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Effective Mode of Communication to the Hearing Impaired in Ghana: The Case of Bechem School for the Deaf, Bechem

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Abstract:

The study aimed at finding out what mode of communication prevail in Ghana, which one is very effective to benefit all categories of student who are hearing impaired in the various schools and the community, with particular reference to Bechem School for the Deaf in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The study made use of questionnaires, interviews and observations. The sample was sixty (60), including thirty-two (32) students, ten (10) teachers, ten (10) parents, two (2) officers from Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service (GES) and four (4) executive members of Ghana National Association of the Deaf as well as two Headmasters. The result of the study was analysed according to a demographic distribution of respondents' status, gender and age. Simple statistical descriptions of analysis of opinions of the people were done using simple percentage, backed by Venn diagram and Bar graphs. The findings were able to give the researcher information that Sign Language (SL) was the prescribed mode of communication for the Hearing Impaired no matter their level of hearing since it was a policy from the Special Education Directorate. Recommendations made include the use of Total Communication as an effective teaching and learning mode that would benefit all categories of Hearing Impaired according to their linguistic needs in the schools and the community at large. There should also be speech therapists, speech rooms and auditory training units with individuals wearing hearing aids in the schools. Effective Sign Language teachers, interpreters and books for Sign Language must also be in the various schools for those interested in Sign Language.

Keywords: Hearing impaired, communication, sign language, total communication, oral education

1. Introduction

There appears to be consensus in the field as to where and how to educate individuals with hearing impairment. The council of the education of Deaf (1976) in United States of America has formally stated that no single method of instruction and communication can best meet the needs of all students with hearing impairment. In a national survey of five hundred and seventy-six (576) programmes, King (1984) found that many educators combined different parts of various languages instructions approaches rather than adhering closely to any single method. The three most common methods of instructions and communication includes: a) Oral communication, b) Total communication which involves simultaneous sign and oral communication and c) American Sign Language. Northcott (1980b) states that the priority in the education of learners with hearing impairment is to ensures that all learners with usable hearing have the maximum opportunity to develop listening and oral skills with the maximum opportunity to speak for themselves, to be understood and to participate actively in decision regarding their own lives and goals. It is important to support students in the use of their residual hearing. Children typically begin wearing hearing aids as early as possible to increase an awareness of environmental sounds and to facilitate language development (Sander, 1982).

Learners with hearing impairment vary widely in their communication characteristics professionals and families often have strong preference about which communication method they believe is more appropriate. However, in Ghana, it appears there is no definite policy with regards to mode of communication used in the education of individuals with hearing impairment. Preference of education and personal unfairness establish whether Sign Language or oral education is promoted and used. Reacting to this, Avoke (2001) observes that what Ghana has in the absence of such policy political oratory and policy statement featuring in many official platforms. Offei (2005), states that in September, 1997 at a meeting of Heads of Special Schools for the deaf, there was a pronouncement to change from the use of Sign Language to the use of Total Communication in all Schools for the Deaf. In 1999, there was a drastic move to change the mode of communication from Total Communication to Sign Language.

This went a long way to the extent that some teachers stop students from talking. Their reasons being that they will lose their jobs when authorities from the Division hear or see the Hearing Impaired talking. Again, the students themselves, especially, the pre-lingual do not respect the postlinguals because they can speak. For example, during prefectoral elections in school, when postlinguals stood for the position of school prefects, they were never voted for with the reason that they can speak therefore they do not qualify to be the prefects of the school for the Deaf. Another example is when the UNESCO consultant on Deaf Education, Mr. Akach and the team had a meeting with the department of Special Education at University College of Winneba. After the meeting, an adult Hearing Impaired who works at the department said Amen'; audible after the closing prayer but Mr. Akach signed to him that: 'you are deaf. Why should you talk?' (Report from Gadagbui 1999).

