

## **DEAF EDUCATION AND TEACHERS TRAINING IN ZAMBIA**

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### **Abstract**

This article provides professional perspective of a teacher-training model which relies heavily on an intensive, culturally immersive field experience for the teacher of the Deaf and hard of hearing. Survey results were based upon 21 participants concerning their perceptions during their three-year internship experience in Zambia. Formal and informal periodic evaluations of participants reinforced the author's perspectives that an intensive yearlong residential experience is critical for developing the linguistic, fluency, and cultural awareness that are not only vital but also indispensable for teachers of D/hh (Deaf and Hard of Hearing) students. (This study does not intend to endorse any philosophy of the education of the Deaf. This study adopts an eclectic approach to teaching different philosophies for D/hh students.)

*Keyword:* Deaf and Hard of Hearing training model

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The importance of field-based instruction for teacher education candidates has been recognized for several years as indicated by former students and available research. Field experience enriches the content of course-based instruction and provides an opportunity for students to apply the concepts and methods presented in texts and lectures to real life settings. Boe, Shin and Cook (2007) reported national data related to general education and special education teacher preparation. They concluded that extensive preparation in pedagogy and supervised teaching had a major contribution in preparing qualified special education teachers. They further highlighted the critical role of in-field teaching for special education teachers.

Given the importance of early field experience in any area of teaching, intensive practice would seem to be critical for pre-service teachers of the Deaf and hard of hearing (D/hh) students, not merely for the purpose of mastering instructional methodology, but also for the opportunity to develop an appreciation of the uniqueness of the Deaf experience. The emergence of Deaf culture as a significant factor in educational programming for Deaf individuals suggests that to be successful, a hearing teacher must recognize and respect the traits of the Deaf social group. Obviously, this level of acculturation cannot be achieved through lectures or textbooks but only through extended, direct interaction with individuals who are D/hh. In addition to socio-cultural considerations, students who wish to teach Deaf individuals should develop proficiency in Zambian Sign Language (ZSL).

Once again, college classroom experience is not sufficient to develop the level of fluency necessary for the efficient transmission of information. Only through total immersion with native language users can one hope to master the finer nuances of a language system that enrich the communication process. A number of publications have provided the field of deaf education with suggestions related to knowledge, skills, and experiences of teachers of the Deaf that can lead to quality instruction for D/hh students (e.g. Lytle, 1992, Lytle & Rovin, 1997). However, there is not a viable body of research on deaf education teacher preparation programs that connects student achievement and teacher competencies (Roberson, Woolsey, Seabrooks, & Williams, 2004).

### **2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of a teacher-training model for D/hh students that rely heavily on an intensive, culturally immersive field experience component. Given the controversial history of deaf education, it is important to note that the focus of this article is not on the endorsement of

any particular philosophy of educating D/hh students. It merely provides detailed information on a unique model for the preparation of teachers of the Deaf.

### **3. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

#### **What colleges and universities offer deaf education?**

There are few colleges and universities that have deaf education teacher preparation programs either at the undergraduate and graduate level. The most comprehensive and up-to-date being the University of Zambia (UNZA), Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE), and Kitwe College of Education (KICE).

The Deaf Education Teaching and Learning at UNZA, ZAMISE and KICE offers local professional educators an extensive overview of educational research in curriculum design.

Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE), trains special education teachers, offering a 2 year full time Diploma course in Special Education that costs (approx. \$640/yr.) and a 3 year Diploma program by Distance Learning at (approx. \$860/yr.). Further education to obtain a Bachelor's Degree at the University of Zambia has course duration of 2 years.

Kitwe college of Education is located in the Copperbelt Province of the Republic of Zambia and is one of the largest teacher training institutions in the Country. Although the college has been training deaf persons as teachers since 1998, academic results have largely remained poor over the years, until now when they have started partnering with supporting partners such as Opportunity Zambia, the Government and the recruitment of a new disability friendly head at the College. "The college enrolled 10 deaf students in 2010 alone in addition to the 11 who have graduated in recent years," This is a clear indication of the College Management Team's efforts in making great strides to make the institution disability-friendly. In early 2010, the college lecturers underwent a 5 days training in effective use of sign language and have now developed a manual to guide them in effectively supporting teachers who are deaf. The new manual is in addition to the sign language dictionary being availed for use in Zambia.

During the course of their yearlong residential internship, students rotate through the school's academic departments including preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, and vocational education. In addition to academic settings, the teacher candidates actively engage in extracurricular activities including sports, parties, dances and field trips. The involvement is total, intensive and fulfilling.

