young, they are now proficient in Sign Language. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

The implication of Deaf children teaching their hearing teachers Sign Language was that the status of the child was likely to be attributed to the language he or she was teaching the teachers. It is not surprising, therefore, that many teachers ascribed lower status to Sign Language as compared to the oral languages that teachers were using. As a result of its low status, Sign Language might not be mastered by some learners in the early grades and this would become a challenge both to the learner and the teacher, since Sign Language helped them in the learning of the second language, as evidenced by the following observation.

**Researcher:** “Why does this child look older than others?”

*She was learning at the main stream school and they say she was in grade 3 Class. Look at her work; she cannot perform even a simple task because of lack of language, Sign Language. She cannot even draw a book or a pencil or even copy the data. Main stream teachers just ignore such children during their lessons. (C<sup>17</sup>)*

The study found that if the status of Sign Language was underplayed, such that learners did not learn the language in early grades; then they would face challenges in learning a second language. This is supported by the following excerpt.

*It's true in the sense that the learners will only require to learn Sign Language only whereas those without sign language need to learn sign language as well as the other language. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

Other participants concurred by saying that learning Sign Language in early grades would help the teachers to move forward with other concepts. They pointed out that the learners who came from Deaf Culture had an advantage over those who came from backgrounds where the parents and siblings were hearing because they already had a language. This is shown in the following excerpts:

*For learners who came from hearing parents, you have to start from zero for they would not be able to sign. (Tr B<sup>6</sup>)*

*Some learners come without language since they come from hearing families and therefore, they have challenges with Sign Language. However, the more they interact with their counterparts, the more they will be learning the language. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*When learners learn a language early, it will be easy to move forward with other concepts. When learners come here, they do not have the language, they learn the mother tongue language, here at school. For learners who come from Deaf Culture, they have already had language so they are better than those who do not come from the Deaf culture. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

The study found that when Sign Language is not used to bridge the communication gap and create an emotionally secure social and learning environment, then there are challenges that may arise. For learners who came from hearing parents, teachers have to start from scratch, as the children would not be able to sign as reflected in the following extract:

*When you are teaching someone coming from the Deaf Culture, they have the basics of sign language. Those coming from homes where there is no Deaf Culture do not have that language, so I am starting afresh to introduce Sign Language to them and since there is the second language, English Language, which you are also using, they get confused a lot. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>).*

One participant also postulated that Deaf learners who came from Deaf families learn the second language faster than those who came from where there was no Sign Language. Learners without the base of a first language face challenges in acquiring a second language.

*Learners need to learn Sign Language in early grades because most teachers cannot communicate well with them. The teachers have bookish Sign Language and the learner is coming from home using rudimentary signs. This is a barrier in terms of communication because the students find it difficult to understand what the teacher is saying and also the teachers get confused with the rudimentary signs that the learners have brought from home to school. Rudimentary signs are those that are created at home to enable family members to understand each other. (Tr H<sup>C</sup>)*

*It's true that those who already have the language can learn the second language, while those without language cannot learn because the second language is built upon the foundation of the first language. Learners will associate things in the new language with the mother tongue. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

The above quotations show the importance of learning Sign Language in early grades, both to the learners and to the teacher because if learners do not learn Sign Language in early grades, it means that their teachers have to teach Sign Language and complete the curriculum as well as teach

English at the same time. On the issue of long- and short-term benefits of learning Sign Language in early grades, administrators had this to say:

*Teachers will be able to communicate with the learners to make them understand because they will be using Sign Language. However, if the learners do not understand Sign Language, the teacher will have to look for teaching aids that will make the learners understand. Proficiency in Sign Language makes teaching faster and more enjoyable. (H<sup>D</sup>).*

*It affects the teachers in the sense that, because if the learners do not have the language, how will the teacher teach them? It means teachers have to start from zero. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Deaf students who have acquired Sign Language as early as possible tend to become more successful at school compared to those who learn Sign Language later. Success also concerns literacy skills. Without functionally using Sign Language from an early age, Deaf people are excluded from society with the risk of lacking proficiency in any language and this will affect Deaf learners in grasping concepts at school. This is in concurrence with the response from the following participant:

*Learners will spend a long period grasping concepts if they don't have Sign Language competence. Teachers will spend long periods teaching learners to grasp concepts if they don't have the language. It is important to understand that the early acquisition of Sign Language development of Deaf learner is strongly connected to cognitive, academic and social skills. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

Participants of the study also postulated that the other function of Sign language is to uplift the academic achievement of learners as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*Sign Language, as opposed to oralism, uplifts their academic achievement. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>, Tr A<sup>4</sup>, Tr D<sup>8</sup>)*

*Sign Language uplifts their academic achievements if they understand what you have said but sometimes we fail to explain things and that's why we used to have Deaf adults (former students) to help us to explain concepts to the Deaf learners (Tr D<sup>7</sup>).*

*Sign Language can uplift their academic achievement. We are saying that they have failed the exams. It's not because they have actually failed the exams but it's because of the language barrier. When you are signing, it's not like speaking in standard English since when signing we are using broken English because we cannot use the proper English as this will make us end up not finishing the work as it will be too long. Sign Language is like broken English. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

Most of the policy implementers believed that Sign Language would uplift the academic achievement of Deaf learners. Perceived challenges, however, emanated from the home signs, the lack of Sign Language at home and lack of teachers' proficiency in Sign Language, all of which negatively affected acquisition of a second language and academic achievement. The next section focuses on teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies.

#### **4.4.3 Teachers' Sign Language Knowledge and Competencies**

The study revealed that Zimbabwean Sign Language implementers held various qualifications, most of which were unsuitable for teaching Deaf learners. The findings revealed that most of the teachers had degree, certificate or diploma qualifications in Special Needs Education. However, the challenge was that most of these qualifications did not have a component of Sign Language such that when they are deployed at special schools for the Deaf, they still needed to be oriented on how to deal with Deaf learners.

This was evidenced by the following excerpts:

*Most teachers have degrees in Special Needs Education. The problem with our universities is that they teach the theoretical aspect, but when it comes to practical aspect, it's another thing altogether. There is need for an individual to pursue the practical part of it because one may say he/she has earned a degree in Special Needs Education but lacks knowledge and skills in sign language (H<sup>A</sup>, H<sup>D</sup>).*

The above extract confirms that most teachers who trained in Special Needs Education did not take enough courses on Sign Language. It is, therefore, a challenge for teachers without Sign Language competencies to teach using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Since most of the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, they preferred teaching using total communication. The study found that teachers who had a certificate in Sign Language had taken short courses, such that they could not be fluent in Sign Language. If the teacher is not competent in signing, it remains a daunting task to teach the Deaf learners.



**Table 4.4: Summary of Teachers' Competencies in the Use of Zimbabwean Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction**

Responses	Participant
<i>I might not be proficient in giving the correct Sign Language to an extent that learners might not understand it.</i>	<b>Tr A<sup>3</sup></b>
<i>I want the knowing of how to sign some of the words, I want to be able to sign some of these words for them to understand maybe I will be making some mistakes and they will be having problems to capture what I am saying. I should be well versed with the signing of the work I will be teaching.</i>	<b>Tr D<sup>9</sup></b>
<i>I am not proficient in Sign Language because it's not my language.</i>	<b>Tr B10</b>
<i>The only challenge we face is that we are not proficient in Sign Language. There are some subjects which are very difficult to teach in Sign language, such as RME and VPA. Some of the matter in those subjects are very difficult to teach.</i>	<b>Tr C<sup>14</sup></b>
<i>The challenge that I have is that of not being proficient in Sign Language.</i>	<b>Tr C15</b>

Table 4.2 supports the teachers' sentiments on not being competent in Sign Language.

Teachers were comfortable in using total communication as a medium of instruction. They decried the lack of capacity development in Sign Language so as to enable them to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. This is evidenced by the following excerpt:

*Teachers are not practically qualified to implement the policy, since most of them are qualified theoretically (H<sup>A</sup>).*

It is evident that, as a result of their own weak Sign Language knowledge and competencies, teachers tried to communicate with the Deaf learners using total communication. This was a challenge because the communication with Deaf learners remained weak and ineffective for teaching and learning. The next section explores teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices.

#### 4.4.4 Teachers' Sign Language Beliefs and Practices

The study revealed that although some teachers believed that they were putting a lot of effort into using Sign Language, the big challenge was that many of these hearing teachers had negative sign language beliefs and engaged in deficient language teaching practices. The hearing teachers were not proficient in Sign Language. As a result, most of the teachers preferred to use total communication so that at least they also had the chance of using their own oral language.

*Sign Language is not our language; so, it's not easy. In Sign Language dictionaries, some of the words are not there and also the kids at home they do not use Sign Language and this makes them not to be proficient in Sign Language. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*I am trying to use Sign Language but because it is not my language I cannot say I am 100% perfect. Sometimes you might find me doing signed English because it's not my language. I make all the effort to use Sign language but make mistakes here and there because it's not my language. However, I am making all the effort to use Sign language as the medium of instruction. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

On the language used as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools, the majority of the teachers used total communication when they were teaching Deaf learners. This choice appears to be informed by total communication's embracing of oral language and the teachers' belief that they had to teach the Deaf learners to talk so that they would use speech, like their hearing counterparts.

From the non-participant observation, it was noted that teachers used total communication that involved talking and signing concurrently. However, sometimes the teachers would not sign some of the words. This suggests that the teachers proceeded with the oral language in the belief that it was a superior language which learners would somehow grasp despite not hearing it. Learners ended up getting confused.

In follow-up discussions, one participant argued that they used English because even Sign Language dictionaries were written in English.

*They encourage the use of English because it is easier. Even those who wrote the Dictionaries, they did so in English. The American Sign Language Dictionary is in written English, and the British Sign Language Dictionary is also in English. Even the*

*Zimbabwean Sign Language Dictionary is written in English. There might be Sign Language variations because of the background of the child. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

The educator's argument strengthens the view that the oral language which has a written form was believed to be superior to Sign Language. Such a belief constitutes a big challenge in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks, as some educators hold the view that they are being asked to implement an inferior language for teaching and learning. In addition, the teachers' view that sign language was not the language for hearing teachers, which is why they were not proficient in it, suggests a negative attitude towards languages other than one's own oral language. Total communication was, therefore, preferred by the teachers so that at least they also had the chance of using an oral language. Paradoxically, total communication in this case meant using Sign Language together with an oral foreign language, that is English, with the latter considered as being easier and not foreign.

*Sign Language is not our language so it's not easy. In Sign Language dictionaries some of the words are not there in our languages and also the kids at home do not use Sign Language and this makes them incompetent in Sign Language. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

One participant argued that they used total communication for the benefit of those who could speech-read, especially those with residual hearing.

*We use total communication because some of them can understand and read the lips of the teachers, especially those with residual hearing. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

This implies a belief that successful speech-reading was associated with an element of hearing some sounds rather than visualizing them. The overriding belief was that Deaf learners had to acquire knowledge through audition rather than visually. This downplaying of the visual channel for communication extends to the downplaying of the status of Deaf people's visual-gestural language which is Sign Language. Since some of the teachers had a strong belief that speech would help the Deaf learners to fit into the society, this shows that those teachers preferred oral language in teaching the Deaf learners. The teachers who believed in total communication also believed that oralism would uplift the academic achievement of the Deaf learners, as shown from the following excerpts:

*Total communication uplift their academic achievement because it uses many methods that benefit all the learners. (Tr A<sup>5</sup>)*

*We agreed that we should use total communication. As a hearing person, it's very difficult to use Sign Language. Therefore, we will just speak. We also have learners who are hard of hearing and so we will use total communication for the benefit of those with residual hearing. (Tr C<sup>15</sup>)*

However, another participant postulated that although Sign Language was not their language, they made a lot of effort in using Sign Language when teaching Deaf learners. This contradicted what the researcher observed during lesson observations. The researcher observed that most of the teachers preferred using total communication during their lessons even though in some of the classes there were more Deaf people than the hearing people. Although teachers had different views on the language used as a medium of instruction, the administrators at the district level had their opinions on the language that was used as a medium of instruction. This was evidenced by the following extracts:

*They use total communication and they are still learning on how to encompass the two, that is the Sign Language and speech. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*They augment Sign Language. They lip read the signs and sometimes use rudimental signs (signs form home) because they are not proficient in Sign Language. They are not trained in Sign Language and are not proficient in Sign Language and that's the major problem. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

Most of the School Heads noted that many teachers of the Deaf used total communication as a medium of instruction. This sentiment was voiced by many teachers of the Deaf, although a few said that they used Sign Language as a medium of instruction. School Heads pointed out that, although teachers would like to follow Section 62:5 of the Education Amended Act (2006) which states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf, the problem was that they were not proficient in Sign Language. Most of the teachers of the Deaf were not trained in Sign Language to be able to teach learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction.

*They talk even when they are Deaf. Most of them have hearing aids so total communication is used. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

Despite the views which were given by the teachers that learners used total communication or Sign Language, this was different from what the researcher observed during lesson presentations. All the Deaf learners used Sign Language in their communication, and no one used speech. Most

teachers preferred that Deaf learners use speech because most of the teachers preferred to use total communication. The main reason for that might be the inefficiency of the teachers' competence in Sign Language because of lack of appropriate training. The unavailability of such training for the teachers was one of the challenges observed. Most of the teachers were not trained purposely to teach Deaf learners in the Sign Language, which they used mostly in their group activities. The following section explores the mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum.

#### **4.4.5 Ambiguity of Mother Tongue Status of Sign Language in the Curriculum**

The study found that teachers, School Heads and district officers were not fully aware of the mother tongue status of Sign Language in the curriculum. The uncertain role of Sign Language in a mother tongue-based multilingual curriculum led to non-implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Ambiguity emanated from unclear policy goals accompanied by some conflict on the means of achieving Sign Language goals and the language's necessity for Deaf learners. Some teachers, school administrators and District officers acknowledged that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction but not as an academic subject as required by the Circular Number 2 of 2001. The following excerpts illustrate the views of the participants on the consideration of the policy which states that Sign Language should be taught in all primary schools:

*It is used as a medium of instruction to teach these learners but it is not considered an academic subject like Shona and other languages. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

This shows that the policies were just there on paper, with neither follow-ups, monitoring nor evaluation being done by the district officers. The implication was that implementation tended to be locally-driven and bottom-up, with outcomes determined by which individual teachers or schools were active and what local resources were available. The high ambiguity on the role of Sign Language made implementation even more uncertain a process.

*Sign Language is there on the timetable but during that time we teach new words or we are helped to teach new vocabulary by the Deaf adults. However, it is not an examinable nor academic subject. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

*I have never heard of the policy. Moreover, we don't have qualified personnel who are fluent in Sign Language who can teach the children. Teachers are also learning the Sign language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*I agree with the policy that Sign Language should be taught since it is a language for the Deaf. To be fair, since the other languages are being taught in schools, Sign Language should also be taught. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*It's there on paper. In special schools all teachers should teach using Sign Language as a medium of instruction but it is not on the timetable. I have never seen it. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

Other participants pointed out that the Policy Circular Number 2 of 2001 was just there on paper but it was not being practiced. The following excerpts illustrate the views of the participants:

*I am not aware of the policy. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

Though the policy has been there for a long period, another administrator acknowledged not being aware of the policy. This implies non-implementation of the policy.

*Yes, it is there on the timetable under indigenous languages; so it is taught as a subject. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

Just like any other indigenous language, Sign Language might be there on some of the timetables, but it is not taught when it is time for Sign Language as some other subjects are taught, as observed by the researcher:

*It is not yet examinable as it is difficult for Sign Language to be an academic subject because most teachers are still learning the language themselves. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

School Heads H<sup>B</sup> and H<sup>D</sup> concurred that sign language was not an academic subject because it was not an examinable subject, just like another administrator who also pointed out that they would not waste time teaching something which was not examinable. This meant that for Sign Language to be an academic subject, it should first of all be made an examinable subject. Another administrator argued that Sign Language could not be made an academic subject because there were no specialist teachers who could teach that subject.

*It is used as a medium of instruction since it is not examinable. Maybe in the future, it can be considered as an academic subject since other indigenous languages are taught. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

Administrator H<sup>A</sup> had the same sentiment as other administrators, by revealing that Sign Language was only used as a medium of instruction but not as an academic subject since it was not examinable. Results of the study revealed that assessment in the form of examinations influences curriculum implementation tremendously. Due to the value given to public examinations, teachers tended to concentrate on subjects that promote academic excellence. This scenario can affect the role of ZSL as an academic subject since it is not examinable. The administrator pointed out that maybe soon it could be made an examinable subject like other indigenous languages. Other indigenous languages were examinable subjects because they had the textbooks written in their language, and had syllabuses to guide teachers on how to teach the subjects so the subjects could easily be examinable. This meant that for Sign Language to be made an examinable subject, it should have specialist teachers who are trained for that. Also, it should have books written in Sign Language and it should have syllabuses that will guide teachers on how to teach and examine the subject.

*This policy was just made to fit in the constitution because they do not make follow-ups. Even if you don't do it, no one will arrest you, no penalties. This was only factored in because of the constitutional rights due to Deaf pressure groups. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

The participant thought that the policy of mother-tongue instruction was just factored in because of Deaf pressure groups. There was uncertainty on the role of Sign Language in the curriculum from the district officers. The following extracts represent the opinions of the district officers on the role of Sign Language in the curriculum:

*If specialists will be available, it must be one of the subjects on the timetable under the specific learning area. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

*It is considered an academic subject at preliminary stages and therefore should be included on timetables. Since it's a medium of instruction it's not a standalone subject. It emphasises the use of sign languages, telegraphic languages. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

*It is a tool used to convey knowledge but it's not being equated to English, Shona or Ndebele. It's just the same way we don't want to be associated with the Deaf. Sign Language is that language for the Deaf, but we don't want to be associated with the Deaf. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*It is not an academic subject because of lack of human resources, as most teachers don't have Sign Language as a language, and there are no books or syllabus in Sign Language. (DSI<sup>D</sup>)*

*Is it examinable? We want to concentrate on something examinable. We are driven by assessment by the exams and certificates. As an official, I am saying that, for it to be important, let it be examinable because we place a lot of emphasis on the exams. That which is not under exam is considered second grade. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

District officers believed that if specialist teachers were found, then it could be considered an academic subject. The uncertainty in the role of Sign Language made implementation even more an uncertain process.

The researcher made different lesson observations to ascertain the role of Zimbabwean Sign Language in the curriculum. The researcher found out that teachers (Tr A<sup>4</sup>, B<sup>12</sup>, C<sup>13</sup>, and D<sup>7</sup>) preferred total communication in the teaching and learning processes, with the exception of only teacher D<sup>8</sup> who had a Bachelor of Education Degree in Sign Language and used Sign Language in all her classroom activities. The researcher also observed that learners used Sign Language in all their activities. The researcher also observed that for language used for classroom administration, teachers preferred mostly speech and partially Sign Language. The researcher observed that the role of Zimbabwean Sign Language was not certain in the curriculum unlike that of the other indigenous languages, despite the fact that the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a, states that the state shall ensure that all languages shall be treated equitably.

#### **4.4.5 Sign Language Agents and Other Resources**

Policy implementation can be successfully achieved if the Sign Language agents provide the appropriate support. Success of the policy implementation will be determined largely by the availability of qualified personnel and the level of resources available and the efficiency of the program developed to implement the policy. Without adequate support, policy implementation becomes a challenge. The study revealed that little support was being given by the Sign Language policy agents such as Deaf community pressure groups, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, district inspectors of schools and school psychologists, in terms of providing qualified personnel and resources to help in the implementation of the policy. This is evidenced from the following extracts:

*There is clear budget for the implementation of the policy because of financial problems and materials. Sometimes you plan for the workshops but you will not be able to conduct them due to financial problems. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*



*Usually we use partners who help us a lot. Partners like King George Centre do help a lot (Psy<sup>D</sup>).*

*Usually we receive help from UNICEF through the Ministry. As of now, there is very little coming from the treasury but from partners. Although we are getting support, we still need more in terms of hearing aids. UNICEF and SIG have been also supporting us. These schools have been benefiting from such sources. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*We have been receiving resources from the King George six such as books so that we can understand sign language. (DSI<sup>P</sup>)*

School Heads also concurred with District inspectors of schools that schools were receiving little support from the Ministry of Education, as illustrated in the following extracts.

*I don't think that the Ministry supports this because we could have seen the Minister funding this project or sending teachers to various institutions to learn Sign Language. We realize that a teacher can go out on his way and out of his pocket to pay for University or college education. No assistance or funding that comes from the Ministry or the Minister. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*Even if they want to follow the guideline, very few teachers are qualified in Sign Language sine. We don't have more institutes that train teachers to be qualified in Sign Language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*Oh, I can imagine getting Sign Language textbooks. Hakuna Zvakadaro (Nothing like that). They are not yet there. Even their dictionary is not yet there because those things require a lot of money and many people should be involved. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Participants also revealed that some of the assistant teachers who were in special schools were not fluent in Sign Language, as shown in this extract:

*We have assistant teachers. Some of them are not fluent in Sign Language. You see these are infants, hence, the teacher has to see that all the things are in place. Helping the teacher in every task in looking for resources and giving them to the teacher is fundamental. When the learners are writing, she also walks around to check whether the learners are doing the right thing because these hearing-impaired learners need a lot of help in order for them to grasp the concepts being taught. (Tr A<sup>4</sup>)*

Participants revealed that across all four special schools, resources were largely unavailable and where they were available, they were inaccessible to the users. The available resources in schools included laptops but most of them belonged to the teachers. There were also computer laboratories

but the challenge was that since learners going there in shifts, they would only have access to them for a short time. This is illustrated in the following excerpts.

*We have alphabet and numbers only and these dictionaries do not have some words. We share the resources at grade level depending on what you are teaching. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*Some of the resources are there but they are not 100% adequate. At least they have few computers, and personally I has a computer there. I can help to teach them with computers but that's the only one available as they don't have their own computers. Therefore, they will be using it in shifts. However, we will like that they have their own. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

One participant mentioned that the computer laboratory was for upper grades, not infants.

*There are computers in one room for the ICT teacher only, but the learners go there to get access to them, but the little ones do not say anything. (Tr A<sup>4</sup>)*

Other resources included projectors which, at some schools, were still being installed.

Televisions were also mentioned, which were found in hostels or school administrators' offices for entertainment.

*Televisions are placed in the hostels for entertainment. There were also sign language dictionaries and Sign Language alphabets. We don't have enough resources. (Tr A<sup>5</sup>)*

*For laptops, and textbooks, we are in the process of installing projectors in each and every classroom (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Videotapes, CD-ROMs and other visual materials containing sign language examples provided an alternate form of training materials, as the dynamic nature of a visual language is best shown using images. These Sign Language resources were also not easily accessed by learners. One of the head teachers said:

*We have laptops and CDS for other classes that we get from friends. Therefore, teachers learn sign language from CDS. The few we have are suitable because when teachers and learners use the videos in sign language, they will both be learning. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

The above quotation shows that although CD-ROMs and other visual materials containing Sign Language were given to the teachers, they were not adequate for the teachers and the learners.

On the availability of learning resources, the study revealed that there was a strong need to provide relevant teaching and learning resources to support the learning of the hearing impaired as evidenced by the following quotations:

*The resources are enough. We share the resources such as textbooks at grade level depending on what you are teaching. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*They are not enough; hence, we improvise the resources. Presently, we don't have the School Head, and don't know the type of School Head who will come or whether he or she will look for the resources (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*The resources are not enough. However, we are better than most schools though the resources are not enough. We share and also try to improvise some resources. We look for pictures, for example, if you talk about the sausage you will think the child does not know the sausage but if you show the picture then the child will point out that it is a sausage. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

From the given responses, it is apparent that Deaf learners cannot learn without visual materials. They need to see the real objects or pictures of the object. If the resource requirements and their use are not planned correctly, they lead to difficulties in implementing the policy. The participants argued that if you teach without visual materials you would be like you are talking to yourself and this would limit policy implementation. These resources would facilitate the implementation of the policy. Curriculum implementation depends on the availability of resources. The participants propounded that resources were available but were not enough.

School Heads were also concerned about the adequacy of resources provided to teachers to implement the Sign Language policy. Administrators argued that teachers were not being given enough resources to cater for the learners.

*Teachers do not have adequate resources and we do not have the Sign Language dictionaries. However, we try as much as we can to source for the required materials. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*To some extent teachers are given adequate resources but it all depends on the number of learners they have. When we are looking at resources, we depend on a number of things such as time. We also look for resources which are to be used when teaching and learning as well as looking at teachers' salaries. When morale is low because of the poor salaries, then the execution of the lessons becomes very poor. When one has very little, or is receiving very little for the job he is doing, they limit their hours at the institution (H<sup>A</sup>)*

Lesson observations at each of the four schools also revealed that for learners in special schools, there were no resources provided to the schools to help these learners. It was observed that teachers at School B did not have any Sign Language dictionaries to refer to when teaching the Deaf

learners. At one time in this province, there was a policy called the operation speak (*taura*) as evidenced from the following excerpt from the head of School B:

*Beginning end of last year up to now, we are encouraging our teachers to use total communication because as we were evaluating on the program Operation taura mwana (Operation speak child) we realised that it works for some children with residual hearing but not those with pre-lingual deafness. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

The learners were not allowed to sign or to use the gestures presently. The teachers did not have any Sign Language books though they were now using total communication as evidenced by the following excerpt from the following teacher:

*No workshops in Sign Language have been organized since we are not allowed to sign or even to use gestures, we were doing aural/oral approach. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

The lack of books on Sign Language means there was no uniformity in the way the teachers were signing. The learners were facing difficulties when they moved to other classes because the signs would be different. This was evidenced by the following quotation from another teacher:

*As they are young, they fail to understand when they change to the next teacher and may face challenges if the signs used are different from the ones they learnt in the lower grades. (Tr C<sup>18</sup>)*

Variations in Sign Language could impact learner engagement due to communication breakdown between the teachers and the learners. This could adversely hinder the teaching and learning processes when learners moved to the next grade. Without financial help from the Ministry, the schools were not managing to provide the necessary materials and equipment for Deaf learners.

It is, therefore, worth noting that Deaf learners in special schools did not have the right resources and equipment to facilitate their learning which a great challenge to them was because they learn through sight.

All the resources were being sourced by the schools because there was no government input in sourcing for the required resources. Most of the special schools did not have adequate resources at their schools because they were too financially handicapped to provide for all the required resources in the schools. Lack of textbooks that were prepared or adapted considering Deaf learners' language requirements was one of the major challenges per se in the data collected as shown below:

*Advocacy first of all was necessary so that we convince the officials, parents, and teachers that Sign Language is an important language. Therefore, if it were to be assessed, it should have to be taught, and we should have text books in Sign Language. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*It is not an academic subject because of lack of human resources, because most of the teachers don't have Sign Language as a language, and there are no books or syllabus in Sign Language. (DSI<sup>D</sup>)*

Teachers and officials at the regional levels pointed out that there were problems in this regard. Deaf learners in Zimbabwe used textbooks for hearing learners. The School Heads had different views concerning the help which was given by Government as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*When they have something, they give us; the economy is not stable (H<sup>B</sup>).*

*They help us in sourcing for donors, and help us with the resources like the textbooks, finance as in grants and help us by paying fees for those who cannot pay fees for themselves through BEAM. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*The government is not helping in any way. I have never seen the help. How can they help whilst they have never visited the school to see the requirements? (H<sup>C</sup>)*

From the above quotations, it is clear that whilst some administrators postulated that they helped schools in terms of paying fees for the learners and sourcing for donations for the schools, most administrators argued that the government was not taking any appropriate measures to help the schools. One administrator went on to argue that the government was not helping the school because the government had never visited the school to know their needs or the challenges, they were facing to implement the policy.

According to the participants, Deaf learners cannot learn anything in the abstract, for they need to see whatever one is talking about for them to understand. This implies that if teaching equipment plays a very important role in the learning of the Deaf learners, then it should be readily available, and if it is not there, it becomes a challenge. The participants said:

*You cannot talk about Victoria Falls without them seeing a video or picture of Victoria Falls for they would not understand anything. Use of videos from televisions or projectors will influence how the learners will understand the concepts being taught by teachers. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

*I think since these are visualisers, they see that you are talking about the weather when we take them out. Today it is cloudy so, we will match explanation with the pictures so that they understand better. This will increase their performance and especially since the Deaf cannot be taught without any media. (Tr B)*

*Lack of learning materials hinders us from teaching effectively. When I am teaching I need to have pictures, I need to have concrete media. Things that are seen for them to understand. If I don't have that, it's very difficult for them to comprehend things or ideas being taught. Today we are doing phonic A, but I can't just put the word just like that. I need pictures. I need concrete objects for them to understand. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

Deaf learners learn through sight, according to the participants. They would only understand the sign of the crocodile after seeing the picture of the crocodile and then match the sign and the real object. Another participant concurred by saying that Deaf learners only understood concepts through visual resources. For instance, if one were teaching about clouds, it is proper to take them out of the classroom and show them the clouds and then sign so that they would be able to match the sign and the clouds. Sign Language Alphabet helped the learners on how to handshape the signs. The following excerpts supports the above sentiments:

*Sign Language alphabet helps the learner to see the handshape on how to sign the letters. Also, the Sign Language dictionaries help the teacher to find out how to sign the words to the learner. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

*They need to see, for example, if I am talking about a bag, they need to see that bag. Their learning will become effective and they will understand what I will be talking about because they would have seen it. If I just teach and I don't have media or concrete media it will be like I am just teaching them something they don't know. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

According to the above excerpts, Deaf learners can only learn with the help of visuals. Without visuals, there is no learning that would take place. This means Deaf learners cannot learn abstractly. The absence of the visual materials becomes a very big challenge to the teachers because it will be very difficult for them to teach the Deaf learners.

School administrators concurred that although they had different resources, they were not adequate so teachers had to share the little resources that were present in schools. From the sentiments of the administrators, it was their wish to increase the resources through sourcing from donors or well-wishers. From the above sentiments, it is shown that the government was not doing anything

to help in the procurement of the resources that were needed for Deaf learners. This meant that if donors were not found, then the available resources would decrease over time, which would be a big challenge to the administrators, teachers and learners, since Deaf learners are not capable of learning without these resources.

Deaf adults/Deaf communities are important Sign Language agents who can help in teaching the correct signs to the Deaf learners and also teach the Deaf Culture to the Deaf learners since it is their culture.

### **4.5 Theme 3: The Extent to Which Teachers Are Equipped in Teaching Deaf Learners**

The third sub-research question in Chapter 1, Section 1.4, focused on the extent to which teachers were equipped to implement Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The study found that teachers were, to a large extent, ill-equipped to implement the ZSL policy because of lack of signing skills. The study found that there were certain competencies and stakeholder involvements that were lacking. These varying views of participants were grouped into six sub-themes: Sign language proficiencies, language teaching skills, attitudes towards sign language, in-service training, and support from school and external agents.

#### **4.5.1 Sign Language Proficiencies**

It emerged, from the results of the study, that teachers needed certain competencies to enable them to effectively implement sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. It is important for teachers of Deaf learners to be qualified and competent as this will enable them to be proficient in Sign Language. These competencies include signing ability, language teaching strategies and curriculum management skills. The following excerpts show the teaching competencies that teachers need to be equipped with to teach Deaf learners:

*I need competencies in signing especially signing new curriculum words because they are not in the dictionary. The government should capacitate us on how to sign so that we will be able to teach the new curriculum to the learners. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*I need to further my studies on Sign Language. (Tr A<sup>4</sup>)*

*I need to have competence in the Sign Language, competencies like teaching strategies on how I can teach certain topics, and deliver lessons. (Tr D<sup>4</sup>)*

*I need to be proficient in Sign Language and also to be ICT literate; so, I need training in those areas. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

The policy implementers believed that if they were capacitated by the government by being enabled to upgrade their knowledge and skills in sign language, then they would be in a position to implement the policy effectively. The participants also pointed out that they needed competencies in teaching certain subjects since they were using the textbooks which were not adapted for Deaf learners, so, they needed workshops on how to customize the content to fit the level of the Deaf learners.

*I need to have competence in the Sign Language, competencies like teaching strategies on how I can teach certain topics in Sign Language, and deliver lessons since we are using text books for the normal students, as a teacher I need to customize their content so that they will understand. I cannot teach these children like the normal children. I need competencies in understanding every topic and how I will adjust the topics to fit their level. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

*The school should hold workshops to enhance those who might have been deployed without the correct qualifications. The learners should be engaged with their counterparts so that they also learn the language from them. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*If teachers are not competent in Sign Language, there will be no learning that will take place since the teachers will not be knowledgeable in sign language. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

In Zimbabwe, teachers were introduced to the new curriculum in 2015. The new curriculum moved from being predominantly a theoretical curriculum to the hands-on curriculum through the policy Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022) (CFPSE). According to the MoPSE, all the relevant preparations were done and schools were in a position to implement the new curriculum with effect from January 2017. All the teachers were capacitated on how to implement the CFSPE (2015-2022) which was introduced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The specialist teachers believed that the Ministry should have held workshops to in-service specialist teachers on how to implement the new language-in-education policy, just like it was taking teachers to workshops to learn how to implement the new curriculum. Without the above-mentioned competencies, the teachers concurred that it would be difficult for



them to implement the policy effectively. School Heads also postulated that teachers needed competencies in Sign Language for them to effectively implement the policy as illustrated by the following quotes:

*Teachers need to be fluent in sign language so that they will be able to communicate with the kids and to deliver lessons effectively, so, they need to be trained in Sign language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*They are not confident because they are not fluent in Sign Language. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

#### **4.5.2 Sign Language Teaching Skills**

It was evident, from the participants' views, that specialist teachers for Deaf learners had very limited language skills and thus presented a problem for teachers who had to teach sign language skills to learners. Teachers can only be prepared to teach language skills to Deaf learners if they are confident in using their language, in this case the Zimbabwean Sign Language. The following extracts show teachers views on their confidence in teaching using Sign Language:

*I think we need the Sign Language skill because it is not our language. We need to be experts in the language so that we can effectively implement the policy. If the government can even provide us with the in-service training, whereby our skills in sign language are upgraded, maybe we can be in a better position to implement these policies. (D<sup>6</sup>)*

*The other factor that makes a teacher confident is the knowledge in Sign Language. If you don't have the knowledge in Sign Language, you cannot be confident because you can't teach something you don't know. If you have knowledge of Sign Language, you know what you are teaching. If you have knowledge of sign language you can ask a child a question and if you find that the child is confused, you can as well change the questioning technique so as for the child to understand. (Tr B<sup>8</sup>)*

*I am not very confident as I told you before that I am not proficient in sign language. Sign language is a language that needs to be used frequently but if you take a long time without using it you will forget all the signs. Tr C<sup>14</sup>*

*I feel good because learners show that they have understood and their written work is good and they participate in the lessons. (Tr C<sup>16</sup>)*

*I need a very strong training in Sign Language but even if you are trained you can only be confident when you are very proficient in Sign Language. (Tr C<sup>13</sup>)*

Lack of confidence in a language can be a major barrier to effective communication skills. The confidence of teachers in ZSL can positively influence the language skills of teachers which will in turn help the teachers to impart language skills to learners.

Whilst participants C<sup>13</sup> and C<sup>14</sup> concurred that they were not confident in Sign Language, participant C<sup>16</sup> had a different opinion.

Most of the teachers, just like the sentiments above, pointed out that they were not confident in using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. From the observations made, it is clear that all the teachers did not have confidence because nearly all of them used total communication in teaching Deaf learners. Teachers were not being capacitated by the Ministry to use Sign language as a medium of instruction but were getting the experience from other Deaf teachers or the Deaf learners. The better the teacher is at a particular skill, in this scenario confidence in ZSL, the more likely they will feel confident in performing the given task, for example, being confident in imparting language skills to learners.

School Heads had their views on the confidence of their teachers in the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction. The following quotations show the views of the School Headmasters:

*They are very confident in using Sign Language, and besides staff development, they have their own sessions as a staff. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

*Few teachers are confident, since most of them are not yet confident because they cannot sign fluently. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*They are not confident because they are not fluent in Sign Language, (H<sup>C</sup>).*

There were various views on the confidence of teachers. While one School Head pointed out that teachers were confident in teaching using Sign Language as a medium of instruction, the others revealed that they were not confident because they lacked fluency in Sign Language. If the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, it would be difficult for them to implement the policy. Teachers who did not receive training in Sign Language struggle to equip Deaf learners with necessary learning skills. However, some of the school administrators pointed out that their teachers were confident in using Sign Language as shown by this excerpt:

*They are very confident and I say so because most of them are qualified. They have the necessary qualifications in Sign Language. (H<sup>M</sup>)*

The above excerpt contradicted what teachers said about their confidence in using Sign Language. Most of the teachers pointed out that they were not confident in using Sign Language, as it was not their language. This implies that teachers of Deaf learners need to be in-serviced in Sign Language for them to be able to teach effectively the Deaf learners.

It was because of lack of sign language skills that specialist teachers of the Deaf preferred to use speech or total communication instead of Sign Language to teach the Deaf learners.

The following extracts were the views of the school administrators on why teachers were not willing to use Zimbabwean Sign Language as a medium of instruction:

*Kusaziva (not knowing). (H<sup>D</sup>)*

*Most teachers are not fluent in Sign Language and as a result, they may prefer to use speech. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Participants H<sup>D</sup> and H<sup>B</sup> concurred that most teachers preferred speech or total communication because of a lack of fluency in Sign Language.

*Those who were not using Sign Language were not qualified enough to use it, so, those who used the language knew the benefits of using the language. We should be biased towards the learner but not the teacher. Sign Language benefits the learner and that is why we should use it. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*Teachers are not fluent in Sign Language. Therefore, it's obvious that they will use a language that will make them comfortable. Teachers are used to talking, so, it's obvious they will be more comfortable in using speech more than sign language. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

All the administrators concurred that teachers were comfortable in using speech, regardless of whether the students were benefiting from it or not because they were not fluent in Sign Language.

#### **4.5.3 Attitudes towards Sign Language**

The attitude of the participants towards Sign Language is discerned through how the policy implementers doubt the authenticity of Sign language as a language in its right. Policy

implementers ask this question: Are sign languages real languages? Sign language is placed low in the hierarchy of languages and they also feel that Sign Language has no value for children. These ideas were expressed in the following extracts:

*Sign language is broken English for example “Start how” instead of saying “How do you start?” There are some ungrammatical words there, such as “Go how”. (Tr D7)*

*I think total communication is more beneficial and better to them and me as a teacher. I communicate better with them when I am using total communication. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

*Sign Language is a social language. It is only used for communication. You cannot write in Sign Language. The policy is deviating from how academics are run. I have never seen a book written in Sign Language. When I sign even when I am teaching the child has to write and what I sign is different from what the child writes. So, I think that there is a contradiction between academics and Sign Language. I believe that Sign Language is a language just for social communicating. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

*I prefer total communication, the reason being that at least they do not have their own community as this one (Community for the Deaf). So as a specialist teacher, I know that I have to train my kids so that they get into the community of the hearing. It will be easy for them to communicate with the hearing. (Tr C<sup>15</sup>)*

*As a teacher it’s a policy there is nothing I can do I should teach according to what the policy wants because it’s a policy, if it wasn’t a policy then I would use other means of communication which is not Sign Language but I will use total communication. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

The above verbatim sentiments reveal that policy implementers do not value Sign Language the same as they value other indigenous languages such as Shona or Ndebele or Venda. They feel that Sign Language is inferior to other languages. They feel that Sign Language is inferior to spoken languages as they feel that a Deaf child cannot function in the hearing community without spoken languages. Policy implementers are still in the audistic model where they still feel manual languages are inferior to spoken languages.

