

BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGICAL EQUIPMENT TO DEAF LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY IN MASVINGO PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The problem of irrelevant equipment for learners who are deaf was created by the traditional trend of issuing hearing aids to all learners with hearing impairment in the education system without considering the degree level of hearing loss. The study explored the extent to which deaf learners access technological equipment that promotes Sign language acquisition while in regular primary schools. A case of Masvingo was used to assess equal opportunities to deaf learners in accessing visual equipment since the official launch of Sign language in Zimbabwean Constitution 2013. Learners with profound hearing loss had been forced to articulate speech yet they are beneficial of non-verbal language. The qualitative interpretive methodology was employed. Open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis techniques were employed to complete data triangulation for qualitative research. Purposive sampling was employed to choose information-rich cases from four regular primary schools with established resource units in Masvingo province. Constant comparative approach was used to analyse data into categories and themes. The study unveiled that the equipment in most schools could not accommodate learners who are deaf since they were audio equipment. The major challenges were lack of knowhow and misconceptions about the equipment for learners who are deaf by stakeholders. Also, financial crisis in the country affected procurement of relevant equipment. The study recommended the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to provide relevant equipment as well as educating regular school teachers on relevant equipment for learners who are deaf. Furthermore, the government had to increase the procurement budget for technological equipment supporting learners who are deaf.

Keywords: Audio equipment, visual equipment, visual learners, Sign language, deaf learner.