It is therefore very important to carry out such study to critically examine this problem of communication among the Hearing Impaired in Ghana so that the most appropriate methods of communication according to the needs of the children are adapted. This is to enable them communicate effectively among themselves and the hearing public as well as improving upon their academic achievements.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Communication

Ofori et. al., (2013: 30) define communication as the process of transmitting or receiving information. Okyere and Adams (2003: 26), also describe communication as the passing on and understanding of information using verbal or non-verbal language. Sekyi-Baidoo (2005: 2) says communication is receiving and giving of information for the purpose of enhancing one's life and the life around him. In most cases, two people are involved, the sender and the receiver. By being able to communicate, we get a way of controlling what happens to us. Indeed, to be able to communicate effectively as an important step towards building a relationship and involvement in the community. Speech and language are tools used for communication. It requires encoding and decoding messages. Cited in Gadagbui (2005), Kirk et. al. (1993), states that communication is made up of language components of phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics.

According to Shea & Bauer (1994: 195), communication is the verbal and non-verbal means of transmitting and decoding messages from one individual with the intention of stimulating meaning in the mind of another. Ruesch (1982) also says communication includes all the procedures by which one mind may affect the other. This involves oral and written, music, pictorial art and in fact, all human behavior. Ellis & Beattie (1986: 3) also assert that communication occurs when there is an organism encodes information into a signal which passes to another organism which decodes the signal and is capable of responding appropriately.

Without communication, teaching and learning would not occur. Hence, teachers are intimately involved in the communication process as they interact with students on a daily basis. Thus teachers constantly send messages to students and receive messages from students. Therefore, communication is central to the learning process. Without communication, learning can never take place. Moore (1996) observes that though most teachers understand the importance of verbal communication, many under estimate how much students learn from teachers' facial expression, body language, use of space and motion, use of time and use of voice. The Warnock report (1978) posits that from childhood to adulthood, the primary goal of Deaf Education is to set up an easy system of communication in order that relationship with fellow human beings can be as rich as possible so that a language foundation can be established in which secondary Language systems of reading and writing can be developed.

Children who are hearing impaired have the same basic needs as those with normal hearing "such as, a warm, responsive, loving cares acceptance stimulation and an enriching environment" (Ling, 1984). This notwithstanding, some efforts need to be put in place to make the individual with hearing impairment able to communicate.

2.2. Hearing Impairment

This refers to the condition in which an individual suffers from partial or total hearing loss. The Hearing Impaired are the categories of individuals who have difficulties in perceiving sound with their ears, that is, individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf. These children may have conductive, sensorineural or mixed hearing loss (Larbi, 2011). According to Kumedzro, (2007:9). Hearing impairment is generic term indicating a hearing loss that ranges in severity from mild to profound. There are different types of Hearing Impairment for the purpose of education. Gadagbui, (1998) also states that even though the Hearing Impaired is heterogeneous group and no single mode of communication will adequately meet their communication and educational needs. Smith and Luckason, (1999), observe that currently, there are no specific schools in Ghana which handle the needs of the individuals.

Gyimah (2000), reports that 18.6% of students of Volta School for the Deaf were not deaf but hard of hearing. Okyere & Adams (2003), confirm that some individuals in the schools are with hearing problems of various degrees. Gadagbui (1998) goes on to explain that though this system enhances socialization, it makes it difficult for the Deaf irrespective of the period of the onset of the problem to receive manual instructions. As such, it becomes important to improve this integrated approach with some form of support.

2.3. Methods of Communication to the Hearing Impaired

According to Taylor (1994), all modes of communication within a speech community are legitimate systems as long as they meet the needs of the user. Ling (1994), in his opinion, communication is important for a group of people and language is best learnt in early childhood. Smith and Luckason (1999) cited in Kumedzro (2007:30) stress that there are differences in the way students are taught. Kumedzro (2007:29) goes on to say that the choice of method of communication for a particular group of Hearing Impaired individuals should be based on the needs of the individual Tucker and Powell (1991) assert that the communication modes used for the

Hearing Impaired are not only meant for communication to take place but also bring about acquisition of language. There's a clear indication that the choice of communication modes for a particular group of individuals with hearing impairment should depend on the needs of the individual.

