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The Comprehensiveness of Transition Services for Deaf Learners in Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

The rapid increase of deaf persons operating as vendors in the Zimbabwean capital city, Harare motivated the execution of the study. The study explored the comprehensiveness of the transition services curriculum offered by educational institutions to learners who are deaf. A mixed methods approach underpinned the study. 30 respondents were purposively drawn from deaf school leavers vending in the streets of Harare, managers of schools enrolling deaf learners and managers of deaf persons organisations. The questionnaire was used to collect data. The researchers used sign language to solicit responses from the deaf participants. In turn the researchers completed the questionnaire on their behalf. The results reveal that Zimbabwe does not have a transitional policy for deaf learners. The results also showed that schools that enroll deaf persons as well as disabled persons organisations do not have localized transitional policies and plans for learners who are deaf. Most disabled persons organisations revealed that they were not in the business of transition. Most deaf school leavers who are street vendors revealed that they were not given the opportunity to decide their future in school. They revealed that teachers mainly decided their destiny on their behalf. It was therefore concluded that the transition services for deaf learners are not comprehensive to enable them live independent and productive lives after school. It was therefore recommended that special schools for the deaf must design individual transition plans for all learners on entry to high school. The designed transition plans must include and involve all stakeholders such as the learners, parents, school, and prospective employers and where possible and other members of the multidisciplinary team. In addition it was recommended that there must be connectivity and collaboration between the school, organizations for the Deaf, employers and parents to enhance smooth transition into employment and adulthood. The study also recommended that schools use standard qualitative assessments to evaluate learners for proper transitions. Lastly it was recommended that a transitional policy for learners with hearing impairment be instituted by policy makers.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is regarded as having the highest literacy rate in Africa. In coming up with such a figure there are certain variables studied such as the ability to read and write. It is not very clear whether the sampling techniques used to come up with respondents in the evaluation of literacy rate include people with disabilities. The African Economist Magazine (June, 2014) reported that Zimbabwe has a literacy rate of 91%. The World Health Organisation (2012) reported that in any given population 15% has disabilities. A lot of researches carried in Zimbabwe have shown that many people with disabilities have not attended school or are not attending school. The city of Harare estimates that there are over 3500 people with disabilities vending in the streets. The majority of these are those with the sensory impairment of deafness. What then boggles the mind is the fact that there are more deaf school leavers in the streets compared with other types of disabilities. Could this be attributed to literacy issues? Could there be something wrong within the transitional path of the deaf learners? It is the need to find answers to these questions that motivated the execution of this study. The main aim of the study was to establish the comprehensiveness of transition services for the deaf learners in educational institutions. Thus the chief research question was;

Do transitional services provided by educational institutions to deaf learners enable them to live and independent and productive life?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Meaning of Transition Services*

The word transition has been used in many aspects. According to Levinson (1998), the term transition has been used to refer to different processes within the educational environment. For example, the movement from preschool to kindergarten and from elementary school to junior and high schools. He defines transition as the process of facilitating the post-school adjustment of students with disabilities. Post-school adjustment is broadly defined to include adjustment to work, leisure and independent functioning in the community. Furthermore, Defur (1999) states that transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assume emergent adult roles. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships, (Halpern, 1994). Thus simply put transition can be seen as helping students with disabilities and their families think about their life after school and identify long term goals designing the high school experience to ensure that students gain the skills and connections they need to achieve these goals.

From all the given definitions it can be deduced that transition was developed to bridge the gap between a student's school system and services for post-secondary school life. In this case students with disabilities are provided with a more structured path to adulthood, (Levinson 1998). It was one of the aims of this research study to find out how structured the adulthood path is for learners with hearing impairments in Harare. The study also intended to find out the extent to which the transition services outlined by various authors above are incorporated in the education of learners with hearing impairments. It is imperative however to note that transition is also a legal issue in some countries. As such it is important to look at a few legal definitions of transition for people with disabilities in general and those with hearing impairments in particular.

The American Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1992 on <http://ncset.org/publications/related/ideatransition.asp> transition services are defined as:

A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, community experience, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional evaluation

In 1997 IDEA was amended to Public Law 105-17. In section 1401 Of the Act transitional services were expanded to include speech and language pathology and audiological services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation and counseling services among others. Lastly, IDEA 2004 included free appropriate education for people with disabilities designed to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. To begin at the age of 14 transition was also made to be a results oriented process, requiring schools to set goals beyond secondary education and give them a summary of their accomplishments and transition needs as they leave school.