One school inspector confirmed that advocacy was being done to convince parents and implementing officers that Sign Language is an important language and should be taught like other indigenous languages. The following extract confirms the sentiment:

*Advocacy is needed first of all so that we convince officials, parents, and teachers that sign language is an important language and that it could be assessed. However, for it to be*

*assessed it should have to be taught. We should have text books in sign and syllabuses to guide us on what we are actually teaching. That's my take. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

Whilst the above sentiment from the DSI shows a positive attitude towards the implementation of the policy, the fact that specialist teachers of the Deaf do not have relevant qualifications related to Sign Language shows the government attitude towards Sign Language. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education wants ZSL to be a medium of instruction for the Deaf, according to Section 62.5 of the LiEP which states that ZSL shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf. Nevertheless, at the same time the MoPSE is not doing anything to ensure that the policy implementers have the required qualifications to implement the policy. Whilst the teachers' reactions concerning their qualifications portray their positive attitude towards the policy, it also reflects the Ministry's attitude towards language-in-education policy. Below are the teachers' sentiments:

*No qualifications concerning Sign language. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>, Tr A<sup>2</sup>, Tr A<sup>3</sup>, Tr A<sup>4</sup>)*

*No qualifications related to Sign Language but Sign Language is my language (Tr C<sup>16</sup>), (post-lingual Deaf teacher).*

*I only did Special Needs Education and don't have any qualification related to Sign Language, (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*I want to know how to sign some of the words. Also, I want to be able to sign some of these words for them to understand. Maybe I will be making some mistakes and they will be having problems to capture what I am saying because the teacher, myself, should be well versed with the signing of the work I will be teaching. I am not well versed with the work so it will be difficulty for the child to grasp what I will be teaching because it's now that I am learning and the child is learning too. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

Sign Language is a priority medium of instruction for the Deaf, according to Section 62:5 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. However, the main concern is that those who are supposed to implement the policy are not even proficient in the language they are supposed to use. The policy implementers are using Sign Language dictionaries which are outdated and they do not have the syllabuses to guide them on how to teach the subjects. This is evidenced by the following extracts:

*I might not be proficient in giving the correct Sign Language for learners to understand it. For teachers who are not Deaf, we are also learning, so, it's a combination of two learners. We have learner the child and learner the teacher. The dictionaries we have do not have all the information. Some of the signs might not be in the dictionaries. (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

*Like what I have said before, the dictionaries that we use do not have all the words, since some of the words are not there so it is not easy to sign and sometimes you may sign the word as it is in the dictionary but the learners may not know the words. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*It's because first, it's not my language, it's not my mother tongue and the other thing is lack of resources. We do not have even a sign language syllabus (Tr D<sup>6</sup>).  
If the teachers could sign proficiently, it would help very much but the problem here is that sign language is not our first language. So, it's very difficult for us to be proficient when we are signing to them. (Tr C<sup>14</sup>)*

The above verbatim reports from policy implementers reveal the Ministry's attitude towards the policy. To show a positive attitude towards the policy, the MoPSE should play a central role in all stages of the policy implementation such as financing the policy, providing in-service training for teachers or providing the required resources. All the above attributes are lacking, as evidenced by the participants claims above, which reflect its attitude towards the policy.

*The problem is inadequate finance. If the financial problem could be addressed maybe it could have been prudent for us to hold in-service training once every term instead of once in a year. Finances are not adequate. There is no budget for this. You plan for the workshops but the finances are not available to run the workshops; so, we end up not doing the workshops because of financial challenges. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

Besides having the policy, the government is yet to fund the policy, and the teachers are yet to be capacitated in the language of the policy. Sign Language is yet to have books written in Sign Language, despite the fact that the government has policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction. The Deaf learners are using the same text books that are being used by the hearing learners. The books do not have visual materials. This attribute shows the attitude of the Ministry's towards Sign Language.

*They give us textbooks but they are the same as those found in the mainstream. Last time they gave us Heritage and Social Studies which are not written in sign language. Oh I can imagine sign language text books (Hakuna Zvakadaro (Nothing like that). Even their dictionary is not yet there because those things requires a lot of money and a lot of people should be involved (H<sup>B</sup>).*

*Although the schools have resources such as textbooks, the textbooks are meant for the hearing learners and are not written in Sign Language (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*The disadvantage of this policy is that they don't have their text books or the relevant materials to teach those who are Deaf. Because the resources are very limited, they have to source for their own materials. (B<sup>11</sup>)*

*We should have text books in Sign Language to guide us on what we are actually teaching. (DSI<sup>B</sup>).*

Whilst the Ministry is providing textbooks for other languages such as Shona, Ndebele, Venda and other languages, Deaf learners are still waiting for text books that are adopted to meet their needs. This reflects the attitude of the government and the MoPSE towards the implementation of the policy and the Deaf learners. The Government and the MoPSE are not treating all the subjects equally even though the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a, which states that the state shall ensure that all languages shall be treated equitably.

The Ministry has a policy on mother tongue instruction. It is even stated in Section 62:5 of the language-in-education policy, that Sign Language shall be the medium of instruction for those with hearing impairment. The Ministry has prepared books in different indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele, but is yet to prepare books adapted to meet the needs of the Deaf people. Lack of materials prepared in Zimbabwean Sign Language shows the government's attitude towards Sign Language. The researcher feels that the Ministry should research and find out from other countries like Japan and India, what should be done. For example, in Japan, textbooks of Japanese hearing people are translated to Sign Language. The above responses clearly spelt out that the MoPSE did not provide schools with any form of material resources related to Sign Language, or any material which is bilingual, as a way of supporting the mother tongue instruction policy. This lack of commitment by the Ministry reflects their attitude towards resources to enable effective teaching and learning of sign language.

#### **4.5.4 In-service Training**

After the initial phase of teacher training, most of the teachers underwent a lot of professional development in diploma and degree training in Special Needs Education, and Sign Language, as shown Table 4.5.

**Table 4.4 Professional Development of Specialist Teachers of the Deaf**

Diploma in Special Needs Education (Dip. In SPED)	B. SC. In Special Needs Education	B.Ed. in Special Needs Education	B.E.D Sign language	Certificate in Sign language	M.E.D Special Needs Education	M.E.D ECD
D <sup>7</sup> , D <sup>8</sup> , D <sup>9</sup> , C <sup>16</sup> , C <sup>15</sup> , B <sup>10</sup> , B <sup>12</sup>	B <sup>12</sup> , B <sup>11</sup> , A <sup>5</sup> , A <sup>4</sup> ,	C <sup>15</sup> , A <sup>3</sup> , A <sup>2</sup> , C <sup>14</sup>	D <sup>8</sup> ,	C <sup>17</sup> , D <sup>6</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>	D <sup>6</sup> ,

Although specialist teachers had degrees and diploma qualifications in Special Needs Education, the results of the study revealed that policy implementation still required highest levels of competencies in Sign Language. Currently, there were few teachers who had undergone formal training in teaching Deaf learners. Teachers could be competent in Sign Language through capacity development or workshops from the Ministry. The following extracts show the views of the teachers in the frequency of in-service training in Sign language:

*We rarely get workshops from the district and the ministry. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*We had one workshop after a very long period from the District. Yes, sometimes, but concerning Sign Language, we are yet to receive the workshops from the Ministry. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*Once in a while you can be called for a workshop in Harare. The problem is that after training you are not given the opportunity to train others. I think we are called there when they want to acquire donor funds. You attend the workshop for a week, so that you will train others. Two years will pass by and you will forget about the workshop and even forget about what you learnt. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

*No workshops are organized by the district, or the Ministry (Tr C<sup>16</sup>)*

The teachers said they needed signing skills for them to successfully implement the policy. Teachers can only get the signing skills by being capacitated in Sign Language, by the Ministry. The above excerpts show that no workshops were being organized by the district education offices and the Ministry. If teachers are not proficient in Sign Language and the Ministry is not re-training



them, this implies implementation failure of the 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, in this case Sign Language for Deaf learners.

Participants said that although it was the responsibility of the Ministry to capacitate teachers and to fund the in-service training for teachers, the schools were taking the responsibility of funding for the training of teachers, as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*The school usually funds the workshops with the help of Non-Governmental Organisations. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*Most of the workshops are sponsored by the school (Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*  
This meant that the schools were funding for the in-service of teachers. The Ministry of Education was not involving itself in the funding of the in-service of teachers. If the schools would not fund the in-service of teachers, no training would take place and there were no penalties stipulated in the policy for not implementing the policy.

*We are the ones teaching the district officers, not them teaching us. We have police officers from police stations who come here for Sign Language lessons. We have lessons with United College from those who specializes in Special Needs. (H<sup>D</sup>).*

*The teachers who are Deaf provide the in-service training in Sign Language. It's in three stages which are Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. Level 1 is on the basics such as the months of the year, relationships and so on. Thus, one of our members of the staff who is doing Masters is the one who comes with the syllabus. He is a lecturer at GZU and is a member of the ZIMSEC Board and he, being Deaf, can offer the lessons (H<sup>D</sup>).*

*In in-service training, we do it here at the schools because the district do not have qualified personnel to train us. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*Long in the past, we used to have in- service training but currently there is nothing like that. We now only organize staff development workshops at school level. For in-service training teachers can come during the holiday to get detailed orientation but as for the government to say they give us in-service training no. They used to do that long time ago whereby teachers would go to Bulawayo to get in-service training. The government should initiate retraining programs for free especially for specialist teachers. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

On the aspect of frequency of in-service training of teachers, the District Schools Inspectors and the psychologists had this to say:

*Like now it has been frequent but looking at the number we have in the province it may not seem frequent. Under guidance and counselling, we are being supported by several partners and every term we are training teachers but you know that the special needs*

*learner welfare issues and psychological issues you may not get into a point where you say we have exhausted that. We have frequent workshops in different aspects. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

According to the above participant, workshops on different aspects, not on Sign Language, are being done through the help of different donor communities but not with the help of the Ministry.

*Teachers are knowledgeable about Sign Language so they are only trained on how best they can impart knowledge to the learners and the teaching methods on how best to treat their pupils. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

This response contradicts the responses from many teachers, who pointed out that they were not fluent in Sign Language and that they needed in-service training in Sign Language. The administrator might not have been aware of what was on the ground, maybe because of a lack of follow-up on the implementation of policies.

*Workshops are only done when there is a need. (Psy<sup>D</sup>)*

According to teachers and school administrators, teachers are always in need of in-service training because of challenges such as lack of fluency in the language and skills on how to implement the policy. The above participant does not see the need for the workshops, which implies that the participant should go into the field to identify the training needs of the policy implementers.

*Us to staff develop them? As an administrator I am also incapacitated. You see that is where the gap is now, meaning that, at all the levels, we should have teachers who should be conversant in Sign Language but we don't have. In your district, do you have such people who are conversant in Sign Language? So as a nation we have been sidelining that area. You see where the gap is. We only have the department of learners' welfare. We also have a remedial tutor but that the tutor might not be conversant with Sign Language. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

According to the above participant, it is difficult for them to have workshops or training for teachers because the administrators themselves are not fluent in Sign Language. They also need in-service training or workshops in Sign Language. Although other policy implementers pointed out that workshops were only done when the training needs arise, on the ground teachers and School Heads pointed out that they required a lot of workshops in Sign Language and how to implement the policy.

*School D always organizes for us workshops in ZSL, we don't know anything about Sign Language. (DSI<sup>P</sup>)*

The above participant postulated that he/she didn't know anything about the in-service of teachers which implies that there were no in-service workshops that were being held for teachers, on Sign Language. If teachers said that they were not fluent in Sign Language while the administrators said that there was no need for workshops because teachers were knowledgeable about Sign Language or how the policy is being implemented, then it remains unlikely that the policy would be implemented.

The following extract shows that if teachers are offered in-service training, then they will be confident in using Sign Language:

*I am very confident. We have a lot of workshops in Sign Language and we have Deaf adults who also teach us Sign Language. We have a Deaf adult here who is a qualified teacher who helps us a lot; so, I am very confident. (Tr B<sup>1</sup>)*

*They are very confident in using Sign Language. Besides staff development, teachers themselves as teachers of the Deaf have their own sessions as a staff. (H<sup>P</sup>)*

*I am very confident because I know Sign Language, I went to college and learnt about it and I know what I am doing. The other thing that makes a teacher confident is the knowledge of Sign Language. If you don't have the knowledge of Sign Language, you cannot be confident because you can't teach something you don't know but if you have the knowledge in Sign Language you are confident, you know what you are doing, you know what you are teaching. (Tr B<sup>4</sup>)*

The above participants acknowledged that if teachers are knowledgeable about Sign Language, this would motivate them to use Sign Language in the teaching and learning process of the Deaf learners. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education can develop confidence in teachers through capacity development.

Whilst some participants postulated that all the workshops were funded by the schools, other participants said the workshops were funded by the Ministry. The sentiments were contradictory, in the sense that the participants said no workshops were being organized by the Ministry, while at the same time they said the workshops were being funded by the Ministry. Some of the participants pointed out that:

*The workshops are funded by the donor community like Leonard Cheshire, UNICEF, UNESCO and other donor communities. For these workshops from the Ministry, they are being funded by UNESCO and UNICEF. (Tr B<sup>10</sup>)*

*The government funds the workshops. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

Teachers from the same school had different views on who was funding the workshops.

*When we used to have workshops, the school would fund them. (C<sup>14</sup>)*

The government had no budget for this policy; it was just a policy on paper. Despite the government approving the use of the policy, it was not doing anything with the regard to the policy, no workshops and no resource procurement.

*No clear budget to implement the policy because of financial problems and materials. Sometimes you plan workshops but you will not be able to do it because of financial problems. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

Administrators pointed out that the Ministry did not help in terms of organizing workshops.

*Through BEAM, in terms of policy they are not. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*The Ministry never supported us in terms of staff development. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

Another administrator pointed out that the government only supported the policy through authorising workshops in schools.

*Very supportive. When we plan for our workshops they authorize. (H<sup>D</sup>)*

*No workshops from the district. They do not have qualified personnel to train the teachers. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*From the Ministry, no workshops. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

Another participant pointed out that the government helped by sensitising the parents about Deafness. Zimbabwe was falling short of ensuring that these students had adequate and equitable opportunities for educational success. Further, the state was at risk of failing to meet the intent of the Education for All Act. It was clear that special education teachers for the Deaf needed high-quality on-the-job support and training to help them better meet the needs of their Deaf learners. However, in Zimbabwe, funding specifically dedicated to supporting and training for teaching

special needs students was very limited. This had a negative impact on the learning of the Deaf learners. The administrators were the ones only providing the workshops for the teachers.

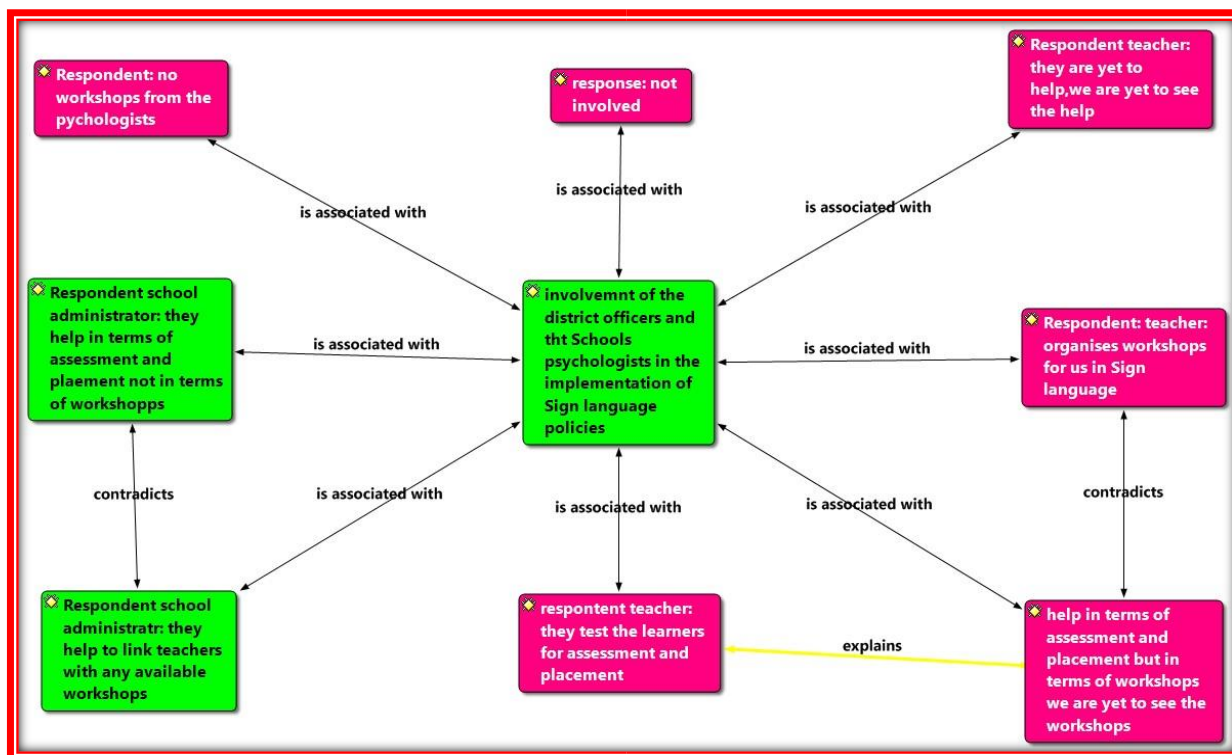
*The school provides in-service workshops for teachers. (H<sup>P</sup>)*

*In-service training is done here at the schools because the district does not have qualified personnel to train us. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

This implies that the policy did not have an adequate budget to cater for these workshops as shown by the above extract.

The participants said that no support was coming from the government in terms of capacitating them in Sign language. The government had left all the responsibilities of in-service training workshops for teachers to schools but without giving them any financial help. The government held workshops to teachers on the new curriculum it had introduced in schools. It funded the workshops but the government was yet to do something in terms of funding or organizing workshops for teachers in line with language-in-education policy. At special schools, there are also hearing learners because of the reverse inclusive education, so the textbooks may mainly help the hearing learners. These findings show that the government is sitting back and expecting things to just happen. There is no allocation of financial resources from the government to capacitate teachers.

The participants had various views on the involvement of the government's Schools Psychological Services in the continuous professional development of teachers for Deaf learners. These views are illustrated in the Network View generated by Atlas.ti, as shown in Figure 4.5 below:



**Figure 4.5 Support from the Schools Psychologists**

#### 4.5.5 Support from School and External Agents

All the participants testified that there was no commitment on the part of the government to ensure availability of workshops to capacitate policy implementers. The schools had to shoulder all the responsibilities of sourcing for donations, sourcing for resources as well as financing the workshops to capacitate teachers with regard to Sign Language.

*We are very supportive. We do in-service training for teachers, and source for CDS with sign language so that teachers learn from them. We also do peer teaching in Sign Language. We have other teachers who are very proficient in Sign Language from whom other teachers can learn. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*The school usually funds the workshops with the help of Non-Governmental Organisations. (A<sup>1</sup>)*

*The school funds the workshops done at the school and Non-Governmental Organisations (A<sup>2</sup>)*

*We do the workshops here at school; so, no funding is required. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*For these workshops from the Ministry they are being funded by UNESCO and UNICEF. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>).*

*We have our donors Leonard Cheshire, CHRISTIAN Blend Commission. (Tr C<sup>17</sup>)*

It is evident, from this theme, that the Ministry was not funding this policy. Results of the study revealed that most of the support in terms of workshops and resource materials are coming from the schools and non-governmental organisations. The government is yet to provide support to this policy.

#### **4.6 Theme 4: Strategies That Can Be Used to Enhance the Implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

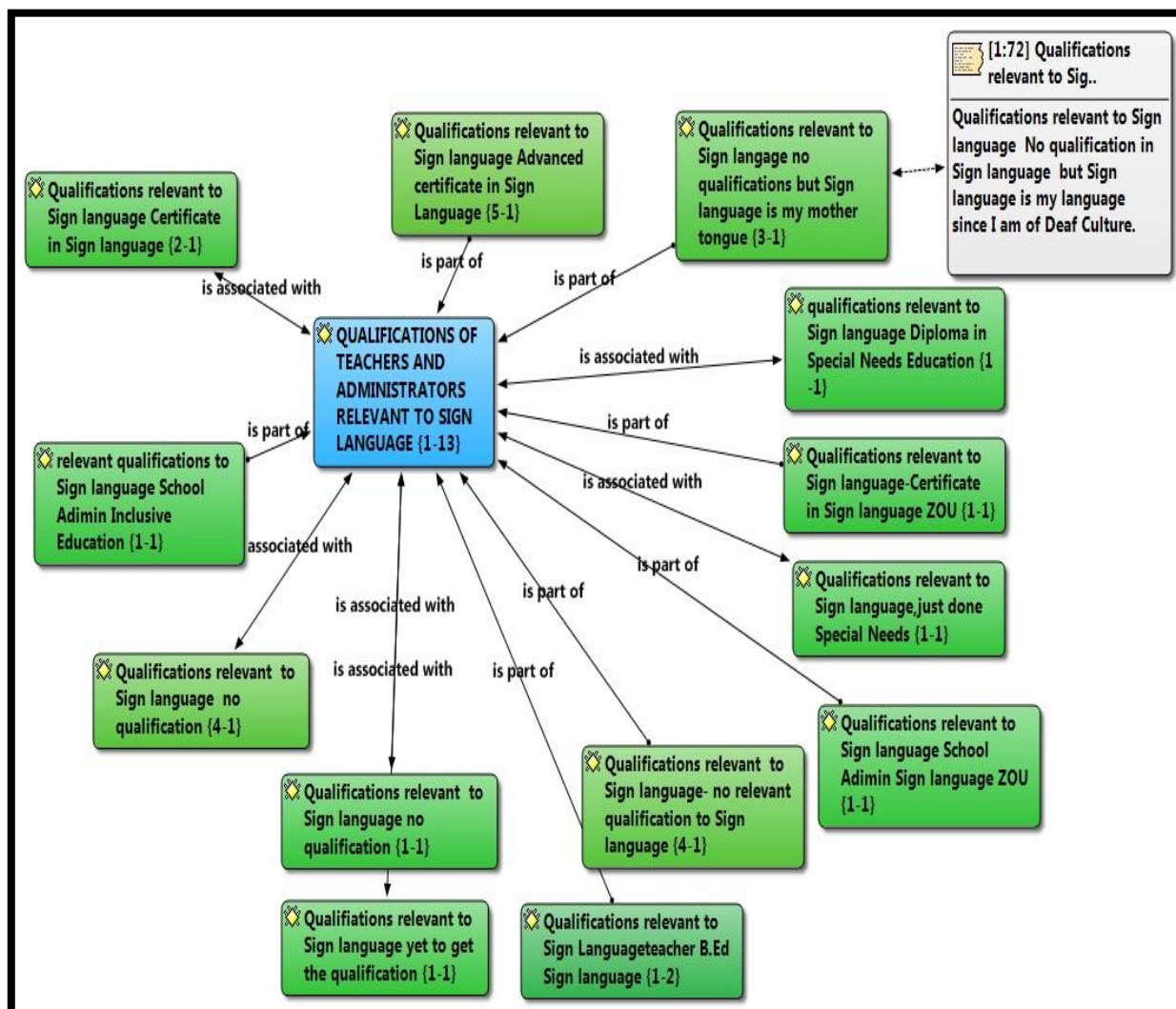
The fourth sub-research question in Chapter 1, Section 1.4, focused on the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean special schools. The study found a large number of strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of ZSL. These strategies include improving the qualifications of teachers, improving resource availability, collaboration with Deaf communities, and improving the frequency and quality of continuous professional development. Each of these strategies is presented as a sub-theme in the following sections.

##### **4.6.1 Ensuring Qualifications of Teachers Are Relevant to Sign Language**

The study found out that use of qualified personnel was one of the strategies that could be used to enhance implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The Network View in Figure 4.6 shows that most of the participants who had degree qualifications in Special Needs Education did not have the qualifications relevant to sign language. This is evidenced by the following extract:

*I only did Special Needs I don't have any qualification related to Sign Language. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

The participant's response revealed that, although the majority of the policy implementers had degree qualifications in Special Needs Education, they did not have the requisite component of Sign Language.



**Figure 4.6: Qualifications of Specialist Teachers of the Deaf Relevant to Sign Language**

Results of the study presented in the above Network View revealed that seven (7) policy implementers held degree qualifications in Special Needs Education, one (1) had a degree in Sign Language, 2 had a Master's degree in Special Needs Education, whilst the other 3 had a Master's degree in Counselling, ECD, and Administration. Two of the policy implementers did not have any professional development after the initial phase of Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed). Three of the policy implementers had done short courses in Sign Language. The qualifications of policy implementers relevant to Sign Language helped the researcher to find out the extent to which policy implementers were qualified to teach Deaf learners.



If the policy is to be effectively implemented, then the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that the teachers are relevantly qualified to teach the Deaf learners.

Results of the study revealed that some of the teachers were taught sign language by the learners as shown by the following quote:

*Teachers are taught Sign Language by the kids. If you spend two or three days with the kids, they will teach you more. What we have is bookish Sign Language. These learners, because they were born deaf and they were brought here when they were still young and at ECD level and maybe up to form four, they are now proficient in Sign Language. (H<sup>C</sup>).*

UNCRPD (2006) 24:3b states that teachers of Deaf students should be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe also has policy document guidelines to the staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that state that there is a need to staff centers for learners with special needs, including Deaf learners, with appropriately qualified teachers. Despite all the policies the government was still deploying teachers who were not qualified, as illustrated by the following verbatim quote:

*In most cases they are not serious about it. We ourselves as a school always emphasise that we need teachers who are qualified in Special Needs Education and who are specialised in Sign Language but then sometimes they sent us teachers without the required qualifications. It becomes tough for us to start training the individuals to be conversant with sign language, (H<sup>A</sup>)*

School head H<sup>A</sup> went on to argue that the problems with Zimbabwean Universities was that they teach the theoretical aspect ignoring the practical aspects. There is need for an individual to pursue the practical part of it so as to be proficient in Sign Language.

The District officers, however, argued that even if they wanted to follow the policy, they were few teachers who were qualified in sign language. This is evidenced by the following verbatim quotes.

*The government might want to consider the policy guidelines but there are few teachers who are qualified or who are fluent to teach in Sign Language. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*They might like to follow the guidelines, but there are very few teachers who are qualified in Sign Language. They might be qualified theoretically but not practically, so it becomes difficult for them to follow the guidelines. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*It is difficult to follow the guidelines because there are no adequate number of teachers who are proficient in Sign Language. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

In Zimbabwe, a teacher could be called a specialist teacher of the Deaf not because the teacher has relevant qualifications in Sign language, but because the teacher would be a holder of a degree or diploma in Special Needs Education. In Zimbabwe, most of the degree programs do not have a component of Sign language. That is why most of the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, although they had degree qualifications in Special Needs Education.

#### **4.6.2 Improving Resources at the School Level**

Ensuring availability of adequate resources is one of the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Policy implementers had the following to say about availability of resources:

*We have laptops from which they can learn by seeing the videos, and the projectors are still being installed. We do not have enough resources, and even sign language dictionaries. (Tr B<sup>10</sup>)*

*The school is in the process of installing projectors in every classroom. On pictures, we source for our own pictures. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

*The school does not get help from the government, so the school is financially handicapped to provide all the resources, so, we share the little resources we have with other teachers. These learners need a lot of resources and materials in order for them to understand. With adequate resources and materials these learners respond positively. You cannot teach Deaf learners without concrete objects or pictures, you will be doing nothing. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>)*

*We need more resources. They are not enough, like models. You know when you are teaching about brushing teeth, we need models to demonstrate that. I think that, since they are visualisers, they need a lot of models. (Tr C<sup>14</sup>)*

All the verbatim statements above reflect that the resources were not adequate since the schools were not being financially helped by the Ministry. Deaf learners are visualisers so without adequate resources no learning would take place. Another participant pointed out that a teacher cannot teach about the river without showing the picture of the river, for Deaf learners cannot learn in abstract. According to the participants, Deaf learners need visual materials in everything they learn. The inadequacy of the visual resources would impact negatively on the academic performance of the learners. Videotapes, CD-ROMs and other visual materials containing Sign Language examples

provide an alternate form of training materials, as the dynamic nature of a visual language is best shown using images. The idea that material resources had an impact in the learning of Deaf learners was expressed in the following statements from the participants:

*Without teaching materials, the Deaf learners will never understand anything since they do not learn in abstract. They need to see the real object in order to understand. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*Teaching materials provide memory for Deaf learners since they are visualisers (Tr C<sup>16</sup>). Resources influence the use of sign language because the learners need a lot of illustrations for them to understand; they do not think in abstract way. (Tr C<sup>14</sup>)*

The above verbatim reports from teachers reflect the need for the MoPSE to provide resources in special schools for the Deaf for the effective learning of Deaf learners, for without visual materials, no learning would take place. School Heads and district officers also confirmed that lack of educational material resources was a hindrance to effective implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act. These findings are exposed in the following excerpts by the School Heads:

*Teachers do not have sufficient resources. We are still finding the resources and we are buying them slow by slow because of the financial constraints We are in the process of putting projectors in each and every class for e learning but it's still a process to be completed. (H<sup>B</sup>)*

*No clear budget to implement the policy because of financial problems and lack of resource materials. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

*We should have text books in Sign Language to guide us on what you are teaching. That's my take. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

The researcher observed that no meaningful teaching and learning took place in terms of policy implementation because of inadequate resource materials. There is need for the government and the Ministry to supply schools with adequate resource materials such as textbooks adapted for Deaf learners to enable teachers and learners to effectively implement the policy.

#### **4.6.3 Identification of Training Needs by District Officers**

It emerged, from the results of the study, that identification of the training needs of the policy implementers was one of the strategies which was essential to enable the capacity development of the teachers.

*There are many strategies through which we can identify their needs. First, through needs analysis. As we monitor, we will be discussing with the teachers what they want to be developed. Number two, we should monitor the program, and identify the gaps that may call for human capacitation. Also, the reports from the School Heads and the inspectors should be utilized. That's how we get to know the needs of the teachers. (Psy<sup>A</sup>).*

*Through the teachers themselves, during supervision the teachers are asked about their training needs. We can also get the training needs of teachers from their administrators (Psy<sup>B</sup>).*

According to the School Heads, they can discuss with teachers to identify their needs, and also monitor the program to identify gaps and get reports from the School Heads.

*Through those monitoring, we identify gaps through asking the teachers because they are the experts in that area. (Psy<sup>D</sup>)*

*When we go there, we supervise them and come up with the training needs for teachers. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

The above participants pointed out that they obtain the training needs of teachers through supervising them and then identifying their training, needs although the specialist teachers pointed out that they rarely saw their district officers making follow-ups on the implementation of the policy.

*We are not specialist teachers in sign language so it will be difficult to identify teachers' needs. However, to be informed, depends on the teacher to identify the training need unless it is the basic things. We will have to depend on the teachers to find the training needs for them. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

District officer DSI<sup>C</sup> pointed out that it was difficult to identify the training needs of the teachers because they were also not conversant with Sign Language or the needs of the policy. Results of the study revealed that the Ministry was not doing anything about the policy in terms of capacity development of the policy implementers.

#### **4.6.4 Challenges Faced in Staff Development and In-service Training**

Findings from the study showed that some challenges were being faced in staff development for teachers of learners who were Deaf. It is the responsibility of district officers to provide opportunities for staff development to teachers who are specialized in ZSL. This implies that the district officers should be proficient in ZSL for them to assist in offering training services to

teachers. The challenge experienced, however, was that the district officers were not proficient in Sign Language and, as a result, staff development in their districts was facilitated by specialist teachers from some of the special schools. According to the district school inspectors, many challenges were being faced in staff development among the teachers of Deaf learners. The following are responses from the officers:

*We do not have qualified personnel to do the training. Though there is adequate availability of transport to enable us visit our special schools, we do not visit the schools because we do not know Sign Language. For example, if we visit the school with specialist teachers in Sign Language, what will I tell a teacher after his/her lesson? (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*We do not train them, instead, they train us so that we can gain some basic communication skills in Sign Language. We always go to schools for training just for basic communication skills. (DSI<sup>P</sup>)*

The above information means that the district officers were not selected on the basis of their qualifications in Sign Language, even though policies and circulars stipulate that teachers and administrators of Deaf learners should be qualified in Sign Language. Another challenge faced in staff development for teachers of Deaf learners was that of financial resources. The government and the Ministry did not provide financial resources to enable schools to organize capacity building workshops on Sign Language for teachers.

*We normally prepare the budget for training purposes but we don't get the funds. Availability of funds is a serious challenge we face when we want to train our teachers in workshops. Therefore, we are forced to look for willing partners to assist us but BSPZ is overwhelmed by the numerous workshops it is supposed to support. The fees-free policy in schools (circular no 5 of 2014) whereby we are not allowed to send learners away from school for fees has also affected our BSPZ undertakings. The little revenue we receive from the government is used for other issues such as facilitating communication. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

*The big problem hindering our functions is the problem of inadequate finance. If this problem can be addressed, it will be possible for us to conduct in-service training at least once in every term instead of doing it once a year. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

Lack of financial resources for teachers' workshops could have contributed to non-implementation of the policy, as teachers continued with the challenge of how to teach Deaf learners. Lack of workshops led to variances on types of Sign Language that were used at school level. There was no standardized Sign Language for all the learners. The district officers also observed that teachers

sought greener pastures after attending some in-service training, for they were not given incentives for teaching Deaf learners.

*We provide in-service training to new teachers every time. However, after such training, they seek green pastures so we are forced to keep giving in-service training to new teachers every time. The other challenge is that of lack of finance. We do not accomplish our goals because of lack of finance. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

#### **4.6.5 Use of Sign Language as the Only Language of Teaching and Learning for Deaf Learners**

Most of the administrators concurred that Sign Language was good for Deaf learners. However, some advocated for the use of total communication since the learners were going to communicate with the larger community. So, the idea was to normalize the Deaf learner to fit into the larger society. One of the DSIs argued:

*I feel that it should be extended up to A-Level so that when one proceeds to A-Level one will have all what is needed to communicate in Sign Language. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*This language also need to be in the mainstream because these children need to communicate with the outside world, hence, those in the mainstream schools should also learn the spoken languages. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

Some administrators supported the use of Sign Language, as they argued that there was no other language that could be used when teaching the Deaf learners. They also argued that it was advantageous to use Sign Language because it was their own language and, therefore, they could understand it better. On this observation, psychologist Psy<sup>A</sup> had this to say:

*We support the idea since there is no other language that the Deaf can use besides sign language. So, it's their medium of instruction and there is no other medium of instruction that they can use to communicate. I strongly support the idea that the use of Sign Language as the medium of instruction be emphasized in schools (Psy<sup>A</sup>).*

#### **4.6.6 Collaboration with the Deaf Community**

The study findings revealed that collaboration with the Deaf community was one of the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Participants pointed out that Deaf community helped in aspects such as taking teachers to workshops, and helping them in signing new words since not all words are found in the Sign language dictionary. Participants also observed that Deaf learners

felt confident when being taught by other Deaf people because there will be no language barrier.

This was revealed by teachers who said:

*Deaf teachers can help by teaching us how to sign new words since some of us are not qualified in Sign Language especially with this new curriculum. (Tr B<sup>11</sup>, Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

*We don't have Sign Language books. So, when we want to learn how to sign new words, they will help us because it's their language. We have Deaf teachers who help us. They help by explaining the concepts we do not understand. If I can't sign a word I usually go to them and they help me or they come to my classroom to explain the concepts. (B<sup>10</sup>)*

Some participants also pointed out that they involved the elders in the training, a strategy which worked at their workshops. They also involved the chaplains to teach their Deaf learners.

*It's necessary because they will help in explaining concepts or ideas better to the deaf children. We have a chaplain who is Deaf who helps in teaching the word of God. They also offer some counselling services to someone who is Deaf. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>, Tr A<sup>3</sup>)*

They also involved the Deaf community when it was storytelling time. They argued that the Deaf community were the best people to teach the Deaf learners about their culture since it was their culture and they understood it better than the ordinary people. When it was time for heritage, they called the Deaf to teach the Deaf learners about relationships since they understood best when they were being taught by other Deaf people. The members of the Deaf community were also invited to facilitate some of the lessons which were difficult to teach especially their Deaf colleagues.

*They help by explaining the concepts we do not understand. If I can't sign a word I go to them and they help me or they come to my classroom to explain the concept and then they go away. (Tr B<sup>10</sup>)*

*We have assistant teachers, some of the assistant teachers are qualified whilst others have children who are Deaf. (Tr B<sup>13</sup>)*

Specialist teachers sometimes used interpreters who were not qualified to help them to teach the Deaf learners. The Ministry introduced the new curriculum so that the Deaf interpreters who lacked the subject content knowledge which would negatively impact on learning of the Deaf learners could be assisted. One district inspector, however, pointed out that they will not take anyone to teach the learners just because the person is Deaf. The following excerpt supports the above sentiment:

*We do not involve Deaf communities. How can we just take anyone from the street, do you just take Shona person from the street to teach Shona language? If that person is Deaf and educated or former classmate, then we can involve him/her. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

In those special schools which have included sign language on their timetables, Deaf teachers were taken to teach new words to the learners when it was time for indigenous languages.

*Sometimes, the members of the Deaf communities visit this school to teach the learners, especially when it is time for indigenous language lessons. (Tr C<sup>15</sup>)*

*Yes, we have DEAF associations which include the Deaf teachers and also Deaf parents. Deaf teachers are here in school and the Deaf parents also come here to help us in carrying out some of the tasks, and helping in teaching some of the difficult concepts (H<sup>D</sup>)*

When the other learners were taking indigenous languages such as Shona or Ndebele, the Deaf learners would also be doing Sign Language. If this idea was put in practice in all the special schools, it was going to help the Deaf learners. This is demonstrated by what one of the School Heads said:

*We involve them so that they can us how to go about certain concepts. We don't understand some of the concepts being taught. For example, we have a Deaf teacher who helps us a lot in elaborating on most of the concepts we don't understand. (H<sup>A</sup>)*

*I don't even know how they are involved but in other schools in the United Kingdom, they are in partnership with other people or special groups. However, for our schools, I don't even know whether they involve the Deaf community or not. (DSI<sup>A</sup>)*

The above sentiments reveal that it was the initiative of the individual schools to involve the Deaf communities. The Ministry was not involved in deploying Deaf assistants in special schools for the Deaf.

During the non- participant observation, the researcher observed that, in some special schools, the hearing learners were sent out to discuss or learn their indigenous languages, but the Deaf learners were doing something else with Deaf assistants, as shown by the following quotation:

*When I am teaching Shona, Deaf learners are taken away by my assistant here to pre-teach or to do something else. (Tr C<sup>18</sup>)*



This implies that even though Sign Language was there on the timetable as an indigenous language to be taught as a subject, it was not considered as one. Special schools were given textbooks which were meant for hearing learners and because teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, it was difficult for them to sign the narrations in the stories in the books.

#### **4.6.7 Importance of the Deaf Community in Zimbabwean Special Schools**

All the participants concurred that there was a need to involve the Deaf community in the learning of the Deaf learners. However, the participants gave different reasons as to why they should be involved. One participant postulated that since they did not have Sign Language dictionaries, the Deaf community would help them to sign new words or new concepts. Participants explained about the importance of Sign Language in Zimbabwean special schools as follows:

*I think they have a role to play since it's their language. They know the challenges and what it means to be Deaf; thus, they may know the solutions to the challenges. Supposing we have a Deaf Adult. Learners will feel more comfortable because there will be no language barrier between them. (DSI<sup>A</sup>)*

*There is need because hearing teachers need help in signing difficult words. They cannot sign and they also need help in the teaching of some of the concepts (Tr C<sup>16</sup>)*

*There is need to involve them because it's their language and sometimes we fail to understand the learner. If we talk to them, they can explain why the learner is behaving like that. (Tr C<sup>17</sup>)*

*It is important because they can impart Deaf Culture to the learners (HB).*

*At this school, we are very lucky because we have three Deaf teachers. So, this is the Deaf community we have involved in education. The staff develops other teachers. Our teachers are not proficient in Sign Language and sometimes they cannot sign difficulty words. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

*We do not train them; they train us just for basic communication and we always go for training just for basic communication (DSI<sup>P</sup>)*

*Their roles are to assist in Sign Language. You will find out that there are many varieties of Sign Language so their role is to assist in the use of proper Sign Language. (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

Participants in this study generally concurred that the Deaf community was important in the education of Deaf learners. The participants said that they were not fluent in Sign Language and

as a result, the Deaf community would help them to sign the difficult concepts. Deaf teachers also act as their resource persons. Policy implementers also concurred the Deaf community and would help the Deaf learners to use the correct signs as the policy implementers were not fluent signers.