2.4. *Oral Communication or Oralism*

Oral communication, otherwise known as speech is the form of language in which articulated sounds or words are used to convey ideas. Oral communication to the Hearing Impaired involves the use of a combination of residual hearing, hearing aids, and speech reading, that is, watching others lips and face. Oral communication demands the utterances of speech sounds in a conversation form between one or more persons. It is supplemented by lip reading or speech reading. Riekehof, (1987) also describes Oral Communication as a method of training or educating individuals who are hearing impaired through speech or speech-reading without employing the language of signs or finger-spelling.

Kumedzro, (2007:30) indicates that the auditory-verbal philosophy postulates that it is the right of children with all degree of hearing loss to have the option of develop their ability to listen and communicate using the spoken language while growing up in the regular living and learning environments of their communities.

Mc Dougall (1991) observes that the oral methods aim at encouraging children to receive and use language in the most conventional manner without using Sign Language. Oralists want children who are deaf to use their residual hearing as best as they can and combine it with other methods of oral communication.

For Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasio, (1993), 'the oral method uses residual hearing through amplified sounds, speech reading and speech to develop communication skills'. The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (May, 1998:8) confirms this by stating that the majority of individuals who are deaf will have sufficient hearing through the use of appropriate audiological aids to develop understanding of spoken language. It is expected that they will follow a similar process of language acquisition to that of hearing children.

2.5. *Sign Language (S. L.) or Manualism*

According to Baker and Cokely, (1980:48), 'whenever there were people who needed to communicate there have been signed language that they and their ancestors have developed.' Sign Language or manualism is the use of several kinds of signs made with the hands to communicate ideas. As the Sign Language is a language that uses manual symbols to represent ideas and concepts, the term is generally used to describe the language used by individuals who are deaf in which both manual signs and finger spelling are employed. (Riekehof 1987:9)

Davis & Silverman (1978:400) also define manual communication as sending information with our hands and arms and receiving information with the eyes. Sign language is therefore a system of communication for the hearing impaired in which finger spelling, signing, gesture and facial expressions are used instead of speech to communicate ideas. It consists of arbitrary signs and icons or hand shapes that represent actual words. Sign Language has its own rules (Riekehof 1987:7). There are three different kinds of signs that make up Sign Language these are: a) Conventional signs, b) Significant signs and c) Arbitrary signs (Toklo & Ohene, 1998). Sign Language is the dominant method of communication among people who are deaf and is considered one of the most important elements belonging to the Deaf community (Moores 1988).

2.6. *Total Communication (T. C.)*

An English anthropologist by name Margaret Mead invented Total Communication (TC). Margaret lived with the Hearing Impaired since she wanted to study the lives of some people as to how they think, to understand them and be understood. She participated in eating, dressing, sleeping and communicated with them. This legend implied that Margaret did not speak same language with the people hence adapted the Total Communication as a mode to communicate with the people, cited by Trier, (1996) in Gadagbui (1998: 79).

Scoutan, (1984) cited in Kumedzro, (2007) says that the term Total Communication was created by Roy Holcomb in 1967. It is the title of a philosophy of communication, not a method. This is confirmed by Riekehof (1987:4) as he insists that Total Communication is a philosophy of educating the Hearing Impaired child which advocates the use of any and all means of communication to provide unlimited opportunity to develop language competence. Included are the following: Speech, amplification (hearing aids) auditory training, speech reading, gesturing, signing, finger-spelling, pantomime, reading, writing, pictures aid and any other possible means of conveying ideas, language and vocabulary.

Gadagbui (1998: 80) also agrees that Total Communication consist of Sign Language, finger-spelling the pad and pencil, oral communication or speech including the use of natural gestures, pointing, iconic symbols, facial expression and pantomime. Other are lipreading, auditory training and cue speech. Gurreton, (1979) also believes that by having access to all channels of communication, the child who is hearing impaired can make use of all his or her sensory mechanism to develop language and acquire a means of communication. This means making use of sign in order to clarify meaning. Leslie &Derbbie, (1999), support the use of plural forms of communication for the Deaf as they explain that with Total Communication, deaf children can have access to total linguistic information in contrast to speech which gives only partial linguistic information.

In regard to the day to day practical aspects of Total Communication, the concept simply means that as far as possible those persons within the child's immediate environment should talk and sign simultaneously and the child should be benefiting from appropriate amplification.