In Zimbabwe the 1992 Disabled Persons Act amended in 1996 stipulates the need to form a Disability Board whose function was to lead in the formation of disability friendly policies. If in place the policies would cover transition related areas (section 5b). These include education, employment, sports, recreation, culture, social services and access to the community. Other services include vocational rehabilitation and social employment.

Although IDEA may not have some ecological validity to the Zimbabwean situation it acts as a guideline and base for the fundamental principles of transition services which may sound utopic to developing nations like Zimbabwe. The 1992 Disabled Persons Act clearly intended to see the transition of people with disabilities in the same line as IDEA as the outlined services are to a greater extent similar. As such this research study intended to find out whether transition education for learners with hearing impairments is in line with some policy framework and to find out the factors responsible for the outcome on the ground.

2.2. *Comprehensiveness and structure of transitional services in educational institution*

2.2.1. Question of Legislation

According to IDEA (2004) the primary purpose of law in special education is to ensure a free and appropriate public education designed to meet each student's unique needs and to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. It is therefore imperative to review some ecological policies and see how they relate to transitional services. This is because it is through policies that educational institutions are mandated to give unique services to individual students.

In Zimbabwe the 1992 Disabled Persons Act, Chapter 17:01 is the major law alongside the 1987 Education Act that guides special education provisions. In the Disabled Persons Act there are certain sections which depending on the user may be linked to the transition of persons with disabilities. These include section 3 (2) (c) which gives the function of the Director for the Disabled Persons Affairs as to co-ordinate activities of institutions, associations and organisations concerned with the welfare and rehabilitation of the disabled persons. Transitional services are part of the rehabilitation. This research study intended to evaluate the extent to which transitional services for learners with hearing impairments are coordinated.

Secondly, section 5 (b)(i) of the 1992 Disabled Persons Act gives the function of the board as to achieve equal opportunities for disabled persons by ensuring as far as possible, that they obtain education and employment, participate fully in sporting, recreation and cultural activities and are afforded full access to community and social services. Other services of the Act that are relate to transitional services are 5b (v), (vi), (vii) and 5d. Although the provisions are not disability specific, they, to some extent provide fertile ground for transitional services.

In contrast the Americans Individual with Disabilities Education Act of (2004) is very specific on what has to be done for children with disabilities concerning their transition. It states that schools are required to provide graduating high school students with disabilities a summary of their accomplishments and transitional needs as they leave school. In addition schools are required to set clear and specific transition goals beyond secondary school. The Student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) is to include appropriate measurable post-secondary goal based on age, appropriate transitional assessments, and describe the transitional services, including courses of study needed to reach his/her goals. The current research study sought to evaluate comprehensiveness and structure of transitional services for the hearing impaired. As such the evaluation was based on the school curriculum. It was expected that both the national and localized school policies were used to provide for the transitional services. In this realm, the efficacy or lack of it in the schools and organisations for the disabled persons would be established. Another question that needed to be answered is how can institutions make transitional services more comprehensive, structured and purposeful? This is addressed in the next section of this review.

Mapepa (1995, 2006, and 2007) argues that unless and until planned vocational and independent living skills are emphasized early and taught to students, both employability and independence remains a pipe dream and not reality. Mapepa, Bhebhe and Manyowa (2008) also postulated that Zimbabwe has no coordinated programmes to ensure employability and independence for people with disabilities. They went further to say that many schools teach prevocational and adulthood skills but due to lack of coordination these do not benefit the students when they graduate from high school. In addition these authors also proposed that there exists no links between educational institutions for people with disabilities, colleges and employment opportunities. This explains why the current research focused on all the stake holders, schools, employers and organisations for the disabled. It was expected that gray areas and gaps in provisions would be established and best ways preferred. However, it has to be noted that the current study was only limited to the transition of learners with hearing impairment and not other types of disabilities.