#### **4.6.8 Shortcomings of the Existing Language Policy**

For policy to be effectively implemented, policy implementers should be involved in the adoption of the policy. The findings of the study revealed that the MoPSE did not put in place any mechanisms to involve policy implementers, educate them and empower them on how to implement the language in education policy. This resulted in variances in the way the policy was interpreted and implemented. The following quotations reflect the participants' sentiments on their involvement in the adoption of the language in education policy:

*Adoption was done at highest level. How could they leave us behind whilst we are the implementers of the policy? (Psy<sup>B</sup>)*

*The issue is that we did not have any gathering to discuss the policy; there were no inputs from us we were given the policy. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*They did not contact us; it was a top-bottom approach. (DSI<sup>A</sup>)*

*I was not part of the administrators who were involved in the formulation of the policy. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

According to policy implementers, the government did not commit itself to making policy implementers aware of the policy as well as educating them on how to implement it. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education did not disseminate information on the implementation of the 2006 LIEP. According to the participants, there were many shortcomings in the policy. Here is what the participants said about the shortcomings:

*The shortcomings may not be in the policy itself but maybe in the implementation modalities like enforcement of the policy. The policy might have also emphasised the financial support to the implementation of that program in sign language. I don't have anything against the policy but maybe the aspects of implementation. Are we providing some resources to ensure its smooth implementation? (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

The participant pointed out that he was not against the policy but its implementation modalities. For instance, the policy did not have enforcement modalities, there was no financial support of the

policy and also no resources were allocated to ensure its effective implementation. These modalities may lead to the non-implementation of the policy.

*The shortcomings are that very few people are competent in the use of sign language. The use of sign language becomes a limiting factor as the Deaf learners will only be able to communicate with those who are competent in Sign language. There is a need for wholesome capacity development of the language so that an adequate number of people are competent in the use of sign language besides only those who are in their spheres of life. (Psy<sup>C</sup>)*

*The shortcomings need to be addressed. It should be seen as a whole language and maybe in the tertiary education, they should offer the language. Is it offered at GZU? If Sign Language is offered at tertiary education level only, it means the number of people who will be fluent in Sign Language will be increased. (Psy<sup>D</sup>)*

*It's a good policy but for it to work we should ensure that Sign Language is taught well. Let us examine that subject as we are examining Shona, English, Sotho, and Venda languages. If it is a language why not examining it? It's inferior when others are examined while it's not. (DSIB)*

*Since it is an amended Act, there is a need for dissemination of more details through circulars and other policy documents that will provide more details on that policy. This implies that the policy is ambiguous, since besides mentioning it as mother instruction, it does not give any other information about how the policy should be implemented. Our Zimbabwean policy does not have strategies on how to improve the usage of sign language neither does it have curriculum material in Zimbabwean Sign Language that can be used for teaching it as a subject in schools. The lack of strategies makes it difficult for policy implementers to implement the policy. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

Participant **DSI<sup>A</sup>** concurred with **DSI<sup>C</sup>** in the following quote:

*The policy is good but no preparations were done especially on how it was supposed to be implemented. If it was made mandatory that all school children should learn Sign Language, then it means it was going to be good for the Deaf learners.*

The policy is silent on the how and the means of implementing. So, it means that the district officials now must decide on what to do. The policy was also silent on the means of implementing it, hence making it difficult for its implementers. This is evidenced by the following quotation:

*It has some shortcomings because you are saying the child should learn in sign language but where the child is coming no one can teach the that child Sign Language. This implies*

*parents should also be trained on how to communicate in sign language so that they will be able to communicate with the child and help their child at home. (DSIP)*

On shortcomings of the policy, participants felt that there was lack of capacity development as very few policy implementers were fluent in Sign Language. The participants also felt that policy implementers were not being in-serviced on how the policy was supposed to be implemented. No preparation was done by the Ministry. The policy implementers observed that the policy was silent on the means of implementing the policy and on role clarity. The policy implementers recommended wholesome capacity development of the language so that a large number of people would be competent in the use of sign language. The Deaf people should also have a large number of people whom they can communicate with besides only those who are in their spheres of life.

#### **4.6.9 Suggestions to the Ministry of Education Policy Makers**

Policy implementers proposed many strategies that could be used to make the implementation of the mother tongue policy effective, as expressed in the statements below:

*I feel the government should support the Deaf children and provide them with all their needs, for example, relevant books. Some parents are not willing to drop their kids at school because they are Deaf. There are a lot of Deaf learners out there who are not coming to school, so, the government should come in and support them. Also, remember that teaching these children is not easy. You have to repeat the same concepts over and over again but my salary is similar to a teacher who is teaching a normal child. So, the government should look into the salaries of specialist teachers; they should be different from those of the regular teachers. It's not easy to teach a Deaf child to read. Just being given 5 Deaf children for a day and you will feel very tired since it's not easy to make the Deaf child recognize numbers. The government should recognize that. (Tr B<sup>10</sup>)*

*They should change the policy; it's too backward. (Tr B<sup>7</sup>)*

*If I was going to be given a minute, I was going to say that before they think of making a policy for the Deaf I think it's wise for them to visit the schools and see how these children are learning and ask from the service providers what they think is the best because sometimes they impose on people things that are very difficult to implement and that's their problem. We want a bottom-up approach. (Tr B<sup>12</sup>)*

*They should support the Deaf in terms of the resources, understand their needs, their challenges and strategize on how to help them. They have challenges even in courts, it's now that they have sign language interpreters. Even in the prisons they have problems. Even when they go to the hospitals, they have problems, as the doctors and the nurses*

*cannot communicate with them. The government should support them by training the staff in every institution on how to sign to accommodate the Deaf people. (Tr B<sup>9</sup>)*

*I think I would say the Ministry should provide the resources, and organize in-service training for teachers in sign language. The other major thing they should do is to provide sign language syllabus because it's not there; so, we are operating from I don't know what I can say. There are no sign language syllabuses, so we just improvise ours. (Tr D<sup>6</sup>)*

*I will say for us the Deaf, we need to take our mother tongue higher than the others because that is the way they will understand you. In other countries, they teach in their mother tongue. Deaf learners understand better in their mother language. If the books would be made simpler for these Deaf learners, it will help them to learn easily. In the new curriculum, it's very difficult to explain some of the concepts. We cannot explain some of the words to the Deaf kids. (Tr D<sup>7</sup>)*

*I was of the idea that, in the long run, the government should look into it that these children are given exams which are designed in their mother tongue. I don't know how that can be. When they come to school, they are forced to learn two languages on the same go and that is difficult for them. That's why they are failing exams. (Tr D<sup>9</sup>)*

*The government should come in to remember this group of learners by printing new Sign Language dictionaries that accommodate the new curriculum. We are trying to teach them but it might be difficult for someone who has not yet mastered Sign Language. They should also help us with resources and also capacitate us on how to sign. These new words which are not found in the dictionaries should also be included in revised dictionaries. (Tr A<sup>1</sup>)*

*The Ministry is not well prepared to have the policy being implemented. The environment is not conducive for the Deaf learners. The exams are not modified to suit the Deaf learners. Also, early intervention should start at the hospital where the child is born rather than to wait until when the child is five years old so that the child is given the rightful provision. The parents should be assisted to get the education on Sign Language so that they can help the child on how to communicate using sign language. (Tr A<sup>2</sup>)*

*Teachers need to be trained on how best to implement the policy. They need to make follow-ups to see how the Deaf learners are learning and provide the resources that are needed to teach Deaf students. The Ministry should provide financial assistance to enable schools to buy the required resources. (Tr C<sup>16</sup>)*

From the above quotations, it was revealed that the government had no immediate budget to support the implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act which supports the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. One participant pointed out that if the government was serious about the policy, they could be seen visiting the schools to check on what was happening in schools. This is evidenced by the following quotation:

*I don't think that the ministry supports this because we could have seen the Ministry or the Minister funding this project or sending teachers to various institutions to learn sign language. However, we find that the teacher would go out on his way out of his pocket to pay for University or college education. No assistance is coming from the Ministry of Education or the minister, there is no funding from the Ministry. (H<sup>C</sup>)*

The above sentiment shows that the government was not doing some follow-ups to check on whether the policy was being implemented or not. Officials were also not visiting the schools to check on the challenges which were being faced by teachers in implementing the policy and how best they could solve the problems.

All teachers who were interviewed bemoaned about the lack of resources such as Sign Language syllabuses. If sign language is to be taught as a subject as suggested by the policy, then it should have a syllabus like any other indigenous language. Teachers also bemoaned the lack of capacity development from the Ministry and, as a result of that, they were found wanting in terms of using Sign Language as a medium of instruction and in terms of implementing the policy. The participants blamed the government for not providing them with financial resources that would enable the special schools to buy the required material resources.

The following were the suggestions of the district officers:

*All Ministry personnel should be conversant with Sign Language for it to be effectively implemented because you can't give what you don't have. As a system, how then do we make sure that Sign Language is taught if we can't use it? So, that is the first aspect of human capacitation. The second aspect is on leadership. We need people who will guide us on how it should be done. I will also recommend that there should be a framework that is very specific to track the progress, where we are, what we have done, what we want to achieve and what the challenges are and finally what lessons we have learnt. If we don't do the monitoring and the evaluation of the implementation process, we may never know if we are progressing in the desired direction. There is also a need for coordination, teamwork and collaboration with other partners in terms of the funding. We should also be talking of the aspect of enforcement to make sure we have some people who ensure that the policy is being implemented right from the top government positions to the grassroots at the school level. (Psy<sup>A</sup>)*

If every educational institute, the system should have someone competent in Sign language. This would make it easy to implement the policy. Districts are failing to conduct workshops in Sign Language or supervise teachers because they are not fluent in Sign Language.

*If Sign language is important, let us treat it as being important. It has to be put on the timetable, but they don't have resources. Teachers should also teach what is examinable. Who would want to teach something which is not examinable? The parents are not going to be comfortable with that. You are turning it as a tool to an end. (DSI<sup>B</sup>)*

According to the participants, Sign Language should be put on the timetable and it should have resources availed for it. It should also be made examinable because teachers teach what is examinable only.

*The level to which the mother tongue should be taught should be extended to the O-level. They should not limit it to lower levels of education. More information on its implementation if equally needed and there should be more institutions that will train teachers in Sign Language. (DSI<sup>C</sup>)*

*They need more financial support rather than relying more on donor funding. They need a budget that will support their needs. (DSI<sup>A</sup>)*

The participants postulated that there should be a budget that supports the policy. Implementers should not rely on only the donor community for funding the implementation of the policy.

*They should train the teachers in Sign Language so that when they come out of the college, they will be able to communicate with the Deaf Learners effectively. When they come out of college, they should have the basics to communicate with Deaf learners. (DSI<sup>D</sup>)*

Results of the study revealed that teachers who come out of college or universities would not be fluent in Sign Language; hence, they would not be competent to communicate with the Deaf learners using Sign Language.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter focused on data presentation and analysis. It focused on data obtained from teachers and administrators who dealt with Deaf learners, through the themes identified based on the research questions. The data that were collected were shown through Network View graphical files, themes and sub-themes and quotations from the participants. Data were presented starting with the views of teachers, school administrators, district schools inspectors, and schools psychologists, on the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. To examine the factors, the researcher focused on practices in the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks

in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, and looked at the extent to which the teachers were equipped to implement the policy. Furthermore, the challenges they were facing in implementing the policy as well as the strategies that could be proposed to enhance the implementation of the policy were examined.

The study found out that policy implementers were not capacitated on the meaning of the policy and how the policy should be implemented. Information was not flowing on each underlying link, hence, confusing stakeholders on how the policy should be implemented. Because of goal ambiguity and means ambiguity, there were variances in the way the policy was being implemented. Policy implementers who were the district officers, school administrators and teachers were not aware of their roles in the implementation of the policy. Each special school was implementing the policy according to the way they understood it. Most of the teachers were not well-equipped to implement the policy because they did not have the relevant qualifications in Sign Language to enable them to teach the learners who were Deaf and, as a result, they ended up using total communication. The study also found that the teachers did not have enough competencies to use Sign Language and even the use of total communication correctly, since they were not trained for such a system. Though most of the teachers assumed that they were proficient in using Sign Language, they observed that they lacked adequate vocabulary, expressiveness and understanding of the nature of Sign Language and how to combine it with speech.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was not capacitating the teachers through in-service training so that they would be equipped adequately to implement the policy. The study also found that the district officers had challenges in providing training opportunities to teachers because they also did not have the relevant qualifications in Sign Language to workshop the teachers. Some of the district officers were being trained in workshops by the specialist teachers. The district officers were also facing challenges in providing funds for workshops because they were financially handicapped. There were no financial resources from the Ministry to cater for the workshops. School administrators were also financially handicapped because the Ministry was not providing them with financial resources to implement the policy. The study also found that that teachers were facing a lot of challenges in implementing the policy. For teachers to effectively implement the policy, they needed adequate resources to use when teaching since Deaf learners



learn through sight; hence, they need a lot of visual resources. There was lack of visual materials like charts, videos prepared with Sign Language, motion pictures, and real material, despite the crucial roles these visual materials play for visual learners. The teachers could not use them because of their scarcity.

Results of the study also showed that there was no Sign Language curriculum to be followed in the teaching of Deaf learners. Additionally, there were no textbooks that were prepared or adapted for Deaf learners as the ones they had lacked Sign Language descriptions. All the special Schools did not have Sign Language syllabuses, as some of the special schools used school made syllabuses which were developed from the mainstream syllabuses by the Deaf teachers at the schools. Some of the schools did not have even Sign Language dictionaries, which led to variations in the Sign Language that was used in the classrooms.

Whilst some of the special schools made use of the Deaf community to help them in signing difficult words, some of the special schools were not even aware of the roles of the Deaf community in the implementation of the policy. Results of the study also showed that there were a lot of factors that were influencing the implantation of Sign language regulatory frameworks in special schools for the Deaf.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This qualitative study examined factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. In this chapter, the findings of the study, as presented in the previous chapter, are discussed under sub-headings derived from the sub-research questions guiding the study as presented in Chapter 1. Specifically, the subheadings are: Implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean special schools, challenges faced by teachers in implementing ZSL policies in special schools; extent to which teachers are equipped in teaching Deaf learners, and the strategies that could be put in place to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

### **5.2 Implementation of Zimbabwe Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf**

The present sub-section is a discussion on how ZSL policies are implemented in Zimbabwean special schools as revealed by the findings of the study. This chapter has focuses on the following sub-sections: policy clarity and consistency, interpretation of policy causal theory, adequacy of implementation process structure, commitment of implementing official, support from stakeholders and interest groups, and barriers to implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. In the discussion, reference is made to available literature related to policy implementation and Sign Language development.

#### **5.2.1 Policy Clarity and Consistency**

It emerged, from the current study, that there were variances in the way the ZSL policies were interpreted and implemented by teachers, School Heads, schools inspectors and psychology services tutors. The connection between the clarity of the message, the clarity of the goals of the policy, and policy implementation, has been discussed. Whilst some of the specialist teachers of the Deaf believed that the 2006 Amended Education Act meant that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction, some specialist teachers of the Deaf maintained that the policy was

unclear as it did not relate to Sign Language. These policy implementers, therefore, felt that Sign Language should just be used as a social language. Policy implementers argued that ZSL could only be used as a bridge to connect the Deaf learners with those around them and vice versa. It is only a means of communication. Similarly, in Zambia, according to Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013), some of the minority specialist teachers of the Deaf also viewed ZASL as a means of communication but not as a subject.

Policy implementers argued that since ZSL was an unwritten language, there was no need to teach it as an academic subject as learners would not write in sign language. They felt that the policy was meaningless and inferior as learners would not write in Sign Language. Policies can fail when policy implementers feel they have limited influence on policy implementation (powerlessness) or that policy has little or no personal meaning (meaninglessness) – they become alienated from the policy (Tucker, Hendy & Chrysanthaki, 2022). Whilst policy implementers in Zimbabwe felt that ZSL should not be taught as an academic subject, in Zambia, according to Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013), the majority of the specialist teachers for the Deaf in Zambia were of the opinion that ZASL should be taught as an academic subject, just like any other Zambian languages. Furthermore, the specialist teachers of the Deaf in Zambia argued that if English and other Zambian languages can be taught as school subjects to hearing pupils, Sign Language should also be taught to Deaf learners. Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013) note that specialist teachers of the Deaf wanted ZASL to be taught as a subject for the purpose of ensuring that all pupils use the same signs and learn standardised Sign Language and for learners to perform better in schools and use Sign Language correctly. As a result, ZASL should be taught just like all other languages. Whilst the Zambian specialist teachers for the Deaf realised the benefit of teaching ZASL as a subject, Zimbabwean specialist teachers for the Deaf were of the opinion that teaching ZSL as an academic subject was a waste of time.

Onyeije (2021) concurs with the above sentiment, arguing that Sign Language is the bridge that connects the Deaf people with the world around them. It helps the Deaf to communicate with the people around them, and vice versa. Furthermore, it helps the Deaf to understand the world around them through visual descriptions and, as result, contributes to the society's development and cohesion. Onyeije (2021) argues that Sign language helps in the social inclusion, as a result

increasing their self-esteem. Onyeije (2021) reveals that Heather Whitestone became the first Deaf woman to win the Miss America pageant in the year 1995, proving to the world that such people can thrive equally well. Furthermore, Helen Keller is considered to be the first woman who was highly educated in spite of being Deaf and blind. This shows that Sign Language can be both a social and academic language.

Despite the fact that Sign Language could be both an academic and social language, participants differed in their understanding of how to implement the LiEP. The different understanding of the policy shows that the implementing officials were not given opportunities to share their understanding on the policy so that the implementing officials would have the same understanding of the policy goals. Vilches (2018) asserts that curriculum implementation is a challenge among teachers, especially in terms of how they should implement the policy at the classroom level if the goals are not clear. The clarity of a policy output is potentially related to the clarity of the information about the policy goals. Therefore, policies are more likely to be implemented when policy makers send clear messages about the goals of a policy (Taylor, Zarb & Jeschk, 2021).

In the same vein, Goggin et al. (1990) suggest that policy implementers should be allowed to engage in dialogue and make sense of the policy with their colleagues to develop a shared understanding of what they are being asked to implement. Correspondingly, Vilches (2018) asserts that teachers are a major influence upon whether educational reforms will succeed or not succeed. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) note that in spite of the key role that teachers play in curriculum implementation, implementation fails in many occasions because the people factor is often neglected in the adoption and implementation of the policies. Without such an opportunity of sharing, policy implementers will continue to interpret policy, but they will do so individually, based on their own experience and this will result in implementation failures. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) indicate that teachers are one of the many factors that determine successful curriculum implementation. Furthermore, teachers, as the people in the frontline of curricular policy implementation, have a significant influence on how these changes disseminate to individual classrooms. As a result, teachers are the most important people in curriculum implementation (Villiena, Reyes & Dizon 2015, Adarlo & Jackson, 2017). Norris and McCrae (2013), argue that the policies formulated at national level may face the challenge of ensuring some

degree of consistency in delivery at subnational level. This shows that teachers, as people in the frontline of curricular policy, should be involved in the process of formulation for consistency in the implementation of the policy. Engaging with stakeholders in the design process of a policy may serve several purposes, making sure that the key message and logic of the policy are transmitted correctly to the main actors, building consensus around the objectives, tools and other means to achieve the policy goals. The clarity of a policy output is potentially related to the clarity of the information about the policy goals. Therefore, policies are more likely to be implemented when policy makers send clear messages about the goals of a policy (Taylor et al., 2021).

The results of the study further revealed that there was a lack of coherence in the policy. A good language curriculum is conceptually systematic when it is based on a coherent interpretation of what learning a language involves that is, theories of language and how it is learned (Graves, 2021). According to Graves (2021), a curriculum is the foundation for effective teaching and learning because of its theoretical coherence, structural cohesiveness and clear outcomes. Furthermore, it provides needed resources for teachers and learners and it provides a rationale and a syllabus for what is to be learned and the materials necessary for learning. Language curriculum developers should, therefore, use these principles to develop theoretically sound curricular guidelines that describe the valuable educational purposes, that is, curricular aims. Without a curriculum, there would be no clarity on goals, how to achieve them, or how to assess the extent to which they have been achieved (Graves, 2021).

The study also found that lack of policy clarity was a major issue that was negatively affecting the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. The clarity of policy objectives and their priorities in policy laws have an effect on the implementation agents' operational level. Furthermore, various actors may have distinct interpretations of policy objectives. Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013), and Taylor et al. (2021) argue that there is connection between the clarity of the message, the clarity of the goals of the policy, and policy implementation. Likewise, Donohue and Bornman (2014) note that the most significant constraint that hinders implementation of a policy is lack of clarity in the policy, that is, the ambiguity about the goals and the means through which they can be achieved. It emerged, from the current study, that the goals of the LiEP were interpreted differently. Different understanding of the goals of the policy led to various ways

of implementing ZSL policies in Zimbabwean special schools. These experiences affected how the policy was implemented.

Weaver (2015), for example, identifies monitoring problems such as information problems, where targets lack information that would make compliance more difficult. The above revelation seems to suggest that policy implementation is only possible if the responsible authority know what is needed before they implement the policy.

Understanding the policy was only possible if the policy had clear goals (ZEPARU, 2012). According to Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002), before acting, the policy implementers should make sense of policy signal. Sense-making is not simply decoding policy messages but the process of comprehension. Spillane et al.'s (2002) Cognitive Theory argues that teachers and other stakeholders get confused by unclear policy goals and unspecified means of implementation. Interpretation and understanding of the policy provisions is a cognitive process in which policy implementers must first understand what it is that the directive is asking them to do. Absence of policy implementers, misunderstanding of what they should implement, why they should implement it and how they should implement it, it remains unlikely that the current Sign Language regulatory frameworks would be effectively implemented in the Zimbabwe education system (Spillane et al., 2002, Goggin et al., 1990). Without doubt, the most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher. With their knowledge, experience and competencies, teachers are central to any curricular development effort (Toghyani, Khorasgani & Rahmani, 2021). Furthermore, Bediako (2019), argues that better teachers support better learning because they are the most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and responsible for introducing the curricular in the classroom. The role of the teacher remains instrumental in the success or failure of the curriculum (Loflin, 2016). According to most researchers, there is need to thoroughly train the teachers on their role in the implementation of the policies.

The current study further revealed that there was ineffective implementation of the ZSL policy in special schools for the Deaf because of lack of role clarity. For effective implementation of the policy, the policy should specify the roles and the responsibilities of the policy implementers. Specialist teachers of the Deaf learners had various conflicting views on their roles in the

implementation of ZSL policies. Some specialist teachers believed that their role in the implementation of ZSL policies was to source visual materials for the learners. Although teachers could source some of the resources, the availability of digital resources such as projectors, televisions or laptops, which were rarely available in the Special schools for the Deaf, was the responsibility of the Ministry and the government in general. Lack of the required resources to enhance the learning of the Deaf learners reflects that the MoPSE abdicated their role of providing for the required resources, leaving the responsibility to teachers. Teachers want to enjoy teaching and watching their students develop skills in their interest area. It emerged, from the study, that teachers faced difficulties in shifting to new signs in the system because they were not capacitated. When teachers are aware of their roles, they are more likely to do what they are supposed to do in this case teaching learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction.

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that participants viewed the lack of policy clarity as a major issue that was negatively affecting the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in special schools for the Deaf in Zimbabwe. Although the majority of key informants thought that the roles were clear and well-described, some thought there was lack of enforcement of roles and responsibilities, unclear responsibility and lack of accountability, which affected service delivery (Muthathi & Rispel, 2020). As a result of lack of enforcement of roles and responsibilities, unclear responsibilities and lack of accountability, the policy implementers were not consistent in the way they implemented the policies. This was worsened by the LiEP failing to outline the roles and responsibilities of different policy implementers in the implementation of the policy.

Musengi (2019) notes that the ZSL policy is inconsistent, as it lists ZSL as a subject to be taught, but does not show who is to teach it or what skills, fluency and qualifications they should have. This is unlike policies for other indigenous languages, where such factors are clearly specified and there is a curriculum to be followed. When the curriculum is uniform for a nation or a program, consistency of results is assured across levels and contexts. If all the specialist teachers follow the same syllabus and use the same materials, all students would learn the same thing and educational aims will be achieved (Muskin, 2015). Therefore, some specialist teachers of the Deaf may have been reluctant to implement the policy, as they did not have the fluency and skills to implement

policy. This is a clear indication of the lack of consistency in the policy. Despite the lack of qualifications among the teachers, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, however, is quite clear on the training of the specialist teachers of the Deaf to reinforce what the policy covers and to include real life scenarios like teaching Deaf learners and those with residual hearing in a reverse inclusive setting. Lack of enforcement of roles and responsibilities, unclear responsibilities and lack of accountability affect service delivery (Muthathi & Rispel, 2020). Policy inconsistency resulted in lack of uniformity in implementing ZSL policies. It emerged that the Ministry of Education Secretary's Circular Minute Number 2 of 2002 simply listed ZSL as a subject to be taught, without identifying who was to teach it and what qualifications or competencies they should have.

The findings of the study revealed that most of the district officers were not capacitated in their roles in the implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act. As a result, there was variance in the way they monitored the implementation of the policy in Zimbabwean special schools. It was clear, from the study findings, that the district officers were not well versed in sign language. To compensate for the lack of knowledge, the officers used interviews and reports from the School Heads to determine whether or not the policy was being implemented effectively. District officers maintained that supervision of the LiEP was difficult because of lack of proficiency in Zimbabwean Sign Language. Monitoring of policy implementation by the district officers was one of the important aspects of role clarity of the officers to enable them to identify the training needs of the policy implementers. Identification of the training needs would enable consistent implementation of the policy, after capacity development by the responsible authority. Weaver (2015), for example, identifies the following factors: monitoring problems, where target compliance may be difficult or costly, resource problems, where targets lack the resources to comply even if they want to, autonomy problems, where targets do not have the power to make decisions that comply with policy, information problems, where targets lack information that would make compliance more likely, and attitudinal problems, where there are hostility and mistrust of targets. The target compliance was difficult for the district officers, for they were also not conversant in the language they were supposed to implement. It was also costly, as the district officers were too financially handicapped to hold workshops to capacitate the specialist teachers for the Deaf. The district officers lacked information on the language of instruction.



The study found that participants interpreted the underlying rationale for the Sign Language regulatory frameworks in two different ways. This resulted in two different ways in which the policy was implemented. As a result of the different ways of understanding the goals of the policy, the policy was differently implemented in different special schools. Some of the special schools used total communication. Pre-lingual Deaf learners were encouraged to lip read what the teachers were saying. The teachers approached their teaching responsibilities through oralism, an approach that stems from a negative view of deafness and the Deaf. People who hold this school of thought have always seen the Deaf as a people who have a deficit in that they cannot talk. Thus, the oralist approach insists on teaching them how to talk. The findings of the study revealed that specialist teachers for Deaf learners wanted to teach the Deaf learners how to talk so that they would use speech like their hearing counterparts. However, Ohajunwa and Mckenzie (2013, and Ngobeni et al. (2020), argue that Deaf people do not develop speech and have a limited number of sounds that they can produce. Likewise, Haskey (2010) argues that Deaf learners' brains cannot penetrate spoken language and, as a result, Sign Language is the only language that can cater for their needs. One of the special schools used the Fitzgerald/Red Star Method, which involves the use of SL and English Language concurrently. This method is used for the Deaf learners to learn the proper grammatical construction of sentences. The method uses two colours, the red and blue colour. The red is for Sign Language and the blue is for the English Language. The strategies that teachers used were through visual and gestural codes. A major difficulty that Deaf children have is memorizing visually the concepts of each word. However, it is difficult to write very long words correctly. Therefore, teachers are supported by a teaching method called Fitzgerald Key (Cano, Collazos, Aristizábal & Moreira, 2017).

According to Cano et al. (2017), Fitzgerald Key involves a linguistic code of visual representation, making use of colour codes in the form of questions, in which the user must put the word sequence together (e.g. person + action + object). Furthermore, Fitzgerald works by a scheme of questions to complement the sentences, such as when, where, who, and actions. Each of these schemes represents a set colour according to whether it corresponds to a pronoun, object, verb, noun, adjective or adverb. The researcher observed that some of the teachers in the Firtzgerald/Red Star Method used signed English instead of ZSL in the teaching of the Deaf learners, for they argued

that ZSL was broken English. There was uncertainty on how the FitzGerald/Red Star Method was supposed to be used as was professed by one of the specialist teachers of the Deaf.

Policy implementers face uncertainty, in the face of limited information (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012). The teachers were still being capacitated on how to teach using the FitzGerald/Red Star Method. There was also no uniformity in the way the policy was being implemented because the policy implementers were not educated on how the policy was to be implemented. According to Matland (1995), administrative policy information should flow from the national level down to the teacher in the classroom. From the results, it is clear that information did not flow to the teacher in the classroom because of the different ways in which the policy was implemented.

Results of the study revealed that some specialist teachers viewed Sign Language as being the most effective means of communication for Deaf learners, whilst others believed that total communication was the best for them. Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013) assert that specialist teachers for the Deaf in Zambia gave various reasons for the use of both Sign Language and signed English. Some teachers said that it was difficult to explain some concepts by using one signing system. Hence, there was need to use both. One teacher explained that for understanding purposes, he/she used Sign Language but for the sake of children passing examinations, he/she used signed English (Nkolola-Wakumelo & Manyando, 2013). Some of the specialist teachers for the Deaf believed that Sign Language would not help Deaf learners in their academic achievement and, as a result, they preferred to use total communication, that is, the use of signed English, speech, fingerspelling, gestures and speech reading in teaching the Deaf learners. During non-participant observation, the researcher also noted that most of the specialist teachers for the Deaf preferred using total communication during their lesson deliveries, even though in some of the classes there were more Deaf learners than hearing learners. The findings of the study revealed that total communication, which was used in all Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf, was predominantly based on speech, with a focus on signed English. In these situations, where learners do not understand; the communication barrier may cause some learners to underperform academically.

Although there was language clarity on the policy which states that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools (Section 62:5 of 2006 Amended Education Act), the majority of the teachers did not agree with language clarity. Consequently, they preferred using total communication when they were teaching Deaf learners. They used total communication despite the hearing status of the learners because they did not see the reason why they should use Sign Language in teaching Deaf learners. Some specialist teachers of the Deaf argued that teaching Sign Language was a big challenge to those learners who did not come from Deaf Culture because they had to learn two languages at the same time, that is, English and Zimbabwean Sign Language. In concurrence with the specialist teachers of the Deaf, Ngobeni et al. (2020) note that it is always better to teach Sign Language in early grades. They argue that it is difficult for some Deaf learners to learn Sign Language while they are under tremendous pressure to cope with mastering the rest of the curriculum.

The results of the study revealed that the majority of the Zimbabwean specialist teachers of the Deaf preferred total communication in teaching the Deaf learners. In the South African context, South African Sign Language (SASL) is introduced as a first language as early as possible. This implies that learners learn English in the written form. Most of the policy implementers were of the opinion that the MoPSE should provide books which are written in ZSL. However, Sibanda (2015) suggests that since Sign Language writing systems are not yet widespread and largely usable, there is a need for sign-bilingual where Sign Language will continue being used as the primary language of instruction and learning, while English will be used for writing.

In concurrence with the specialist teachers of the Deaf learners, the majority of the School Heads who participated in the study noted that most teachers of Deaf learners used total communication in teaching the Deaf learners. The School Heads who participated in the study testified that although teachers would have liked to follow Section 62:5 of the Education Amended Act (2006), which states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf, they were not fluent or competent in Zimbabwean Sign Language. The majority of the teachers of the Deaf were not trained in Sign Language, hence, were not able to teach learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction and, as a result, they used total communication. It was also revealed, in the study, that total communication was not uniformly used in Zimbabwean Special

schools for the Deaf. From the study findings, it was revealed that some specialist teachers of Deaf learners used the English Language, some used the Shona Language, whilst the others used the Ndebele language. For the Deaf, the familiar language is Sign Language. This being the case in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean Sign Language is yet to be given that status similar to other Zimbabwean indigenous languages.

The current study further revealed that ZSL was treated differently from other indigenous languages, even though the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a, states that the state shall ensure that all languages are treated equitably and Section 6:4 state that the state must promote and advance the use of all languages in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language, and must create conditions for the development of those languages. Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a, also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c states that the state should ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction in early childhood education. Despite all these provisions, Sign Language is neither a curriculum subject, nor is it formally taught in Zimbabwean schools, including in schools of the Deaf, yet Deaf learners are expected to learn the same materials and perform the same tasks as their hearing counterparts (Matende, Sibanda, Chandavengerwa & Sadiki, 2021). ZSL is not treated as an academic subject like other Zimbabwean languages. ZSL, just like any other indigenous language, is supposed to be given equal opportunities of being taught to Deaf learners in Zimbabwean special schools. Zimbabwean Sign Language is not a taught subject, nor is it a medium of instruction in Zimbabwean special schools according to the findings of the study. Chimedza et al. (2007) found that Sign Language is a language in its own, right which has its syntax, semantics and pragmatics which are found in spoken languages. This implies that ZSL should not be devalued as being inferior to other languages.

Goggin et al. (1990) assert that education must be designed to be justifiable, in that there must be a good reason why schools and teachers should implement the given policy. This is in line with Spillane et al.'s (2002) Cognitive Theory, which stipulates that local implementing agents do not simply act on policy provisions like docile bodies; rather, they interpret the policy and try to work out the practical demands that the policy puts on them before actually acting on it. Implementing agents like policy implementers of the LiEP must first understand what it is that the directive is

asking them to do before acting upon it. Policy implementers in this study were reluctant to implement the policy because they did not understand the reasons why they should implement the policy. The policy implementers argued that if the Government wanted the policy to be implemented effectively, then it should have provided books written in Sign Language and should have made it an examinable subject. Contrary to the findings of this study, in Kenya, according to Pakata (2015), the Ministry of Education (2004) recognised the use of Kenya Sign Language as an effective medium of instruction for Deaf learners. It was also developed as an examinable subject in schools for Deaf learners in 2010 by the Kenya National Examination Council. In Sweden, according to Chupina (2006), the Swedish Sign Language became the language of instruction, as well as a taught subject in 1995. Specialist teachers in Zimbabwe wished for the same scenario in their schools. The success of implementation ultimately depends on the way people perceive, make sense of, and act on, policy provisions (Goggin et al., 1990). In this case, it depended on how teachers and other policy implementers understood the Amended Education Act (2006), and other policies that supported the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, since their beliefs and attitudes affected how they implemented the policy.

According to Keshav, (2012) sense-making by policy-enactors depends on their attitudes, knowledge and skills, and the implementers who are crucial in this respect are the district and school leadership. If the district and school leaders do not understand well what the policy entails, if they are not motivated or do not have sufficient time to implement it, teachers will not develop an interest in the policy but will only comply and do the minimum to satisfy their superiors (Keshav, 2012). Many public policies do not get successfully implemented. Explanations of why policies fail to progress include absent incentive structures (Béland et al., 2016), resistance from different stakeholder groups (Davidescu et al., 2018), and poor communication or policy support (Borrelli, 2018, Hudson et al., 2019).

According to Goggin et al. (1990), education must be designed to be coherent, justifiable, and legitimate. The policy must be coherent in that it should make sense and be easily understood for it to be implemented (Communication Theory). If the curriculum is based on a coherent understanding of what needs to be learned, it is organized so as to provide a clear pathway for learning, and provides appropriate, well-conceived materials, it follows that if teachers use it in

the way it was intended, the results will be good (Graves, 2021). Likewise, Spillane et al. (2002) note that before acting, policy implementers must make sense of policy signal. Without coherence, individuals will move to their understanding of the policy. Lack of coherence in the 2006 Amended Education Act led to different interpretations of the policy, since interpretation is done differently in Zimbabwean special schools. Without coherence, individuals act according to their own understanding of the policy. Lack of coherence in the 2006 Amended Education Act led to variances in the way the policy was implemented, hence curricular guidelines that describe the valuable educational purposes would ensure coherence in the policy (Graves & Garton, 2017).

Matland (1995) postulate that policy implementers from the national, provincial, district and school levels should be aware of their responsibilities in implementing the policy. Successful policy implementation relies heavily on the role of policy implementers who directly come into contact with Deaf learners. If the teachers, School Heads and district officers are not aware of their roles in the implementation process, then it remains unlikely that the policy will be implemented effectively. Role clarity by district officers is very important in ensuring consistency in the implementation of the policy. ZEPARU (2012) notes that once a policy has been implemented, there is a need for regular monitoring to determine the extent to which the policy is achieving its intended objectives. Monitoring would also involve coming up with corrective measures to align the policy to its aims. The findings of the study revealed that lack of sign language knowledge by district officers affected the monitoring of the policy, for they had to rely on others to find out whether the policy was being implemented. The officers pointed out that due to a lack of knowledge of ZSL, they could not effectively implement the policy since they had to rely on specialist teachers of the Deaf for information. They also pointed out that they had to get information from the specialist teachers through interviews and reports from the School Heads.

### **5.2.2 Adequacy of Implementation Process Structure**

From the study findings, it is clear that the inadequacy of the implementation process was negatively affecting the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks. To support the effective implementation of the language-in-education policy, there was a need for adequate support services. This view shows that financial constraints and lack of political will are some of the challenges that are militating against the successful implementation of the language policy

(Masoke-Kadenge & Kadenge, 2013). Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) assert that the provision of resources distinguishes between language policy formulation and implementation.

The majority of the policy implementers concurred that Sign Language is supposed to be the first language of the Deaf. During non-participant observation, the researcher observed that Deaf learners used Sign Language when communicating with peers and teachers and in everything they did. Although teachers mentioned that the Deaf learners used total communication, this contradicted the researcher's observation, whereby only the Deaf learners used Sign language. Similarly, Bragg et al. (2019) suggest that if you want to see the first language of the Deaf, see what they use when they are out of school or when they are on their own; that is their first language. Mutswanga and Sithole (2014) also concur with this sentiment.

Acton (2012), however, notes that most Deaf children do not get easy access to Sign Language because of a lack of trained teachers, although most countries have policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf students. The Zimbabwe Constitution Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013, Chapter 1, Section 6, Sub-section 1, recognises Zimbabwean Sign language as one of the sixteen official languages of the country and Section 62:5 of the language-in-education policy states that Sign Language should be the medium of instruction for the Deaf. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was still to fulfil its obligation to implement the policy. Trovato (2013) avers that only Sign Language can guarantee that each Deaf child will properly develop the linguistic and cognitive potentials they are endowed at birth. Learners understand better in a familiar language (Sign Language for Deaf learners) and it enables them to participate in the learning process.

The Ministry does not treat sign language like other indigenous languages even though the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a, states that the state shall ensure that all languages are treated equitably. Deaf learners do not have pictorial Sign Language textbooks to help in the teaching of the Deaf learners at infant level. As a result, Deaf learners cannot study on their own, unlike their hearing counterparts. Some of the specialist teachers of the Deaf asserted that Deaf learners could not read on their own without the assistance of the teacher because of a lack of pictorial Sign Language textbooks written in Sign Language. In the same vein, in Zambia,

according to Wakumelo and Mulonda (2013), Sign Language is not regarded the same as other indigenous languages. Wakumelo and Mulonda (2013) note that with respect to spoken indigenous languages, the government has invested a lot in the production of teaching materials in these languages. Nevertheless, some teachers revealed that teaching materials for Sign Language were not available (Wakumelo & Mulonda, 2013).

Japan, unlike Zimbabwe, according to Honna and Kato (2003), publicised Japan Sign Language textbooks for Deaf children and trained Deaf school teachers. In countries like Zambia, some of the special schools use pictorial signed English textbooks to help in the teaching of the Deaf learners. Zimbabwe can also learn from other countries on how books can be published in Sign Language. However, Sibanda (2015) suggests that since the Sign Language writing systems are not yet widespread and largely usable, hence there is need for sign-bilingual practice where, as has been alluded to elsewhere in this study, Sign Language will continue being used as the primary language of instruction and learning, while English is used for writing. On the contrary, as observed by the researcher, English was not used for writing only but also as a medium of instruction since most of the specialist teachers preferred signed English in place of ZSL.

Many research findings also revealed that students can perform better at school when they learn through their mother tongue or first language. However, many situations have forced schools to fail to implement the mother tongue instruction policy, such as a lack of support from the Ministry in terms of resources such as human, material and financial resources. Lack of the required resources forces schools to educate Deaf learners using spoken language instead of their mother tongue. Previous studies in Tanzania (Kagaruki, 2013, Malaika, 2016, Saka et al., 2019) have indicated that policies were not being implemented because of lack of resources, lack of enforceable law and lack of policy awareness among the stakeholders.