2.7. 1850s Controversy over Oralism and Manualism

The method of imparting knowledge to individuals who are hearing impaired became a big problem as education of the Hearing Impaired in early times became very popular throughout the world. Most of the early educators used the oral method in educating the Hearing Impaired. One of the people was Samuel Heiricke who was born on April 10, 1727 in Nantschutz, Germany (Bender, 1960: 101). He was of the view that spoken language is the hinge upon which everything turns. He insisted that the hearing impaired learn to take in with the eye. However, many others had different opinions that though the use of oral education had so many problems and very little success was achieved by users.

The oral educationists argued that spoken language was the common medium for the exchange of ideas among people and that in order to make persons who are hearing impaired part of the family and society, they needed to be taught to communicate orally, all difficulties notwithstanding signing, they contended, labelled as well as limited individuals who are hearing impaired (Dery, 1984).

Other educators like Abbe de l'Epee started to use manual method in educating the Hearing Impaired. He asserted that the signs the Hearing Impaired made with their hands in trying to communicate with each other were basis of a mother tongue for them in much the same way that one's native language is for a hearing person (Bender, 1960: 81). He was convinced that Sign Language was more natural for the Deaf and that it enables them to explore the nature of language and more importantly afforded them a facile means of communicating with others.

The question of whether children who are hearing impaired should be educated by Sign Language or speech has always aroused enormous controversy. The result has been a tug-of-war between Samuel Heinicke, an exponent of oralism and Abbe de l'Epee. There was exchange of a number of letters between them. Each one describes and defends his own philosophy and techniques without the least convincing the other.

According to Bender (1960: 149), as a means of resolving this controversy, there was a world conference in Milan, Italy, on September 6, 1880. The main aim of the conference was to discuss which method would appropriately be useful in the education of the Hearing Impaired. After a considerable length of discussions as to which method would be more useful to the Hearing Impaired, the congress ended proceeding with these resolutions from Bender (1960: 149) as follows: "*Considering the incontestable superiority of speech over signs in restoring the deaf to society, and in giving them a more perfect knowledge of language*". The Declaration also stated the following: "*That the oral method ought to be preferred to that of sign for the education and instructions of the deaf*". Other resolutions from the congress which proceeded from the first read as follows: "*Considering that the simultaneous use of speech and signs has the advantage of injuring speech, lipreading and precision of ideas and that the pure oral method ought to be preferred.*" In view of Bender (1960: 149) one resolution that was noteworthy was the one which said that "*No teacher can effectively teach a class of more than ten children in the pure oral method.*"

Turker and Nolan (1986), also claim that there was controversy about whether the communication methods can be mixed. The Total Communication supporters argued that are providing more information to an information deprived child. The controversy over methods of communication has raged on long enough and it has serious effects on both the children and the adults it is meant to help. The responsibility for bringing it to an end lies on all educators and families of the Hearing Impaired.

2.8. Modern Controversy over the Mode of Communication in Ghana

As the Hearing Impaired in Ghana is made up of totally deaf and hard of hearing, there has been the problem of communication among themselves and the society. Each of them has their own method of communication.

The Presbyterian church of Ghana invited the late Reverend Jackson Andrew Foster, a Black American who was deaf. He began the first School for the Deaf in Ghana on the 10th September, 1957 at Osu in Accra. His aims were to enable the hearing impaired read, write and assist them to earn a living and bring them back into the society as capable citizens. Reverend Foster being deaf used the American Sign Language (ASL) in teaching the Students (Gadagbui, 1998: 54).

The first Principal of the Deaf Education Specialist Training College, a British, introduced the oral method of communication where the Hearing Impaired with amplification was taught to listen, lipread, and to use speech. Oralism became a policy. A demonstration school where the method was to be practiced was set up and attached to the college. The old school which was founded by Reverend Foster was phased out to discourage its influence on the model school where the Hearing Impaired were to be taught to lipread and to use speech (Kwadade, 2000: 4-5).