During the junior year, program participants at the named university/colleges return to the university/college main campus to complete general studies, professional education, and specialization courses. Based on observations over the years, students returning to campus after the program demonstrate a level of sophistication that enables truly constructive debate with their professors regarding the advantages and disadvantages of various teaching methods. The senior year emphasizes a semester-long student teaching assignment. Student teaching is normally scheduled in a public school classroom to ensure breadth of practical experience. Students demonstrate teaching proficiency through a variety of rubric-based assignments including a portfolio-based assessment.

#### **What are the three main types of teacher preparation programs in the field of deaf education?**

There are three types of deaf education teacher preparation programs as defined by the Council on Education of the Deaf from which to choose a program of study.

There are several types of Deaf Education Teacher Preparation programs from which to choose a program of study.

1. Oral-Aural Programs ~ University /College teacher preparation programs that focus on the preparation of oral-aural teachers emphasize audiology, aural rehabilitation, and techniques for speech development in addition to specialized teaching strategies. Many programs following the oral-aural philosophy work with children who have received cochlear implants and, therefore, prepare Deaf Educators to work in a therapeutic setting.
2. Bilingual-Bicultural Programs ~ University/College teacher preparation programs that focus on the preparation of bilingual-bicultural teachers emphasize learning Zambia Sign Language as an eighth language and bridge to the development of English (or any other spoken language). These programs also value Deaf Culture as one of the many cultures represented by the diverse student population. Majoring in this area requires one to become proficient in Zambia Sign Language and knowledgeable in the visual learning needs of deaf and hard of hearing students.

3. Comprehensive Programs ~ Most university/college teacher preparation programs in the Zambia belong to this category. Comprehensive programs provide majors with a variety of techniques in order to prepare them to be versatile enough to work with children who are deaf in a variety of settings. In addition to courses in instructional strategies, comprehensive programs may offer coursework in audiology, speech pathology, aural rehabilitation, and Zambia sign language. Some programs offer courses in communication systems such as cued speech or signed English. Others provide courses in Zambia Sign Language (ZSL). Colleges and universities vary in their entry requirements. Please contact the institutions in which you are interested for further information.

A key feature of the Deaf Education Teachers program is the integration of research and practice. Students remain full-time teachers for the duration of the program. They design, implement and evaluate curricular innovations in their own classrooms. The culmination of the Deaf Education Teachers work is a thesis describing the rationale, development, and effectiveness of these innovations. Once students have completed this deaf education teachers training graduate program, they may apply to enter directly into the three or four year of the Ed.D program either immediately or at a later time.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Deaf Education is a broad and diverse professional field that centers on the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Teachers often concentrate their studies in early childhood education, elementary education, or a secondary content area. Teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing become experts in language acquisition for unique learning and communication needs of their students.

Sometimes areas of expertise intersect Deaf Education. For example, some university/college graduates who majored in Deaf Education have become transition specialists who work with students who are transitioning from school to work. Others function as educational interpreters and academic tutors in inclusive settings. Some may work with families of newly diagnosed deaf or hard of hearing infants and support the family during the early months as they confront and learn the challenges of raising a deaf or hard of hearing child. There are many other areas in which Deaf Educators expand their careers such:-

- a) Speech, language, pathology, career technology, audiology, school counseling, social work, educational administration, etc.
- b) Deaf Education provides a great foundation and career options for individuals who are interested in working with this unique population of students.
- c) Deaf Educators work in several different settings. They work in private/government schools for the deaf such as the St Joseph's High School for the Deaf in Kalulushi.

Most states have a residential school for the deaf, which provides educational services deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state. Sometimes the students live on campus, going home on weekends. Often families move to be near the school so their children can live at home and still take advantage of the educational program.

Deaf Educators also work throughout our public school system in various roles. Deaf Educators who work in a public school setting often are itinerant teachers who travel, much like speech pathologists, from school to school providing consultation and individual services. In addition, Deaf Educators working in public schools serve as resource room teachers, providing academic support for children mainstreamed into the regular education classes. And, sometimes, especially when there is a magnet program with a large enrollment of deaf and hard of hearing students, Deaf Educators teach self-contained classes similar to other teachers in the public school setting.

Colleges and universities offer both undergraduate and graduate programs in Deaf Education Teacher Training. Depending on where you live, both options may be available to you.

#### **What do teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students do?**

Teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students may find employment in various program models including those listed below.

##### ***Consultants***

Teachers working as consultants generally provide indirect services to students enrolled in regular classes in their neighborhood schools. They often serve as consultants to regular education teachers and coordinate all services provided to students. For example, they typically maintain assistive technologies, ensure appropriate assessments, and coordinate related service providers (e.g., interpreters, speech pathologists).

### ***Itinerant Teachers***

Teachers working as itinerant teachers generally provide a combination of indirect and direct services such as tutoring students who are enrolled in regular classes in their neighborhood schools.