Laitin, Ramachandran and Walter (2015) argue that learners understand what is being taught, and what they are expected to do themselves, through mother tongue instruction, which helps to improve children's motivation to continue attending school. They further argue that in countries that have adopted the use of national Sign Language as the medium of instruction in schools for the Deaf, unprecedented success has been achieved in the education of the Deaf.



Ngobeni et al. (2020) observe that in South Africa, just like in Zimbabwe, Deaf learners come to school without having any language, such that the special schools, according to Demissie (2021), must prepare the children for the acquisition of a first natural language before second language acquisition. Demissie (2021) notes that these tasks are generally not undertaken naturally in their infancy at home and will only take place in special schools. McDowell (2019) observes that many Deaf learners in South Africa are still not educated through the medium of SASL because many teachers in schools for the Deaf cannot sign and still believe that Deaf children must learn the spoken language of the area. Sibanda (2015) asserts that sign language proficiency among teachers of the Deaf forms the basis for effective learning by Deaf learners. Sibanda (2015) further argues that young children who are Deaf learn more effectively when taught using Sign Language. This shows the importance of Sign Language proficiency for specialist teachers of the Deaf.

For mother tongue instruction for Deaf learners to be effectively implemented, there is a need for a lot of support from the relevant Ministry. Support should be in terms of resources having teachers who are qualified to use Sign Language fluently. Results of the study revealed that teachers were not fluent in Sign Language because of a lack of capacitation. In order to achieve effective curriculum implementation, it is important to provide training and support for teachers, school management teams and parents. Nelson (2015) asserts that in-service training courses should be taken into account, which shows that there must be a close connection between school improvement work and initial teacher

### **5.2.3 Commitment of the Implementing Officials**

It emerged, from the current study, that there was a lack of commitment by the implementing officials, which was caused by different factors. Maseko and Dhlamini (2014) note that there is a half-hearted commitment to the development of the LiEP. There is lack of legislation to enforce the provisions (Maseko & Dhlamini, 2014). Lack of commitment was also reflected through lack of teacher training in the language of instruction, lack of workshops in sign language to enhance the implementation of the policy, as well lack of materials to help in learning by the Deaf learners. One of the major problems highlighted in all the reviewed studies is the inadequacy of the existing teacher training programme (Maseko & Dhlamini, 2014). Policy implementers are not given

enough opportunities to train in the language of instruction. Maseko and Dhlamini (2014) note that the teacher deployment policy is not in tandem with the indigenous language policy. Section 62.5 of the 2006 LiEP states that ZSL shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf language. UNCRPD (2006), Section 24:3b states that teachers of Deaf learners should be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe also has a policy guidelines document for the staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that states that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs, including Deaf learners, with appropriately qualified teachers. The government and the Ministry showed lack of commitment by deploying teachers who were not qualified in Sign Language to teach Deaf learners, despite all the provisions. Lack of commitment was shown by Ministry top officials who had never visited the schools to find the needs of teachers and learners, such as the availability of resource materials and capacitation of teachers. The School Heads also asserted that there was no funding from the Ministry, in terms of resources and workshops.

Results of the study also revealed that there was lack of commitment from the specialist teachers to effectively implement the policy because of their attitude towards Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Specialist teachers of the Deaf were not certain that ZSL was a real language. As a result of their lack of commitment in ZSL, the specialist teachers of the Deaf preferred using signed English and English in teaching the Deaf learners. The silence and lack of support from the teachers in using the mother tongue instruction can be very isolating for the learners. Furthermore, isolation results in the learners feeling confused and embarrassed. Such situations do not provide equal learning opportunities because those who cannot articulate issues in English are left out of the learning process (Maseko & Dhlamini, 2014). The Deaf learners are also left out because they cannot comprehend spoken languages.

In the same vein, Ngobeni and Rankmise (2020), in their study on the effect of limited Sign Language as a barrier to teaching and learning among Deaf learners in South Africa, noted that that spoken languages did not benefit the Deaf learners in terms of their future development. Mindness (2014) argues that lack of experts in Sign Language is a contributing element to the failure to teach through the use of Sign Language alone in teaching Deaf learners.

The government lacked of commitment to the implementation of mother tongue instruction in schools. Lack of commitment was also shown through lack of appropriate resources to help in the teaching of the Deaf learners. Lack of appropriate educational materials such as pictorial Sign Language textbooks, teachers' guides and reference books in the mother tongues negatively impacted on the learning of the Deaf learners. Maseko and Dhlamini (2014) also note that the teaching practice and the development of literacy have also been negatively impacted by a severe lack of appropriate educational materials, teachers' guides, textbooks and reference books in the mother tongues. This visual equipment and materials augment the students' understanding of linguistic skills, which in this case entail Sign Language. If teachers were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, they would be able to meet the learning needs of Deaf learners.

The findings of the study revealed that special schools received more financial support from donors than they received the materials from the relevant Ministry. This shows a lack of commitment by the MoPSE in terms of provision of resources, workshops and making follow-ups. Donors were being used to sponsor the implementation of the policy. Although School Heads showed their commitment to the policy by sending their teachers to South Africa to learn about the aural/oral method and the Fitzgerald key method of teaching Deaf learners, there was no commitment from the Ministry to support the effort of the special schools for the Deaf. The schools managed to send teachers to South Africa through the help of donors, not the Ministry. Despite the effort made by schools to send teachers for further capacitation in different methods of teaching Deaf learners, the Ministry did not complement the effort by providing the required equipment to implement the methods. This shows a lack of commitment by the Ministry.

The participating district officers revealed that there was no clear budget to support the implementation of the policy. Financial and technical resources, along with quality human resources, are key factors that contribute to the proper implementation of any policy. Low education funding is, thus, considered a major obstacle to realizing the implementation targets of Pakistan's educational policies (Majoka & Khan, 2017). A unique problem of education policy in developing countries like Zimbabwe is their dependence on foreign aid and loans to bridge the budget deficit and finance their development plans. It is clear, from the study, that there were financial problems in special schools for the Deaf. Special schools for the Deaf were not able to

hold any workshops for the teachers as a result of financial problems. Lack of financial support to enhance training workshops for teachers was one of the causes of no implementation of the policy. The majority of the policy implementers concurred that they received help more from well-wishers such as UNICEF rather than from the Ministry. At present, the government is yet to come up with strategies to solve the problems in implementing the LiEP since most of the help is coming from donors. The study further found that little support was being given by district offices. The schools were giving support to the district in terms of providing interpreters to the district whenever there were functions at the districts which needed interpreters. The findings of the study revealed that special schools for the Deaf were not given qualified teachers to teach Deaf learners.

It was also revealed, by the district officers in the study, that they were not able to give support to the schools as they were not getting any support from the Ministry and the government. Overall, the study found that support from the government was very essential to enable the effective implementation of the policy. Support was required in terms of resources and training of policy implementers. The study found that the major barriers to policy implementation as perceived by district officials were a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems, lack of knowledge and skills to implement the policy, poor governance system, as well as lack of funding and resources.

#### **5.2.4 Barriers to Implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

It was evident, from the results of the study, that there was no support in terms of materials, workshops, human resource and financial support to carry out the necessary workshops. In a global review of the effectiveness of delivery units in one policy area, it was found that education services a number of key lessons for effective practice are identified (Aid Effectiveness, 2014). These include focusing on a limited number of key priorities, such as being able to ensure that budgets for each priority are adequate. This implies the MoPSE should ensure that the budget for the implementation of the LiEP should be adequate. Adequate budget enables availability of adequate resources. A study by Ferguson (2014), noted that the implementation of the policy can be compromised due to a lack of adequate support staff and resources. Chibuike (2020) postulates that more funds should be allocated for procuring teaching and learning materials for special needs

learners, including Deaf learners. Results of the present study revealed that Deaf learners in special schools were not provided with adequate resources to help them in the learning process. Another study which was carried out by Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013) confirmed the above findings that there were limited resources and facilities in special schools to cater for Deaf learners. Lack of adequate resources impacted negatively in the learning of the Deaf learners.

Ngulube (2016) expresses concern about the inadequate supply of specialised learning materials and equipment for Deaf learners. Schools were financially handicapped because they were not getting financial help from the Government and, as a result, the schools were facing challenges to procure all the resources. Findings of the study revealed that, although Deaf learners were in special schools, the appropriate resources and equipment were not there to facilitate their learning. Lack of visual materials impacted negatively in the education of Deaf learners, for they could not learn through sight. Visual equipment and materials enable the child to acquire sign language through sight. The findings of this study were in agreement with El-Zraight and Smadi (2012), who assert that Jordanian schools were inadequately equipped and that inappropriate equipment and materials caused the ineffectiveness of teachers of Deaf learners. Likewise, Haitembu (2014) notes that without relevant materials, Deaf learners will always face challenges in their learning. Kaswa (2015) found that the teachers felt the use of visual materials had a positive impact on the students' ability to pay attention to texts, and that they performed well in examinations when the materials were used. Luckner and Ayantoye (2013), found that the use of overhead projectors, smart boards and other visuals provide visual supplements to spoken messages, which helps Deaf learners to recall fast the information learned. They further argue that for Deaf learners to understand the signs, they need visual materials to help them to understand the concept. Deaf learners are visual people and, as a result, they can only understand concepts through the use of visual materials which, however, are not adequate in special schools for the Deaf.

Deaf learners have difficulties understanding complex subjects without the aid of visual materials due to their limited ability to read and write. Deaf students are more capable of understanding when they are using pictures and visual communication, including sign language, fingerspelling, and drawings (Fakhrudin, Yamtinah & Riyadi, 2017).

During the non-participant observation, the researcher observed that at one of the special schools, visual materials such as videotapes, CD-ROMs and other materials containing Sign Language were mostly available at the school. The special school produced resources such as charts, number lines, and the alphabet, to assist learners in their learning efforts. The special school even produced its own Sign Language dictionary, which is the latest Sign Language dictionary present in Zimbabwe. The Sign Language dictionary was produced with the help of the Deaf community. A study by Ghulam et al. (2015) suggests that visual materials prompted more thinking and learning, and created a more pleasing environment in the classroom. Similarly, Nyawinda (2015) reports that the use of visual materials influences motivation and achievement in learning activities, especially those related to numeracy skills, and enhances the learning processes of children. When schools lack access to visual materials, there can be a negative impact on learning and achievement. ZEPARU (2012) asserts that there should be a policy evaluation process which should involve assessing the budget to ensure whether enough resources are being distributed towards the attainment of each of the set goals. ZEPARU (2012) observes that where deficiencies are observed, an evaluation would also entail sourcing more resources for the effective implementation of the policy.

The use of total communication was a major barrier to Deaf learners. One of the criteria for effective usage of local languages as languages of instruction is that there must be enough teachers to teach through that language. The absence of relevant and adequate manpower hinders policy implementation. By using total communication and aural/oral approach, the specialist teachers of the Deaf were denying Deaf learners access to Sign Language. The Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:2, states that school curricula shall as far as possible reflect the culture of the people of every language used or being taught. Deaf adults are able to teach about Deaf Culture since it is their language. This can be achieved through the use of Deaf parents and Deaf teachers as ASL storytellers in the classroom (Leigh, Andrews & Harris, 2018). In the same scenario in Zimbabwe, it can also be achieved through the use of Deaf teachers or the Deaf community.

The National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.9.10, states that the state should ensure the learning of the Zimbabwean Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf

community, which is in line with Article 24:3(b) of CRPD (2006) which promotes the right to learn Sign Language. However, specialist teachers of the Deaf in Zimbabwean special schools believed in using total communication in their special schools. However, this did not apply in the Zimbabwean special schools because it is in these special schools that total communication or spoken language was being used to teach the Deaf learners because of teachers' lack of proficiency in Sign Language. Similarly, in South Africa, DeafSA (2009) also observes that only 14% of the teachers of the Deaf are proficient in Sign Language. DeafSA argues that if neither the teacher nor the learner is well-versed in signing, this poses a barrier to teaching and learning. Ngobeni et al. (2020) also observe that the South African education system, just like Zimbabwe's, lacks skilled and fluent Sign Language teachers. This affects the teaching and learning of Deaf learners. Mandyata (2018) notes that it was evident, from the study the researcher carried out, that most teachers of the Deaf learners did not use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Instead, they used total communication. The above assertion was supported by more than half of the hearing teachers and Deaf learners who participated in the study. The participants observed that learners who were Deaf understood lessons taught by Deaf learners who used mainly Sign Language compared to when they were being taught by hearing teachers who heavily depended on total communication.

The subsequent sub-section discusses the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, as revealed by the findings of the present study.

### **5.3 Challenges Facing Teachers in Implementing Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks for the Deaf in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

This section presents the discussion on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf, as revealed by the findings of the current study. In the discussion, the following sub-section will be looked at: forms of Sign Language, functions of Sign Language, teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies, teachers' Sign Language beliefs and practices, and Sign Language agents and other resources.

In the discussion, reference is made to literature related to challenges in the implementation of policies in general and Sign Language regulatory frameworks in particular.

### **5.3.1 Forms of Sign Language**

The present study revealed that policy implementers had varying opinions on the challenges which were faced in implementing Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. In order to better understand how to improve policy support, it is, first of all, instructive to appreciate the nature of policy failure. Logically, the reasons why things go wrong should help to guide the search for potential solutions (Hudson, Hunter & Peckham, 2019). In the same vein, the MoPSE and the government should identify the challenges faced by policy implementers to enhance the effective implementation of her education policies. Results of the study revealed that teachers were facing challenges of learners who came to school with home signs only and were supposed to learn Sign Language from the specialist teachers for the Deaf. It was a challenge to teachers for they were linguistically handicapped in Sign Language to teach the learners. Akoth (2021) notes that hearing teachers at Uganda School for the Deaf, though they had UgSL skills, they lacked competency and fluency. Similarly, in Kenya, according to Mweri (2016), most teachers for the Deaf are largely competent in their various teaching subjects but handicapped in terms of the language to use so as to pass knowledge to the Deaf children. It was also a challenge for some Deaf learners to start learning Sign Language while being under tremendous pressure to cope with mastering the rest of the curriculum. Traditionally, educators demonstrate and explain course material using spoken language to ensure that learners understand and can learn and retain information. The communication barrier can result in some learners under-performing academically in a situation where the learners are unable to understand, and educators are unable to explain adequately. It was observed that teaching of Sign Language was a big challenge to those learners who did not come from Deaf Culture because they had to learn two languages at the same time; that is, English and Zimbabwean Sign Language. This lack of fluency in ZSL by the specialist teachers for the Deaf had a negative impact in the learning of the Deaf learners. A study by Fine-Bone (2017), who investigated the level of Sign Language expertise among teachers in special education centres in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, showed that most of the teachers who participated in the study had no requisite expertise in Sign Language. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the level of expertise in Sign Language was significantly low among teachers in



special schools in the study area and this affected the development of Sign Language skills among children who were Deaf.

The MoPSE expects specialist teachers for the Deaf to use ZSL to teach the Deaf learners, but at the same time it is not capacitating specialist teachers for the Deaf with the required skills. This might be due to a lack of commitment by the Ministry to capacitate specialist teachers for the Deaf in Sign Language. The Ministry just expected things to happen on their own. The belief that Deaf people are the best teachers led schools to employ Deaf Sign Language instructors and researchers to run Sign Language programs, irrespective of whether they meet the standard qualification requirements (Lutalo-Kiingi & De Clerck, 2017, Power & Leigh, 2011). On the training offered to teachers in Sign Language, the study revealed that the majority of the teachers felt that they did not receive adequate training in sign language. Of the teachers involved in the study, most of the policy implementers indicated that they did not have adequate training in Sign Language but a few said that they had undergone comprehensive training in Sign Language. Policy implementers in Zambia asserted that training in both ZAMISE and UNZA was generally poor. Specialist teachers of the Deaf argued that they were not using Sign Language alone since learners do not write in Sign Language because their books were not written in Sign Language but English. Policy implementers argued that Deaf learners would learn how to read and write through signed English not Sign Language.

According to the policy implementers, signed English would help in the development of English literacy among Deaf learners. On the contrary, in South Africa, Deaf learners are not introduced to sign English. In the South African context, South African Sign Language (SASL) is introduced as a first language as early as possible (Ngobeni et al., 2020). The verbal language of the environment (such as English) is acquired as a second language, primarily in its written form (Napoli et al., 2015). Whilst Zimbabwean specialist teachers for the Deaf believed that Deaf learners can only learn English language in oral form, Ngobeni et al., (2020) have argued otherwise.

According to Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013), in Zambia, the intention of the curriculum developers in some of the special schools is to teach the learners the language structure

or rules of English, and not Sign Language. This is evidenced by Sign Language book at one of the special schools. The Sign Language pictorial book followed Sign Language vocabulary, hence, learners were not taught Sign Language grammar and syntactic rules, but instead they were taught English grammar.

Manyando (2013) notes that some of the specialist teachers for the Deaf in Zambia use Signed English when they are teaching the Deaf, for they claim that Sign Language is broken English. The current study revealed that there were long-term consequences of continually underplaying the functions of Sign Language by forcing Deaf students to receive instruction in a spoken language, as this could lead to illiteracy. Although the language-in-education policy stipulated that education should be provided through the medium of Sign Language, the implementation was generally non-existent and not monitored because of insufficient Sign Language skills among the teachers and district officers. Sometimes Deaf students had to teach their hearing teachers Sign Language, as they were not competent enough in ZSL. The implication of Deaf children teaching their hearing teachers Sign Language was that the status of the child was likely to be attributed to the language he or she was teaching. It is not surprising, therefore, that many teachers ascribed lower status to Sign Language as compared to the oral languages that teachers were using. As a result of its perceived low status, Sign Language might then not be mastered by some learners in early grades and this would become a challenge both to the learner and the teacher, as Sign Language helped in the learning of a second language. It is critical for the linguistic and academic development of Deaf children that they be taught a natural Sign Language as their primary language during the early childhood (Baboun, 2016). The study found that if the status of Sign Language was underplayed such that learners did not learn the language in early grades, then they would face challenges learning a second language. Learners are faced with a teacher whose only source of learning how to communicate with them is the learners themselves. This unique learner-becomes-teacher situation should never happen in any classroom anywhere in the world, but it happens constantly in classrooms with Deaf learners (Parkin, 2010).

The findings of the current study revealed that, when Sign Language was not used to bridge the communication gap and create an emotionally secure social and learning environment, then there were challenges to be encountered. For learners who came from hearing parents, the teachers had

to start from scratch, as the children would not be able to sign. Deaf learners who came from Deaf families learnt the second language faster than those who came from where there was no Sign Language. Learners without the base of a first language face challenges in acquiring a second language. The challenge for teachers is that if learners do not learn Sign Language in early grades, they cannot move forward with other concepts. It emerged, from the study, that the learners who came from Deaf Culture had an advantage over learners who came from backgrounds where the parents and siblings were hearing, because they already had a language.

### **5.3.2 Functions of Sign Language**

The study findings indicated that Deaf students who had acquired Sign Language as early as possible tended to become more successful at school compared to those who learnt Sign Language later. Success also concerns literacy skills. The challenge is that without functionally using Sign language from an early age Deaf people are excluded from society with the risk of lacking proficiency in any language and this will affect Deaf learners in grasping concepts at school. Learning of Sign Language is of great importance both to the learners and to the teacher because in early grades it means teachers have to teach Sign Language and the curriculum as well as English at the same time.

The findings further showed that most of the policy implementers believed that Sign Language would uplift the academic achievement of Deaf learners. Perceived challenges, however, emanated from the home signs, the lack of Sign Language at home and lack of teachers' proficiency in Sign Language, all of which negatively affected acquisition of a second language and academic achievement of Deaf learners. Humphries et al. (2013) argue that late Sign Language acquisition leads to a delay, disruption, or a deficit in the development of cognitive skills that interweave with linguistic ability, including language acquisition, verbal memory organization, mastery of numeracy and literacy, academic success, and social skills knowledge. Confusion amongst policy implementers on what uplifts the academic performance of learners is a big challenge in the implementations of the policy. As a result of the confusion on what uplifts the academic performance of learners, there were variations on the methods which were used in teaching the Deaf learners. Variation in Sign Language impacts learner engagement, and hinders teacher-student and student-student communication (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2013, Werts, Carpenter &

Fewell, 2017). Chibuwe (2015) noted that the performance of Deaf learners was affected negatively by the teachers' signs which were not the same with the signs used by learners. Furthermore, the study indicated that most learners did not follow instructions due to communication barrier. These variations contribute negatively during instructions in the classroom (Chibwe, 2015). Those specialist teachers of the Deaf who believed that oral language uplifts the academic achievement of Deaf learners used total communication in teaching the Deaf learners, with more emphasis on spoken languages. Total communication is when speech and signing are used together. It is used to manually represent English using a sign system known as signed English (Mweri, 2016). Mweri (2016) argues that this system would only serve to confuse the deaf, especially because the use of signed English forces the structure of English onto Sign Language. These variations caused confusion amongst the learners. Although most of the specialist teachers of the Deaf believed that ZSL would uplift the academic achievements of Deaf learners, the majority of the specialist teachers of the Deaf used total communication in teaching the Deaf learners. Despite the fact that specialist teachers of the Deaf asserted that oral languages uplift the academic achievement of Deaf learners, Mulonda (2013) notes that Deaf students tended to remain at the third and fourth grade reading levels rather than advancing further. In a study done in China, Mulonda (2013) argues that poor education translates into poor performance. The poor performance of Deaf learners was associated with challenges in medium of instruction, inconsistencies in modes of communication, inability to read for comprehension, and mismatch between formative and summative assessment employed by teachers and the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) (Chifinda & Mandyata, 2017). Utilizing Sign Language enhances reading and writing development in learners with hearing impairment. Results of the present study revealed that most of the specialist teachers of the Deaf were not trained in ZSL, making it difficult for the learners to understand.

Baboun (2016), in a study on the importance of early Sign Language acquisition for Deaf learners, found that early exposure to Sign Language affects the learners' linguistic and academic development positively. The age acquisition of Sign Language and the proficiency level of said Sign Language affect the academic success of the learners (Baboun, 2016, Clark, et Al. 2016). The findings of the current study revealed that some of the policy implementers believed that total communication would uplift learners' academic achievement. These policy implementers did not believe in the use of Sign Language as the medium of instruction for Deaf learners. On the contrary,

a study by Tucci (2016), concluded that late-signing Deaf children from hearing families are delayed, while those born to Deaf parents and who have been exposed to Sign Language in the early stages of childhood are more or less at the same level with hearing children. This implies that late acquisition of Sign Language for Deaf learners has a negative impact on the academic achievement of the Deaf learners. The next section focuses on teachers' Sign Language knowledge and competencies.

### **5.3 3 Teachers' Sign Language Knowledge and Competencies**

Results of the study revealed that in Zimbabwe, there is a challenge of shortages of specialist teachers of the Deaf who were trained in ZSL. The shortage of special education teachers may also be a challenge to the effective teaching and learning of Sign Language (Ikwen, Nkebe & James, 2017). Although the majority of the teachers had degrees or diplomas in Special Needs Education, they were unsuitable to teach Deaf learners, as their qualifications did not have a component of Sign Language, such that when they were deployed at special schools for the Deaf, they would need to be oriented on how to teach Deaf learners. The lack of Sign Language teaching expertise is a challenge to the development of Sign Language skills of Deaf learners (Chibuike, 2020, Yasin et al., 2017). Khumalo (2014) asserts that teachers lack of competencies in using Sign Language as a medium of instruction is a major deterrent to effective implementation of Sign Language policies due to lack of training. This is because teachers who did not receive training in Sign Language struggled to equip Deaf learners with necessary learning skills. This is not desirable for any teaching and learning situation because in order for human beings to progress, they need to be exposed to someone who knows more than they do and can do more than they can do; this is how teaching and learning happen (Parkin, 2010). However, this is not the case in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf, as learners know more than teachers in terms of ZSL. Teaching Deaf learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction requires that teachers be trained in Sign Language for them to effectively teach learners using Sign Language. Chifinda (2017) note that there was an acute problem of lack of enough knowledge in Sign Language among teachers and learners who solely depended on it as a medium of classroom instruction.

Sign language gives Deaf learners normal academic development and so, teachers who are assigned to teach Deaf learners need not only be trained in Special Needs Education but also in

Sign Language, to enable them to communicate effectively with Deaf learners (Mandyata, 2018). Sign Language bridges the communication gap and creates an emotionally secure social and learning environment. In India, unlike in Zimbabwe, according to Zeshau, Vasishta and Sethna (2005), in their study on the implementation of Indian Sign Language in educational settings, right from the beginning of the Sign Language programmes, producing qualified Sign Language teachers is a matter of high priority in the Indian Sign Language Cell. This implies that teachers of Deaf learners in India, unlike those in Zimbabwe, are conversant with Indian Sign Language. Zimbabwe can also learn from the successful strategies such a country has implemented in training its specialist teachers for the Deaf, for effective implementation of the language-in-education policy.

#### **5.3.4 Teachers' Sign Language Beliefs and Practices**

The study findings revealed that, although some teachers believed that they were putting a lot of effort into using Sign Language, the serious challenge was that many of these hearing teachers had negative Sign Language beliefs and engaged in deficient language teaching practices. Specialist teachers of the Deaf believed that ZSL is a form of broken English. As a result of this belief, they preferred using total communication in teaching the Deaf. In the same vein, a study by Musengi (2015) revealed that all specialist and non-specialist teachers believe that ZSL is a defective language. Sign Language is not recognized as a true language. Therefore, Deaf learners are taught English and signed English concurrently. Furthermore, a study by Mpuang et al. (2015) on Sign Language as medium of instruction in Botswana primary schools, revealed that communication systems vary from region to region and from school to school in Botswana. In Zimbabwean special schools, the hearing teachers were not proficient in Sign Language; hence, they preferred to use total communication so that at least they also had the chance of using their own oral language. The study by Chibuwe (2015) found that lack of competencies in Sign Language resulted in teachers being comfortable with using total communication as a medium of instruction. Since most of the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, they preferred teaching using total communication. Chibuwe's study (2015) notes that the performance of Deaf learners was affected negatively by the teachers' signs which were not the same with the signs used by learners. Furthermore, it indicated that most learners did not follow instructions due to the communication barrier. Chibuwe (2015) notes that the most important factors that lead to Sign Language variations in schools were

environment, culture, teachers' 'competencies, and the type of training institutions the teachers attended. Furthermore, the study revealed that most of these learners face a lot of challenges at school due to variations in Sign Language. Deaf learners are taught English and signed English at the same time. Teachers are at liberty to use any form of communication (Mpuang, 2009). This results in much confusion, which seriously affects the academic performance of Deaf learners. Furthermore, a study by Mpuang et al. (2009) on Sign Language as medium of instruction in Botswana primary schools, revealed that communication systems vary from region to region and from school to school in Botswana. It recommended that more teachers need to undergo special education training in Sign Language. Likewise in Zimbabwe, teachers need capacity development that should be funded and organized by the Ministry, such that they will be fluent in Sign Language. If the teacher as manager of the classroom is not competent in signing, it remains a daunting task to teach Deaf learners.

In the same vein, Ntinda and Tfungi (2019) also found that teachers of the Deaf and Hard-of Hearing learners in the Eswatini Special Needs High School for the Deaf did not have adequate Deaf education training. Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) and Carpenter and Fewell (2014) assert that there are knowledge, skills and experiences that teachers of the Deaf need for policy implementation to be relevantly effective. The scholars further note that teachers of Deaf learners lack adequate Deaf language. Similarly, Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) and Khumalo (2014) assert that teachers' lack of competencies in Deaf Education was a major challenge to the implementation of the LiEP due to lack of training. Ntinda and Tfungi (2019) postulate that teachers who did not receive the required training in the Deaf language in Eswatini struggled to equip the students with the necessary learning skills. Likewise, teachers who did not receive training in Sign Language in Zimbabwe struggled to use Zimbabwean Sign Language as a medium of instruction in teaching the Deaf learners. As a result of lack of proficiency in ZSL, specialist teachers of the Deaf believed that the use of oral languages was the best in teaching the Deaf learners. This choice appears to be informed by total communication's embracing of oral language. The teachers approach their teaching responsibilities through oralism, an approach that stems from a negative view of deafness and the Deaf. People who hold this school of thought have always seen the Deaf as a people who have a deficit in that they cannot talk. Thus, the oralist approach insists on teaching them how to talk. The study revealed that specialist teachers for Deaf learners want to teach the Deaf learners how to talk

so that they would use speech like their hearing counterparts. The educators' argument strengthens the view that the oral language which has a written form is believed to be superior to Sign Language. Such a belief constitutes a big challenge in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks as some educators hold the view that they are being asked to implement an inferior language for teaching and learning. In addition, teachers' belief that sign language is not the language for hearing teachers which is why they were not proficient in it, suggests a negative attitude towards languages other than one's own oral language. Total communication was, therefore, preferred by the teachers so that at least they also had the chance of using an oral language. Paradoxically, total communication in this case meant using Sign Language together with an oral foreign language, that is English, with the latter considered as being easier but not foreign.

The overriding belief was that Deaf learners had to acquire knowledge through auditory means rather than visually. This downplaying of the visual channel for communication extends to the downplaying of the status of Deaf people's visual-gestural language, which is Sign Language. Since some of the teachers had a strong belief that speech would help the Deaf learners to fit into the society, this shows that those teachers preferred oral language in teaching Deaf learners. Teachers who believed in total communication also believed that oralism would uplift the academic achievement of the Deaf learners.

From the non-participant observation, it was noted that teachers used total communication, that is talking and signing, but often they would not sign some of the words. The challenge was that Deaf learners would not understand most of the content since the teachers could not sign all the words. This suggests that the teachers proceeded with the oral language in the belief that it was a superior language which learners would somehow grasp, despite not hearing it. Learners ended up getting confused. Some policy implementers argued that they used total communication for the benefit of those who could lip-read, especially those with residual hearing. This implies a belief that successful speech-reading is associated with an element of hearing some sounds rather than visualizing them. The challenge was that those Deaf learners without residual hearing would not benefit from the lip reading.



Findings of the current study revealed that specialist teachers of the Deaf who believed that speech would help the Deaf learners to fit into society would always use orals in teaching the Deaf learners. Teachers who believed in total communication also believed that oralism would uplift the academic achievement of Deaf learners. Van Staden et al. (2009) note that pre-linguistic Deaf learners who grow up in a linguistic world of spoken language are confronted with the extremely difficult challenge of understanding that the mysterious lip movements of other people represent a language and they are expected to assign meaning to this spoken language and to learn to speak it. In contrast to their hearing peers, the acquisition of spoken language offers a few language outcomes for the Deaf learners. Hiskey (2010) also argues that Deaf learners' brains cannot penetrate spoken language. As a result, Sign Language is the only language they can use to cater for their needs. Similarly, Van Staden et al. (2009) assert that Deaf learners find the acquisition of spoken language very difficult and that their receptive as well as the expressive language skills are directly impaired by the acquisition of spoken language. Mweri (2014) asserts that teachers in special schools for the Deaf are required to impart knowledge through the use of Sign Language and not necessarily a mixture of communicative skills. This has a positive impact on the learning process of Deaf learners. School Heads in Zimbabwean special schools pointed out that although teachers were willing to follow Section 62:5 of the Education Amended Act (2006) which states that sign language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf, the problem was that they were not proficient in Sign Language and most of them were not trained in Sign Language; hence, they were not able to teach learners using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Mandyata (2018) observes that inadequacies in the preparation of teachers at the college level, worsened the situation, as most teachers graduated with little or no knowledge of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in the learning of Deaf learners. According to Mindness (2014), lack of experts in Sign Language is a contributing element to the failure to teach through the use of Sign Language alone. Mindness (2014) further notes that the problem in the use of Sign Language as the only medium of instruction in teaching Deaf learners emanated from the teacher training institutions which did not prepare teachers for such, but to teach through the use of total communication.

The Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c states that teachers should ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction in early childhood education.

The Amendment Act does not state who is to teach the language, it does not specify how the implementers will be trained, neither does it specify the qualifications required to implement the policy. In the current study, teachers bemoaned the lack of capacity development in Sign Language to enable them to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction. In support of these findings, Forlin, Kahwai and Higuchi (2015) found that teachers were not adequately trained to be practitioners who can equip Deaf learners with Sign Language skills. Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) and Khumalo (2014) argue that teachers' lack of competencies in Deaf Education was a major deterrent in effective implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks, due to lack of training. This is because teachers who did not receive the required training in Deaf language in Eswatini struggled to equip students with deafness and those hard-of-hearing with the necessary learning skills. The results from the non-participant observation in Zimbabwean special schools showed the need for capacity development, since most teachers were not competent in Sign language. Mpila (2013) indicates that teachers lacked training in Special Needs Education and appropriate innovations in the teaching and learning of the Deaf learners. Recent studies have shown that administrative support and professional development opportunities for specialist teachers influence whether or not teachers feel supported to implement the policy (Bakir, Devers & Hugs, 2016). An administrative official who has a negative attitude towards the implementation may cloud the perspectives of teachers and may hinder the onset of the implementation. Over the years, many studies have determined the contributions to success and failure for curriculum implementation and have found that the administrative officers' attitudes and perspectives influence the teachers' efforts to implement stipulated education policies (Derring & Campbell, 2015). Derring and Campbell (2015) argue that an administrator who presents a negative attitude towards the implementation of policy may cloud the perspectives of the teachers and may hinder the onset of implementation, in this case the onset of the use of ZSL as a medium of instruction for the Deaf.

The findings of this study show that teachers believed in the use of Sign Language interpreters or Deaf community in the teaching of Deaf learners. They believed that the Sign Language interpreters would help in the teaching of new words and the correct ZSL. They also believed that Deaf learners would understand better when they are taught by other Deaf people since it is their own language. The challenge is that in Zimbabwe there are very few people who are qualified

interpreters because of lack of training. Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013) note that the problems of lack of use of proper Sign Language in schools could also be attributed to the fact that the government was unwilling to involve some qualified Deaf people in the teaching of Sign Language. The authors expressed that well-qualified Deaf people who can teach students Sign Language at colleges and the universities are not employed by the government. In Zimbabwe in 2000, interpreters' training was provided as part of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Sign language Interpreting Project offered by the Finnish Association of the Deaf (Kortosallo, 2015, WFD 2008) However, since then there have not been trained interpreters, only volunteers only. Sometimes Deaf teachers and Deaf students have to act as interpreters between their peers and their teachers. According to Barbra Nyangairi from Deaf Zimbabwe Trust, there still is no training programme for interpreters, but Zimbabwe is in the process to start one.

Despite the views which were given by the teachers that learners use total communication, this was different from what the researcher observed during lesson observations. All the Deaf learners used Sign Language in their communication; no one used speech. This conflict of which language to use for Deaf learners, might lead to a communication breakdown between the teachers and the learners. This shows the importance of the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners. Most teachers preferred that Deaf learners use speech because most of the teachers preferred to use total communication. The main reason for that might be the inefficiency of the teachers in Sign Language because of lack of appropriate training. The unavailability of such training for the teachers was one of the challenges observed. Most of the teachers were not trained purposely to teach Deaf learners in the Sign Language they used mostly in their group activities.

### **5.3.5 Ambiguity of Mother Tongue Status of Sign Language in the Curriculum**

Ambiguity of ZSL in the curriculum for teachers, School Heads and district officers led to non-implementation of the policies that supported the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction as well as a taught subject. Policy implementers were confused about the role of ZSL in the curriculum, despite the fact that Zimbabwe has a lot of policies which clarify the role of ZSL in the curriculum and universal declarations which clarify the role of Sign Language in the curriculum. In 2001, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, through schools psychologists' services and the Director's Circular No. 2, directed that Sign Language be taught

in primary schools in Zimbabwe. The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 6:3a, states that the state shall ensure that all languages are treated equitably and Section 6:4 states that the state must promote and advance the use of all languages in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language, and must create conditions for the development of those languages. The Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c states that the state shall ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction in early childhood education. The National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.9.10 states that the state should ensure the learning of the Zimbabwean Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community, which is in line with Article 24:3(b) of CRPD (2006), which promotes the right to learn Sign Language. Despite all these provisions, Sign Language is neither a curriculum subject nor is it formally taught in Zimbabwean schools, including in schools for the Deaf, yet Deaf learners are expected to learn the same material and perform the same activities as their hearing counterparts (Matende et al., 2021). The challenge was that the uncertain role of sign language in a mother tongue-based multilingual curriculum led to non-implementation of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks (Musengi, 2022). Ambiguity emanated from unclear policy goals, accompanied by some conflict on the means of achieving Sign Language goals and the Deaf learners' need for the language. Some teachers, school administrators and district officers acknowledged that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction but not as an academic subject as required by the Circular Number 2 of 2001. Due to the value given to public examinations, the teachers tended to concentrate on subjects that promote academic excellence in examinations.

Results of the study revealed that assessment in the form of examinations tremendously influences curriculum implementation. The challenge was that this scenario affected the role of ZSL as an academic subject since it was not examinable, despite the fact that the Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1b, also states that the State shall ensure that the language of instruction shall be the language of examination. The main challenge of Sign Language not being an academic subject was that learners did not have the same signs and they did not learn standardized Sign Language. The teaching of Zimbabwean Sign Language has been branded as a waste of time by one of the district officers since it is not examinable. Some specialist teachers argued that ZSL was not a taught subject because it was just a means of communication, not a

subject. However, to the specialist teachers who knew the importance of Sign Language to Deaf learners, it was quite a challenge to convince other teachers and the district officers that ZSL was a tool through which Deaf learners learn. It was found, from the study, that Zimbabwean Sign Language has not been made an examinable subject, because there are no specialist teachers who could teach that subject. Other indigenous languages are examinable subjects because there are books written in their language, and they have syllabuses to guide teachers on how to teach the subjects, so the subjects can easily be examinable. This means that for Sign Language to be made an examinable subject, it should have specialist teachers who are trained for it, it should have books adapted to meet the needs of Deaf learners and it should have syllabuses that guide teachers on how to teach the subject, as well as Zimbabwean Sign Language curriculum. Mulonda (2013) argues that Sign Language has no widely-written form. Results of the study revealed that teachers were facing a challenge of being uncertain on the role they should give ZSL in the curriculum. As a result of the uncertainty, specialist teachers of the Deaf were confused on whether ZSL was to be used as a medium of instruction or be taught as an academic subject.

As a result of the uncertainty, the researcher observed that ZSL was neither used as a medium of instruction nor treated as an academic subject. Policy implementers thought that the policy of mother-tongue instruction was just factored in because of Deaf pressure groups. Likewise, in Zambia, according to Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013), ZASL was not a taught subject because there were no materials for Sign Language and there was no policy on the teaching of sign language to guide teachers. With respect to the spoken languages in Zimbabwe, just like in Zambia, the government and the MoPSE have invested a lot in the production of teaching materials in other indigenous languages. This is not the case with Sign Language, as some teachers revealed that teaching materials for sign language were not available. Although ZASL is not a taught subject the majority of the specialist teachers for the Deaf were of the opinion that ZASL should be taught as a subject, just like any other Zambian languages.

For teachers, School Heads and district officers to be fully equipped to implement the 2006 Amended Education Policy in Zimbabwean special schools, they should be aware of the status of Sign Language in the curriculum. The uncertain role of Sign Language in the curriculum could lead to the non-implementation of the policy. Some teachers, School Heads and District officers

noted that Sign Language should be used as a medium of instruction but not as an academic subject as required by the circulars that had been sent to schools, including a policy directive from the Secretary for Education. Curriculum policy in primary and secondary schools put in place 2002 mandates that Sign Language be taught in all primary schools. Thus, the issue in Zimbabwe is a mismatch between policy and implementation.

According to Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (2013), even though these government guidelines were issued, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education did not develop the capacity of teachers and schools to follow them. Even though the Zimbabwe Constitution Amendment (No. 20) Act, of 2013, Chapter 1, Section 6, Sub-section 1, recognises Zimbabwean Sign Language as one of the sixteen official languages of the country, it is not being equated to other languages. Meanwhile, the language policy in Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Amended Act (2006), Section 62 states that, before the 4th Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best, and section 62:5 states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing. The Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a, also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially-recognized language and Section 62:1c states that the mother tongue should be used as medium of instruction at early childhood level. ZSL is one of the 16 officially-recognised languages in Zimbabwe and, as a result, it should also be taught, like any other Zimbabwe languages and should also be used as a medium of instruction. Despite all these legal and policy instruments, the policy implementers still view Zimbabwean Sign Language as being inferior to other languages. Therefore, the policies are just there on paper and no follow-ups are being made, either by the district officers or the Ministry.