Presently, there are fourteen schools for the Hearing Impaired approximately. The schools follow the regular curriculum with minimal modifications without any legislation and a clear-cut policy on the medium of instruction to be used in schools for the Hearing Impaired. Personal biases and whether the headmaster and staff were trained in oralism or manualism have influence on the choice of the medium of instruction in use. For example, the oral school also known as the Demonstration School for the Deaf at Mampong Akwapem used oralism, as Volta School for the Deaf at Hohoe. Similarly, Bechem and Teshie Schools for the Deaf were also known for manualism. Due to communication problems the education attainment of the majority of persons who are hearing impaired have remained at the basic level (UNESCO ORG/EDUCATON, 2001: 1).

Cited in Kumedzro (2007: 49), Oppong (2003), agreed with the use of Sign Language (Manualism) in Special schools for the Deaf by emphasizing that the mode of communication used for and by all students who are deaf all over the world, is Manualism or Sign Language. He further states that Ghanaian students who are deaf should use Ghanaian Sign Language since Nigerian students who are deaf use Nigerian Sign Language (NSL). South African students who are deaf use South African Sign Language (SASL), American students who are deaf use the American Sign Language (ASL) and so on.

Oppong (2003) is of the view that speech reading is largely guess work, and that it will be extremely difficult for a student who is deaf to rely greatly on voice language for educational and social endeavours. He also asserts emphatically that even if a profoundly deaf person is trained to use voice language, that students cannot hear the teacher orally. The schools that practise oralism teach and force the Deaf to learn and use oral speech. He goes on to say that by taking such an ingrained philosophical position. Some schools have used communication approaches that are out of place to the needs of the Hearing Impaired resulting in poor learning outcomes.

In her assertion to the above view, Gadagbui (2005) citing Mortin, (1987) as cited by Kumedzro (2007: 51) states that people who are hearing impaired are in different categories due to differences in the levels of impairments and people in any of the categories must be treated and supported according to their functional needs not by a wholesale corrective measures. She insists that in the 1990s, the decision to use Sign Language exclusively did not consider parents' view on preference and children who were post linguals. Gadagbui (1998) indicates that the post linguals and those with potential speech are lost since they are deprived of speech practice and teaching. To her, the directive on the use of Ghanaian Sign Language (GSL) in schools for the Deaf would worsen the problems of the Deaf or the Hard of Hearing. Gadagbui (2001), wonders how Ghana with more than one hundred (100) spoken languages and sixty (60) written languages could effectively have a Sign Language that could satisfy all the known icons or symbols of every culture.

The implication is that the use of the Ghanaian Sign Language is going to alienate Ghanaian Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals from their own culture. But language is meant to make children maintain their cultural identity. Moreover, the Ghanaian Sign Language is not standardized therefore any attempt to enforce its exclusive use in schools for the Deaf nationwide suggests a gamble with lives of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Today, the Sign Language in use in Ghanaian schools for the Deaf is a blend of American Sign Language and Ghanaian Sign Language which is being piloted (Offei, 2003).

The above discussions indicate that advocates of one communication approach invariably claims that their method was superior to others in the development of language and communication in Hearing Impaired Persons. As a result, the debate has been going on for years as to which method of communication is the best to instruct the Hearing Impaired.

3. Methodology

3.1. Population

The population comprised the Headmasters, teachers, Junior High (JHS) to technical three students of Bechem School for the Deaf. Others are heads of Education for the Hearing Impaired unit of Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service, Accra, Executive members of Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) and parents of learners who are Hearing Impaired.

3.2. Sample

A total number of sixty (60) people who participated in the study include two headmasters, ten teachers who have specialized in education for the Hearing Impaired and two heads of Education for the Hearing Impaired (EHI) Unit of Special Education Division, Accra. Others include four executive members of the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD), ten parents of learners who are hearing impaired and thirty-two students of both Junior High School to Technical three of Bechem School for the Deaf.

Status	Sample Size	Male	Females	Age range
Headmasters	2	2	0	43 - 58
Teachers	10	7	3	33 - 56
Heads of EHI	2	1	1	50 - 52
Adult Hearing Impaired	4	4	0	37 - 51
Parents	10	6	4	22 - 46
Students	32	20	12	15 - 24

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the sample according to status, gender and age

Total number = 60 (M. 40 = 66%, F. 20 = 33.3%)

3.3. Sample Technique

The research was carried out on sixty people. The simple random sampling technique was used in getting the number of subjects.