### ***Resource Room Teachers***

Teachers working in the resource classrooms generally provide direct instruction to students such as tutoring them in subjects for which they are mainstreamed. They also teach special skills not presented in the regular classroom context and serve as a resource to regular classroom teachers.

### ***Self-Contained Teachers in Neighborhood Schools***

Teachers working in special classes generally teach students in a self-contained classroom for more than half of the school day. The teacher provides an intensive academic program and unique skills training. Student needs are such that major curriculum modification and mode of instruction are unique, precluding regular classroom placement.

### ***Self-Contained Teachers in Residential Schools***

Teachers working in residential schools generally teach students in self-contained classes for the entire day either in preschool, elementary, secondary, or career technology classrooms.

### **What do teachers say about their experience in the Deaf Education Teacher Training Program?**

"There is much to think about, much to learn, and much room for improvement in education. This program is an opportunity to start your quest to help the field of education as more than just a teacher."

"Think of this program as something you do for yourself. This is an opportunity to return to the 'life of the mind.' This year gave me a chance to recharge my intellectual batteries!"

"This program skillfully leads you through a process of discovering your own philosophy about teaching and learning, questioning your assumptions, and engaging with educational research."

### **Challenges**

Deaf and hard of hearing students are a unique part of most school in Zambia but unfortunately they face their own set of challenges. Most schools do not offer junior secondary education for the deaf and hard of hearing, because the school only has few teachers of the deaf who is trained to teach primary education (Grade1-7). The only schools for the deaf which offers secondary education is Munali Secondary School, in Lusaka and St. Joseph school for the Deaf in Kalulushi a prestigious school that is out of the reach of these vulnerable children due to its high cost and distance.

Consequently, most of the deaf and hard of hearing children fail to continue with their studies due to lack of sponsorship. This leads to some entering early marriages and forgetting about school altogether. Those who fail to attend Munali or St. Joseph school are either re-enrolled to repeat classes or are lost back into the community with no hope of furthering their education.

The deaf and hard of hearing children are all taught in one classroom, irrespective of their age group, and this classroom is not sound proofed. Thus, the children are disturbed by background noise from other classrooms. The class also lacks significant numbers of visual aids, posters, sign language books, bright colors and computers.

The lack of resources greatly hampers their learning experience. The only success story of a deaf pupil, who was initially at Most schools, is of one who is now a Teacher of the Deaf at Munali High Secondary School.

### **Is there a shortage of deaf education teachers?**

Yes! There is a consistent and growing demand for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students, particularly in rural, urban or low-socioeconomic areas of the country. Although there has been a significant increase in the number of deaf and hard of hearing students in the nation's schools, the number of teachers being prepared to teach deaf and hard of hearing students has remained the same. Anticipated retirements will also affect the job market.

The shortage of teachers for deaf and hard of hearing students is one of both quantity and diversity, and some teachers do not have appropriate certification or licensure. It is increasingly difficult to gather sufficient educational resources to meet the needs of widely dispersed, ethnically diverse students, many of whom have a secondary disability.

### **Examples of Deaf Education Teachers Training in Research**

The topics of the "Deaf Education Teacher Training" theses in past years are varied, and have included: multimedia approaches to secondary biology and chemistry instruction; writing revision among emergent writers; building partnerships between families and schools; activities which link home and school experiences in the content areas of reading and writing, mathematics, science, and social studies; improved integration of curriculum and assessment; motivation and art; using technology for mathematics and geography teaching; and embedding ESL in native language instruction.

Since the program's inception in 1989, more than 240 educational professionals have earned Deaf Education Teacher Training degrees in Teaching and Learning (Research in Curriculum Design). Of these, over half came from the ranks of elementary teachers while the remaining teaches in secondary and post-secondary settings.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Disagreements about the best philosophy of teaching D/hh students have been the subject of debate for well over 400 years. These authors could not agree more with Easterbrooks (2001) that deaf education is more controversial than successful. As a result we may be diverting the attention away from the most important aspect of teacher training. Therefore, in these authors' opinion, it is imperative that we make a quantum leap to move beyond the present battle, which has stretched over centuries.

Given 400 year of Deaf education the profession is confronted with a number of major challenges including: a) ensuring that hearing teachers possess the communication fluency and cultural awareness essential to be successful teachers of the D/hh; b) ensuring that teachers are knowledgeable in issues related to different modes of communication for D/hh students; and c) ensuring teachers are able to teach a wide range of D/hh students, including children with cochlear implants.

Based on participant reflections and the program's longevity of over 30 years, the authors are convinced that an intensive yearlong residential experience is critical for developing the linguistic, fluency, and cultural awareness that are not only important but also necessary for teachers of D/hh students.

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