The researcher made lesson observations to ascertain the role of ZSL in the curriculum. The researcher found that teachers preferred total communication in the teaching and learning process, except for one teacher who had a Bachelor of Education degree in Sign Language and who used Sign Language in all the activities. The researcher also observed that learners used Sign Language in all their activities. Deaf learners of hearing parents would learn the correct signs from the Deaf learners of Deaf parents. The researcher also noted that for the language used for classroom administration, teachers mostly used spoken language and partially Sign Language. Although ZSL

is adopted in special schools for the Deaf, it is not used as a medium of instruction, nor is it a taught subject. Deaf learners are either taught English or signed English. In the same vein, Musengi (2019) notes that Zimbabwean Sign Language is not taught as a subject in all the three special schools for the Deaf, despite the curriculum policy for primary and secondary schools that lists sign language as one of the languages that can be taught in schools.

### **5.3.6 Sign Language Agents and Other Resources**

The term ‘resources’, according to Ikwen, Unimke and James (2018), refers not only to teaching methods and materials, but also the time available for instruction, and the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience. Specialist teachers were facing the challenge of lack of adequate materials. Results of the study revealed that without adequate support, policy implementation becomes a challenge. Lack of resources is manifested in the absence of necessary instructional materials that can be used to teach sign language, as there are many things that are difficult to explain and sign to young learners who may not be having adequate knowledge of such things without the use of instructional materials (Chibuikwe, 2020). Findings in many studies have indicated that the teaching and learning materials used in the teaching of Sign Language in special schools for the Deaf are either not available or not adequate. Furthermore, the inadequacy of these resources made it difficult for head teachers and teachers to perform their functions adequately (Mwari, 2016, Banda, & Mpuang, 2009, Mandyata, 2018, 2012, Chibuikwe, 2020).

The current study found that teachers and School Heads faced the challenge of resource unavailability across all four special schools. Most of the laptops which were used in teaching Deaf learners belonged to the teachers. The challenge was that all the Deaf learners in the classes would rely only on one computer, which belonged to the teacher, for their learning. Although there were computer laboratories in some of the special schools for the Deaf the challenge was that infant learners did not have access to the laboratory, as it was only meant for the junior classes, according to the policy implementers. The results of the current study revealed that there was need for the government and the Ministry to provide adequate learning resources to the learners to enable effective implementation of the policy. The findings are in line with Mandyata’s (2018) study, which recommended that there was a strong need to provide relevant teaching and learning resources to support the learning of the hearing impaired.

Since Deaf learners learn through seeing, attention needs to be paid to the supply of teaching and learning materials for the effective use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction (Chibuike, 2020). Lack of instructional resources has a negative impact on the learning of Deaf learners as there are many things that are difficult to explain and sign to young learners who may not be having adequate knowledge of such things without the use of instructional materials (Chibuike, 2020, Yasin et al., 2017).

According to Chibuike (2020), visual methods of teaching and learning create a more lasting experience and relate most readily to other sensory experiences. Furthermore, instructional materials accomplish 83% of what is learnt through sight, activating students in the learning process. They make the learning very interesting. This implies that Deaf learners need a lot of visual materials for them to learn. Although CD-ROMs and other visual materials containing Sign Language were given to the teachers, they were not adequate for the teachers and the learners. These Sign Language resources were also not easily accessed by all learners. Some of the special schools were still in the process of installing projectors. Some specialist teachers of the Deaf stated that televisions were found in hostels but for entertainment and, therefore, could not be used for teaching. The special schools for the Deaf cannot afford to buy all the materials, which implies that the Ministry should help with financial resources to enable the schools to buy the visual materials (Chibuike, 2020). Without financial help from the Ministry, the schools were not managing to provide the necessary material and equipment for Deaf learners. Lack of resources poses a serious challenge, in that often schools are not capable of supplying their Deaf or Hard-of-hearing students with the proper technology that could significantly increase the learning development process. This could be any form of assistive technology – interactive whiteboards, VRI, chat rooms, strobe lights, digital pen technology, closed captioning on all movies and videos, infra-red systems, hearing aid compatibles, computer assisted note-taking, ASL videos for testing materials, alert systems such as vibrating systems, alarms and interpreters in the classroom (Chibuike, 2020).

In Zimbabwean special schools, all the resources are being sourced by the schools and the NGOS. There is no government's input in sourcing the required resources. Most of the special schools did



not have adequate resources because they were too financially handicapped to provide for all the required resources in the schools. Lack of pictorial Sign Language textbooks prepared or adapted considering Deaf learners' language requirements was one of the major challenges in the data collected. Teachers and officials at the regional levels pointed out that there were problems in this regard.

Ngulube (2016) expresses concern about the inadequate supply of specialised learning materials and equipment for Deaf learners. He further states that with current inadequate Government grants, schools could not fully manage to provide the necessary material and equipment for Deaf learners. Michaleowa (2011) quotes this Chinese saying, "If I hear I forget, if I see I remember, if I do I know", to demonstrate the importance of resources for Deaf learners. The Chinese saying puts emphasis on the importance of visual materials in information retention. Michaleowa (2011) postulates that by seeing over and over again, the brain may be able to recall what has been learnt. Furthermore, the concepts become more visible and self-explanatory from the diagrams and visual materials reduce the language demands, especially for Deaf learners and they are able to easily recall what has been learnt from such visual aids.

The study revealed that little support was being given by the Sign Language policy agents such as Deaf community pressure groups, the Ministry, district schools inspectors and schools psychologists, in terms of providing qualified personnel to help in the implementation of the policy. Similarly, in South Africa according to Parkin (2010) the Department of Education was seriously lacking in its support, inspection, and control of teachers of the Deaf in different aspects, such as curriculum implementation, teaching methodology, and qualification requirements. Most teachers went to the classrooms for Deaf learners with little or no experience with deafness. Furthermore, the burden of this situation is two-fold on teaching and learning. Firstly, teachers are faced with learners they cannot communicate with, or whose communication is rudimentary, at best, and secondly, teachers lack the qualifications. All these barriers were caused by lack of support from the responsible authority. Policy implementation can be successfully achieved if the Sign Language agents provide the appropriate support. The success of the policy implementation will be determined largely by the availability of qualified personnel, the level of resources available and the efficiency of the program developed to implement the policy. Shortage of special

education teachers in the school system may also pose a challenge to teaching of sign language. This is due to the fact that it is the special education teachers who are expected to teach and train the children and when they are not available, it becomes a bigger challenge in the learning process (Chibuike, 2020). This shortage can further lead to excess workload for the few available special education teachers, which will make it difficult for the teachers to give adequate attention to every child with hearing impairment. According to Phillips (1992), a major limitation of the use of African languages was that there were few reading materials available in their language. Shortages of relevant materials could critically undermine implementation, in this case shortages of sign language dictionaries. Thus, it is prudent to ask whether the resources necessary for the implementation of the Zimbabwean 2006 mother tongue education policy are available.

It emerged, from the study, that teachers faced the challenge of the existence of different forms of Sign Language, depending on the child's background or home region. Use of different forms of Sign Language by teachers and learners led to communication breakdown between the teachers and the learners as was revealed by one of the specialist teachers. The lack of common Zimbabwean Sign Language dictionaries also led to variations in Sign Language. A study by Chibwe (2015), on contribution of Sign Language variations to academic performance of learners with hearing impairments in selected Copperbelt and Lusaka special primary schools in Zambia, found that the performance of Deaf learners was affected negatively by the teachers' signs which were not the same with the signs used by the learners. The study revealed that most of these learners face a lot of challenges at school due to variations in Sign Language used. Furthermore, it indicated that most important factors that led to variations in schools were environment culture, teachers' competencies and the type of training institutions the teachers attended. It emerged, from the current study, that some of the schools were using the Deaf community to help the learners to learn the same Sign Language. Similarly, in Zambia, according to Chibwe (2015), the teachers collaborated with parents and caregivers to improve Sign Language development. Chibwe (2015) recommends that Sign Language dictionaries should be revised and used intensively and that teachers need to undergo special education training in Sign Language.

Honna and Kato (2003) found that in Japan, a lot was being done for Deaf learners, like using Japanese Sign Language and written Japanese to teach Deaf children as well as develop teaching

theories, methods and curricula for Deaf education. Often, the Deaf child is attempting to learn both basic inter-personal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979) when they arrive at school, resulting from incomplete access to a visual language for social interactions at home and with peers during the traditional period for language acquisition. Hence, first and second language acquisition, as well as education in general, are extremely inconsistent between hearing and Deaf individuals because hearing children in the United States tend to arrive at school with fully developed social language or BICS and then use this base as a scaffold into academic language or CALP.

Specialist teachers of the Deaf professed that they faced challenges with Deaf learners from hearing parents, for they come to school without the basics of the first language. Often, the Deaf child will be attempting to learn the first language as well as the second language. If the first language has not been developed well enough, such a child is likely to have challenges in forming new concepts in the second language in this case English for Deaf learners. In the classroom situation, such educators fail to effectively explain concepts to Deaf learners and to ensure that they have an understanding of the course material, due to a communication breakdown. Garton and Graves (2014) argue that teachers should adapt the curriculum according to who their students are, the resources they have, and the culture of their classrooms. In this scenario, there is a need to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of Deaf learners. However, most teachers are not taught how to adapt materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, Graves et al., 2019). It is very difficult for some Deaf learners to start learning Sign Language while being under tremendous pressure to cope with mastering the rest of the curriculum (Ngobenie et al., 2020). Similarly, Free et al. (2011), in comparing Deaf children of Deaf parents and Deaf children of hearing parents, found that Deaf children of Deaf parents generally outperform Deaf children of hearing parents in future linguistic and academic success. Specialist teachers of the Deaf face the challenges of teaching literacy skills as well as language skills. The use of Sign Language would enhance the Deaf learners' ability to generate and disseminate knowledge (Musengi, 2022).

#### **5.4 Teachers' Level of Preparation Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners**

The present sub-section is a discussion of the teachers' level of preparation/ skills for teaching Deaf learners as revealed by the findings of the current study. In this discussion, reference is made to literature related to in-service and pre-service teacher.

#### **5.4.1 Sign Language Proficiencies**

It emerged, from the current study, that teachers were to a large extent ill-equipped to implement the ZSL policies. Nelson (2015) asserts that the school, educational settings, in-service, training, administrative support and availability of support services contribute significantly to the competencies that teachers need in the teaching and learning of Deaf learners. It also emerged, from the current study, that teachers needed certain competencies especially related to Sign Language, to enable the effective implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Teachers were therefore not adequately qualified and competent to be proficient in Sign Language. The competencies that teachers lacked included signing ability, language teaching strategies and curriculum management skills. Likewise, Mulonda's (2013) study revealed that the major challenges which teachers and pupils faced were lack of knowledge of Sign Language, limited vocabulary of Sign Language, and limited learning and teaching materials in sign language. Nelson (2015) observes that in-service training courses should be taken into account. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to access diverse expertise in the Deaf world and their language, and training should focus on hands-on experience to enable teachers to acquire the competencies needed in teaching Deaf learners. Another study by Nkolola-Wakumelo and Manyando (2013) revealed that teachers try to overcome these challenges by learning from the learners, consulting the more experienced teachers of the Deaf, and creating new signs for words which are new to both the teachers and the pupils.

#### **5.4.2 Language Teaching Skills**

The current study found that teachers were not capacitated by the government in order to upgrade their sign language skills so that they would be in a position to implement the policy. Foley (2008) contends that in addition to the training of teachers, it would also be necessary to upgrade the competence levels of those teachers who are already in practice, in this case specialist teachers of Deaf learners. It was revealed, from the study, that policy implementers needed competencies in teaching certain subjects since they were using textbooks which were not adapted for Deaf learners. Therefore, they needed workshops on how to modify the content to fit the level of the Deaf learners. On the training offered to teachers in Sign language, Mulondo (2013) notes that the majority of the teachers in his study felt that they did not receive adequate training in Sign

Language. As a result, they did not have the Sign Language skills. Results of the study revealed that specialist teachers of the Deaf were not prepared to teach the Deaf language skills because they had very limited sign language skills. The results also demonstrated that Zimbabwean specialist teachers for the Deaf had very limited language skills and this presented a problem for teachers for they had to teach Deaf learners language skill.

One of the challenges that teachers were facing was that they were not prepared to teach Deaf learners language skills because they were not confident in using the language of instruction, in this case ZSL, because of lack of adequate training. Sign Language proficiency among teachers of the Deaf forms the basis for effective learning by Deaf children (Sibanda 2015). Akoth (2021) argues that Sign Language, therefore, plays a pivotal role that affects all activities in the classroom for Deaf learners. Without Sign Language, Deaf learners will face challenges in the classroom situation because of the communication barrier.

In this study, most of the specialist teachers for Deaf learners professed that they were not confident in using Sign Language, as it was not their language. It was revealed, from the study, that as a result of a lack of Sign Language skills, specialist teachers of the Deaf were not confident in using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. According to Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012) Sign Language proficiency means knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful signs which are appropriate to the linguistic context. Specialist teachers for the Deaf can be knowledgeable about meaningful signs in ZSL through capacity development. As a result of lack of knowledge of these meaningful signs, specialist teachers for the Deaf preferred using spoken language to signing in teaching the Deaf learners. However, the researcher observed that a teacher who had a degree in Sign Language used Sign Language in all the classroom activities. In concurrence with the research study's findings, Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) assert that there has been evidence to suggest that teachers who attend teacher training programmes in Sign Language and become qualified teachers are more successful in using Sign Language than their counterparts who did not attend teacher training programs in Sign Language. The goal of teacher training programmes in sign languages is to provide pre-service teachers with the professional knowledge, knowledge, skills and disposition needed to assist Deaf students (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013). Andrews and Covell (2007) and Wakumelo (2009) also observe that Sign Language gives Deaf students normal

academic development as teachers who are assigned to teach Deaf students need not only to be trained in Special Needs Education but also in Sign Language, to enable them to teach Deaf students using Sign Language as a medium of instruction. The findings of the study reflected that instead of being capacitated by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction, they were getting the experience from other Deaf teachers or Deaf learners. Mpunga (2009) notes that the majority of teachers of the Deaf often lack the skills necessary to teach Deaf learners.

Chifinda and Mandyata (2017) postulate that there is an acute problem of lack of enough knowledge in Sign Language among teachers and pupils solely depend on it as a medium of classroom instruction. Likewise, Khumalo (2014) notes that teachers' lack of competencies in using Sign Language as a medium of instruction is a major deterrent in the effective implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks due to lack of training negative attitude towards Sign Language.

#### **5.4.3 Attitudes towards Sign Language**

The attitude of policy implementers towards Sign Language was seen in how the policy implementers doubted the authenticity of Sign Language as a language on its right. Policy implementers asked this question: Are sign languages real languages? Sign language was placed low in the hierarchy of languages and they also felt that Sign Language had no value for Deaf learners, as they lived in the hearing world. Policy implementers did not value Sign Language as they valued other indigenous languages such as Shona, Ndebele and Venda. They felt that Sign Language was inferior to other languages. They felt that Sign Language was inferior to spoken languages, for they felt that a Deaf learner could not function in the hearing community without spoken languages. Policy implementers were still in the audistic model, where they still felt that manual languages are inferior to spoken languages. Musengi (2019) notes that belief in the supremacy of spoken language over manual language results in discrimination which is referred to as audism. Kiyaya and Moores (2009) indicate that teachers of Deaf learners in Sub-Saharan Africa could not sign and did not view Sign Language as a complete language. Akoth (2021) asserts that teachers are instrumental to the successful implementation of Sign Language in schools for the Deaf. Akoth (2021) also note that teachers' abilities and attitudes can be major limitations

to learners' academic performance. Musengi (2019) asserts that Deaf people can use Sign Language for communication and, therefore, have a right to this language in education. "Let the Deaf be Deaf", declared Mnoz and Ruiz (2000) to underscore the fact that Deaf learners should be taught using appropriate Sign Language and resources. This implies that the Deaf should also be given the right to their language. Some of the district school inspectors confirmed that advocacy was being done to convince parents and implementing officers to understand that Sign Language is a language like any other language and should be taught like other indigenous languages.

The fact that specialist teachers of the Deaf did not have relevant qualifications related to Sign Language revealed the Government's attitude towards Sign Language. The teachers' reactions concerning their qualifications portray the Ministry's attitude towards the language-in-education policy. Sign language is a priority medium of instruction for the Deaf according to Section 62:5 of Zimbabwe's Constitution, which states that Sign Language is the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf. However, the main concern is that those who are supposed to implement the policy are not even proficient in the language they are supposed to use. The policy implementers were using Sign Language dictionaries which are outdated and they did not have the syllabuses to guide them on how to teach the subjects. Sign Language was yet to have books adapted to meet the needs of Deaf learners, even though the Government has the policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Deaf learners were using the same textbooks that were being used by the hearing learners. The books did not have visual materials. This attribute reflected the attitude of the Ministry towards Sign Language. The Ministry had prepared books in different indigenous languages such as Shona or Ndebele, but was yet to prepare books in Sign Language. This lack of commitment by the Ministry reflected its attitude towards Sign Language.

#### **5.4.4 In-service Training**

The Sign Language-based challenges given by the teachers are further indicative of the lack of training in Sign Language offered to teachers. Similarly, the claim that Sign Language is shallow is indicative of how teachers who are trained to teach the Deaf are unfamiliar with the capabilities of their learners in language and shows the common misconception about sign languages. It also shows how inadequately trained or incompetent they are in the language they are supposed to use as a medium of instruction. However, as Parkin (2010) notes, learning to educate and communicate

with Deaf learners are not skills that can be imparted through 2-day or 1-week workshops. Parkin (2010) also notes that in this field, methodology and communication take years to learn and master. According to Parkin (2010), the lack of training available to teachers compromises the quality of teaching that Deaf learners receive, firstly because many teachers are unable, or have limited ability, to communicate with their learners, and secondly because they lack an understanding and appreciation of Deaf education and Deaf Culture and community, they are not empowered to connect with their learners and provide them with meaningful teaching. School Heads noted that teachers were always in need of in-service training because of challenges such as lack of fluency in the language and workshops on how to implement the policy. Mulonda (2013) reveals that the majority of the specialist teachers did not receive adequate training in Sign Language.

According to Mugarura, Ssempala and Nachuha (2022), in-service training is very important in the life of a teacher and general performance of the learners. Furthermore, learners' achievement is linked to numerous factors, but quality teachers are one of the most important components of student success. After the initial phase of teacher training, most of the teachers underwent a lot of professional development by obtaining diplomas in Special Needs Education and Bachelor's degree in Special Needs Education. Although specialist teachers had those high qualifications in Special Needs Education, the results of the study still revealed that policy implementation still required the highest levels of competencies in sign language. Currently, there are few teachers who have undergone formal training in dealing with Deaf learners. Teachers could be competent in Sign Language through capacity development or workshops from the Ministry. This professional development enables teachers to improve their own education through seminars, workshops, and classes among others. On the contrary, the district officers felt that teachers would only attend workshops if there was a need. Some of the district officers argued that specialist teachers of the Deaf were knowledgeable about Sign Language or how the policy was being implemented. If teachers said that they were not fluent in Sign Language while the district officers said that there was no need for workshops, then it remains unlikely that the policy would be implemented.

#### **5.4.5 Support from School and External Agents**

Some School Heads argued that the government was not taking any appropriate measures to help the schools. They further argued that the government could not help the special schools for the



Deaf because they have never visited the special schools for the Deaf to identify the needs of the schools. Some of the policy implementers confirmed that the workshops were funded by the donor community, like Leonard Cheshire, UNICEF, UNESCO and other donors. Mpuang, Mukhopadhyay and Malatsi (2015) note that most of the special schools are run by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). These NGOs offered different training programmes. This implies that if the donors were not there, then no workshops would be held and the available resources would decrease over time, which would be a big challenge to the School Heads, teachers and learners, since Deaf learners could not learn effectively without this resource.

### **5.5 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

This sub-section is a discussion of the strategies that can be used to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean special schools, as revealed by the findings of the current study. In this discussion, reference is made to literature related to policy implementation, Sign Language and strategies for enhancing policy implementation in education. Implementation strategies can be defined as methods or techniques used to enhance the adoption and implementation and sustainability of a policy (Proctor, Powell & McMillen, 2013). Most often a number of strategies are combined to form a multi-faceted strategy involving aspects such as training, consultation, audit and feedback. Strategies can also be called intervention measures (Proctor et al., 2013). Thus, an implementation strategy is the operational plan that guides a process to make policy happen in effect. Fischer (2015) confirms that a clear separation of policy formation from policy implementation model lists six criteria factors for effective policy implementation. Policy strategies can only be effective if the following attributes exist in the policy: policy objectives are clear and consistent, the program is based on a valid causal theory, implementing officials are committed to the program's goals and interest groups, and (executive and legislative) sovereigns are supportive. Strategies are a series of activities undertaken by the government and other key stakeholders to achieve the goals and objectives articulated in policy statements.

The study found a large number of strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean special schools. These strategies include improving the qualifications

of teachers, ensuring resource availability, collaboration with Deaf communities, and improving the frequency and quality of continuous professional development.

### **5.5.1 Ensuring Qualifications of Teachers Are Relevant to Sign Language**

The study found that the use of qualified personnel is one of the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. It was revealed that, although the majority of the policy implementers had a Bachelor's degree qualification in Special Needs Education, their qualification did not have a component of Sign Language. Similarly, in Zambia, the two major institutions that train teachers of the Deaf, the Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE) and the University of Zambia's (UNZA) Department of Psychology, Sociology and Special Education (EPPSE), only provided Sign Language as a component of special education, implying a medical view of Deafness. The kind of training offered, therefore, is general since there is no specialisation in Sign Language. Graduates from these training institutions join the teaching service with very limited skills in Sign Language and general interaction with Deaf children. They lack both the linguistic and communicative competence in Sign Language required to effectively teach the Deaf. Akoth (2021) notes that in Ghana, problems that lead to poor quality education persist because of the shortage of both qualified and properly trained teachers in UgSL. Akoth (2021) further argues that, if a teacher is not competent in UgSL, then he/she will have a barrier in delivering content to Deaf learners which later affects UgSL development.

In Zimbabwe, some of the specialist teachers of the Deaf had certificates in Sign Language, whilst only 1 specialist teacher had a degree. Some of the School Heads felt that Zimbabwean universities were also only teaching the theoretical aspect, but not the practical aspect. Graduates in the country, just like those in Zambia, join the teaching service with no skills in Sign Language that can enable them to teach Deaf learners. This is contrary to the requirements of the UNCRPD (2006), Section 24:3b, which states that teachers of Deaf students should be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe also has policy document guidelines for the staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that state that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs, including those with Deaf learners, with appropriately qualified teachers. Despite all the policies put in place, the government was still deploying teachers who were not

qualified. If the policy was to be effectively implemented, then the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should have ensured that the teachers had appropriate qualifications to teach Deaf learners. Results of the study revealed that some of the teachers were taught sign language by the Deaf learners.

In Zimbabwe, a teacher could be called a specialist teacher of the Deaf, not because the teacher had relevant qualifications in sign language, but because the teacher was a holder of a degree or diploma in Special Needs Education. In Zimbabwean universities, most of the degree programs did not have the component of Sign Language, which is why most of the teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, although they had degree qualifications in Special Needs Education. Schools for the Deaf are places where Sign Language can be acquired. Likewise, studies done in Zambia revealed that UNZA only teaches Sign Language as a small component of SNE, without specialisation in Sign Language. As a result, teachers trained in SNE are neither competent nor fluent in sign language.

### **5.5.2 Improving Resources at the School Level**

Ensuring the availability of adequate resources is one of the strategies that could be used to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Mapepa and Magano (2018) assert that there is great importance in provision of support services for successful tackling of the barriers to learning for Deaf learners. Mapepa and Magano (2018) also argue that support services needed to address barriers to learning for Deaf learners include provision of appropriate teaching materials. Visual materials appropriate for Deaf learners include pictures, diagrams, and illustrations, which can be used to enhance their understanding during teaching and learning processes. They also include slides and DVDs (Mapepa & Magano, 2018). In the current study, findings showed that appropriate resources were not adequate since the schools were not being financially supported by the Ministry. According to the specialist teachers of the Deaf, Deaf learners need visual materials in everything they learn. School Heads and district officers also confirmed that the lack of educational material resources was a hindrance to the effective implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act. The inadequacy of the visual resources impacted negatively on the academic performance of the Deaf learners. Videotapes, CDROMs and other visual materials containing Sign Language examples normally provide an alternate form of training materials, as

the dynamic nature of a visual language is best shown using images. The Ministry should visit the schools and see how these children are learning and ask the service providers what they think should be done. The MoPSE would be aware of the needs of the special schools if it had taken time to visit the special schools for the Deaf, to identify their needs. The policy implementers felt that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should make follow-ups to see how the Deaf learners were learning and assess the resources that were needed to teach them. Gillen and Papers (2021) note that Deaf learners have the same potential as other children for language development, but their communication needs have often gone unmet, simply because a full accessibility to sign language is not present in their environment and that the language that is in their environment (that is, auditory-based) is not fully accessible.

Lack of commitment on the part of the government to ensure the availability of resources had a negative impact on the learning of the Deaf learners. The schools had to shoulder all the responsibilities of sourcing donor funds and support. Donors provided resources as well as financed workshops to capacitate teachers in Sign Language. It was evident, from the study, that the Ministry was not funding this policy. Results of the study revealed that most of the support, in terms of workshops and resource materials, was coming from the schools and Non-Governmental Organisations. The government and the MoPSE were yet to visit the schools so as to identify the needs of the special schools for the Deaf and provide support for effective implementation of the policy.

It is, therefore, worth noting that, although Deaf learners were in special schools, the right resources and equipment were not there to facilitate their learning. Birinci and Saricoban (2021) note that extensive use of visual materials such as pictures, videos, drawings and real objects helps Deaf learners comprehend and remember topics or concepts easily. Birinci and Saricoban (2021) argue that due to Deaf learners' visual orientation and lack of access to auditory modes of perception, the use of such materials is more likely to be pivotal in the education of Deaf learners. According to Birinci and Saricoban (2021), Deaf learners struggle in understanding abstract concepts when the explanations offered are not linked to something visual, such as a drawing or photo. The specialist teachers' explanations should be accompanied by visual materials and visual interactive methods. In the same vein, Nyawindac (2015) states that the central role of learning

materials is to support teaching by making ideas and concepts clear and making learning interesting and vivid. Despite the importance of the visual materials, the special schools in Zimbabwe still relied more on donors than the Ministry for provision of funds and the visual materials.

### **5.5.3 Identification of Training Needs by District Officers**

It emerged, from the study, that the majority of teachers was in need of specialised training for them to effectively implement the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. As a result, the identification of the training needs of the policy implementers was identified as one of the strategies which are very essential to enable the capacity development of the policy implementers. De Prado (2021) notes the importance of designing training programs in Sign Language for teachers and the need to evaluate teaching programs, with a focus on the required actions to improve school curricula for achieving linguistic standardization for Deaf learners. Allcock et al. (2015) point out that those who work on the front line know more about the challenges of delivery than national policy-makers. A crucial task for implementation support is, therefore, to tap into the perceptions and experiences of those whose behavior will shape the implementation process. The authors argue that this support is not so much about explaining legal obligations or the requirements of statutory guidance, though this is important. It involves assessing existing capacity to deliver, knowing what is being done well, what needs improving and how best to build new capacity. Similarly, Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019) note that those operating at higher levels cannot succeed without having some grasp of what actually happens on, or close to, the frontline of deaf education. This can be achieved by identifying the training needs of the policy implementers through visiting the special schools for the Deaf, to identify what is on the ground. In an effort to address this lack of pre-service training for teachers of the Deaf, the provincial departments of education sometimes organise or facilitate workshops offered by NGOs, the private sector providers or the department itself (McKenzie, Kelly & Shanda, 2018, Parkin 2010). This can only be achieved after the identification of the training needs of the teachers. Likewise, being ware of the lack of adequate preparation of teachers of the Deaf, the Department of Education sometimes organizes or facilitates additional workshops offered either by private service providers, NGOs, or sometimes the department itself. This was unlike the case in Zimbabwe, where those who were supposed to identify the training needs were not aware of the needs themselves. District officers confirmed that it was difficult to identify the training needs of the teachers because they

were also not conversant with Sign Language or the needs of the policy. Results of the study also showed that it was important for the district officers to be capacitated in ZSL for them to effectively monitor the implementation of the policies. Despite these needs, the results demonstrated that the Ministry was not doing anything about the policy in terms of capacity development of the policy implementers. Umalusi (2018) also notes that education officials at the district level also need to be trained in SASL for there to be proper quality control of training and ongoing support. These suggestions are of particular importance in light of the fact that SASL is afforded official language status for the purpose of ensuring effective teaching and learning in schools for the Deaf. SASL is now offered as a school subject in the country (South African Schools Act, 1996, Umalusi, 2018).

#### **5.5.4 Challenges Faced in Staff Developing and In-service Training for Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

Policy implementers felt that in-service training in Sign language was another strategy that could enhance the implementation of the LiEP. As most specialist teachers of the Deaf did not have qualifications, they required a continuous update of their knowledge and skills in Sign Language and appropriate teaching methodology for Deaf learners (Keshav, 2012). This can be provided through continuous professional development. It is essential that teachers keep abreast of new ideas, for example, on the implementation of the LiEP, in order to enhance their performance and their learners' achievements. Hence, professional development is essential for individual teachers as this can empower them and enhance their effectiveness in teaching the Deaf learners (Keshav, 2012). Specialist teachers of the Deaf are at different levels of expertise in terms of ZSL and, as a result of this, they need professional development (Mulondo, 2013). The challenge in providing in-service training for the teachers in special schools was that the Zimbabwean government and the MoPSE were engaging policy implementers who were not qualified in Zimbabwean Sign Language. Findings from the study showed that a lot of challenges were being faced in retraining of the teachers of Deaf learners.

The first challenge was that the district officers were not proficient in Sign Language; hence, they were being capacitated by specialist teachers. Policy implementers felt that the MoPSE should provide capacity development for teachers and district officers in ZSL. In Zimbabwe the Better Schools Programme Zimbabwe (BSPZ) is responsible for improving the quality of teaching and

learning through continuous provision of in-service training for teachers as well as pooling of resources for all schools. The district officers asserted that the BSPZ was sometimes overwhelmed by numerous workshops. The fact that other workshops were prioritised in place of workshops for specialist teachers of the Deaf in Sign Language indicated a lack of willingness from the Ministry to capacitate specialist teachers for the Deaf.

Lack of financial resources for organizing workshops for the teachers significantly contributed to non-implementation of the sign language policy in schools, leading to a situation where the teachers ended up being confused about how to teach Deaf learners. Findings of the study revealed that the government did not have an immediate budget to support the implementation of the 2006 Amended Education Act which supports the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Very little or no funds were being remitted to these special schools. Participants felt that the Ministry should provide financial assistance to enable the holding workshops for teachers. Likewise, Mweri (2014) also notes that in Kenya, very little or no funds were being channeled to special schools for the Deaf.

Positive experiences of PD can go a long way to change teachers' views on the use of ZSL as a medium of instruction. Similarly, in Zambia according to Mainza (2017), although the government has been financing education in general, including education of the disabled, special education has not been seen as a priority area in the allocation of the available financial resources to support the delivery of such education. Funding provisions to the special education sector has been inadequate and inconsistent to have any significant impact on the quality of education offered to children with special education, including Deaf learners.

Keshav (2012) notes that on-site professional development programmes are usually school-initiated and school-based and can be once-off for particular issues which are a priority for teachers at a school. It can take the form of senior teachers or experts from the outside acting as mentors of the less experienced teachers. On the other hand, workshops did not bring positive results in terms of making teachers become competent in teaching Deaf learners using ZSL. In the same vein, Ntinda and Tfusi (2019) observe that teachers of the Deaf in the Estwani special school for the Deaf did not have adequate Deaf language training.

#### **5.5.4 Use of Sign Language as the Only Language of Teaching and Learning for Deaf Learners**

The study findings showed that most of the School Heads were of the opinion that Sign Language was good for Deaf learners. However, they advocated for the use of total communication since the learners were going to communicate with the larger community; so, the idea of using total communication was to normalize the Deaf learner to fit into the society. In Zimbabwe, Deaf learners are mostly educated in special schools and the predominant medium of instruction is total communication, which is predominantly based on speech. However, the researcher observed that the Deaf learners preferred to use ZSL instead of total communication.

Many studies have also revealed that most teachers of the Deaf prefer using total communication when teaching the Deaf learners. The researcher observed that although teachers preferred using total communication, the total communication was not uniformly used. As some specialist teachers of the Deaf used signed English in their total communication, there were some of the specialist teachers in one of the provinces who used signed Shona Language. In Zimbabwe, Deaf learners are not taught Shona language though they are supposed to be taught Sign Language and English Language. Some administrators supported the use of Sign Language, as they argued that there was no other language that could be used when teaching the Deaf learners. They also argued that it was an advantage to use Sign Language because it was their own language and could make them understand it better.

#### **5.5.5 Collaboration with the Deaf Community**

Logsdon (2020) asserts that the Deaf community has a strong cultural component, and some families feel that Deaf Culture should be part of their child's experience from the start. Schools for the Deaf provide learners the opportunity to be acquainted with Deaf Culture. Deaf community gives the learners the opportunity from an early age to form friendships that are not limited by the communication gap but that will be part and parcel of their whole lives (Logsdon, 2020). Teacher-pupil rapport and pupil-pupil rapport contribute to Sign Language acquisition. According to Humphries et al. (2013), interaction in Sign Language is promoted by competent teachers and specific language policy. Deaf people often feel a close bond with each other because they face similar problems and share a similar way of communicating, like Sign Language. Nieman, Greenstein and David (undated) note that Deaf people play a very important role in the learning of



the Deaf learners. Nieman et al. observe that Deaf learners feel very comfortable in being taught by other Deaf people for there will be no language barrier. Deaf adults are of great help in the learning of Deaf learners because they understand their needs and their challenges (Nieman et al., undated). Lutalo-Kiingi (2016) notes that Deaf children acquired UgSL through full immersion and communication between language users in actual conversations and classroom environments, thus, enhancing their language development. Furthermore, when a Deaf child is enrolled in a school for the Deaf, he/she starts to learn with peers and from Deaf models hence, changing from using rural gestures to adopting the UgSL.

When children come to school, they will be having home signs. Deaf adults will, therefore, help them to learn the correct signs at school because it is their language. Szmanski et al. (2013) note that there is a lack of qualified teachers and professionals who understand and can meet the diverse needs of Deaf students. Deaf adults can help in meeting the needs of Deaf learners. Deaf learners also feel comfortable in meeting and communicating with other Deaf adults who work in their schools since this will boost the self-esteem of the Deaf learners (Nieman et al., undated). The Zimbabwe Education Amendment Act No. 15 of 2019, Section 62:2 states that the schools should ensure that school curricular shall as far as possible reflect the culture of the people of every language used or taught. The Deaf adults are the only ones capable of teaching the Deaf learners Deaf Culture because it is their language.

The study found that collaboration with the Deaf community is one of the strategies that could enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Special schools are considered the best places where learners can learn Sign Language from other Deaf people. This shows the importance of Deaf community in the learning process of the Deaf learners. This is in line with the Zimbabwe National Disability Policy, Section 3.9.9, which states that Standard Zimbabwean Sign Language, which is governed by a Sign Language Authority, must be established in line with the Zimbabwean Deaf community. Humphries et al. (2013) note that adults who are Deaf play an important role in Sign Language training and ensuring that the new learner who is Deaf is introduced to Deaf Culture. Logsdon (2020) asserts that the Deaf community has a strong cultural component, and some families feel that Deaf Culture should be part of their child's experience from the start. Schools for the Deaf

provide an opportunity for learners to be immersed in Deaf Culture. Deaf community gives the learners the opportunity, from an early age, to form friendships that are not limited by the communication gap but that will be of benefit to them even after completing their studies (Logsdon, 2020). When it was time for Heritage, they called the Deaf to teach the Deaf learners about relationships since they understood best when they were being taught by other Deaf people. It was revealed, from the study, that Deaf community members were involved during storytelling time. The main challenge that faced teachers was that they had not been taught how to cope with the diversity of learners who were then entering schools. Policy implementers maintained that the Deaf community helped in aspects such as giving workshoping teachers and helping teachers in signing new words since not all words were found in the Sign Language dictionary. Policy implementers also observed that Deaf learners felt confident when being taught by other Deaf people because there would be no language barrier. As a result of this observation, special schools should involve Deaf adults in teaching Deaf learners. For example, a deaf chaplain was involved during church services to teach the Deaf learners. Deaf adults working in special schools for the Deaf were also involved in teaching the Deaf. Special schools were given textbooks which were meant for hearing learners and because teachers were not fluent in Sign Language, it was difficult for them to sign the stories in the books. The Deaf community was also called to facilitate some of the lessons which were difficult to teach, especially for their Deaf colleagues. It was evident, from the study, that the use of the Deaf community was the initiative of the schools. The Ministry was not involved in employing Deaf assistants in special schools for the Deaf. Payment of the Deaf assistants was done by the special schools of the Deaf, and not the Ministry. Since the Deaf assistants were not employed by the Ministry, not all special schools had Deaf interpreters.

According to National Disability Policy (2021), Section 3.33.3, persons who intend to provide Sign Language interpretation shall submit their application in the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, who shall issue them with a Zimbabwean Sign language License. Section 3.33.4 states that the Department of Disability Affairs in the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social welfare shall establish and maintain a register of persons entitled to perform the Zimbabwean Sign Language interpretation services. This implies that the MoPSE must use ZSL interpreters who are qualified to enhance language development for Deaf learners and to enhance effective use of ZSL as a medium of instruction for

the Deaf. However, this was not the case in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The MoPSE mostly used interpreters who were not qualified to help them to teach Deaf learners. The Ministry introduced the CFPSE so that the Deaf interpreters would not lack the subject content knowledge which would negatively impact on the learning process of Deaf learners. District officers confirmed that not all Deaf adults were involved in the teaching of Deaf learners. In those special schools which recognise Sign Language on their timetables, Deaf teachers were taken to teach the learners new words when it was time for indigenous languages. Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck (2015) notes that there is a belief that Deaf people are the best teachers for Deaf learners. Their studies influenced schools to employ Deaf Sign Language instructors and researchers to run Sign Language programs, irrespective of whether they met the standard qualification requirements.

For the Deaf community to be able to teach Deaf students, they should also have the required qualifications. It emerged, from the study, that there was no uniformity in the tasks which were performed by the Deaf interpreters. Some were used to teaching the Deaf learners whilst the others were used to managing large classes. As a result of the reverse inclusive education, specialist teachers were now teaching large classes. Similarly, Musengi et al. (2013) note that teachers were unaware of how they might utilize the deaf assistants in more meaningful ways related to the development of language. Musengi et al. (2013) assert that Deaf interpreters would help with preparing teaching media, organizing the learners when they did pair work, or with cleaning up after the lessons. Furthermore, Deaf assistants were assigned as helpers and sometimes they were used to control the large classes.

The researcher also carried out personal classroom observation on the use of the Deaf interpreters. The researcher discovered that Deaf interpreters were not found in all the four special schools since it was not a government initiative but the initiative of the schools. The researcher discovered that there was no uniformity in the tasks performed by the Deaf interpreters. Some were used as helpers in managing the large classes, some in helping in making the media for the next lesson, some in helping in giving out books to the learner, some were used to monitor whether the learners were listening to the teacher, while others moved around to check whether the learners were writing their work. Only a few of the Deaf assistants were used to teach the Deaf learners and some of them would use spoken language to teach the Deaf learners. Musengi et al. (2013) note that the

Deaf interpreters were not used for academic transmission of concepts. Lawson (2012) notes that the role of the Deaf interpreters was not made clear to the specialist teachers before the assistants were assigned to their classes; consequently, they were given different tasks to perform. There was a lack of clear role definitions for interpreters (Lawson, 2012). There was also confusion among teachers, parents, administrators, students and interpreters themselves as to what the interpreters should do during class lessons. Even within a single school, expectations differed among different teachers.