3.4. Research Tools

To make the research comprehensive, questionnaires, interviews and observation were used. Four forms of questionnaires were developed. These were to require information from the Head Masters, Teachers, Heads of Education for the Hearing Impaired (EHI) unit of Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service and Executive members of Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD).

Parents of individuals who are hearing impaired were interviewed to know if they were able to communicate with their children who are Hearing Impaired and what mode they used. Again, they were requested to state which method of communication they preferred that their children use. The parents were further required to state some of the problems they encounter when communicating with their children. In addition, the students were also interviewed. They were required to state which mode of communication they preferred most and why?

The final method used for the study was personal observation. The Hearing Impaired were observed when they were interacting with their teachers, parents, housemothers and other social workers in the school as well as among themselves.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings have been discussed below.

The table below shows the demographic distribution of respondents according to their status, genders age and percentage.

Status	Sample size	Male	Female	Age Range	%
Headmasters	2	2	-	44-58	3.33
Teacher	10	7	3	33-56	16.67
Heads of EHI	2	1	1	50-53	3.33
Adult Hearing Impaired	4	4	-	37-51	6.66
Parents	10	6	4	22-46	16.67
Students	32	20	12	15-24	53.33
Total	60	40	20		100

Table 2: Demographic distribution of the respondents according to their status, gender, age and percentage

4.1. Questionnaire Distribution and Collection

In all, eighteen (18) questionnaires were given out to all respondents. Two (2); 11% out of that were administered for the headmasters of Bechem School for the Deaf. Ten (10) 55.6% for teachers of Bechem School for the Deaf, two (2); 11% for the heads of Education for Hearing Impaired (EHI) unit of Special Education Division, Accra and four (4); 22.22% for executive members of Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD). The questionnaires were all retrieved.

Category of respondents	Area of distribution	No. of questionnaires sent out	No. retrieved	% retrieved
Headmasters	Bechem School for the Deaf	2	2	11
Teachers	Bechem School for the Deaf	10	10	55.5
Executive members	GNAD, Accra	4	4	22
Head of EHI Unit	Accra	2	2	11
Total		18	18	100

Table 3: Questionnaire Administration

4.2. Interview Conducted

In all, forty-two (42); 100% subjects were interviewed. Out of them, fourteen (14); 33.33% of them were females and twenty-eight (28); 66.67% were males. Out of the total number, ten (10) 23.8% of them were students of Bechem School for the Deaf.

Out of the ten (10) 100% parents, six (6); 60% of them were males and four (4); 40% were females. Among the thirty-two (32); 100% students, twenty (20) 62.5% of them were males and twelve (12); 37.5% of them were females.

4.3. Analysis of Respondents to the Research Questions in a Descriptive Manner, backed by Pie Charts and Bar Graphs are the Following

4.3.1. Research Question One

- What mode of communication prevails in Ghana?

To this question, fourteen (14) 100% respondents mentioned Oralism, Manualism and Total Communication (TC) as the modes of communication for the Hearing Impaired in Ghana and that for past five (5) years, Total Communication was the mode of Communication used in Bechem School for the Deaf.

Out of ten (10); 100% teachers, three (3) 30% agreed that post linguals and those who have residual hearing benefited from Total Communication (T C). Two (2); 20% out of them supported it by saying that both the Deaf and Hard of hearing benefited. Five (5) 50% also said the deaf also benefited.

Deduced from the above analysis, it can be seen that individuals who are hearing impaired benefited or enjoyed lessons when Total Communication (T C) was used as the medium of instruction in Bechem School for the Deaf. Figure 1 shows teacher's response to those who benefited from Total Communication (T C).

