**Thematic analysis**

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| S | Survey |
| F | Focus group |
| P | Participant number |

**Theme 1: Defining Educational Audiology (EA).**

This theme describes participants’ views on what EA service delivery entails. The following two subthemes emerged.

*Subtheme 1.1: The service delivery*

Most of the participants agreed that EA is a service provided by audiologists to children/ learners in a school setting.

“Services delivered by audiologists to children with hearing impairments within the educational setting.” (S P41)

Participants opinions varied on what aspects need to be included in the service delivery of EA, but most used the term “audiological services” to encompass the range of services that should be provided.

“For me Educational Audiology is school health, identification, diagnosing and managing patients within schools…” (S P14)

“Providing audiology services in school setting. Screening, assess ,diagnose and treat children in such setting with hearing difficulties.” (S P15)

There was some uncertainty about the extent of the role of the audiologist in the service delivery of EA in terms of being an advocate for the child. Some participants felt that the parent is the advocate wheras others felt that the audiologist should be the advocate.

“…I feel like the main thing is an educational audiologist is an advocate for the child, for the patient…” (F P3)

“…it's the parents that go to the school to speak to them [the teachers]…” (F P3)

Some participants indicated that services could be rendered in multiple settings.

“Hearing screenings, hearing tests, hearing aid fittings, therapy and aural rehab provided to children of school age either in a private or public work setting or at school.” (S P1)

“Testing, managing and fitting children who have hearing loss as well as following up in all settings and doing aural rehab.” (S P3)

Most participants felt that EA service delivery should be restricted to schools for children with special needs.

“An offer of audiology services to schools that cater for children with a hearing loss.” (S P5)

“Educational audiology is a broad term which probably covers the management and on-going audiological care of learners based in a special school environment…” (S P17)

*Subtheme 1.2: Working as a team*

Some participants highlighted the importance of teamwork when managing the child with hearing loss.

“Making sure that the team being the parents, the educators, and any therapists that might be in the educational setting of the child are aware of the child's auditory needs and that the child is accounted for in the educational setting.” (F P1)

“…put the ball in the parents’ court and tell them this is now also your responsibility as it is my responsibility…” (F P2)

“…collaborations with the educational team and with the parents of the children that are served.” (S P26)

*Subtheme 1.3: The benefits of service delivery*

Most participants agreed that there is benefit in providing EA services to children who need it. These benefits included the fact that learners with hearing loss received access to sound and thus improving their educational outcomes.

“An audiologist in a school setting that aims to improve the child with a HL's access to sound to be able to learn in the classroom”. (S P 56)

“…ensure that children with hearing loss are accommodated in their classroom in a way that maximizes their learning opportunities so that they can meet their full potential.” (S P 63)

Participants were also asked about aural rehabilitation, as it is an aspect of EA service delivery and a few benefits emerged. These benefits included improving learners’ communication skills and limiting the effect of the hearing loss.

“Improving the communication skills of learners with hearing loss and/or auditory processing difficulties...” (S P38)

“…optimizing a person’s ability to participate in activities that have been limited as a result of hearing loss.” (S P 15)

**Theme 2: Perceived challenges to EA service delivery.**

This theme describes the challenges perceived by audiologists to rendering EA services in South Africa. Three subthemes emerged.

*Subtheme 2.1: Parental influence*

Several participants mentioned that parents play an important role in helping or hindering the service delivery of EA. These include parental commitment to the process and financial constraints.

“…one of the biggest issues that we struggle with is parent understanding, education and commitment to the process…” (F P1)

“…if the parents don't believe in the process or don't understand why it's important, then your device use is usually very often poor…[ ] There could be a financial burden work commitment. That transport issues now they must commit to bringing you know, their child then once a week…” (F P1)

“…my first thing would say that its finances. With a child, not everyone has access to the finances that are available…” (F P2)

*Subtheme 2.2: Access to resources*

Some participants highlighted the fact that schools don’t have access to resources.

“I think also main part, if we look at our schools for the deaf is also resources. Most of them are based in the public sector and resources are very, very limited because they only have a short budget to work from and they usually don't get the most needed equipment that they need.” (F P2)

“Limited resources, not accessible to all.” (S P27)

“Especially in a public health setting, where resources are not readily available.” (S P22)

One participant felt that few audiologists want to provide services in schools, because in private practice it is not viable to generate enough money if the focus is ony on children.

“…It's hard in private practice. Why would you go and do further training? I mean it's very well known that Paediatrics are a drain on a private practice. They do not make you money. They take a lot of time and a lot of energy…” (F P1)

*Subtheme 2.3: In the educational environment*

Some participants felt that teachers could also be a contributing factor to helping or hindering the service delivery of EA, as they have very large classrooms, and they do not have the neccesary knowledge of EA.

“…know from the teacher side, I think from their side if they have 40 children in the class, I'm not sure if they are very open to actually receive the (support) ...” (F P4)

“…I feel like teachers that aren't equipped with the knowledge about certain disabilities like hearing, they don't really take into consideration what the child’s needs are because of the amount or how big their classes are that they can't give that individual attention and that's how the child falls through the cracks…” (F P3)

**Theme 3: Improving EA service delivery.**

This theme describes suggestions obtained to improve the service delivery of EA in South Africa,

*Subtheme 3.1: Better defined responsibilities*

Some participants felt that EA is not well-defined and that until a better definition is generated, the service delivery will not improve.

“…I think that's where the confusion comes in. What exactly is educational audiology? Nobody really knows… [ ] I think just better defining what educational audiologists will be responsible in doing, because there's a lot of question mark [about] what you need in order to be doing educational audiology…” (F P2)

Some participants also felt that they themselves have a lack of knowledge about what EA is.

“Many people know less about it.” (S P25)

“Don’t understand the term.” (S P28)

*Subtheme 3.2: Audiologists need more information and training.*

A few participants felt that there is not enough training opportunities for audiologists after they finished their undergraduate studies to train as an educational audiologist.

“…What can you do to develop your… [skills] but just I think there's a very big gap with regards to CEU events regarding educational audiology…” (F P2)

“…I don't even remember if we had any lectures on educational audiology. I have to assume we did. They clearly didn't stick with me and it certainly wasn't a big section, but I feel these days if you want to go into a field within your field. You need to kind of specialize. And that doesn't mean necessarily doing extra training, although obviously that is beneficial… [ ] …It might be in-house training, you know, within the centre that you're in. It might be CPD’s. But I think in any area in audiology that you specialize, you do need further training…” (F P1)

*Subtheme 3.3: Support*

Some participants felt that educational audiologists need more support from the department of health and department of basic education when providing their services.

“…I think that the education departments should have advisors who are audiology trained. And can go in and support, because I certainly don't expect audiologists in the public sector to try and support the number of patients they have on their caseloads…” (F P1)

“…I think the education department needs to take some responsibility for educational audiologists, certainly in the public sector, anything kind of health related…” (F P1)

One participant felt that the audiologists who are employed in an educational setting, should do more to advocate for their post and to create awareness of the field of EA.

“…I feel if they advocate and they put in the, the more the more effort into it it could be. More positively seen now than before…” (F P3)