#### **5.5.6 Focusing on the Shortcomings of the Existing Language Policy**

The Government and the MoPSE should focus on the shortfalls of the policy as a strategy to enhance the implementation of the policy). In order to better understand how to improve policy support it is, first of all, instructive to appreciate the nature of policy failure – logically the reasons why things go wrong should help to guide the search for potential solutions (Hudson et al., 2019). It emerged, from the study, that the shortcomings of the policy were not addressed in the policy itself but in the implementation modalities like enforcement of the policy. The policy implementers felt that the policy should have emphasised the financial support for the implementation of that program in Sign Language. The policy implementers argued that they were not against the policy but the implementation modalities that could address financial as well as resources provision. These modalities, if not provided for, could lead to the non-implementation of the policy. Political commitment is an important signal for the credibility of a policy (Liu et al., 2018). Results of the study reflected that the Zimbabwean policies are just there on paper but are not being implemented, as they lacked support, which reflected lack of political commitment. Policy implementers also argued that the shortcomings included the fact that very few people were competent in the use of Sign Language. One of the criteria for effective usage of local languages as languages of instruction is that there must be enough teachers to teach those languages. The absence of relevant and adequate manpower hinders implementation. Imbiti et al. (2014) found out that, although most teachers had a positive attitude towards KSL use, they lacked the knowledge and skills in it due to inadequate training. She also found that human resources, who included teachers with HI, teachers trained in KSL, and support staff with HI, were insufficient.

Another strategy that the Government could use to enhance the implementation of the policy was to commit itself to making policy implementers aware of the policy as well as educating the policy implementers on how to implement the policy. The Ministry should disseminate information on the implementation of the 2006 LIEP. The Government should not just get excited that it has developed the required policies and procedures because without implementing the policy correctly, it will not be effective. The Government has the obligation to provide adequate information, instructional supervision and training to the policy implementers (Graves 2021). According to the policy implementers, there were many shortcomings in the policy. Teachers can contribute by collaboratively and effectively working with curriculum development teams and specialists to arrange and compose materials, textbooks, and content. Teacher involvement in the process of curriculum development is important in aligning the content of the curriculum with students' needs in the classroom. One of the strategies that was found to enable effective implementation of the policy was involvement of the policy implementers in the formulation and the adoption of the policy. The results of the study indicated that the LiEP had some shortcomings. This shows that for policy to be effectively implemented, policy implementers should be involved in the adoption of the policy, that is, by consulting all relevant stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the policies. Consultation should ensure that every policy implementer understands the importance of the policy procedures and why they need to implement the policy effectively. As a result of consultations, policies and procedures can be achievable. Furthermore, the policy should state specifically what actions should be taken and how. Deng and Noblitz (2017) observe that those who develop the curriculum are generally separate from those who use it. Developers are responsible for developing a sound curriculum and materials. Policy implementers are responsible for realizing the aims of the curriculum by transforming it into educative experiences in the classroom.

The findings of this study revealed that the MoPSE did not put in place any mechanisms to involve policy implementers or even educate and empower them on how to transform the policy into an educative experience in the classroom. This resulted in variances in the way the policy was interpreted and implemented. Goggin et al. (1990) in their communication theory, postulate that policy implementers should be allowed to engage in dialogue and make sense of the policy with their colleagues to develop a shared understanding of what they are being asked to implement.

Without such an opportunity, policy implementers will continue to interpret policy erroneously, individually, and based on their own experience. This will lead to variance in the way the policy will be implemented. If there is uncertainty at the local level, about the goals of a policy, its successful implementation is less likely (Goggin et al., 1990). ZEPARU (2012) observes that for policies to avoid variance in the implementation process, they should be inclusive. ZEPARU (2012) argues that the policy making process should involve consultations with those responsible for service delivery. This also entails undertaking an impact assessment and seeking feedback on the effect of the policy on the service providers. In the case of LiEP, service providers were not consulted nor involved in the formulation of the policy, which led to policy implementers interpreting the policy individually and wrongly.

#### **5.5.7 Suggestions to the Ministry of Education Policy-Makers**

In the present study, some participants suggested that if ZSL was to be taught as an academic subject, then the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that it is also an examinable subject like other indigenous subjects such as Shona, Sotho and Venda. Policy implementers felt that as long as Zimbabwean Sign Language was not examinable, it will still be considered as being inferior to the others. Other countries have accepted Sign Language as a medium of instruction as well as an examinable subject. The teachers' views were supported by the curriculum specialists for the Deaf, who stated that there was need to introduce Sign Language as an examinable subject (Mulonda, 2013). In Kenya, according to Pakata (2015), the Ministry of Education in (2004) recognised the use of Kenya Sign Language as an effective medium of instruction for Deaf learners. Kenya Sign Language was also developed as an examinable subject in schools for Deaf learners in (2010) by the Kenya National Examination Council. Likewise, in Sweden, Chupina (2006) reported that Swedish Sign Language became the medium of instruction as well as a taught subject itself in 1995. Since then, according to Chupina (2006), Deaf learners registered better academic performance than before because of exposure to more Sign Language as a medium of instruction as well as a taught subject itself in 1995. Chupina (2006) notes that increased use of Swedish Sign Language contributed to good literacy for Swedish Deaf Learners.

All teachers who were interviewed in the current study complained of the lack of Sign Language syllabuses. If Sign Language was to be taught as a subject as suggested by the new policy, then it

should have a syllabus, like any other indigenous language. While the Primary and Secondary Education Ministry in its CFPSE has made the syllabi for Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Tshivenda, Kalanga Nambya, Sesotho, Shangani and many other local languages, the new programme of study is conspicuously silent on the indigenous language for the Deaf (Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT), 2018). This shows lack of political will on the part of the government and the MoPSE. Political commitment is an important signal for the credibility of a policy (Liu Tang, Zhan & Lo, 2018). Policy implementers felt that, in the long run, the government should show its political will by supporting the policy in terms of making available the Sign Language curriculum and the Sign Language syllabus for effective implementation of the policy. It should also examine the Deaf learners in Sign Language as a subject. DZT programmes officer Nyabvure (Press 2022) has called upon the government to provide the Sign Language syllabus and materials to ensure Deaf learners have equal access to education. Nyabvure (Press) asserts that the MoPSE held a workshop in 2018 to develop the Sign Language syllabus. However, the syllabus is yet to be operationalised. Nyabvure (Press) argues that development of a syllabus for Sign Language syllabus will assist to harmonise, develop and describe the language. Teachers use the same syllabus without taking into consideration of the Deaf, thus, making it difficult for the Deaf to take part in the lessons.

Likewise, Mulonda (2013) in a study on the use of Sign Language in the education of the Deaf in Zambia, revealed that the overwhelming majority of the teachers and pupils wanted Sign language as a taught and examinable subject. Nkolola-Wakumelo and Mulonda (2013) also assert that Sign Language should be taught as a subject for the purpose of ensuring that all pupils use the same signs and learn standardised Sign Language. In the same vein, in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a, also states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and, Section 62:1c states that the Government should ensure that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction in early childhood education. In order for ZSL to be taught a Sign Language, its curriculum should be developed to guide the teachers in the implementation of the policy.

It further emerged that there was a need for more details on Sign Language implementation through circulars and other policy documents to expand on whatever was contained in the Education Act, in order to avoid ambiguity in the policy. Ambiguity in a policy will lead to policy implementers

facing uncertainty, or having to make decisions in the face of limited information (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012). Policy circulars should be formulated to give details and directives on what should be done. This implies that the developed policy was ambiguous. As a result of the ambiguity, policy makers will have different ways of understanding policy problems (Herweg et al., 2018). Policy implementers pointed out that the Zimbabwean policy did not have strategies on how to improve the use of Sign Language, nor does it have curriculum material in Zimbabwean Sign Language that could be used for teaching ZSL as a subject in schools. The lack of strategies made it difficult for policy implementers to implement the policy. In India, the goals of the Indian Sign Language curriculum include preparing curriculum material in Indian Sign Language that could be used for subject teaching in the schools (Zeshau, Vashita and Seltna, 2005). If all countries could achieve these goals, then specialist teachers for the Deaf would not face any challenges in implementing policies that would ensure the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in Deaf schools.

The policy implementers felt that the problem of the Ministry was the imposing of the policy on policy implementers without adequate preparation. Shahriar and Khan (2016) contend that the issue of poor policy awareness among policy implementers is the core problem in policy implementation mostly in developing countries. The Amendment Act mentions only what is to be done. For instance, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment Act of 2006, and the Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c states that the mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction in early childhood education. However, nothing has been said about the means of achieving the goals and the qualifications of those who will be involved in the implementation of the policy.

In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean LiEP is silent on the how and the means of implementing the policy. This implies that the policy implementers must decide on what to do. Unlike the Indian Sign Language which has modalities on how the policy should be implemented and the preparations that should be made to prepare for the policy implementation, such as training teachers and preparing a curriculum to be used when teaching, the Zimbabwean policy is quiet on the means of implementing the policy which made its implementation difficult.



One of the strategies that could be used to help the teachers to teach Deaf learners CFPSE is to update the sign language dictionary to go hand in hand with the CFPSE. Results of the study revealed that special schools for the Deaf were using Sign Language dictionaries which were outdated. Likewise Chibwe (2015) notes that Sign Language dictionaries in Zambia should be revised and used intensively. More teachers need to undergo special education training in sign language. Policy implementers pointed out that the new curriculum was very difficult to explain without the help of Sign Language dictionaries. Most of the specialist teachers refer to the ZSL Dictionary when teaching Deaf learners. Thus, it becomes a challenge when the dictionaries do not exist or are outdated. Specialist teachers asserted that they struggled to explain new concepts to the learners. According to policy implementers, the Government should print new Sign Language dictionaries that include the new curriculum. Policy implementers felt that they should be capacitated on how to sign these new words which are not found in the dictionaries. Likewise, Mulondo (2013) found out that some teachers were complaining that the Zambian Sign Language Dictionary had some signs that were different from what the pupils used. Also, it had some signs missing and, as a result, it needs to be updated. To remedy, this there is need to develop specialised vocabularies of Sign Language, apart from the general Sign Language dictionary (Wakumelo & Manyando, 2013).

In the present study, the district officers suggested that all Ministry personnel should be conversant with Sign Language for it to be effectively implemented because they cannot give what they do not have. It was suggested that there should be a well-trained leadership that will guide the others on how the implementation of the policy should be carried out. Most principals of schools for the Deaf had less knowledge and training than their teachers, and were, therefore, not adequately equipped to guide or empower their staff with expertise in appropriate and effective teaching and learning methods (Parkin, 2010). As a result, the education of Deaf learners was encumbered by a lack of effective communication, appropriate teaching and learning methods (Parkin, 2010). The district officers also asserted that there should be a framework that is very specific to track the progress of the policy implementation. Teachers in schools for the Deaf need leaders who know more than they do and who are able to lead them toward achievable and sustainable goals through the provision of support and training (Parkin, 2010). They argued that monitoring and evaluation

determine the progress of the policy. The district officers suggested that there should be coordination, teamwork and collaboration with other partners, in terms of funding. They argued that there should be enforcement of the process to ensure that the policy is being implemented right from the top (Government) to the grassroots at the school level. Most School Heads who had been in special schools for the Deaf for many years were not specifically trained in Deaf education methodology, although they had had many years of experience in the field. This implies that they could not enforce a policy which they had no knowledge about (Parkin, 2010).

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter focused on the discussion of the study findings. It focused on data obtained from specialist teachers of the Deaf, School Heads, District Schools Inspectors and school psychologists. The discussion focused on practices in the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The chapter also focused on the extent to which the teachers were equipped to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks and the challenges they were facing in implementing them, as well as the strategies that could be put in place to enhance policy implementation. The study findings revealed that there were variations in the way Sign Language regulatory frameworks were understood. This emanated from the fact that policy implementers were not involved in the formulation and adoption of the policy. This resulted in policy implementers not being adequately prepared to implement the policy, as most of them lacked the required skills. The lack of required skills led to policy implementers having negative attitude toward Sign Language. Policy implementers used total communication which involved use spoken English and signed English in teaching Deaf learners. The findings were discussed vis-à-vis those of prior studies and literature. The next chapter focuses on the summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. This chapter presents the summary of the key findings of study, conclusions and recommendations, based on the research questions of the study. The next section is a summary of the whole study.

### **6.2 Review of the Research Problem**

Although the government of Zimbabwe recognized ZSL as a legitimate, natural language and elevated its status to academic language in line with international conventions, declarations and policies, the process of integrating this language into the official curriculum was yet to be completed. Even though a number of circulars were sent to schools, including a policy directive by the Secretary for Education, Circular 3 of 2002 on curriculum policy in primary and secondary schools, which mandated that Sign Language be taught in all primary schools, the language is hardly used in Zimbabwean special schools. A few studies have been conducted concerning the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, for example, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (2017), Musengi et al. (2012) and Masawi (2017). These studies focused on regular schools and trainee teachers, thereby leaving a gap in studies that focused on the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks that would support established educators' use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in special schools. The current study, therefore, examined the factors that influence the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

### **6.3 Summary of Review of Related Literature**

The following were the major findings realised by the researcher in the study on how ZSL policies were being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools.

### **6.3.1 Practices in the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks**

Review of related literature globally revealed that in most countries, the development and recognition of sign languages were influenced by language advocates from different minority groups (WFD, 2003). In agreement with WFD (2003), a study which was done by Honna and Kato (2005) established that in 1983, an Osaka group initiated a movement to urge the use of Sign Language in Deaf schools. According to the study, the Osaka group did not intend to ask for Sign Language to be employed as a medium of instruction in Deaf schools because they thought the situation was not ripe enough. Yet, by demanding that their language be taught in schools, the Osaka Association of the Deaf wished to reject an oralist way of life relentlessly forced on them. The effort of the Osaka Association showed that there was light at the end of the tunnel. Deaf education in Japan is moving toward the use of Sign Language. Furthermore, free schools for Deaf learners were established throughout the country, where Sign Language is the main means of instruction and communication. Whilst policies advocate for the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners, this study focused on factors that influence the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

Review of related Zimbabwean literature revealed that Sign Language had never been made a curriculum subject in Zimbabwe because it was assumed that it developed naturally, a notion which was wrong (Hlatywayo, undated). Similarly, Chimedza (1997) argues that Sign Language does not develop naturally like spoken languages. Section 1, Sub-section 4 of the Constitution stipulates that the State must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe, including Sign Language and must create conditions for the development of those languages.

A review of related Zimbabwean literature revealed that in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf has taken responsibility and continues advocating for Sign Language as their birthright, resulting in the specific mentioning of Sign Language in the 2013 Constitution. On September 23, 2013, Zimbabwe ratified the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2001 the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, through Schools Psychological Services Director's Circular No. 2, directed that Sign Language be taught in primary schools in Zimbabwe. The reviewed Zimbabwean literature further indicated that

despite these provisions, Sign Language was neither a curriculum subject nor formally taught in Zimbabwean schools, including in schools for the Deaf yet Deaf learners were expected to learn the same materials and perform the same as their hearing counterparts (Matende, Sibanda, Chandavengerwa & Sadiki. 2021). While the Primary and Secondary Education ministry in its new curriculum has made the syllabi for Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Tshivenda, Kalanga Nambya, Sesotho, Shangani and many other local languages, the new programme of study was conspicuously silent on the indigenous language for the Deaf (Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT), 2018). In Sweden, the Swedish Sign Language became the language of instruction as well as a teaching subject in 1995 (Chupina, 2006). Since then, special schools as well as mainstream schools study Sign language along with the written Swedish.

### **6.3.2 Regulatory Frameworks Supporting the Use of Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction in Special Schools**

The language policy in Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Amended Act (2006), Section 62 states that, prior to the Fourth Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best, whereas Section 62:5 of the Amended Act states that Zimbabwean Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing. The Language Policy Amendment of 2006 allows teachers to use the learners' first language in education from the Early Childhood Education phase (Pre-school up to Grade 3) through upper primary classes up to Grade 7. The intriguing question that led to my exploring of the issue is: Why is the government reluctant to implement a language policy which facilitates learning through a familiar language for learners to access the curriculum with ease? According to Acton (2012), Sign Language is a first language, that is, the mother tongue for the Deaf children. This provision, therefore, suggests that, for the Deaf learners, Sign Language should be used and consequently, that primary school teachers of the Deaf learners should be proficient in Sign Language.

The Zimbabwean Sign Language Bill (2015), which was crafted by an advocacy group for the Deaf to put pressure on government, pointed out that government ministries and departments responsible for education at all levels in Zimbabwe should ensure that all public and private institutions responsible for, or involved in, Deaf education in Zimbabwe, should use Zimbabwean

Sign Language (ZSL) as the medium of instruction, which implies the full implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks. The Zimbabwean Sign Language Bill (2015) also states that ZSL should be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for Deaf learners. The National Disability Act (2021), Section 3.9.10, states that the State should ensure the learning of the Zimbabwean Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community, which is in line with Article 24: 3(b) of CRPD (2006), which promotes the right to learn Sign Language. The Convention, Chapter 24:3b, states that, the State shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign Language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the Deaf community. Chapter 24:4 also states that the governments shall also ensure that teachers of learners with hearing impairment shall be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe also has a policy document guidelines on staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) that states that, there is need to staff centres for learners with special needs, including those with hearing impairment, with appropriately qualified teachers. According to National Disability Act (2021), Section 3.9.22, the State should ensure the employment of teachers and staff including teachers and staff with disabilities who are qualified in the Zimbabwean Sign Language. The Zimbabwean Language Policy of 2006, according to Nhongo (2013), in the study of the national language policy in the 20th Century, lacked enforcement on the teaching in mother tongue for the first 3 years of primary education. The Zimbabwean Government and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education added another Amendment Act, the Zimbabwe Education Amendment No. 15 (2019), Section 62:1a, which states that every school shall endeavour to teach every officially recognized language and Section 62:1c states that the mother tongue should be used as medium of instruction at early childhood education. The National Disability Act, Section 3.9.9, states that Standard Zimbabwean Sign Language which is governed by a Sign Language authority in collaboration with the Ministry, must be established.

According to Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO (1994), education policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction among the Deaf, for example, should be recognised and provision made to ensure that all Deaf persons have access to education in their national sign languages. Owing to the particular communication needs of the Deaf persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or units in mainstream schools (Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement

(UNESCO, 1994). This study focused on Sign Language as a medium of instruction in special schools. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education emphasized the significance of Sign Language as a medium of instruction.

### **6.3.3 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

Reviews of related literature revealed that most hearing specialist teachers of the Deaf internationally are linguistically handicapped in relation to Sign Language (Lane, Pillard Hedberg, 2011). They would prefer the use of oral language or a combination of oral and total communication in classroom instructions. Odhiambo (undated) assert that teachers often made decisions for Deaf learners based on what they would be comfortable with and not what would serve their Deaf students better. According to a study by Lane, Pillard and Hedberg (2011), a combination of communicative approaches was disapproved by Deaf learners, as evidenced by one female participant who said that for the Deaf, it was very difficult to learn when Sign Language was not used in the classroom. The participant postulated that most teachers did not know Sign Language. Kamukwemba (2017), explains the the above observation is premised on the fact that there were inadequacies in the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction, which led to failure by teachers to operate effectively in Sign Language.

#### **6.3.3.1 Challenges Related to Language**

Review of related literature revealed that specialist teachers of the Deaf depended on other Deaf teachers and Deaf learners for further clarification of difficult concepts because of lack of knowledge in ZSL. This challenge was exacerbated by teachers teaching Deaf learners who were not natives of the ZSL and were also not trained in ZSL, with the exception of 1 teacher who had a degree in ZSL and few teachers who had certificates in ZSL. Mandyata (2017) observes that teachers of the Deaf learners depended much on learners whereby they wrote words on the chalk board and learners gave those signs; thus, the learners who were supposed to be the learners became the teachers due to inadequate Sign Language skills among teachers. Chifinda (2017) points out that there was an acute lack of enough knowledge in Sign Language among teachers and learners solely depended on it as a medium of classroom instruction.

### **6.3.3.2 Challenges Related to Variations in ZSL**

Results of the study revealed that teachers faced difficulties in teaching learners with different forms of ZSL, for they had to start from scratch. Review of related literature revealed that variation in Sign Language impacted negatively on learner engagement, and hindered teacher-student and student-student communication (Mpfungu and Chimhenga, 2013, Werts, Carpenter & Fewell, 2017). Teacher-student and student-student communication are major ways of learning in the classroom, especially for Deaf learners. Learners who have difficulty communicating in a classroom setting may likely not take part in classroom activities, which may also affect their learning. Variations in ZSL also affected specialist teachers of the Deaf, for they were not adequately trained in ZSL and at the same time they were supposed to teach the Deaf learners the ZSL. According to Forlin, Kawai and Higuchi (2015), teachers who are inadequately trained in Sign Language use fail to use Sign Language effectively as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners.

The Zimbabwean Constitution Amendment Number 20 (2013) recognises Zimbabwean Sign Language as one of the 16 official and legitimate languages of the country. Meanwhile, the language policy in Zimbabwe, as enshrined in the Education Act (2006), Section 62, states that, before the 4th Grade, all learners should be taught using their mother tongue or the language that they understand best. Section 62.5 states that Sign Language shall be the priority medium of instruction. This provision suggested that, for the Deaf learners, sign language should be used and, consequently, that primary school teachers of the Deaf learners should be proficient in Sign Language. Review of related literature revealed that Zimbabwean specialist teachers of the Deaf were not adequately trained in ZSL; consequently, they were not proficient in ZSL.

### **6.3.3.3 Challenges Related to Lack of Appropriate Resources**

Review of related literature revealed that lack of resources was one of the challenges which was faced by specialists of the Deaf to effectively implement the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Specialist teachers of the Deaf lacked adequate resources to effectively implement the policy. Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) postulate that policy implementation is affected significantly by the extent to which resources are committed to the implementation of the policy. Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013) also note that one of the excuses that the Government of Zimbabwe gave for not promoting and developing indigenous languages, ZSL included, lack of



financial resources. Financial resources according to Masoke-Kadenge and Kadenge (2013), are an important means by which implementers are enabled to initiate, promote and manage the implementation of the policy.

#### **6.3.4 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners**

The review of related literature from different researchers globally exposed the extent to which teachers were equipped to teach Deaf learners.

##### **6.3.4.1 Competencies That Teachers of the Deaf Need to Teach Deaf Learners Using Sign Language**

Review of related international literature revealed that the goal of teacher training programmes in sign languages is to provide pre-service teachers with the professional knowledge, skills and disposition needed to assist Deaf learners (Luckner & Ayantoye, 2013). Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) assert that there was evidence to suggest that teachers who attended teacher training programmes in sign languages and become qualified are more successful in using Sign Language than their counterparts who did not attend teacher training programmes in Sign Language.

Review of related literature in Zimbabwe revealed that, there were policies that supported the use of Zimbabwean Sign Language as a medium of instruction as well as to be taught as subject. The Amended Education Act of 2006 states that, before the 4th Grade, sign language should be used when teaching the Deaf learners, while the 2001 Education Act stated that sign language was one of the academic subjects to be taught. However, Zimbabwe misses this factor on implementation. Though Sign Language is recognised as an official language, only a few learning institutions offer it as a subject. There are no official facilities to teach professionals like teachers, lawyers, nurses, doctors and police officers to communicate in Sign Language. Training colleges must come up with programmes that train the teachers to deal with Deaf learners and using their mother tongue as a medium of instruction, which in this case is Sign Language. Zimbabwe has only one college, namely the United College of Education (UCE), where teachers specialise in practical communication while most colleges and universities concentrate on special needs education in general. It was, therefore, important to find out the extent to which the teachers are

equipped in their profession to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks in the school curriculum.

### **6.3.5 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

These are summarised in the subsequent sections.

#### **6.3.5.1 Use of Qualified Personnel as Teachers of the Deaf**

Review of related literature indicated that the use of qualified personnel as teachers of the Deaf was one of the strategies that could be used to enhance the effective implementation of ZSL policies in the country. It was revealed from, the review of various literature globally, that specialist teachers of Deaf learners could not communicate using manual method of communication to teach the Deaf learners. The reviewed literature also showed that most specialist teachers of the Deaf were not taking any Sign Language proficiency interviews in teaching the Deaf. This resulted in specialist teachers of the Deaf not being proficient in teaching the Deaf learners.

Review of related literature also showed that teachers of the Deaf in Africa, most of whom are hearing, lacked appropriate training and certification to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with Deaf learners. In South Africa, according to Glaser and Van Pletzen (2012), DEAFSA (2009), only 14% of the teachers of the Deaf are proficient in South African Sign Language (SASL), most of them were not trained specialists, while some were not even trained teachers. As a result, expectations were low and standards were inferior. Textbooks and other materials were in short supply.

#### **6.3.5.2 Adhering to Special Needs Education Staffing Requirements**

It was revealed, from the reviewed related literature, that different countries have different requirements concerning the staffing of teachers who will be responsible for teaching Deaf learners. In Virginia, there are various qualification requirements for personnel providing services for Deaf learners or hard of hearing. Firstly, the personnel providing educational interpreting

services for learners using Sign Language should have a valid Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) Level III, or have a passing score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) written test, along with a minimum of a Level 3.5 on the EIPA Performance Test or any other state qualification or national certification (excluding Certificate of Deaf Interpretation) recognized by the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as equivalent to or exceeding the VQAS Level III. Each student shall receive special education services from special education personnel assigned following the Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel (8VAC20-22). Special education teachers who are the teachers of the Deaf shall be highly qualified.

Additionally, it is indicated that, under no circumstances shall local educational agencies or private special education schools hire interpreters who hold qualifications below a VQAS Level II, EIPA Level 3.0 or the equivalent from another state. The question now is: Does Zimbabwe have any strict staffing requirements when recruiting teachers for learners with hearing impairments who use sign language as their mother tongue?

Zimbabwe should be in line with UNCPRD to which Zimbabwe became a signatory in September 2013. Chapter 24:4 states that the governments shall ensure that teachers of Deaf learners shall be qualified in Sign Language. Zimbabwe has policy document guidelines on Staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education, 2007a) that states that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs with appropriately qualified teachers. This implies that teachers for Deaf learners should be qualified in Sign Language. However, the circular unlike other frameworks in other countries, is quiet on how it will test the proficiency of teachers in sign language. A study at the KG VI Memorial School by Mpofu and Chimhenga (2013) showed that there was a need for the schools to appoint a Sign Language interpreter at the school where hearing impaired learners were enrolled and that there was need for King George VI Memorial School to increase the number of teachers with Sign Language skills so that they could complement the other teachers who were not skilled in using Sign Language. The study also suggested that teachers who were not skilled in Sign language, but teaching Deaf learners, should be encouraged to get staff development courses on Sign Language. CRPD Chapter 24:4 states that teachers of learners with hearing impairment should be qualified in Sign Language and Zimbabwean policy guidelines on

the staffing of Special Needs Provision (Secretary for Education 2007a) states that there is a need to staff centres for learners with special needs with appropriately qualified teachers. Whilst the study focused on one special school in Zimbabwe, the current study focused on all the special schools in Zimbabwe.

#### **6.3.5.3 Development of Communicative Skills**

It was revealed from the literature review on ZSL that Sign Language proficiency among teachers of the Deaf forms the basis for effective learning of the Deaf (Sibanda, 2015). Review of related literature also indicated that the Department of Learners Welfare, Psychological Services did not ensure that there was a program on Sign Language instruction that runs regularly at a convenient centre for the participants to attend. Previous studies and literature have unequivocally confirmed that young children who are Deaf learn more effectively when taught using Sign Language. The knowledge and skills of the Deaf adults and the use of a Sign Language dictionary should be enlisted to ensure the success of the program.

#### **6.3.5.4 Availability of Specialized Personnel in Deaf Education**

Deaf education is the education of learners with any manner of deficit in hearing which addresses their differences and individual needs. This process involves individually-planned, systematically-monitored teaching methods, adaptive materials, accessible settings and other interventions designed to help learners achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency and success in the school and community than they would achieve with typical classroom education. Many countries focus on training teachers to teach Deaf learners with a variety of approaches and have organizations to aid Deaf learners (McCarty & May, 2017).

Previous studies and reviewed literature have unequivocally confirmed that young Deaf learners learn more effectively when taught using Sign Language. However, those studies indicated that most of the teachers of the Deaf in Zimbabwe lacked Sign Language proficiency. What teachers at times mistook for Sign Language were mere finger spelling and some distorted signed systems. As a result, learning by the Deaf learners was heavily compromised due to a lack of effective communication between teachers and the learners (Musengi Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2012, Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). Review of related literature in Zimbabwe revealed that in Zimbabwe, a teacher

could be called a specialist of the Deaf, not because the teacher is proficient in sign language, but because the teacher holds a degree or diploma in Special Needs Education. The majority of the teachers of the Deaf in schools operate at either the non-functional or novice levels of Sign Language proficiency (Sibanda, 2015).

#### **6.3.5.5 Availability of Financial and Human Resources as a Strategy for Effective Implementation of the Policy**

Review of related literature revealed that financial and technical resources, along with quality human resources, are key factors that contribute to the proper implementation of any policy. Low education funding is, thus, considered a major obstacle to realizing the implementation targets of education policy in Pakistan's educational policies (Majoka & Khan, 2017). A unique problem of education policy in developing countries like Zimbabwe is their dependence on foreign aid and loans to bridge the budget deficit and finance their development plans. The success of implementation ultimately depended on the way people perceived, make sense and act on policy provisions. If teachers can make sense of the policy, they will be able to use it confidently (Banegas, 2019).

Review of related Zimbabwe related literature indicated that human and material resources were other handicaps in Zimbabwe that hindered the full implementation of the 2006 Mother tongue education policy. One of the criteria for effective usage of local languages as languages of instruction is that there must be enough teachers to teach that language. The absence of relevant and adequate manpower hinders implementation. According to Phillips (1992), a major limitation on the use of African languages was that there were few reading materials available in their language. Therefore, shortages of relevant materials undermined the implementation case shortages of Sign Language dictionaries. Thus, it is useful to ask whether the resources necessary for the implementation of the 2006 mother tongue education policy were available.

Review of related literature also indicated that Deaf Zimbabwe Trust advocated for use of Zimbabwean Sign Language as a language of instruction in schools, training of teachers in Sign Language and the development of teaching materials, specifically for the Deaf.

### **6.3.6 Use of the Deaf Community in the Teaching of the Deaf Learners**

Logsdon (2020) asserts that the Deaf community has a strong cultural component, and some families feel that Deaf Culture should be part of their child's experience from the start. Schools for the Deaf provide an opportunity to be immersed in Deaf Culture. This is in line with the Zimbabwe National Disability Policy, Section 3.9.9, which states that Standard Zimbabwean Sign Language, which is governed by a Sign Language authority, must be established in line with the Zimbabwean Deaf community. Deaf community gives the learners the opportunity, from an early age, to form friendships that are not limited by the communication gap and develop friendship that can follow them after they are finished in the school setting (Logsdon, 2020).

Deaf adults are of great help in the learning process of the Deaf learners because they understand their needs and their challenges (Nieman et al., undated).

### **6.4 Summary of Research Methodology**

This study used the interpretivist paradigm, which Smith et al. (2009) contend is essential for the full understanding of reality, its subjective interpretation and intervention. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study because it enabled the research to be done within a natural environment of social factors. In this study, the natural environment was the special schools for the Deaf. Some scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that human learning is best researched by using qualitative data. The study used three sources of data, which were the in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation, to obtain data from 17 teachers, four School Heads, four school inspectors and four school psychologists who were all purposively sampled. This implies that the researcher studied participants in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, a phenomenon in terms of the meaning the participants brought to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher managed to gain a better understanding of factors influencing Sign Language policy implementation in Zimbabwean special schools using a phenomenological multiple-case study.

This research used semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation as research tools to obtain data and the data were audio-recorded from the informants

in order to obtain the right information that would answer the research questions. Atlas.ti was utilized in data analysis.

### **6.5 Summary of the Research Findings**

It emerged that there was no consistency in the way Sign Language regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf. This was a consequence of the ambiguity of the Sign Language policy goals and conflict of the means of achieving sign language policy goals. Policy implementers were not capacitated on the meaning of Sign Language regulatory frameworks and how they were supposed to be implemented.

Challenges faced by teachers mostly were related to lack of capacitation. The study found that there were inadequate financial resources in special schools, as they were receiving insufficient funding from the Ministry. This resulted in severe shortages of material resources, which negatively affected policy implementation, since the teachers needed to use visual materials for effective Sign Language teaching. It further emerged that specialist teachers for the Deaf were facing challenges of not having a Sign Language curriculum, Sign Language syllabi, and pictorial Sign language textbooks prepared or adapted for Deaf learners with Sign Language descriptions and Sign Language dictionaries to help them in effectively implementing ZSL policies. Lack of workshops in ZSL was another challenge which was faced by specialist teachers of the Deaf. District officers were not organizing workshops or in-service training programmes for the teachers because they were equally incompetent in Sign Language and were financially handicapped, as the government did not provide funds for training activities. This led to various incongruous and conflicting interpretations of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks.

It also emerged that teachers were, to a large extent, professionally ill-equipped to implement ZSL policies because pre-service, specialist in-service and other continuous professional development workshops did not make Sign language proficiency a pre-requisite for graduation. The study revealed that most of the teachers in the special schools did not have qualifications related to Sign Language, although many held degree and other qualifications in Special Needs Education. Most specialist teachers for the Deaf have very limited Sign Language competencies and so were not confident in using Sign Language as the language of instruction. As a result of being professionally

ill-equipped, specialist teachers for the Deaf preferred using spoken language, signed language, and total communication and its variants such as the Fitzgerald Key, rather than the natural Sign Language, in teaching Deaf learners.

Strategies that could be put in place to enhance implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks included: the use of qualified specialist teachers for the Deaf with adequate Sign Language proficiencies to teach Deaf learners; ensuring the availability of adequate resources to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks; identifying the training needs of the Sign Language policy implementers for effective policy implementation; provision of adequate financial and material resources through the MoPSE; and the employment of proficient Sign Language interpreters by MoPSE as a stop-gap measure, until teachers become competent to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks independently. Participants also suggested that there should be greater involvement of local level policy implementers in the formulation, adaptation and evaluation of sign LiEP.

## **6.6 Conclusions**

The following were the conclusions of the study based on the findings:

### **6.6.1 Implementation of Zimbabwe Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

The study found that there was no consistency in the way Sign Language regulatory frameworks were being implemented in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf. This was a consequence of ambiguity of Sign Language policy goals and conflict of the means of achieving Sign Language policy goals. Policy implementers were not capacitated on the meaning of the policy goals and how the policy should be implemented, which resulted in conflicting means of achieving the policies. Information did not flow hierarchically from the top, down to the teacher in the classroom, resulting in conflicting ways of policy implementation such as the use of total communication, particularly its Fitzgerald Key variant and Signed Language, as opposed to natural Sign Language. The credibility of the policy was, therefore, compromised as a result of lack of commitment by the government in general and the Ministry in particular, to educate the policy implementers on how the policy was supposed to be implemented.



The Zimbabwe Government recognized ZSL as a legitimate natural language through Constitution Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013, Chapter 1, Section 6, Subsection 1, and elevated its status to academic language through MoPSE Secretary's Circular 3 of 2002: Curriculum policy in primary and secondary schools. Circular 3 (2002) states that ZSL shall be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for Deaf learners, which is in line with Article 24: 3(b) of CRPD (2006) which states that Deaf people are entitled to communicate through sign language. Even though the Government of Zimbabwe adopted policies that were in line with international conventions and declarations, the process of integrating ZSL into the official curriculum was yet to be completed, as the policy goals remained ambiguous and the means were also ambiguous, in conflict and incongruous. Thus, the issue in Zimbabwe implies a mismatch between, on the one hand, ratifying an ideal international convention and enacting a progressive national constitution and, on the other hand, unclear language-in-education policy ideals and conflicting implementation practices.

Although the MoPSE has policies that support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction, it was concluded that the technology needed to implement the policy did not exist. Most of the teachers were not well-equipped to implement the policy because they were not involved in the formulation and adaptation of the policy. Furthermore, they did not have the relevant qualifications and proficiency in Sign Language to teach the learners who were Deaf which is why they ended up using total communication. The study, therefore, concludes that Sign language-in-education policies need to be aligned with micro-implementers' local contexts, particularly their interpretation of the policy problem and recommendation of possible solutions.

### **6.6.2 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

The study revealed that teachers faced a lot of challenges in effectively implementing the sign LiEP. These challenges included lack of proficiency in Sign Language, lack of resources, and lack of capacitation from the MoPSE. Most of the teachers in the special schools did not have qualifications related to Sign Language and were, therefore, not proficient in the language although they held degree and diploma qualifications in Special Needs Education. There was also a lack of

visual materials like charts, videos prepared with sign language, motion pictures, and other real material to be used in teaching Deaf learners. Despite the crucial roles these visual materials played for visual learners, teachers could not use them because of their scarcity. The efforts that were made by policy implementers to effectively implement the Sign Language policy were outweighed by lack of the required human, visual and financial resources.

Since the curriculum influences the use of Sign Language in learning, the study concludes that the unavailability of Sign Language syllabi and lack of appropriate human and material resources exposed the implied hidden curriculum which undervalued the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in education for Deaf learners. Even though the district officers were sometimes financially helped by donor communities, they would channel the money towards other workshops further revealing the implied lack of commitment and low prioritization of Sign Language by the government.

### **6.6.3 Teachers' Level of Preparation/ Skills for Teaching Deaf Learners**

The study revealed that the teachers did not have Sign Language proficiencies to enable them to effectively implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The Ministry was yet to capacitate specialist teachers for the Deaf on the meaning of the sign LiEP and how to implement it. The study concludes that Zimbabwean specialist teachers for the Deaf had very limited Sign Language proficiency, which was a problem when they taught Sign Language skills to Deaf learners. In the immediate term, the implication is that it may be necessary to employ competent Sign Language interpreters to work alongside specialist teachers. In the medium- to long-term, it also implies that the teachers need to be professionally equipped in the language by facilitators with native-like proficiency in preservice and in-service training. Native-like proficiency acquired from Deaf members of the community would be desirable for the professional development of specialist teachers. It is also implied that language teaching skills need to be acquired from facilitators with qualifications in language teaching. Therefore, the study concludes that, although most of the teachers underwent a lot of professional development by taking diploma and bachelor degree in Special Needs Education, few teachers had undergone formal training in teaching Deaf learners and specifically in utilizing Sign Language as language of instruction and examinable subject. Practising teachers, therefore, needed in-service training on

how to implement Sign Language regulatory frameworks because of the challenges they faced such as lack of fluency in the language.

#### **6.6.4 Strategies That Could Be Put in Place to Enhance the Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf**

Among the key strategies suggested by participants was the need for the Ministry to use proficient Sign Language specialist teachers for teaching Deaf learners. Although the majority of specialists has degree qualifications in Special Needs Education, these qualifications did not have modules on Sign Language. This had a negative effect on the learning of Deaf learners. For effective implementation of the policy, there was a need to professionally develop teachers in the area of Sign Language competencies and language teaching skills.

It was further suggested that teacher training institutions should teach the theoretical as well as the practical aspect of Sign Language. There was need for an individual to pursue the practical part of Sign Language programmes to be proficient in Sign Language. Tertiary education should ensure that the teachers are appropriately qualified to teach Deaf learners by acquiring Sign Language teaching skills so that they avoid having to be taught Sign Language by the Deaf learners whom they should be teaching. It was also suggested that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education could ensure the availability of resources to enhance the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. It emerged, from the study, that the resources were not adequate since the schools were not being financially helped by the Ministry. Various other strategies were proposed by participants to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf. The suggested strategies imply that micro-level implementers of Sign Language regulatory frameworks had ideas that need to be considered in order to enhance implementation of ZSL policies, as shown in the following recommendations:

#### **6.7 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations related to policy and practice that may enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf were made. The recommendations are classified under policy-makers, District School Inspectors and schools psychological services, School Heads and teachers.