2.3 Ways in which transitional services can be made comprehensive, structured and purposeful

2.3.1. Adoption of a philosophy that recognizes the leadership roles of schools in the transition process will help ensure a seamless transition to adulthood

Research in the past two decades has portrayed a discouraging picture of the post-school experience of young deaf and hard of hearing adults. Bullis, Bull, Johnson and Peters (1997) all found out that; (i) there was a high unemployment and underemployment rates for school leavers with hearing impairments, (ii) low rates of fulltime employment among those employed and (iii) low rates of post-school participation in post-secondary education. In a study by Lam (1994), 24% of deaf youth were unemployed 3 - 4 years after learning high school and 40% of deaf youth with additional disabilities in the same study were unemployed.

According to March (1998) school years offer a potential for incredible potential growth, self awareness, and expanding career maturity over an extended period of time. In addition to academic programming, March suggested that the schools can provide structured paid and unpaid work on a continuum from school-based to community-based employment. Such a career pathways concept provides a way for students to move from skill acquisition to skill application, from observation to hands on activities, while offering a broad approach to building competitiveness that can be applied to any occupation (Mooney, 1997).

Thus, certainly schools cannot provide transition services in isolation. They must forge partnership with the community and not vice-versa. This leadership role cannot be abrogated, postponed or deferred, rather it has to be employed as early as possible, (Hoyt, 1994). Thus, people with hearing impairments need to participate in comprehensive career development programs during school years. These help the hearing impaired to understand themselves, their skills and develop their talents so that they can acquire and refine good work habits, learning skills and career plans (Hoyt and Lester, 1995).

Against this background the current research study sought to find out the ways in which schools for the hearing impaired are using for the transitional process. The study also intends to find out how well schools provide coordinated transitional activities. In other words, the study needed to establish how school-based programs are providing developmental experiences that counteract the experiential deficits and limitations such as those cited in the above researches.

2.3.2. Adoption of a comprehensive developmental guidance model

According to Szymanski (2003) career development should be considered the core of a successful transition program. The career development process can play a key role in a schools educational program and should be integrated throughout the curriculum. According to Hershenson (1996) a comprehensive guidance model recognized that all students pass through specific stages as they mature. Hershenson (1996) preferred a theory of work which includes work personality. This is the individuals' personal system of work motivation and self concept as a worker. Work personality develops primarily during the preschool years and is influenced mainly by the family. The work theory also posits work competencies. There include the individuals work habits, physical and mental skills applicable to jobs and work related interpersonal skills. These develop during school years and are influenced by the learning environment. Lastly work goals entail the individuals' career objectives at any one time. These develop typically during later school years and are influenced by family and learning environments as well as socializing environments.

There are other types of guidance models. The focus of this research study was to establish whether there is any systematic guidance models followed in the transition process for learners with learning impairments. If they are available the study needed to find out whether they encourage extensive collaboration among teachers and counsellors, thus integrating classroom concepts with developmental issues, including career and work-based learning. According to March (1998) adoption of an interdisciplinary

curriculum that is outcome-oriented promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are important for productive and satisfying lives for the hearing impaired students.

2.3.3. Parental and employer participation

According to IDEA (2004) parental involvement in an interdisciplinary curriculum and transitional actuates is an essential component. In a study by Hlatywayo (2008) on the efficacy of parental involvement in the education of Deaf learners it was found that learners with participating parents were doing well in all aspects compared to their counterparts whose parents were either dormant or withdrawn. According to Kreig, Brown and Balled (1995) postulated that student adulthood and workforce preparation needs can be met in part by incorporating employer characteristics and expectations, labour market trends, local community employment needs and other realities in to a comprehensive career development transition program.

According to the American Employer- Parent Advisory Committee (2001), employers are an integral of the school-parent-community partnership. It goes further that employers and parents can both benefit from understanding one another's perspective and the needs learners with hearing impairments. It has to be noted that employers are profit makers and they need information and support from schools and parents. For example, they need information about the communication needs, expectations and rights of the hearing impaired, support for making job modifications and accommodations such as interpreters and assistive technology (Watson, 1997). In addition parents, supported by school and adult service personnel, can bridge this gap to employers.