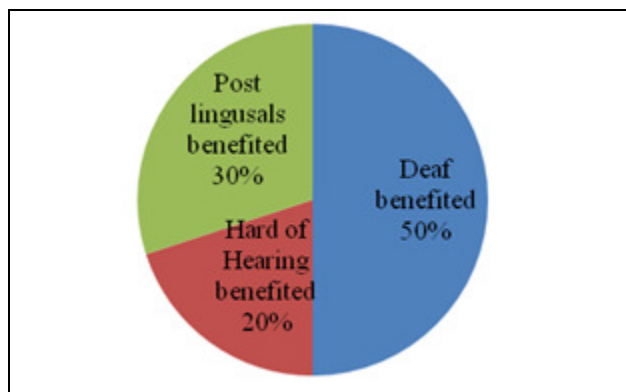


Figure 1: Responses of those who favoured Total Communication

A sub question related to research question one; what modes of communication prevails in Ghana? All fourteen (14) 100% gave their views on how children are assessed before admitted into the school. Two (2); 14.24% heads of Education for the Hearing Impaired, Special Education Division Directorate mentioned that the children go through the audiological test to know their hearing levels and to determine the effectiveness of use of hearing aids after which they go through the pre-school programme.

Seven (7); 50% teachers supported the view by saying that the children are taken through audiological test before they start the preschool programme for a period of one year. Two (2) 14.29% of teachers also added their view that the parents were given forms for a Medical Doctor to examine the children thoroughly before they are admitted. Two (2) 14.29% said the children are assessed to see if they can benefit from hearing aids. Only one (1); 7.14% stated that after the audiological assessment, decisions are made on appropriate placement option.

4.3.2. Research Question Two

- Why do the schools for the Hearing Impaired choose Sign Language as the only mode of communication?

In answering this question, fourteen (14); 100% respondents gave out their views. Two (2); 14.29% who are the heads of Education for the Hearing Impaired Unit of Special Education Division of Ghana Education Service responded to this that they prefer Sign Language to any other mode of communication though they are familiar with the other modes of communication. Their reason being that it is the natural language for the Hearing Impaired as spoken language is for the Hearing. It is also essential for the pre-linguals and post-linguals.

Supporting what they said, seven (7) 50% teacher respondents said that Sign Language makes teaching very effective since it is the mother tongue of the hearing impaired. Four (4) 28.57% disagreed to this by saying that Sign Language is discriminatory since those who have speech are sidelined, also it is difficult using it to teach because teachers are used to talking and signing (TC) and that the sudden change has become a problem. One (1) 7.14% said that Sign Language does not completely solve the problem of communication of the Hearing Impaired because there are degrees of hearing impairment as some of them have residual hearing and as such have speech and may benefit from speech. Respondents views on why the schools choose Sign Language is shown in figure 2 below.

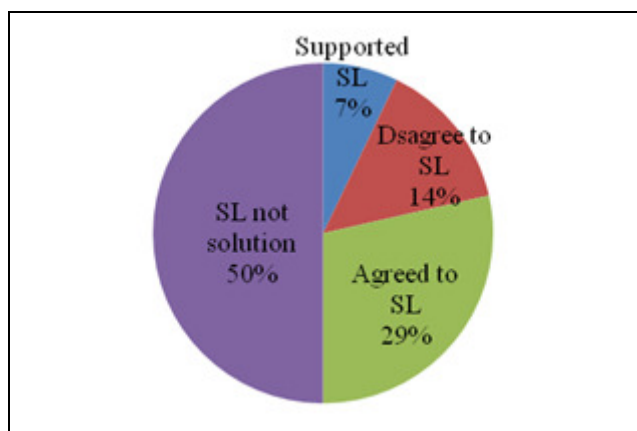


Figure 2: Respondents views on why the schools chose Sign Language

4.3.3. Research Question Three

- What are the capabilities of individuals with hearing impairment in hearing and speaking?

Out of the twelve (12) teachers and headmasters, two (2); 16.66% headmasters agreed that the Hearing Impaired with the aid of hearing aids are capable of speaking as some of them are post-linguals and others have residual hearing. Five (5); 41.67% teacher respondent supported by saying that the Hearing Impaired are capable of speaking if they are encouraged and taught or given training especially for those who have the interest. Those who have residual hearing and eligible speech are to be taken to a regular school. The other five (5); 41.67% disagreed to the assertion with the reason that once they are hearing impaired. The policy does not allow Oralism nor Total Communication.