### **6.7.1 Policy Formulation**

Sign Language policy implementers were not involved in the formulation and adoption of the policy and no workshops were held to educate them on the meaning of the Sign Language policy and how it was supposed to be implemented. There was, therefore, no shared understanding on the meaning of the Sign Language regulatory frameworks. The study, therefore, recommends that the government should consider involving local level Sign Language experts and implementers in the formulation and adaptation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. Such involvement would help to specify the roles of the Sign Language policy implementers and getting their support in lobbying for appropriately sign language-competent staffing of special schools. It would also foster the development of developing Sign Language syllabi and mobilizing resources for the Sign Language curriculum.

### **6.7.2 Policy-Makers**

- Policy-makers should ensure that they formulate Sign Language regulatory frameworks whose goals and means are not ambiguous, to avoid conflict in the way the policy is implemented.
- Policy-makers should also ensure that there is production of pictorial textbooks in Sign Language to enable learners to read on their own.
- Policy-makers should ensure the production of updated ZSL dictionaries in electronic forms.
- MoPSe officials also need to be empowered with requisite skills and resources for enforcing Sign Language regulatory frameworks with clear penalties against those who willfully fail to adhere to the Sign Language regulatory frameworks.
- Policy-makers and other MoPSE officials whose duties involve monitoring implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks should be offered intensive training on Sign Language curriculum facilitated by members of the Deaf community.

### **6.7.3 The Ministry of Education**

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should provide capacity development opportunities to Sign Language policy implementers, from the national, provincial, district

and school levels down to the teacher in the classroom on how the Sign language regulatory frameworks can be implemented. Continuous professional development through seminars and other in-service training workshops are crucial for teachers and other policy implementers for them to be able to use Sign Language as a medium of instruction when teaching the Deaf learners. It also enables the MoPSE officers to be knowledgeable on how to monitor the implementation of the Sign Language policy to avoid policy ambiguity and policy conflict.

- Universities, colleges and other institutions that train teachers should introduce ZSL as a teaching subject as this will give more recognition, appreciation, acceptance and standardization of training in the language, just as it is happening with other indigenous languages.
- MoPSE staffing officers need to deploy only teachers who are trained in ZSL for Deaf learners.
- All schools should be made aware of the Sign Language policy which stipulates that it is a medium of instruction for the Deaf.
- Teachers need in-service training on ZSL so that they will be able to handle Deaf learners in special schools.
- There should be a meaningful and active collaboration between the Ministry of Education, special schools, parents and the Deaf community to come up with a ZSL curriculum for Deaf learners.
- The Ministry should provide ZSL syllabi to guide teachers on how to teach Deaf learners. Furthermore, they need to provide pictorial textbooks which are adapted to suit Deaf learners, textbooks with visual descriptions so that Deaf learners can read on their own.
- It is also recommended that MoPSE needs to regulate training of Sign Language interpreters who are in special schools as they may need specialized training in order to be able to interpret specific subjects.

#### **6.7.4 District School Inspectors and Learners Welfare, Psychological Services and Special Needs Education**

- SPSSNE officials need to be fluent in Sign Language for Deaf learners. They could be given priority for in-service training in Sign Language so that they can monitor, evaluate and assist teachers in this area.
- School psychologists and remedial tutors should be trained to function in a supervisory and administrative capacity for the implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks. School psychologists should supervise specialist teachers by devising timetables for completion, evaluation, enforcement, and cross-checking, and not wait for things to happen on their own.
- Psychologists should organize the provision of in-service training for specialist teachers. As school psychologists travel from school to school and consult with administrators and teachers, they should be able to identify training needs common to a school or the whole district, such as training in the use of Sign language as a medium of instruction for Deaf students.

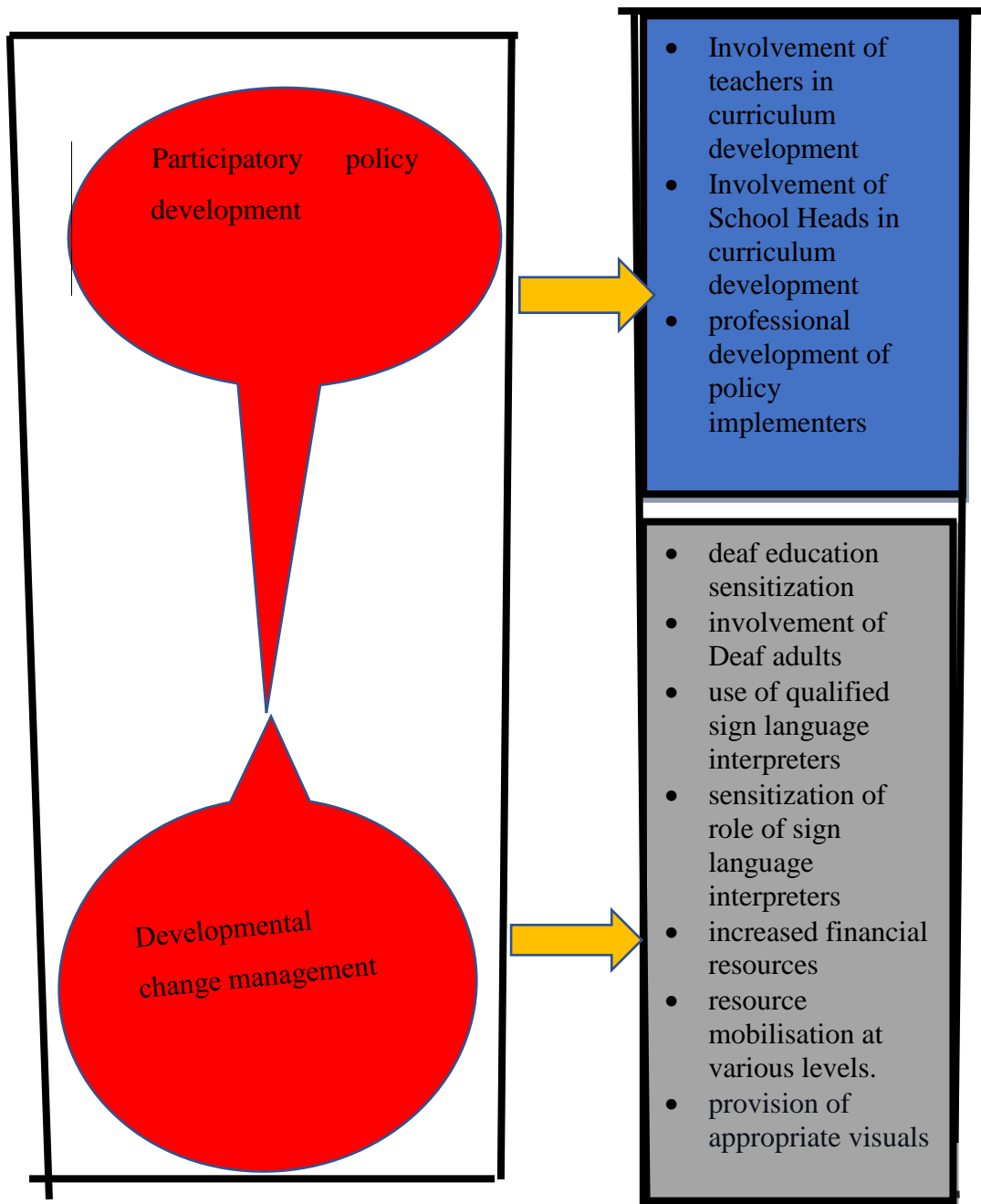
#### **6.7.5 School Heads and Specialist Teachers**

- The Head teachers at special schools for the Deaf need to master Sign Language and teach lessons for the teachers to emulate and should also draw work plans or schedules among others.
- The head teachers should ensure that the schools follow sign language policy implementation that is agreed upon to be used for teaching in the curriculum and that Sign Language is effectively implemented for the school to achieve its goals, the main one being academic achievement.
- The head teachers should be committed to facilitating structural integrity in classrooms so that students who are Deaf and teachers can work effectively.
- The head teachers should ensure that parents attend Sign Language workshops to enhance the acquisition of Sign Language by their children who are Deaf.
- Teachers should attend intensive in-service training to acquire pedagogical skills and standards for teaching Sign Language.

- Through in-service workshops, special school teachers should well-versed with visual equipment and materials to be used when teaching Deaf learners.
- The teachers should also improve the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction in the classrooms by updating themselves through capacity development programmes sponsored by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- There should also be a strong collaboration between the teachers and the interpreters so that the two plan the lesson together. Alternatively, interpreters need to be qualified teachers.

#### **6.7.6 A Proposed Model for Enhancing the Implementation of ZSL Policies in Zimbabwean Special Schools**

The model being proposed by the current researcher, Chegovo (2023), is a reflection of the suggestions from the participants, the literature surveyed for this study and the conceptual framework that oriented this study, in order to enhance the implementation of ZSL policies in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf. The proposed model was designed based on Matland's (1995) Orienting Conceptual Framework, the Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation, particularly the aspects it borrows from Elmore's (1982, 1985) synthesis of bottom-up and top-down perspectives of policy implementation. The current study proposes Chegovo (2023) model which is aptly called Administrative Sign Language Policy Conflict-Ambiguity Resolution Model. The proposed model features participatory policy development and developmental change management that reciprocally interacts with teacher professional development, Deaf education sensitization and resource mobilisation at various levels. Within the model, all the current study's proffered recommendations are included. These recommendations are captured as special features which are meant to enhance the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks in Special schools for the Deaf as illustrated in the proposed model in Figure 6.1.



**Figure 6.1: Chegovo (2023) Administrative Sign Language Policy Conflict-Ambiguity Resolution Model**

Without doubt, the most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher. With their knowledge, experiences and competencies, teachers are central to any curriculum development effort (Toghyani, Khorasgani & Rahmani, 2021). Furthermore, Bediako (2019), argues that better teachers support better learning because they are the most knowledgeable about



the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom. The head teachers should ensure that the school use signs agreed upon to be used for teaching in the curriculum and that Sign Language is effectively implemented for the school to achieve its goals, the main one being academic achievement (Kalya, 2020). This implies that the head teachers should be capacitated so as to have appropriate managerial skills in monitoring the implementation of the LiEP. A study conducted in Zimbabwe by Chireshe and Maunganidze (2007) revealed that ideal learning for Deaf learners should be assisted with visual modalities since sight is their only source of information. These visual equipment and materials augment the student's understanding of linguistic skills which in this case is sign language. This implies that there is need for mobilisation of appropriate resources for the Deaf learners.

### **Developmental Change Management**

Sign Language, according to Faunae (2009), involves the ability to collaborate with the Deaf community and parents during curriculum design since they have great knowledge about their children, and Sign Language. Political commitment is an important signal for the credibility of a policy (Liu et al., 2018). Political commitment can be seen through increased allocation of financial resources, resource mobilisation at various levels and provision of appropriate resources at special schools for the Deaf. There is need for ZSL interpreters in Zimbabwe. The previous training for interpreters was held in 2000 by the Finnish Association of the Deaf (WFD 2008). According to Barbra Nyangairi from Deaf Zimbabwe Trust, there still is no training programme for interpreters. The Chegovo (2022) Administrative Sign Language Policy Conflict-Ambiguity Resolution Model advocates for ZSL interpreters training and their role in the learning of the Deaf learners in special schools for the Deaf.

### **6.7.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations were made for further studies:

- During non-participant observation, the researcher found that most specialist teachers for the Deaf preferred spoken language over Sign Language. This study, therefore, recommends that a further study on the impact of the use of total communication over spoken language for Deaf learners.

- The researcher also observed that hearing learners were also learning in special schools for the Deaf (residential schools). This study recommends that there should be a study on the impact of reverse inclusive education for Deaf learners.
- The study focused on special schools for the Deaf. Therefore, this study recommends that a different study should focus on the Resource Units for the Deaf.
- The Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has introduced a new curriculum in the education system, with new words and new content. Thus, a study should be conducted on the impact of the new curriculum on Deaf learners.

### **6.8 Contribution of the Study**

- Firstly, this research may increase the understanding of how Sign Language is employed in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Since the study focused on special schools for the Deaf, it might give some insights into the level of Sign Language used in Zimbabwean special schools.
- Secondly, because this study focused on Deaf students' primary classes Sign Language use in education, it may uncover the actual situation at the beginning level briefly. Educators and policymakers can gain some ideas about how mother tongue instruction (sign language) is carried out at this crucial level. Language in education policy-makers, specifically, may get some ideas of Deaf students' special needs regarding Sign Language and how it should be implemented.

### **6.9 Final Comments**

The study examined the factors that influence the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The specialist teachers of the Deaf, the DSIs, and the school psychologists experts revealed the practices in the implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. Results of the study revealed that the policy implementers were not involved in the formulation and adoption of the policies; hence, there were variances in the way the policy was interpreted. It was established from the study that teachers faced a lot of challenges in effectively implementing the policy. Teachers were not capacitated in ZSL and, as a result, they lacked proficiency in ZSL. Lack of

proficiency in ZSL resulted in teachers employing total communication instead of using ZSL as a medium of instruction in teaching the Deaf learners. It further emerged from the study that teachers lacked visual resources in teaching the Deaf learners. The findings of the study revealed that Deaf learners can learn effectively through sight and, as a result, the availability of visual materials was of paramount importance to the learning of the Deaf learners. Although most of the teachers were holders of Special Needs Education qualifications, these qualifications did not have a component of ZSL and, as a result, teachers were found wanting in terms of ZSL qualifications. Although the Deaf community was used to help in the teaching of the Deaf learners, it was established from the study that these Sign Language interpreters did not possess the required qualifications and, as a result, most of them lacked mastery of content to teach the Deaf learners.

## REFERENCES

- Adarlo, G. & Jackson, L. (2017). For whom is K-12 education: A critical look into twenty-first century educational policy and curriculum in the Philippines. In *Educating for the 21st Century* (pp. 207-223). Singapore: Springer
- Adebayo, A. S. & Ngwenya, K. (2015). Challenges in the implementation of inclusive, education at Elulakeni cluster primary schools in Shiselweni district of Swaziland. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(13). Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education Access and Quality.
- Ainscow, M. (2019). Ainscow, M. Slee, R. & Best, M. (2019). Editorial: the Salamanca Statement: 25 years on, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(7/8), 18 - 31.
- Akoth, J. (2021). *Factors influencing the development of Ugandan sign language in the learning environment: A case study of Uganda school for the Deaf Kampala city* (Doctoral dissertation, Kyambogo University).
- Allcock, C., Dormon, F., Taunt, R. & Dixon, J. (2015). *Constructive comfort: accelerating change in the NHS*. London: Health Foundation.
- Alsubaie, M. A. (2016). Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(9), 106-107.
- Alzahrani, A. (2022). Early Sign Language: Psychological and Mental Health of Deaf Babies. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry*, 23(6), 79 - 93.
- Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 23(3), 121-127.
- Amoako, S. F. (2019). Sixty years of Deaf education in Ghana (1957-2017). *Commun Disord Deaf Stud Hearing Aids*, 7(1), 1-11.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Annum, G. (2017).  
[http://campus.educadium.com/newmediart/file.php/1/giilmadstore/UgradResearch/acaResearch\\_index.htm](http://campus.educadium.com/newmediart/file.php/1/giilmadstore/UgradResearch/acaResearch_index.htm).

- Baboun, M. A. (2016). *The Importance of Early Sign Language Acquisition for d/Deaf Children* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Puerto Rico).
- Bakir, N., Devers, C. & Hugs, B. (2016). Affordances and Constraints of a Blended Course in a Teacher Professional Development Program. *Journal of Education Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 25, 323-341.
- Banegas, D. L. (2019). Teacher professional development in language-driven CLIL: A case study. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 12(2), 242–264.
- Baş, G. & Şentürk, C. (2019). Teachers' voice: Teacher participation in curriculum development process. *I.I.: Inquiry in Education*, 11(1), 5 - 17.
- Béland, D. & Howlett, M. (2016). The role and impact of the multiple-streams approach in Comparative policy analysis. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 18(3), 221-227.
- Bellugi, U. & Fischer, S. (1972). A comparison of sign language and spoken language. *Cognition*, 1(2-3), 173-200.
- Bediako, S. (2019). Models and concepts of curriculum implementation, some definitions and influence of implementation. *Unpublished Manuscript, University of Cape Coast*.
- Bergbauer, A., Van Staden, S. & Bosker, R. (2016). Differences in achievement between home language and language of learning in South Africa: Evidence from prePIRLS 2011. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 6(1), 1-10.
- Birinci, F. G. & Saricoban, A. (2021). The effectiveness of visual materials in teaching vocabulary to deaf students of EFL. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 628-645.
- Board, Rwanda. Education. (2018). Republic of Rwanda, Rwanda Education Board.
- Bongco, R. T. & David, A. P. (2020). Filipino teachers' experiences as curriculum policy implementers in the evolving K to 12. *Issues in Educational Research*, 2(2), 19 – 35.
- Glaser, M. & Van Pletzen, E. (2012). Inclusive education for deaf students: Literacy practices and South African landscape. *Issues in Educational Research*, 30(1), 19-34.
- Borrelli, L. M. (2018). Whisper down, up and between the lanes: Exclusionary policies and

- their limits of control in times of irregularized migration. *Public Administration*, 96(4), 803-816.
- Bragg, D., Koller, O., Bellard, M., Berke, L., Boudreault, P., Braffort, A. & Ringel M. M. (2019). Sign language recognition, generation, and translation: An interdisciplinary perspective. In *The 21st international ACM SIGACCESS conference on computers and accessibility* (pp. 16-31).
- Cairney, P. (2022). The myth of ‘evidence-based policymaking’ in a decentred state. *Public Policy and Administration*, 37(1), 46-66.
- Cano, S., Collazos, C. A., Flórez Aristizábal, L. & Moreira, F. (2017). Augmentative and alternative communication in the literacy teaching for deaf children. In *International Conference on Learning and Collaboration Technologies* (pp. 123-133). Springer, Cham.
- Chibuike, E. (2020). The Challenges of Teaching Sign Language to Pupils With Hearing Impairment in Special Education Primary School, Ibom Layout, Calabar. *Ibom Layout, Calabar (April 1, 2020)*.
- Chibwe, J. (2015). *Contribution of sign language variations to academic performance of learners with hearing impairments in selected copperbelt and Lusaka primary special schools in Zambia* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Chifinda, R. (2017). *Facilitators and barriers in academic assessment of learners with hearing impairment: A case of examinations council of Zambia* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Chikopela, R. (2013). The Impact of New Breakthrough to Literacy programme on reading performance of learners with hearing impairment. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 3(11), 36-41.
- Chilemba, E. M. (2014). *Malawi African Disability Rights YearBook*, 2, 207 - 214.
- Chimedza, R. (1997). Deaf Culture in Zimbabwe: Existence, Reality and Implication for Education. *Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education*, 5(1), 1-12.
- Chimedza, R. & Sithole, C. Z. R. (2007). *Zimbabwe National Sign Language Dictionary*. Harare: SPS and SNE, UNICEF.
- Chimdi, W. (2015). Ethiopian sign language and educational accessibility for the deaf community: A case study on Jimma, Nekemte, Addis Ababa and Hawasa towns. *Journal of Languages and Culture*, 6(2), 9-17.

- Chupina, K. (2006). The Role of Sign Language in Sweden. *Florida*. Retrieved October, 3, 2015.
- Clark, M. D., Hauser, P. C., Miller, P., Kargin, T., Rathmann, C., Guldenoglu, B. & Israel, E. (2016). The importance of early sign language acquisition for deaf readers. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 32(2), 127-151.
- Coleman, A., Billings, J., Allen, P., Mikelyte, R., Croke, S., MacInnes, J. & Checkland, K. (2021). Ambiguity and conflict in policy implementation: the case of the new care models (vanguard) programme in England. *Journal of Social Policy*, 50(2), 285-304.
- Coombs, H. (2022). *Case study research: single or multiple [White paper]*. Southern Utah University. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7604301>
- Commission of Higher Education CHED) Philippine Memorandum Order No. 20 of (2013). Commitments. Paris: UNESCO. *Derived from the World Education Forum*.
- Constitution of Zimbabwe. (2013). *Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 Act*. Harare: Fidelity Printers.
- Cooper, A., Holzman, S., Shanks, M. & Tay, P. (2021). Beginning with language: Inclusive education strategies with sign languages in Rwanda, Singapore, United States, and Việt Nam. In *Global Directions in Inclusive Education* (pp. 45-65). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research designs: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (4th Ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J. (2009). *10 Bilingual and immersion programs: The handbook of language teaching*. Routledge.
- Dakar Framework for Action (2000). *Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/dakfram\\_eng.shtm](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtm).
- Dakwa, F. E. & Musengi, M. (2015). A look at language problems experienced by children with hearing impairments the learner's experience. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 35(2), 177-180.

- Davidescu, S., Hiteva, R. & Maltby, T. (2018). Two steps forward, one step back: Renewable energy transitions in Bulgaria and Romania. *Public Administration*, 96(3), 611-625.
- Deaf Zimbabwe Trust. (2015). *Zimbabwe Sign Language Bill*.
- DEAFSA (Deaf Federation of South Africa) (2009). Deaf learners & their education rights: Is South Africa listening? Available at: [www.deafsa.org.za](http://www.deafsa.org.za) [accessed 19 January 2011].
- Dekker, D. (2010). What is mother tongue-based multilingual education? *Starting where the children are*, 23-25.
- Deneke, G. Y. (2017). *Accessibility of sign language services to the deaf in tertiary education institutions: A case of the University of Zambia and Zambia Institute of special education* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Deng, Z. (2017). Rethinking curriculum and teaching. In G. W. Noblit (Ed.). *Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- De Meulder, M. (2015). The legal recognition of sign languages. *Sign Language Studies*, 15(4), 498-506.
- De Meulder, M. (2016). *The power of language policy: The legal recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of deaf communities* (No. 301). University of Jyväskylä.
- De Meulder, M. (2017). The influence of deaf people's dual category status on sign language planning: The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act (2015). *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 18(2), 215-232.
- de Prado, J. E. L. (2021). Sign language teaching technological advances and differences in international contexts. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 1 (2), 23 - 42
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S. & Liamputtong, P. (2009). Researching sensitive topics: Qualitative research as emotion work. *Qualitative Research*, 9(1), 61-79.



- Dube, C. & Chigumira, G. (2019). Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit. *Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 1-32. Retrieved January 20 2009 from *research encyclopedia, education* (pp. 1–23). New York, UK: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.55.
- Dzastina, A. (2022). Ethical Considerations: Types and Examples. BachelorPrint <https://www.bachelorprint.eu › methodology › ethical>.
- Education Amendment Act. (2006). Harare: Government Printers.
- Education Assessment Association of Southern Africa. (2017). Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Elmore, R. F. (1985). Forward and backward mapping: Reversible logic in the analysis of public policy. In *Policy implementation in federal and unitary systems* (pp. 33-70). Springer, Dordrecht.
- El-Zraigat, I. A. & Smadi, Y. (2012). Challenges of educating students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in Jordan. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(8), 150-158.
- Engler, K. S. & MacGregor, C. J. (2018). Deaf education teacher preparation: A Phenomenological case study of a graduate program with a comprehensive philosophy. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 162(5), 388-418.
- Fakhrudin, A., Yamtinah, S. & Riyadi, R. (2017). Implementation of augmented reality technology in natural sciences learning of elementary school to optimize the students' learning result. *International Online Journal of Primary Education*, 6(2), 30-38.
- Fine-Bone, S. U. (2017). The level of sign language expertise among teachers in special education centres in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 5(4), 337–339.
- Finland, U. N. I. C. E. F. (2015). Introduction to the human rights based approach: a guide for Finnish NGOs and their partners. *Helsinki: Finnish Committee for UNICEF*.
- Fischer, S. D. (2015). Sign languages in their historical context. *The Routledge handbook of historical linguistics*, 442-465.
- Fischer, F. & Miller, G. J. (2017). *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics, and methods*. Routledge.

- Forlin, C., Kawai, N. & Higuchi, S. (2015). Educational reform in Japan towards inclusion: Are we training teachers for success? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(3), 314-33.
- Fox, N. (2009). Using interviews in a research project. *The NIHR RDS for the East Midlands/Yorkshire & the Humber*, 26.
- Fraser, J., Fahlman, D. W., Arscott, J. & Guillot, I. (2018). Pilot testing for feasibility in a study of student retention and attrition in online undergraduate programs. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 19(1), 13 - 25.
- Frederickson, N. & Cline, T. (2015). *Special educational needs, inclusion and diversity*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Fungai, M. (2017). *Critical analysis of the factors affecting the acquisition of sign language by learners with hearing impairment in regular primary schools* (Doctoral dissertation), Sultan Idris Education University.
- Garton, S., & Graves, K. (2014). Identifying a research agenda for language teaching materials. *The Modern Language Journal*, 98(2), 654-657.
- Gillen, J., & Papen, U. (2021). The story makers mini-project: Encouraging children's multimodal writing. *Research, Practice and Innovation in Deaf Multiliteracies*, 1.
- Glaser, M. & Van Pletzen, E. (2012). Inclusive education for deaf students: Literacy practices and South African Sign language. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 30(1), 25-37.
- Glendenning, D. (1999). Country report: Ireland the Education Act 1998. *European Journal for Education Law and Policy*, 3(1), 61-65.
- Goggin, M. L., Bowman, A. O. M., Lester, J. P & O'Toole, L. J (1990). *Implementation theory and practice: Toward a third generation*. Scott Foresman & Company.
- Government of Ireland. (2008). *Disability Act Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act*. Dublin: The stationery Office.
- Wedell, M., & Grassick, L. (Eds.). (2018). *International perspectives on teachers living with curriculum change*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Graves, K. (2019). Survey review: Recent books on language materials development and analysis. *ELT Journal*, 73(3), 337–354.

- Graves, K. & Garton, S. (2017). An analysis of three curriculum approaches to teaching English public-sector schools. *Language Teaching*, 50(4), 441–482.
- Graves, K., & Garton, S. (2019). Materials use and development. In K. Graves & S. Garton (Eds). *The Routledge handbook of English language teacher education* (pp. 417-431). Routledge.
- Haitembu, R. K. (2014). *Assessing the provision of inclusive Education in Omusati region*. [Masters' Thesis]. Windhoek: University of Namibia.
- Heale, R. & Forbes, D. (2013). Understanding triangulation in research. *Evidence-based Nursing*, 16(4), 98-98.
- Herweg, N., Zahariadis, N. & Zohlnhöfer, R. (2018). The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, refinements, and empirical applications. In C. Weible & P. Sabatier. *Theories of the Policy Process* (pp. 17–53). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Heugh, K., Prinsloo, C., Makgamatha, M., Diedericks, G. & Winnaar, L. (2017). Multilingualism (s) and system-wide assessment: A southern perspective. *Language and Education*, 31(3), 197-216.
- Hilligoss, T. (2014). Principals who supervise teachers of the deaf: A mixed methods study. Tanya Hilligoss *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [tanyahilligoss@yahoo.com](mailto:tanyahilligoss@yahoo.com).
- Hiskey, D. (2010). How Deaf People Think. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2010/07/how-deaf-people-think/>
- Honna, N. & Kato, M. (2003). Establishing sign language in deaf education in Japan: A sociolinguistic approach. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 12(3), 37-50.
- Hordern, J. (2015). An unfinished experiment: Ambiguity and conflict in the implementation of higher skills policy. *Research Papers in Education*, 30(2), 248-265.
- Hudson, B., Hunter, D. & Peckham, S. (2019). Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: Can policy support programs help? *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(1), 1-14.
- Humphries, T., Kushalnagar, R., Mathur, G., Napoli, D. J., Padden, C., Rathmann, C. & Smith, S. (2013). The right to language. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 41(4), 872-884.

- Ikwen, E. U., Nkebe, S. A. & James, D. D. (2017). A survey of opinions of primary school teachers and University lecturers on inclusive and equitable educational provision in primary schools in Central Education Zone of Cross River State. *The Exceptional Child*, 19(2), 47-55.
- Imbiti, B., Awori, B. B. & Kwena, J. (2014). Strategies facilitating Kenyan sign language progress in primary schools for learners with hearing impairments, inwestern province, Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 2(1), 56-67.
- Jess, M., Carse, N. & Key, J. (2016). The Primary Physical Education Curriculum Process: More Complex that You Might Think! *Education*, 3-13, 44, 502-512.
- Jones, B. D. & Baumgartner, F. R. (2012). From there to here: Punctuated equilibrium to the general punctuation thesis to a theory of government information processing. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), 1-20.
- Kaibe, M. C. (2021). *Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in the policy framework of the education sector: The case of Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, Republic of South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).
- Katjavivi, P. (2016). *Education Transformation in Namibia*. Forum of Commonwealth Council on Education.
- Kalya, J. K. (2020). *Effect of Kenyan Sign Language on academic performance of learners with hearing impairment: Case of Kedowa Special School, Kericho County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta university).
- Kamukwamba, K. L. (2017). *Factors affecting the use sign langauage in the learning of hearing impaired pupils in selected upper primary schools in Lusaka district* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Karangwa, E. (2014). Towards Inclusive Education in Rwanda An assessment of the socio-political contributors to Inclusive Education developments. *Rwandan Journal of Education*, 2(1), 46-60.
- Kaswa, J. M. (2015). *The effect of visual learning aids on student's academic performance in public secondary schools, a case of Magu District secondary schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
- Kenya, Laws of. (2013). *The constitution of Kenya: 2010*. Chief Registrar of the Judiciary.
- Keshav, B. (2012). *The role of school leaders in influencing the implementation of the IQMS: Tasks, opportunities and constraints: A case study of two Gauteng schools* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities and School of Education).

- Khadka, B. K. (2018). Mother Tongue Education: A Quest of Quality and Access in Education. *Journal of NELTA Surkhet*, 5, 65-74.
- Khorasgani, A. T. (2021). Teacher Role and Involvement in Curriculum Development and Mapping. *Journals of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (EJAHSS)*, 1(1), 67 – 80.,
- Khumalo, S. W. (2014). *An implementation analysis of the language policy in basic education in selected schools in eThekweni Municipality* (Doctoral dissertation). University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26-41.
- Kolawole, S., Osakuade, O., Saxena, N. & Olorisade, B. K. (2021). Sign-to-Speech Model for Sign Language Understanding: A Case Study of Nigerian Sign Language. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2111.00995*.
- Kortesalo, M. (2015). A study of qualification processes and competencies of sign language interpreters in african context: A contribution to the process of establishing a Sign Language interpreter training programme in Ethiopia. University of Jyväskylä.
- Lane, H., Pillard, R. C. & Hedberg, U. (2011). The people of the eye: Deaf ethnicity, ancestry and Language. *Africa Education Review*, 3 (2), 101 – 123.
- Larkin, M., Shaw, R., & Flowers, P. (2019). Multiperspectival designs and processes in interpretative phenomenological analysis research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(2), 182-198.
- Lawson, H. R. (2012). *Impact of interpreters filling multiple roles in mainstream classrooms on communication access for deaf students*. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Leigh, I. W., Andrews, J. F., Harris, R. L. & Ávila, T. G. (2020). *Deaf culture: Exploring deaf communities in the United States*. Plural Publishing.
- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2014). Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide. *Using Software in Qualitative Research*, 1-384.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1989). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. *The Review of Higher Education*, 12(3), 221-240.

- Liu, N., Tang, S.-Y., Zhan, X. & Lo, C. W.-H. (2018). Political Commitment, Policy Ambiguity, and Corporate Environmental Practices. *Policy Studies Journal*, 46(1), 190–214.
- Lodi, A. C. B. (2013). Bilingual education for the deaf and inclusion under the National Policy on Special Education and Decree 5.626/05. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 39, 49-63.
- Loflin, T. (2016). Relationship between Teacher Fidelity and Physical Education Student Outcomes. *Physical Educator*, 12, 359-383.
- Luft, P. (2017). What is different about deaf education? The effects of child and family factors on educational services. *The Journal of Special Education*, 51(1), 27-37.
- Luckner, J. L., & Ayantoye, C. (2013). Itinerant teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing: Practices and preparation. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 18(3), 409-423.
- Lutalo-Kiingi, S. & De Clerck, G. A. (2017). Perspectives on the sign language factor in sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges of sustainability. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 162(1), 47-56.
- Magaldi, D., & Berler, M. (2020). Semi-structured interviews. *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*, 4825-4830.
- Mainza, C. F. (2017). *Financing of special education in Zambia: An exploration of the current practice in Southern Province* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Maizere, J. (2020). *Exploring academic experiences of deaf children in a primary school in Zimbabwe* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).
- Majoka, M. I., & Khan, M. I. (2017). Education policy provisions and objectives. A review of Pakistani education policies. *Italian Journal of Sociology of education*, 9(2), 104-125.
- Mandyata, J. (2018). Stakeholders' Views on Use of Sign Language Alone as a Medium of Instruction for the Hearing Impaired in Zambian Primary Schools. *International Journal of Special education*, 33(1), 62-76.
- Mapepa, P., & Magano, M. D. (2018). Support to address barriers to learning for Deaf learners. *African Journal of Disability*, 7(1), 1-8.

- Mapolisa, T. & Tshabalala, T. (2013). The impact of the inclusion of children with hearing impairments into regular schools: A case study of Dakamela primary school in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(7), 1500-1510.
- Maseko, B., & Dhlamini, N. (2014). Mother tongue instruction for lower primary school level in Zimbabwe – A half hearted commitment to the development of her indigenous languages. *Education*, 5(6), 75 – 89.
- Matende, T., Sibanda, C., Chandavengerwa, N. M. & Sadiki, M. (2021). Critical language awareness in the education of students who are deaf in Zimbabwe. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 41(3), 240-248.
- Matland, R. E. (1995). Synthesizing the implementation literature: The ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 5(2), 145-174.
- McBurney, S. L. (2001). William Stokoe and the discipline of sign language linguistics. *Historiographia Linguistica*, 28(1-2), 143-186.
- McCarty, T. L. & May, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Language policy and political issues in education*. New York: Springer.
- McDowell, A. C. M. (2019). *The use of unaided augmentative and alternative communication strategies to support learners in South Africa special schools: a study of teachers' perceptions* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
- Villena, D., Reyes, E. & Dizon, E. (2015). *Curriculum development*. Manila, Philippines: Adriana Printing Co. Inc.
- McKenzie, J., Kelly, J. & Shanda N. (2018). *Starting Where We Are: Situational Analysis of the Needs of Learners with Severe to Profound Sensory or Intellectual Impairments in South Africa*. Cape Town: Disability Innovations Africa, Disability Studies Programme, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Cape Town.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Michaleowa, K. A. (2011). *Education for All? A Perspective on an Inclusive Society*. In M. Oliver, *Understanding Disability: From theory to practice* (pp.78-94). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

- Mindess, A. (2014). *Reading between the signs: Intercultural communication for sign language interpreters*. Nicholas Brealey.
- Mhlanga, S. K. (2011). *Zimbabwean Sign Language dictionary*. KG VI School.
- Modipane, M. & Themane, M. (2014). Teachers' social capital as a resource for curriculum development: lessons learnt in the implementation of a Child-Friendly Schools programme. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(4), 73 - 89.
- Mpila, M. J. (2013). *Challenges and opportunities in teaching learners with special needs in Swaziland: A case of special schools*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni campus, Swaziland.
- Mpofu, J. & Chimhenga, S. (2013). Challenges faced by Hearing Impaired pupils in learning: A case study of King George VI Memorial School. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 2(1), 69-74.
- Mpuang, K. D., Mukhopadhyay, S., & Malatsi, N. (2015). Sign language as medium of instruction in Botswana primary schools: Voices from the field. *Deafness & Education International*, 17(3), 132-143.
- Mugarura, P., Ssempala, F. & Nachuha, S. (2022). Role of in-service for the students' performance in selected public secondary schools in Kisoro District. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, 9, 1-13.
- Mulonda, M. (2013). A situational analysis in the use of Sign Language in the education of the Deaf in Zambia: A case of Magwero and St Joseph Schools for the Deaf. University of Zambia, Lusaka.
- Murray, J. J., Snoddon, K., De Meulder, M. & Underwood, K. (2020). Intersectional inclusion for deaf learners: Moving beyond General Comment no. 4 on Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 691-705.
- Musengi, M. (2014). *The experience of teaching in residential schools for the deaf in Zimbabwe* (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Musengi, M. (2019). The place of Sign Language in the inclusive education of Deaf learners in Zimbabwe amid CRPD (mis)interpretation. *African Disability Rights Yearbook*, 7, 96 - 111



- Musengi, M. (2020). Special Educational Needs and Academic Professionalism for Inclusive Higher Education in Africa. In *Inclusion as Social Justice* (pp. 128-140). Brill Sense.
- Musengi, M. (2022). Multilingual Ability among Deaf Students in Multicultural Education Contexts: Policies and Principles for Teaching. In *Deaf Education and Challenges for Bilingual/Multilingual Students* (pp. 61-74). IGI Global.
- Musengi, M., & Chireshe, R. (2012). Inclusion of deaf students in mainstream rural primary schools in Zimbabwe: Challenges and opportunities. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, 10(2), 107-116.
- Musengi, M., Ndofirepi, A. & Shumba, A. (2013). Rethinking education of deaf children in Zimbabwe: Challenges and opportunities for teacher education. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 18(1), 62-74.
- Muskin, J. A. (2015). From good ideas to good practice: putting teachers at the center of education improvement, where they belong. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 27, 93-102.
- Muthathi, I. S., & Rispel, L. C. (2020). Policy context, coherence and disjuncture in the implementation of the Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance programme in the Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 18(1), 115 - 129.
- Munoz-Baell, I. M., Alvarez-Dardet, C., Ruiz, M. T., Ferreiro-Lago, E. & Aroca-Fernandez, E. (2008). Setting the stage for school health-promoting programmes for Deaf children in Spain. *Health Promotion International*, 23(4), 311-327.
- Mutswanga, P. & Sithole, C. (2014). Perceptions of people who are deaf on sign language teaching and communication by hearing people: Harare Urban, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1 (4), 59-68.
- Mwanza, C. (2017). *Teacher involvement in curriculum development in Zambia: a role analysis of selected secondary school teachers in Lusaka district, Lusaka province, Zambia* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).
- Mweri, J. G. (2014). Diversity in education: Kenyan sign language as a medium of instruction in schools for the deaf in Kenya. *Multilingual Education*, 4(1), 1-14.

- Napoli, D. J., Mellon, N. K., Niparko, J. K., Rathmann, C., Mathur, G., Humphries, T. & Lantos, J. D. (2015). Should all deaf children learn sign language? *Pediatrics*, 136(1), 170-176.
- National Disability Policy (2021). Zimbabwe Government. Harare: Government Printers.
- Nelson, M. M. (2015). *Deaf Education Services in Southern Regions of Vietnam: A survey of Teacher Perceptions and Recommendations*. *Deafness and Educational International*. 3 (3), 94 – 106.
- Ngobeni, W. P. (2017). *The Effect of Sign Language Barriers among Deaf Learners: A Case Study of a Special School in Motheo District South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, Bloemfontein: Central University of Technology, Free State).
- Ngobeni, W. P., Maimane, J. R. & Rankhumise, M. P. (2020). The effect of limited sign language as barrier to teaching and learning among Deaf learners in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(2), 1-7.
- Ngulube, J. (2016). *Challenges and facilitators of Inclusion Policy Implementation for pupils' special educational needs in post-primary regular schools in Zambia* (Doctoral dissertation, Ph. D. Thesis. Trinity College Dublin).
- Nhongo, R. (2013). A national language policy for Zimbabwe in the twenty-first century: Myth or reality? *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(6).
- Nkolola-Wakumelo, M., & Manyando, M. (2013). A situational analysis of the use of sign language in the education of the Deaf in Zambia: A case of Magwero and St Joseph's schools for the Deaf. *Language Matters*, 44(3), 69-88.
- Noble, H. & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-based nursing*, 22(3), 67-68.
- Norris, E. & J. McCrae, J. (2013). *Policy that sticks: Preparing to govern for lasting change*. London: Institute for Government.
- Ntinda, K. & Tfusi, B. (2019). Experiences of Teachers of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students' in a Special Needs School: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 7(7), 79-89.