A research carried by Wehmeyer and Davis (1995) have shown that hiring deaf and hard of hearing workers is not a concern for many employers, however maintaining a productive workforce is the major concern. Thus, when concerns are addressed in supportive environments, employers can make the connection to a win-win situation for all. It was the one of the intentions of this study to establish the efficacy of the links between schools, employers and the hearing impaired organisations. Employers were expected to show their concerns regarding the productivity of deaf workers and concerns raised. Thus, the extent of parental and employer involvement in the transition process was to be evaluated. Rizzo and Varin (1997) concluded by saying that many schools overlook parents in that they are also workers, who own businesses, as potential employers, and as career role models. These authors also said schools can enhance their transition programming by actively recruiting parents and other community members as employers.

Research by Sinclair and Christenson (1992) found out that family involvement in the transition process positively impact the transition of youth in general. They found out in one study that family support and encouragement is a major factor in the transition of Deaf youth. However, family involvement can easily decline across the grades unless schools work to involve parents in positive ways, recognizing that efforts to involve families must address geographic and work schedule problems.

2.3.4. Qualitative Assessments of interests, abilities and aptitudes

According to Goldman (1990) many learners with hearing impairments have experienced years of standardized tests that have compared them to others in an age or norm group. Very few standardized career assessments instruments focus on all the major areas necessary for an integrated, comprehensive career evaluation of Deaf or hard of hearing individuals. Goldman (1990) added that qualitative assessments use information gathered in variety of environments through interviews, observations, historical records, educational records and similar information to develop a holistic study of the individual. Thus, the flexibility and adaptability of qualitative methods make them attractive for working with Deaf and hard of hearing youth who may differ in significant ways from the groups on whom standardized tests are normed. McDivitt (1994) went further to say that the assessments provide a level of self-awareness that can involve the student directly and actively in decision making. Thus, they incorporate a developmental framework that implies growth through learning about oneself. According to Szymanski, Fenandez, Koch and Merz (2004) qualitative assessments have another advantage of empowering individuals as they are person centered. The methods cast the student as a collaborator by emphasizing learning about oneself and self understanding within the context of different environments.

Lastly the assessments (McDivitt, 1994) enable the construction of a career portfolio. A portfolio is a tool that allows students the opportunity to collect a great deal of information about themselves, document competencies, and record accomplishments and achievements. Thus, portfolios may be used as both an assessment and counselling tool by pointing out existing skills, interests and values, progress towards goals, and changes or new initiatives in education among other uses.

What then are the types of assessments used in educational institutions for learners with hearing impairments in Harare? Do the assessments used have some ecological validity? It is one of the areas this current study was interested in. While research revealed how valuable qualitative assessments and infusion are, the current study intended to evaluate their level of use or alternatives in schools for learners with hearing impairments.

According to Scheetz (2001) career education programs can begin as early as kindergarten and extent through high school. He argued that early exposure to career concepts prepares students for meaningful participation in transition planning process, "beginning not later than the first IEP in effect when the student is 16 and updated annually". Mandlawitz (2005) said career education can be addressed using two basic approaches which are coursework and infusion. Bos and Vaugh (2002) said the infusion approach is more effective for three reasons. Firstly teachers can establish the relevance of out-of-context academic concepts to the realistic context of the working world. Secondly since most of Deaf students are taught in local programs, the small number of these students in a given school might not make the coursework option feasible. Thirdly, there is usually little, if any, room for additional courses in the curriculum. According to Drew and Egan (2002) special educators are faced with the choice of either teaching academic content or focusing on transition skills in recent years. The authors recommend an eclectic approach where both are used. This is supported by

Wood (2002) who maintains that teachers can and should create lessons that enable students to acquire knowledge and skills that are both school-base and career applicable, noting “this is transition in its truest form”

3. Methodology

The study used the mixed methods design where both qualitative and quantitative techniques and methods were applied. The sub-research questions were designed in a way that they solicited qualitative responses. However, some questions which were derived from the research questions demanded quantitative presentation and analysis. These were based on the responses gathered from the respondents. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods research as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study or set of related studies. Rossman and Wilson (1985) cited by Johnson et al. (2007) identified three reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research that is to enable confirmation or collaboration of each other through triangulation, to develop analysis in order to provide richer data and to initiate new modes of thinking by attending to paradoxes that emerge from the two data sources. In this study both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. The study sample was purposively selected and it comprised of 10 school managers selected from schools of the deaf in Harare. It also comprised of 10 managers of deaf persons organisations and 10 deaf persons trading in the streets of Harare. The questionnaire was the sole data gathering tool used. The questionnaires were distributed and collected back within a period of ten days.

4. Findings

4.1 Biographic Data of Respondents

Variable	Group	Number	%
Sex	Males	4	40
	Females	6	60
	Totals	10	100
Capacity	School Head	2	20
	Deputy Head	2	20
	Senior Teacher/TIC	5	50
	Health Coordinator	1	10
	Total	10	100
Period in same capacity	0 – 5 years	2	20
	6 – 10 years	3	30
	11 – 15 years	1	10
	16 – 20 years	2	20
	20 + years	2	20
	Total	10	100

Table 1: School Managers

These results show that the sample had more females than males. 50% of the group was either senior teachers or teacher in charge, while 40% were school heads. One health worker contributed 10% of the total.

Variable	Group	Number	%
Capacity of Interviewee	Disability Officer	1	10
	Communications Officer	2	20
	Finance Officer	2	20
	Director	1	10
	Chairperson	2	20
	Secretary	2	20
	Totals	10	100
Experience with organisation	0 – 2 years	4	40
	2 – 4 years	1	10
	5 – 6 years	2	20
	7 – 8 years	1	10
	9 – 10 years	1	10
	11 + years	1	10
	Totals	10	100

Table 2: Biographic Data of Disability Institution Managers

From the table it can be deduced that all the interviewees held very high offices in their organization and thus we well informed. About 40% of these however, had little experience ranging from 0 – 2 years.

Variable	Group	Number	%
Sex	Males	5	50
	Females	5	50
	Totals	10	100
Educational level	Primary	-	-
	Secondary Dropout	1	10
	'O' Level	9	90
	College	-	-
	University	-	-
	Total	10	100
Age	10 – 15 years	-	-
	16 – 20 years	-	-
	21 – 25 years	1	10
	26 – 30 years	5	50
	31 – 35 years	1	10
	36 – 40 years	2	20
	40 + years	1	10
	Total	10	100

Table 3: Biographic Data for Deaf people in the streets

These results show that half of the Deaf people interviewed were males while the other half were female. In terms of education 90% were 'o' level graduates. The age range interviewees ranged from 25 – 40 + years with the majority being in the interval 25 – 30 years which constituted 50%.

4.2. Comprehensiveness of Transition Services

The first research question solicited for responses related to comprehensiveness and structured of transitional services meant for learners with hearing impairments.

4.2.1. Comprehensiveness of Transition Services

The law determines how comprehensive a program can be as it acts as a basis. School managers were asked whether there is any policy guideline with regard to transition for learners with hearing impairments.

Response	Frequency	%
YES	0	0
NO	10	100

Table 4: Whether there is a Transitional policy (N = 10 school managers)

The results show that special schools do not have any policy that mandates them to provide transitional services. School managers were also asked to respond whether they have a school-based transitional plan for learners with hearing impairments.

Response	Frequency	%
YES	3	30
NO	7	70

Table 5: Whether there are transitional plans at school level

The data above shows that the majority of school managers said that there are no transitional plans for learners with hearing impairment. However, 30% said the plans exist. Of these 20% of them were from a school where both the head and deputy said there are no such plans. Asked to comment on the subsequent question 5(b) none of the three respondents expanded.

Question 4 of organizational management asked whether the organization provide some transitional services for learners with hearing impairments, and the following results were obtained.

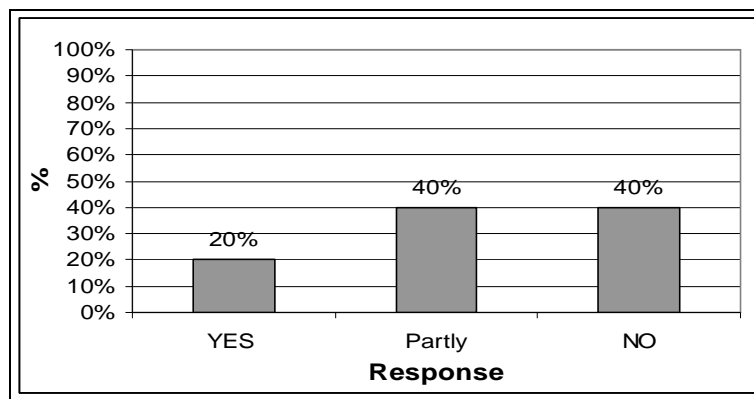


Figure 1: Whether organisation for Deaf and PWD provide transitional programs

The results in Figure 1 above show that organisations are not mainly involved in the business of transition. Only 30% of the respondents said they provide transitional services but the extent could be partly as seen by the 40% who indicated so.