- Nyawinda, C. W. (2015). *Influence of learning materials on learner achievement in number work activities of pre-schools in Kisumu east sub-county, Kisumu County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Obilo, P. I., & Sangoleye, S. A. (2010). Curriculum implementation and the teacher: Challenges and way forward. A paper presented at the 9th National Conference of the School of Social Sciences, AIFCE, Owerri.
- Oduro-Bediako, E. (2019). *Public-School Teachers' Gender, Years of Teaching Experience, Knowledge, and Perceptions as Predictors of Their Implementation of Brain-Based Learning Practices in K-12 Classrooms*. Andrews University.
- Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2013). *The Nature of Policy Change and Implementation: A Review of Different Theoretical Approaches*. OECD.
- Ohajunwa, E. B. C. & Mckenzie, J. (2013). Beyond 'if' to 'how': Disability inclusion in higher education. *University of Cape Town case study. Disability Catalyst Africa: Series, 4*.
- Okabe, M. (2013). Where does Philippine education go? The "K to 12" program and reform of Philippine basic education. *Philippine Journal of Labor and Industrial Relations* 35, nos. 1–2: 113–129.
- Ornstein, A. C. & Hunkins, F. P. (2017). *Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues, eBook*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- Orstein, A. & Hunkins, F. (2018). *Curriculum foundations, principles, and issues*. London,: Pearson Education Limited.
- Pakata, B. F. (2015). *Factors influencing use of sign language in teaching and learning in public primary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya*. M. Ed Dissertation, University of Nairobi.
- Parkin, I. (2010). Factors affecting deaf education in South Africa. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 155(4), 490-493.
- Petrie, S. (2013). Policy Contexts, Consequences and Controversies. In *Controversies in Policy Research: Critical Analysis for a New Era of Austerity and Privation* (pp. 1-12). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Phiri, M. (2021). Challenges faced by deaf children in accessing education in Malawi. *Deafness and Education International*, 23(3), 234-249.

- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Proctor, E. K., Powell, B. J. & McMillen, J. C. (2013). Implementation strategies: Recommendations for specifying and reporting. *Implementation Science*, 8(1), 1-11.
- Rai, N. & Thapa, B. (2015). A study on purposive sampling method in research. *Kathmandu: Kathmandu School of Law*, 5.
- Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M. S. A., Alhabsyi, F. & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 12(1), 22-29.
- Salamanca World Conference. (1994). *Special Needs Education framework for action statement*. Salamanca: Longman.
- Sambu, M. C., Otube, N., & Bunyasi, B. A. (2018). Assessment of academic performance of learners with hearing impairment in selected special primary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 6(2), 1-12. Sanjari, M., Bahramne.
- Secretary for Education Secretary's Circular 3 (2002). *Curriculum policy in primary and Secondary schools*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Secretary for Education (2007a). *Special examination arrangements for learners with disabilities and other special needs*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Sibanda, P. (2015). Analysis of sign language proficiency among teachers of the deaf in primary schools in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe): Implications for learning and inclusion. *Scientific Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences*, 4(9), 157-165.
- Shabiralyani, G., Hasan, K. S., Hamad, N. & Iqbal, N. (2015). Impact of visual aids in enhancing the learning process case research: District Dera Ghazi Khan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(19), 226-233.
- Shah, S. R. & Al-Bargi, A. (2013). Research Paradigms: Researchers' Worldviews, Theoretical Frameworks and Study Designs. *Arab World English Journal*, 4(4) 19 - 34.
- Sibanda, P. (2018). Awareness of the benefits of sign bilingual education in the education of deaf children in Zimbabwe. *Scientific Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences*, 7(11), 823-832.
- Smith, J., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretive phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Los Angeles: Sage

- Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J. & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387-431.
- Stander, M. & Le Roux, A. (2022). Teaching South African Sign Language as a second language to university students: an integrated pedagogy. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 60(4), 1119-1141.
- Stemela-Zali, U., Kathard, H. & Sefotho, M. M. (2022). The matrix of linguistic exclusions impeding career construction for D/deaf learners. *African Journal of Disability*, 11, 935. Stokoe Jr,
- Swanwick, R., Gregory, S., Daunt, W., Hanifin, J. & Silo, J. (2007). *Sign bilingual education: Policy and practice*. Coleford, Gloucestershire: Douglas McLean.
- Szymanski, C., Lutz, L., Shahan, C. & Gala, N. (2013). *Critical Needs of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Public Input Summary*. Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center. Publications and Information Dissemination, Clerc Center KDES PAS-6, 800 Florida Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002-3695.
- Taylor, K., Zarb, S. & Jeschke, N. (2021). Ambiguity, uncertainty and implementation. *International Review of Public Policy*, 3(1), 71 - 86.
- Tedla, T. & Negassa, D. (2019). The Inclusive education for deaf children in primary, secondary and preparatory schools in gondar, Ethiopia. *Humaniora*, 31(2), 177.
- Kenya Constitution. (2010). Government Printers. Nairobi.
- .
- Todd, R., Martin, J. & Brock, A. (2014). *Delivery units: Can they catalyse sustained improvements in education service delivery*. Melbourne: Cambridge Education.
- Toghyani Khorasgani A., Rahmani J. (2021). Economics Across the School Curriculum-Benefits and Drawbacks of Some Related Approaches. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*. 6(1), 9-14; ISSN: 2575-3363 (Online); Doi: 10.11648/j.ijecs.20210601.12.
- Tucker, D. A., Hendy, J. & Chrysanthaki, T. (2022). How does policy alienation develop? Exploring street-level bureaucrats' agency in policy context shift in UK telehealthcare. *Human Relations*, 75(9), 1679-1706.
- Trovato, S. (2013). A stronger reason for the right to sign languages. *Sign Language Studies*, 13(3), 401-422.

- Tucci S. L., Easterbrooks S. R., Lederberg A. R. (2016). The effects of theory of mind training on the false belief understanding of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in prekindergarten and kindergarten. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 21, 310–325.
- Ugwuanyi, B. I. & Chukwuemeka, E. E. (2013). The obstacles to effective policy implementation by the public bureaucracy in developing nations: The case of Nigeria. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 33(856), 1-10.
- UNCRPD. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. Geneva: United Nations.
- UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting our Collect Commitments*. Paris: UNESCO. Derived from the World Education Forum Proceeding Dakar, Senegal, April.
- UNESCO. (2004). *Education for all: The quality imperative. EFA global monitoring report 2005*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1994). World Conference on Special Needs Education, Salamanca, Spain..
- Van Staden, A., Badenhorst, G. & Ridge, E. (2009). The benefits of sign language for Deaf learners with language challenges. *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning/ Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, 25(1), 44-60.
- Vilches, M. L. C. (2017). Involving teachers in the change process: One English language teacher's account of implementing curricular change in Philippine basic education. In *International perspectives on teachers living with curriculum change* (pp. 15-37). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Wakumelo, N. M. (2009). Provision of Education for the Deaf in Zambia: The Situation and Challenges. In *University of Zambia School of Education and the Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies Conference*.
- Walker, M. & Martinez-Vargas, C. (2022). Epistemic governance and the colonial epistemic structure: Towards epistemic humility and transformed South-North relations. *Critical Studies in Education*, 63(5), 556-571.
- Wang, Q. (2015). Reframing 'public lessons' to support English teachers for curriculum change

- in China. In *Experiences of second language teacher education* (pp. 126-152). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Weaver, R. K. (2015). Getting people to behave: Research lessons for policy makers. *Public Administration Review*, 75(6), 806-816.
- Werts, M. G., Carpenter, E. S. & Fewell, C. (2014). Barriers and benefits to response to intervention: Perceptions of special education teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 33(2), 3-11.
- World Federation of the Deaf. (2008). Global Survey Report WFD Regional Secretariat for Southern and Eastern Africa (WFD RSESA) by World Federation of the Deaf. The World Federation of the Deaf and the Swedish.
- Yasin, M. H. M., Tahar, M. M., Bari, S. & Manaf, F. N. (2017). The sign language learning in deaf student and special education teacher in integration program of hearing problem. *Journal of ICSAR*, 1(2), 166-174.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Designs and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.
- Zeshan, U., Vasishta, M. N. & Sethna, M. (2005). Implementation of Indian Sign Language in educational settings. *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*, 16(1), 16-40.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: APPLICATION LETTER TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
P.O.Box 38  
Murombedzi

Great Zimbabwe University  
P.O. Box 1235  
Masvingo  
Zimbabwe

#### RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I am requesting for approval to conduct an educational research study in Masvingo, Midlands, Bulawayo and Harare Provinces, Zimbabwe. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Special Needs Education. The research study is for my doctoral thesis, a partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Education (Didactics) requirements.

The topic of the research will be: Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. The study will explore the factors that affect implementation of the 2006 Amended Education in the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction prior to grade four in Zimbabwean special schools. The study will require lesson observation, Individual face-to-face interviews will be held with District Education Officers, School Heads and teachers.

I sincerely appreciate your help.

Yours Sincerely Chegovo Reward Wedzero

Signature

.....



**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION**

**GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY: EDUCATION**

**RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION**

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RESEARCHER**

*Please complete only the sections applicable to you*

**Name of applicant: CHEGOVO REWARD WEDZERO**

**Student Number: M146996**

**Year 2020**

**1. Title of research:**

**Factors that influence implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf**

**2. Main Supervisor**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>	<b>e-mail address</b>	<b>Contact Address</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Mary Doctor Runo	Lecturer SPECIAL NEEDS KENYATTA UNIVERSITY	+254 72138151 3	maryruno@g mail.com	KENYATTA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMEN T OF SPECIAL EDUCATION P.O. BOX 43844-00100, NAIROBI	KENYATTA University

**3. Co-Supervisor**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>	<b>e-mail address</b>	<b>Contact Address</b>	<b>Institution</b>

Professor Martin Musengi	<b>Associate Professor</b>	<b>Cell:+263</b> 077644080 4  Land:+263 392266653	mmusengi@ gzu.ac.zw	Great Zimbabwe University P.O. Box 1235 Masvingo Zimbabwe	GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
--------------------------------	--------------------------------	--	------------------------	---	---------------------------------

**4. Research field(s) (please mark with an X)**

	YES	NO
The research project involves animals		<b>x</b>
The research project involves plants.		<b>x</b>
The research project includes work on Genetically Modified Organisms.		<b>x</b>
The research project involves human participants (subjects).	<b>x</b>	

**5. PHOTOGRAPHY AND/OR AUDIOVISUAL RECORDING**

**5.1 Will be applied during any stage of the research procedure:**

Audio recording will be used during interview sessions

**5.2 If yes, elaborate\_\_**

Audio recording shall be used during interview sessions to be sure that the respondents 'comments are accurately captured.

**6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE(S)**

---

- The research aims at finding out how Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks are being implemented in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf with special reference to 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of mother tongue

as a medium of instruction from pre-school to grade 3 in this case, sign language for the Deaf.

- The study aims at finding out the experiences of teachers in implementing Zimbabwe sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf
- to find out to what extent are teachers are equipped in the profession to teach the Deaf learners
- The research aims at exploring the strategies that can be proposed to enhance the implementation of Zimbabwean Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf

## **7.SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION / BENEFIT OF THE RESEARCH**

---

- First, the research will increase our understanding of how sign language is employed in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf. Since the study focuses on Special schools for the Deaf, it might give some insights about the level of Sign language used in Zimbabwean Special schools.
- Secondly, because this study looks at Deaf students'primary classes'Sign language use in education, it can show the situation at the beginning level briefly. Educators and policymakers can gain some idea about how mother tongue medium education (Sign language) is carried out at this crucial level. Language in education policymakers especially may get some pictures of Deaf students'special needs regarding language and how it should be entertained.
- Thirdly, which Deaf education approaches and languages are serving in the school is identified. Their strengths and weaknesses are discussed in reference to the best practices.  
Thus, Deaf schools could learn something from that in selecting their approach.

**8. ANIMALS: MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**8.1 Full description of animals to be used**

Species	Strain/Breed	Gender	Age / body mass	Number required

If any of the above cannot be provided, state the reason:  
 The research is not based on animals

**8.2 Origin of animals N/A** .....

Indicate, if special permission or CITES documents are necessary for the use of the animals. If so, attach required documentation.

**8.3 Husbandry**

Details of person(s) responsible for the husbandry and general care of the animals:

Name	Qualification	Contact number	Emergency contact number	Contact address

**8.4 Experimental procedures**

**Please indicate in the relevant category Mark with an X).**

Experiments involving use of bacteria, protozoa, viruses, fungi or animal species.	
Experiments on animal species that are expected to produce little or no discomfort or minor stress.	
Experiments that involve significant but unavoidable stress or pain to animal species	
Procedures that involve inflicting sever pain near, at or above the pain tolerance threshold of unanaesthetised, conscious animals	

Please include the following:

- Number of animals in experimental and in control groups
- Initial handling of animals
- Duration of experiment
- Samples to be collected (type, site and volume), frequency per animal?

Place(s) where the experimental procedures will be performed

## 9. PLANTS: MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 9.1 Full description of plants to be used

Species	Strain	INDIGINOUS/EXOTIC	PROTECTED	Number required

### 9.2 Origin of PLANTS

Indicate, if special permission or CITES documents are necessary for the use of the plants. If so, attach required documentation.

**Please include the following:**

- Number of plants in experimental and in control groups
- Describe experimental procedures in detail
- Place(s) where the experimental procedures will be performed

## 10. GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMO's): MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 10.1 Description of GMO's used in the research project

Type	Species	Strain	Number required

### 10.2 Origin of GMO's used

### 10.3 Experimental procedures

- In detail, describe the experimental procedures intended.
- Include the number of GMO's per experimental group and the number of groups

### 10.4 Risk assessment

Include a detailed risk assessment in terms of a possible impact on humans, animals and/or the environment.

**a. Liability**

Describe how you will address the liability for any possible damage caused by the use or release of GMO's.

**b. Notification of the public**

Please indicate how the public will be informed about a trial release or release of GMO's if this forms part of the study.

**c. Waste management**

Describe the procedures that will be used to dispose waste resulting from the use of GMO's must be described in the proposal.

**11. HUMANS**

11.1 Which characteristics of the study group are relevant to the research?

	YES	NO
Physical/ medical condition		x
Injections, blood samples, swabs and similar interference		x
Use of drugs / medicines		x
Use of toxic or dangerous substances		x
Use of food, fluids or nutrients		x
Psychometric measuring instruments		x
Questionnaires		X
Interviews for District inspectors	x	
Interviews for Psychologists		
Interviews for headmasters		
Interview for teachers		
Participant observation		

11.2 Elaborate \_\_\_\_\_

**\_\_\_\_\_ Target population**

Where are the research subjects drawn from?

	YES	NO
Hospitals/ clinics		X
Local communities		X
Educational institutions	x	
Other		

11.3 Are there any possible impacts that may result from the study to the research subjects and or the environment?

There are no known impacts that may result from the study to the research subjects and or to the environment.

#### **11.4 Which precautions will be undertaken to ensure the safety/ protection of the research subjects and/or the environment and/or researchers?**

The researcher will guarantee the participants that no participants will be put in a situation where they might be harmed as a result of their participation, physical or psychological.

Explain: The researcher will ensure that no sensitive questions will be asked to the informants. Through pilot study, the researcher will be able to identify if they are any sensitive questions that may cause harm to the respondents.

#### **11.5 INFORMED CONSENT**

##### **11.5.1. Is it necessary to receive consent from research subjects?**

It is necessary to receive informed consent from the subjects because those who are being researched should have the right to know that they are being researched and that they should give consent. The researcher will talk to the participants verbally and then let them sign informed consent forms which will be explaining their rights as subjects

##### **Please explain**

Participants have the right to decide voluntarily if they want to participate in the study or to terminate their participation after receiving full information about the study and after signing the informed consent forms

##### **11.5.2. In order to conduct the research would institutional consent be required?**

It is necessary to receive consent from the institutions because it is their right to know that their institutions are being researched.

##### **Please explain:**

The purpose of informed consent is to provide sufficient information to the participants so that they can provide a voluntary decision regarding to 'or not to' participate in the research study. The institutions also have the right to know the purpose of the study, procedures, risks and benefits of the study to their institutions. Institutions also have the right to know what will happen to the information once the research is completed.

**11.5.3. How will the subjects be made aware of their right to withdraw at any stage of the project, even after consent had been given?**

The informed consent letters that each participant will receive will clearly state that they are free to discontinue from the research should they feel uncomfortable to continue being part of the research. The researcher will ensure that the participants understand what the study is about and what participation meant prior to gaining consent. The participants will be informed that they are free to withdraw their consent at any time by informing the researcher about their intention. The researcher will ask the participants to read and sign an informed consent form as a way of guaranteeing their willingness to freely participate in the research. Participants will be informed and be reminded throughout the study that their participation is voluntary.

**11.5.4. How will the potential risk involved be communicated to research subjects?**

There are no known risks associated with the procedures of this study. Although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, the researcher will take reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

**11.6 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY**

**11.6.1. What measures will be taken to ensure the rights of the subject to anonymity and confidentiality?**

The researcher will keep private all research records that identify the subject, to the extent allowed by law. Numbers and Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the participant's right to privacy. No information disclosed will be used against the participants. Records and tapes will be kept safely by the researcher and will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis.

**11.6.2. Is feedback to research subject(s) necessary? If yes, elaborate Feedback to the researcher is necessary.**

Feedback will enable the subjects to double check the accuracy of the findings and to test the conformability of the researcher's interpretation and to invite the participant's



reflection, feedback, comments and corrections. This will help to establish that the research's findings accurately portray subjects' responses. Feedback will enable the respondents of the study to evaluate the findings and interpretation and also the recommendations of the study to make sure they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study

## 12 UNDERTAKING

The researcher undertakes to:

- Give due respect to all research subjects.
- Conduct the research in accordance with the approved protocol, relevant legislation and the policies and procedures of Great Zimbabwe University.
- Notify the Faculty Ethics Committee if changes to the aforementioned protocol are effected.

- Name (Names & Surname) Chegovo Reward Wedzero

R Chegovo Signed\_ R Chegovo Date 19-06-20

## APPENDIX C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Robert Mugabe School of Education and Culture

Dean's Office

P. O. Box 1235

MASVINGO

MASVINGO

Tel: 039 263408

Fax: 039-252100

Email: rmugweni@gzu.ac.zw

Off Bulawayo Road

website: www.gzu.ac.zw

GREATZIMBABWEUNIVERSITY

NAME OF APPLICANT: CHEGOVO REWARD WEDZERO M 146996  
JAIROS JIRI CENTRE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS  
DEPARTMENT; EDUCATION

PROJECT TITLE: **Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign Language  
Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf**

SCHOOLS APPROVAL No: 2020/01

COMMENCEMENT DATE: NOVEMBER 2020

APPROVAL VALID To: OCTOBER 2023 COMMENTS:

The researcher must report immediately to the School Ethics Review Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of the participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability Of the project.

In Issutng this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years, These documents may be required tor compliance audit processes aunng that time. If the location at which Cata and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the School Ethics Review Committee should be advised of the new location.

SIGNATURES: 

Date 17/11/20 School Ethics Review Committee D or, Rearch and Postgraduate Studies

**APPENDIX D: APPLICATION LETTER MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
POBox 38  
Murombedzi  
Date 25 November 2020

The Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
P.O. Box CY 121  
CAUSEWAY, HARARE

Dear Sir / Madam

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF IN HARARE, MASVINGO, BULAWAYO AND MIDLANDS PROVINCES.**

I am a student at the University of Great Zimbabwe in the department of Special Needs, Department. As part of the fulfillment of the Doctorate Program, I am required to carry out research. The study is entitled: **Factors that influence implementation of Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwe's Special schools for the Deaf.**

The study is entitled to take place in the following schools Emerald Hill School for the Deaf in Harare Region, Naran Centre School for the Deaf in Midlands Region, King George VI School for the Deaf in Bulawayo Region and Henry Murray School for the Deaf in Masvingo Region. I can be contacted by phone on 0774 437 874 or by email: [rewardkwash@hotmail.com](mailto:rewardkwash@hotmail.com). The study is entitled to commence in November 2020. Attached please find permission letter from the University of Great Zimbabwe.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Chegovo Reward Wedzero

Signature 

**APPENDIX E: APPLICATION LETTER MASVINGO PROVINCE**

Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
P.O.Box 38  
Murombedzi  
24~~June~~ 2020

The Provincial Director  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
P. O. Box 89  
Masvingo

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE-. REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF.**

I am a student at the University of Great Zimbabwe in the department of Educational Special Needs Department. As part of the fulfillment of Doctorate Program I am required to carry out research. The study is entitled: **Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special schools for the Deaf.**

The study is entitled to take place at Henry Murray School for the Deaf. The study is entitled to take place between .....and .....Attached please find permission letter from the University of Great Zimbabwe.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Chegovo Reward Wedzero.

R. Chegovo

**APPENDIX F: APPLICATION LETTER MIDLANDS PROVINCE PROVINCE**

Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
P.O.Box 38  
Murombedzi  
24 June 2020

The Provincial Education Director  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Gweru

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF.

I am a student at the University of Great Zimbabwe in the department of Educational Special Needs Department. As part of the fulfillment of Doctorate Program am required to carry out a research. The study is entitled: **Factors that influence implementation of Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwe's Special schools for the Deaf.**

The study is entitled to take place at Naran Centre School for the Deaf. The study is entitled to take place between. ....and .....

Attached please find permission letter from the University of Great Zimbabwe.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Chegovo Reward Wedzero.

*R. Chegovo*

**APPENDIX G: APPLICATION LETTER BULAWAYO PROVINCE**

Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
P.O.Box 38  
Murombedzi  
24 June 2020

The Provincial Education Director  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Bulawayo

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF.**

I am a student at the University of Great Zimbabwe in the department of Educational Special Needs Department. As part of the fulfillment of Doctorate Program I am required to carry out a research. The study is entitled: **Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.**

The study is entitled to take place at King George VI School for the Deaf. The study is entitled to take place between .....and..... Attached please find permission letter from the University of Great Zimbabwe.

I thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Chegovo Reward Wedzero.

.....R. Chegovo

**APPENDIX H: APPROVAL LETTER MASVINGO PROVINCE**

*ALL communications should be addressed to "The Provincial Education Director for Primary and Secondary Education"*  
**Telephone: 263585/264331**  
**Fax: 039-263261**



**Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education**  
P. O Box 89  
Masvingo

11 December 2020



Chegovo Reward Wedzero  
Mariga Primary School  
P.O.Box 38  
Murombedzi  
Zimbabwe

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN MASVINGO PROVINCE: MASVINGO DISTRICT: HENRY MURRAY PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

Reference is made to your application to carry out a research at the above mentioned school in Masvingo District on the research title:

**"FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE POLICIES IN ZIMBABWEAN SPECIAL SCHOOLS"**

Please be advised that the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education has granted permission to carry out your research.

You are also advised to liaise with the District Education Officer who is responsible for the schools which are part of the sample for your research.

(pp) Z. M. Chitiga  
Provincial Education Director  
**MASVINGO PROVINCE**



**APPENDIX I: APPROVAL LETTER HARARE PROVINCE**

All communications should be addressed to  
"The Provincial Education Director"

Telephone : 339334  
 E-mail : hararemetropolitanprovince@gmail.com



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
 Harare Provincial Education Office  
 P. O. Box CY 1343  
 Causeway  
 Zimbabwe

8 December 2020

*Mr. Ronald Welzke*  
 P.O. Box 312  
 Harare, Zimbabwe

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE: NORTHERN/CENTRAL DISTRICT: Harare, Hill

Reference is made to a letter dated 8 December 2020 from the Secretary for Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education granting you permission to carry out research in Harare Metropolitan Province on the research title

*to be that influence on the education of*  
*the children in the Harare Metropolitan Province*  
*and its surrounding areas*

Please be advised that the Provincial Education Director grants you authority to carry out your research on the above-mentioned title. You are required to supply Provincial Office with a copy of your report.

MIN. OF PRY. & SEC. EDUCATION  
 DISCIPLINE SECTION  
 HARARE PROVINCE  
 08 DEC 2020

FOR PROVINCIAL OFFICE OF HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE  
 P.O. BOX CY 1343, CAUSEWAY  
 TEL: (04) 792671/7798146

*[Handwritten Signature]*



# J APPROVAL LETTER L BULAWAYO PROVINCE

all communications should be addressed to  
"The Provincial Education Director"  
Telephone: 09-69511  
Telegraphic: "SCHOLASTIC"  
Telex: 50531 MPSEM ZW  
Fax: 09-77027



ZIMBABWE

REF. C/440/1 Byo  
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
Bulawayo Metropolitan Province  
P O Box 555  
Bulawayo  
Zimbabwe

14 December 2020

Reward W. Chegovo  
**GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY**

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH ON: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE POLICIES IN BULAWAYO SPECIAL SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF KING GEORGE VI SPECIAL SCHOOL: BULAWAYO CENTRAL DISTRICT: BULAWAYO METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

With reference to your application to carry out a research on the above mentioned topic in the Education Institutions under the jurisdiction of the Bulawayo Province, permission is hereby granted. However, you should liaise with the District Schools Inspector for the concerned district and Heads of the Institutions/Schools for clearance before carrying out your research.

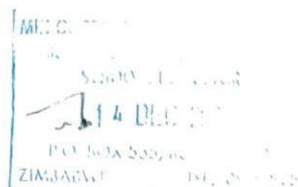
It will also be appreciated if you could supply the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province with a **final copy** of your research which may contain information useful to the development of education in the Province.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'T. Sithole'.

T. SITHOLE

**A/ Schools Inspector – Strategic Policy Planning, Research and Statistics**

**For: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR  
BULAWAYO METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**



## **APPENDIX K: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Chegovo Reward Wedzero and I am a researcher from Great Zimbabwe University in the School of Special Needs Education department. I am conducting a research study on factors that influence the implementation of Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean Special Schools for the Deaf which is designed to understand experiences of teachers in implementing Zimbabwean Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks. As a result interpretivist paradigm will be used so as to get in depth understanding of the situation. The Principal Investigator is **Chegovo Reward Wedzero**, School of Special Needs Education.

I would like you to take part in interviews which will involve being individually interviewed by me during your free time at your station. Participation will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and additional interviews may be requested to provide follow-up information or to more thoroughly address a previously discussed topic. You may also be asked to review notes of your interview to ensure accuracy. With your permission, the interview would be audiorecorded. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide not to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. I may publish the results of this study; however, I will keep your name and other identifying information private. All participant identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms, and all audio files and transcripts will be stored on a locked, password protected computer. Only the research team will have access to these files and the audio files will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Data will be used for a thesis study and will be reviewed by Great Zimbabwe University educators. While there are no direct benefits to you, I hope to gain more knowledge on the phenomenon from you.

If you would have any questions, please contact Chegovo Reward Wedzero at [rewardkwash@hotmail.com](mailto:rewardkwash@hotmail.com), (263) 774 437 874

Sincerely,  
Chegovo Reward Wedzero. Ph.D. student Great Zimbabwe University.

## APPENDIX L: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Principal Investigator:** Chegovo Reward Wedzero

**Topic of study:** **Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf**

**Brief Introduction:** This informed consent explains about being a research subject in a study. Therefore, it is important for you to read it carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer participant. The study is in partial fulfillment of my doctoral thesis as required by the Ministry of Education, Great Zimbabwe University.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf

with special reference to 2006 Amended Education Act on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction prior to grade 4 and Sign language being the mother tongue of the Deaf.

**Participant selection:** According to the 2006 Amended Education Act —mother tongue instruction should be medium of instruction prior to grade 4 so only Grade One to Grade Three teachers will be involved in this study.

**Duration:** Interviews are anticipated to take from 60-90 minutes and follow-up interviews may be requested after initial analysis is completed.

**Procedure:** The study participants will be required to respond to face-to-face interview questions where data will be recorded using an audio-recorder.

**Possible Risks:** There are no known risks associated with the procedures of this study. Although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, the researcher have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. **Benefits to Participants:** There may be no direct benefit to you associated with participation in this research; however, you may benefit from the study from being given the opportunity to express personal beliefs and experiences related to Factors that Influence Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf.

. This study may provide a better understanding of this phenomenon.

**Confidentiality:** I will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law Numbers and Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the participant's right to privacy. Records and tapes will be kept safely by the researcher and will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. The data reported in the final write up of the thesis may be presented at professional gatherings and published in educational journals without naming participants.

**Participant's rights:** Participants have the right to ask questions related to the research and their participation in the study. Contact [rewardkwash@hotmail.com](mailto:rewardkwash@hotmail.com). Cell no 0774437874

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide not to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty.

**WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW:** You may be asked for follow-up interviews. The researcher would like to audiotape your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. Only the research team will have access to the audiotapes and they will be destroyed when they have been transcribed

Do you give the researchers permission to audiotape your interview (in-person interview) Please initial next to your choice below.

Yes, I agree to be digitally recorded (audio) \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

No, do not audiotape my interview \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

**Participant confirmation and signature:** Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document.

**Signature of (Volunteer) Participant:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Signature of Investigator:** .....

**Date:** .....

**APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

-

**General information:**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Duration of lesson: .....

Duration of observation

.....

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the school \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students Male ----- Female \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

The teacher's hearing status \_\_\_\_\_

Age

31-35 years	
31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41-45 years	
46-50 years	
51-55 years	
Above 55 years	

Part A

nos	Item	yes	no
1	Is Sign language considered as one of the academic subject?		
2	Is the teacher cap able oproficient inexplaining everything in Sign language		
3	Does the teacher have fluency in the medium of instruction?		
4	Does the learners have fluency in the language in the medium of instruction?		

5	Do learners comprehend what the teacher instructs using Sign language?		
6	Do learners follow instructions in sign language?		
7	Are lerners interested in using the medium of instruction?		
8	Does Learning in Sign language confuses learners		
9	Do the specialist tteachers encourage the learners to use Sign language?		
10	Does the Special schools for the Deaf have adequate resources?		

**Part B**

1. The medium of instruction in special the classes for the Deaf.. Language of teaching .....
2. Which language is used forDeaf learners in group discussions, questioning and answering? .....
3. Language of classroom administration forDeaf learners .....
4. ForDeaf learners which is the language of written tasks? .....
5. ForDeaf learners which is the language of learners - teacher informal communication? .....
6. ForDeaf learners Which is the language of learners to learners‘informal communication? .....
7. ForDeaf learners which is the language used as a medium of instruction in classroom activities .....
8. How well do the Deaf Learners understand and use the medium of instruction? .....
9. ForDeaf learners which is the preferred language of communication for class room activities? .....
10. Are Deaf learners inclined to use sign language? Or are the Deaf learners inclined to use other languages? .....
- 11 .How do the specialist teachers for the Deaf express new concepts in sign language? .....
12. What is the general situation of sign language usage in the teaching- learning process? .....
- 13 ForDeaf learners what resources are available to help implement mother tongue instruction?

**APPENDIX N: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR SCHOOL HEADS**

My name is Reward Wedzero Chegovo, a DPHIL student at the Great Zimbabwe University. My supervisors are Dr Mary Runo (Kenyatta University, Kenya) and Prof. Martin Musengi (Great Zimbabwe University). Part of the University requirement is to undertake a study in the field of Special Needs Education and we are inviting you to participate in this study entitled: Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf

I will administer interview. The School Heads will respond to the following issues regarding factors influencing the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners.

All information given shall be treated confidentially.

Gender Male  female  Age bracket:

31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41-45 years	
46-50 years	
51-55 years	
Above 55 years	

Years of experience as head of a special school of the Deaf: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous professional experience: \_\_\_\_\_

1 What is your understanding of the requirements of the current language-in-education policy? .....

2 What is the role of sign language at your school? Is it an academic subject .....

*Probes: curriculum policy for Primary and Secondary schools (Secretary for Education, 2002)*

*Policy directive, Director's policy 2 of 2001) Sign language should be taught in all primary schools*

3 How is monitoring of the implementation of the mother tongue instruction policy at your school done?.....

4 How does the district support you on the use of sign language as the language of teaching and learning for Deaf learners? .....

*Probes: Article 24: 3(b) of CRPD (2006) UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stated Deaf People are entitled to communicate through Sign language.*

4 How supportive is the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education on the use of Sign language as the language of teaching and learning? .....

*Probes: UNCRPD (2006), Section 24:3b, States should take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign language* .....

5 Which language do teachers prefer to use for instruction when teaching Deaf learners? .....

*Probes: Section 62:5 of the Education Amended Act (2006) Sign language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf*

6 Which challenges do Deaf students have in your school? .....

*Probes: how do you solve the challenges? .....*

7 Which relevant qualifications do specialist teachers of the Deaf at your school hold? .....

*Probes: UNCRPD (2006) 24:3b states that teachers of Deaf students should be qualified in Sign language.*

*Policy document guidelines (Secretary for Education 2007a) staff personnel for the Deaf should be appropriately qualified.*

8 Do specialist teachers of the Deaf have sign language qualifications when they are appointed for the first time? .....

9 What sort of challenges do specialist teachers of the Deaf face in implementing the sign language regulatory Frameworks at this school? .....

10 At what frequency do specialist teachers of the Deaf get in-service training in Sign Language? .....

11 Who is responsible for the in-service training in Sign Language to specialist teachers of the Deaf? .....

12 In what form does the in-service training in Sign Language for specialist teachers of the Deaf take? .....



13 Are specialist teachers of the Deaf teachers being given enough resources to implement the policy?

*Probes consider: Resources such as textbooks for learners, course books for teachers, Sign language dictionary.* .....

14 What resources are available for specialist teachers of the Deaf to help implement mother tongue instruction? .....

15 Does the government help in making specialist teachers of the Deaf have enough resources to implement the policy? .....

*UNCRPD (2006) states should take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign language* .....

16 What re your views on the suitability of available teaching/learning resources to cater forDeaf learners? .....

17 What is the significance of the Deaf learners to learn how to read and communicate in Sign language? .....

18 Which language does the Ministry of Education require Deaf learners to learn at your school? .....

*Probes: Section 62:5 of Education Amended Act (Sign language shall be the priority medium of instruction for the Deaf)* .....

19 Which language Deaf learners use to communicate with the teacher and other peers? .....

20 What is your opinion regarding the use of Sign language as the language of teaching and learning forDeaf learners? .....

21 Why is it important for specialist teachers of the Deaf teachers to teach and instruct in Sign language? .....

22 What are the reasons why specialist teachers of the Deaf teachers might not be using Sign language as the medium of instruction in your opinion? .....

*Probes: Why do you say so?* .....

23 What can be regarded as factors that hinder the implementation of the language in education policy in your opinion? .....

24 What measures can be put in place at school level to ensure effective implementation of the language-in-education policy? .....

25 Do special schools for the Deaf collaborate with the Deaf communities in teaching the Deaf learners? .....

*Probes: How do you involve the Deaf community? .....*

26 What is the significance of the Deaf communities in the teaching/ learning of Deaf learners? .....

27 Which strategies can be employed by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture to enable the use of Sign language as a medium of instruction in the education of Deaf learners?

.....  
*Probes: UNCRPD (2006), Section 24:3b, (States shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of Sign language*

28 What are the shortcomings of the existing language policy in using Sign language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners? .....

29 If you were given a minute to talk to the the Ministry of Education policy-makers concerning use of Sign language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in Special schools of Education what would you say to the Ministry,?

.....

## APPENDIX O: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

My name is Reward Wedzero Chegovo, a DPHIL student at the Great Zimbabwe University. My supervisors are Dr Mary Runo (Kenyatta University, Kenya) and Prof. Martin Musengi (Great Zimbabwe University). Part of the University requirement is to undertake a study in the field of Special Needs Education and we are inviting you to participate in this study entitled: Implementation of Sign Language Regulatory Frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf. I will administer the interview. The teachers will respond to the following issues regarding factors influencing the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners.

All information given shall be treated confidentially.

Gender                      Male                                      female                      Age  
 bracket:

31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41-45 years	
46-50 years	
51-55 years	
Above 55 years	

<b>QUALIFICATIONS:</b>	
<b>Diploma in Education</b>	
<b>Certificate in Education</b>	
<b>Diploma in Special Needs Education (Dip. In SPED)</b>	
<b>B.Ed. in Special Needs Education</b>	
<b>B. SC. In Special Needs Education</b>	

### Experience as specialist teacher for the Deaf

<b>0-10 years</b>	
<b>11-20 years</b>	
<b>21-30 years</b>	

<b>30 and above</b>	
---------------------	--

**Previous professional experience:**

.....

.....

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Duration of lesson:** .....

**Duration of observation**

**Grade level** .....

**Subject** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the school** \_\_\_\_\_

**District** \_\_\_\_\_

The Ministry of Education issued an order for mother tongue instruction (Sign language for the Deaf) from grades 1-3, (2006) Amended Education Act Section 62)

1 What is your understanding of the requirements of the language un Education policy

.....

*Probes: AS a specialist of the Deaf what are you supposed to do?*

*What is the special school for the Deaf supposed to do?*

*What are Deaf children supposed to do?*

2 Which languages is used as the medium of instruction for teaching all the primary school subjects forDeaf learners? Please explain why.....

*Probes: when is each language used?*

*Which language do you prefer?*

*For which purpose?*

*How do students" response to each language?*

3 In your opinion which is the first language for the Deaf? .....

*Probes: Why do you say so?*

*Probes: The Zimbabwe, Constitution Amendment Number 20 (2013) recognizes Sign language as one of the sixteen official and legitimate languages of the country.*

4 Which language do Deaf learners use when participating in group work in the class and in co-curricular activities? .....

5 How does the use of Sign Language influence performance of Deaf learners in classroom? .....

*Probes: Sign language as opposed to oralism can uplift academic achievements*

6 What do you think are the factors which hinder you from teaching effectively using Sign language as a medium of instruction? .....

7 Identify the challenges you face in implementing sign language regulatory frameworks? .....

8 What solutions would you recommend in order to solve the challenges you mentioned above? .....

9 Are you confident enough to teach using Sign language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners? .....

10 How do you get in-service training on Sign Language? .....

11 In what form is your school supportive head on the use of Sign language as the language of teaching and learning? .....

12 Identify the inputs and resources that are required to implement the policy? .....

13 Which materials and equipment would you prefer to use when teaching Deaf learners? .....

14 Which resources are available at your school that helps you to implement the policy? .....

15 How do teaching equipment and materials influence the use of Sign language as medium of instruction for Deaf learners? .....

16 Of what importance is the use of Sign language as the medium of instruction to (a) you as the teacher and (b) learner who is Deaf? .....

17 In your opinion to what extent does the use of Sign language instruction impact on the learning of Deaf learners in your classroom? .....

18 In your opinion what will happen when learners learn in Sign language in the early grades?

*Probes: In your opinion what are the benefits of using sign language in early grades and disadvantages?*

*What are the long and short term benefits of using sign language in early grades?*

*How will it affect the learners?*

*How will it affect the teachers?*

19 To what extent is it true that learners (Deaf learners) who can read and communicate in their mother tongue (Sign language?) are able to learn the second language better than those who cannot read and communicate in Sign language? .....

20 Do Deaf learners face challenges in your class? .....

*Probes: How do you deal with the challenges?*

21 When do you collaborate with Deaf Communities in teaching Deaf learners?

.....

22 In your opinion do the Deaf Communities help you in the implementation of sign language regulatory frameworks .....

23 In your opinion is there is need for Deaf communities to be involved in the teaching/ learning of Deaf learners? .....

*Probes: How are they involved? .....*

24 suppose you are given a minute to talk what would you say to the Ministry of Education and policy-makers concerning use of Sign language as a medium of instruction for Deaf learners in Special schools,? .....

**APPENDIX P: PROOF OF EDITING BY PROF RUGARE MAREVA**

Great Zimbabwe University  
Department of Curriculum Studies  
P O Box 1235  
Masvingo  
Zimbabwe  
15 September 2023  
Email: [rmareva@gzu.ac.zw](mailto:rmareva@gzu.ac.zw)/ marevarugare@gmail.com  
Cell: +263 772 978 970  
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Re: Proof of Editing REWARD W. CHEGOVO'S DOCTORAL THESIS (M146996)**

This is to certify that I, **Prof. Rugare Mareva** (National Identity Number 22-101 400 K 22), have edited **REWARD W. CHEGOVO'S DOCTORAL THESIS** titled: *Factors that influence implementation implementation of Sign Language regulatory frameworks in Zimbabwean special schools for the Deaf*, to be submitted to Great Zimbabwe University. I am a holder of a PhD (English) (University of Venda), M.Ed (English) (University of Zimbabwe), B.Ed (English) (University of Zimbabwe), and a Certificate in Education (English Major) (Gweru Teachers' College).

Thank you.



**Prof. Rugare Mareva (PhD), Language Editor: Policy Documents; Journal of New Vision in Educational Research (JoNVER); Projects, Dissertations and Theses. Great Zimbabwe University, Department of Curriculum Studies, Masvingo, Zimbabwe**