Organizational managers were asked whether schools transitional services were comprehensive enough to enable school leavers with hearing impairments lead competent adulthood and employment. All the 10 employers said NO, meaning the programs were not comprehensive.

Deaf people in the streets were asked whether there are many Deaf people in the formal employment. 100% said they are very few of them. Asked to name the strengths and weaknesses of their transitional path, only weaknesses were cited. The most recurring responses obtained from interviews were as follows:

- We were not given the opportunity to decide our future at school.
- Teachers dictated to us subjects to follow
- We were learning the same things and subjects at school.
- I only started to think of my career after I got 'o' level results.
- I was not given information on what to do without English at 'O' Level.

Deaf people were also asked to indicate what critically lacked in their transitional path.

Response	Frequency	%
Career guidance	10	100
General Curricula	6	60
Multi-disciplinary guidance	4	40

Table 6: What lacked in the transition path: Deaf persons' perspective
N = 10 (However some respondents gave more than one answer)

The table shows that career guidance was cited by all the respondents as a critical component that lacked in their transitional path.

The data obtained from the employers on how they managed to get information about employing Deaf persons helps to determine the comprehensiveness of transitional programs. The table below shows the responses obtained from the employers.

Response	Frequency	%
Increased knowledge on disability issues	2	20
Adhered to non-discriminatory policies	3	30
Partnership with schools and organisations	-	-
The helping spirit	4	40
Availability of disability in family	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 7: How employers employed the Deaf

The results show that the majority of the employers only employ people with hearing impairments only as a gesture of helping. However, increased knowledge on disability and non-discriminatory issues combined contributed 50%. A point to note is that all the employers did not get influence to employ deaf persons from schools and organisations that represent them.

4.2.2. Structure of transitional Services

The structure of the transitional services was evaluated using organizational connectivity, quantity of services rendered in schools, whether transition is part of the ongoing school curriculum and the level at which multi-disciplinary teams are involved. Management at the two studied schools was asked to proffer services they give to learners with hearing impairments as part of transition.

Service	Frequency	%
Activities of daily living	10	100
Vocational Education	10	100
Educational and foundational competency	10	100
Individualized curriculum	6	60
Community experience	-	-
Marriage and family management	-	-
Post secondary academic support	-	-
Decision making skills	3	30
Management of personal assistance	1	10
Supported employment and employer support	-	-
Rehabilitation counseling	-	-
Audiological services	5	50
Psychological services	-	-
Social work services	-	-

Table 8: Transitional Services provided in Schools

The results in table 11 above show that the schools mainly focus on activities of daily living, vocational education and educational competency whose response was 100%. Other transitional services such as community experiences and rehabilitation counselling which are core to transition are not part of the transitional structure.

The school managers were asked in question 10 to show whether transitional training was an ongoing process or is done periodically. The majority of the respondents did not answer the question (80%) The other 20% said transitional training is a periodical process. Thus, the structure of the transitional services seemed to be little understood.

Employers, school managers, Deaf persons and organizational management were asked about the collaboration between schools, organisations and professional in relation to transition services.

4.2.2.1. Whether schools collaborate with employers and Deaf organisations in relation to transition services.

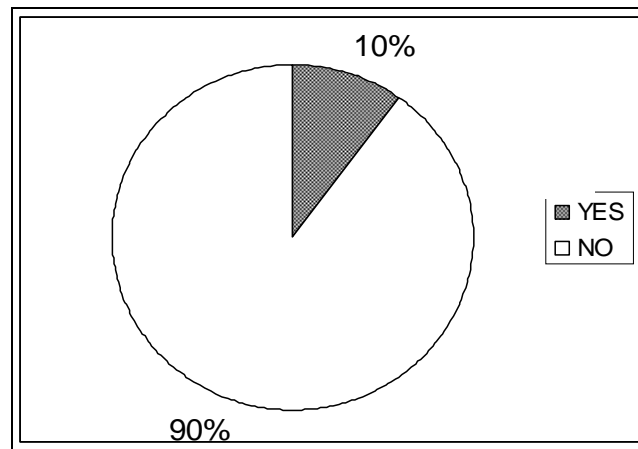


Figure 2: Schools Sphere of Collaboration

From fig 2 it can be deduced that special schools for the Deaf do not have a structure that involves working with other organisations to improve the transition of learners with hearing impairments.

4.2.2.2. Deaf Employee Supports

Employers were asked to indicate the level at which their Deaf employees get external support whilst at work.

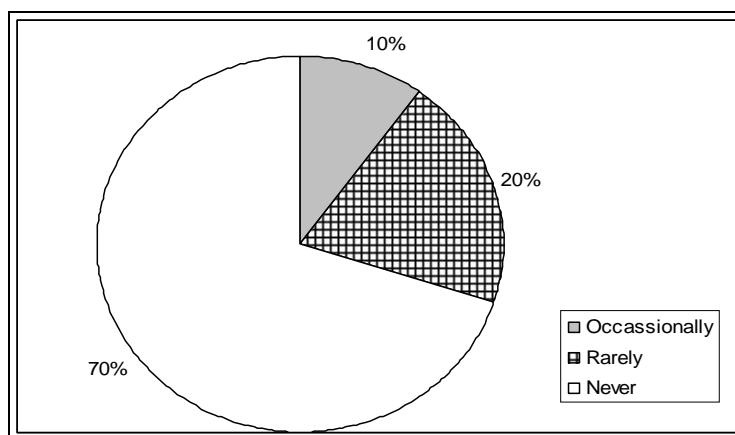


Figure 3: Deaf Employee Work Support

The results shown in fig 3, shows that the majority of respondents (employers) (70%) never have their employees with hearing impairments get external transition support. Only 1 out of 10 employers said support is received occasionally. This confirms the lack of a proper transition structure from school level as found in 4.2.2.3 (a) above.

4.2.2.3. Organizational Management was asked the question

In which way does your organisation collaborate with other institutions and employers to ensure smooth transitions?

Some of the raw responses obtained are as below:

- We are planning sign language to health professionals in referral hospitals.
- We work closely with ZIMNAD and participate in other activities.
- We provide counselling to Deaf people entering employment.
- We have a radio program, a newsletter, a disability update for advocacy.

These responses confirm the results above that these organisations and schools seem to be working towards different directions and in isolation. Thus, a structured transition path for deaf learners seems to be non-existent

4.2.2.4. Organisational management

Organisational management was asked how suitable are the transitional services provided by educational institutions. The answers obtained ranged from not at all, not adequate, very inadequate, and not suitable. This confirms that something is wrong with the structure of the transitional process.

Deaf people in the street all indicated that the main professional who worked with them during their school years were teachers. Only 20% indicated that they got the services of counselors and teacher turned audiologists, this is among a wide range of professionals who are supposed to be involved in the transitional path.

On question 17 of the interview guides Deaf persons were asked to indicate the organisations that helped that in the transition path.

Organization	Frequency	%
Emerald Hill	8	80
Danhiko	7	70
Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre	7	70
Beatrice Rehabilitation Centre	6	60

Table 9: Organizations that helped Deaf people in transition (N = 10, whereas respondents gave more than one response)

The results show that Deaf persons credit their former schools and institutions for the skills they obtained. The basis seems to have been made on the premise that transition is mostly vocational. It has been noted that organisations that represent them were not cited as influencing the transition process which has an influence on the structure of the transition process.

5. Discussion

5.1. Comprehensiveness and structure of transition service

Research results have shown that there is no policy in Zimbabwe which directs transitions services .All the school managers (100%) who are supposed to be the implementers of this policy said such a policy was non -existent. According to IDEA (2004) , the purpose of such a policy in special education is to ensure a free and appropriate public education designed to meet each student’s unique needs and to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. Thus education for learners with hearing

impairments in Zimbabwe is guided by the 1992 Disabled Person Act and the 1987 Education Act. These policies, besides being steps in the right direction have, for a very long time been criticized for being too general. As such the results found in this research can be highly attributed to the absence of mandatory policies such as the American Public Law 105-17 which positively impacted on the provision of transition services. For example the policy stipulates that typical transition services start from kindergarten and at the age 14 students should have a specific view of what the future demands from them.

70% of school management indicated that there are no specific plans with regards to transitional services in schools. In addition it was found that there are no assessment tools used to evaluate learners for transition services. The school management also said such services are partly provided in the schools. All the 10(100%) of the school managers felt that the transitional programs were not comprehensive. Confirmation was obtained of this lack of comprehensiveness by the Deaf people in the streets (100%). They said that they lacked career guidance. Of all the employers, no one employed a Deaf person due to partnerships with schools and organizations for people with disabilities.

These results are really disturbing. Schools are supposed to provide graduating high school students with disabilities a summary of their accomplishments and transitional needs as they leave school (IDEA, 2004). It has to be the responsibility of schools also to set clear and specific goals beyond secondary school. The facts that there are neither transitional plans nor appropriate transitional assessments effectively means that school leavers with hearing impairments do not have their future comprehensively decided at school. This explains issues raised in the background section of this research study which include increased number of people with hearing impairments in the street. Their only hope was in the street because their curriculum was not comprehensive to enable them to lead productive lives. It is disturbing to note that schools are not making the least by just making partnerships with employers. These findings agreed with assertion by Mapepa (1995, 2006 and 2007) that unless and until planned vocational and independent living skills are emphasized early and taught to students, both employability and independence remains a pipe dream and not reality. The results also confirms Mapepa, Bhebhe and Manyowa (2008) who said that Zimbabwe has no coordinated programmes to ensure employability and independence for people with disabilities. In addition results of this study tally to those by Peters 1997 who reported,

- High unemployment and underemployment rates for school leavers with hearing impairments
- Low rates of fulltime employment among those employed
- Low rates of post-school participation in post secondary education.

Special schools seem to be offering learners with hearing impairments' with the vocational skills needed for employment and let them leave school with very little if any knowledge on their employment. Career development should be considered the core of any successful transitional program (Szymanski, 2003). The results suggests that activities in schools are generally fragmented and not coordinated or futuristic. As such for as long as there is no transition policy, no transitional plans for individual learners in schools and no transitional assessments the future of learners with hearing impairments remain very bleak.

In terms of structure of transition services, research results point to very negative areas. All the school managers (100%) pointed out that transition is the primary responsibility of teachers. All deaf people in the streets confirmed this when they said teachers were the primary service providers in their transition path. The basic transitional service provided in the schools according to the results is activities of daily living (100%), Vocational education (100%) Educational Foundation Competency (100%). Negatives which are not considered included community experiences (0%), post-secondary academic supports (0%), employer supports (0%), psychological, welfare and rehabilitation counseling (0%). Employers (70%) indicated that they do not get support, which confirms the teachers responses.

These results pointed to the lack of structure on the transition services. Surely there can be no transition without some of the services pointed above, for example when schools fail to support their leavers in employment how many employers would want to employ learners with hearing impairments? The American Employer-Parent Advisory Committee (2001) argued that employers are supposed to be an integral part of the school-parent-community partnership. The Current findings indicated non availability of such a connectivity which is militating against the employment of learners with hearing impairments. Such a structure lacks critical aspects including qualitative assessments which are person-centered and have an empowering effects, (Szymanski, Fenandez, Koch and Merz (2004). The Structure of transition services in the schools are more or less like the general education system. The structure lacks curriculum and career infusion, multidisciplinary team support and integrated career evaluation (Wood, 2002). An important issue that needs also to be raised is that of lack of collaboration between schools for the deaf and organizations representing the Deaf people. All the three organizations studied pointed that they do not work with the schools on issues relating to the transition learners with hearing impairments. Thus it can be concluded that while schools do things on their own, organizations do their own things on the other side. The end results are that the deaf persons suffer due to lack of structure between these important stakeholders.

6. Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions the following recommendations are made.

- Special schools for the Deaf must design individual transition plans for all learners on entry to high school. This will help the students to become responsible for their future in time.
- Designed transition plans must include and involve all stakeholders such as the learner, parents, school, and prospective employer where possible and other members of the multidisciplinary team.
- There must be connectivity and collaboration between the school, organizations for the Deaf, employers and parents to enhance smooth transition into employment and adulthood.

- Schools used standard qualitative assessments to evaluate learners for proper transitions
- That a transitional policy for learners with hearing impairment be instituted by policy makers.

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