From the above discussions, one can say that some categories of individuals who are hearing impaired are capable of speaking especially when they are given hearing aids and encouraged to use it. Those who are interested to speak can be taught to speak.

4.3.3.1. Responses to Interview Question item three

What are the capabilities of individuals who are hearing impaired in hearing and speaking?

The thirty-two (32); 100% of students interviewed, twenty-one (21); 65.62% of them said they were not born with the impairment. Fourteen (14); 43.75% of them had already acquired enough vocabulary before they became hearing impaired. Nineteen (19); 59.37% of the total number responded in the affirmative that they are interested in talking and that they would like to be taught to talk. Nine (9); 28.12% respondents disagreed with them, saying they are deaf and to that question, four (4); 12.5% did not respond. Students who are interested in one mode or the other are shown in figure 3 below.

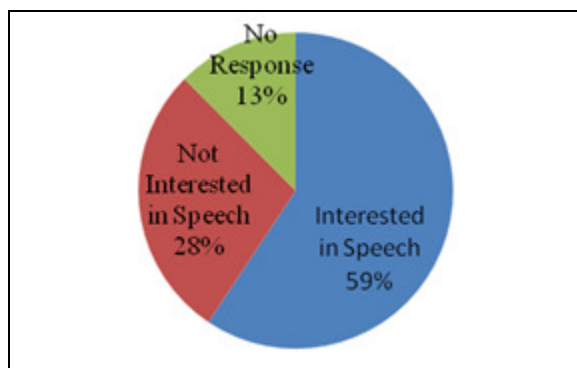


Figure 3: Students who are interested in one mode or the other.

As to what mode of communication they prefer, eighteen (18); 56.25% of them preferred talking and signing whilst fourteen (14) 43.75% of them preferred Sign Language. As to why they prefer that, nineteen (19); 59.38% of them said they used to talk before becoming hearing impaired. One (1); 3.13% of the students said he does not enjoy lessons because only Sign Language is used. Twelve (12); 37.5% of them said they enjoy lessons partially. Nineteen (19); 59.38% also said they enjoy lessons when Sign Language is used. Besides, twenty-three (23); 71.87% of the students said they would be happy if Sign Language and speech are used at the same time in school, and nine (9); 28.13% out of them wished Sign Language is maintained.

4.3.4. Research Question Four:

- What impact has Sign Language got on learners of the oldest school that practised Sign Language?

Two (2); 50% out of the four (4); 100% respondents who are executive members of Ghana National Association of the Deaf, agreed that Sign Language is the mode of communication they prefer, whilst two (2); 50% prefer Total Communication. All the four (4); 100% responded in the affirmative that the Hearing Community and the Hearing Impaired understand each other since they communicate through gestures and writing.

The four (4) 100% respondents mentioned Mr. Paul Baafi as the challenging personality from Bechem School for the Deaf. His educational background is Advanced Level (GCE) certificate. He was a worker at Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi as a designer and a sign writer.

Others who were mentioned have been tabulated below:

Name	Educational background	Occupation
Harry Osei	Middle School Leaving Certificate	Sales assistant
Emmanuel Ofori	Middle School Leaving Certificate	Security
Joseph Gyapong	N.V.T.I.	Instructor (Bechem Sch. For Deaf)
Yaw Sekyi	N.V.T.I.	Carpentry
Amankwah Opoku	N.V.T.I.	Tailoring
Robert Ayi	N.V.T.I.	Trading
Ama Konadu	N.V.T.I.	Trading
Monica Boakyi	N.V.T.I.	Trading
Sakah Gyapong	N.V.T.I.	House mother (Bechem sch. Deaf)

Table 4

According to three (3); 75% of the respondents, the Hearing Impaired do not get Government job because they do not have good qualification. One (1); 25% of them indicated that it is because of ignorance of the capabilities and potentialities of the Hearing Impaired on the part of the government officials. The two (2) 100% Heads of Special Education Directorate for Education for Hearing Impaired confirmed that it is due to poor quality of education, low educational attainment and communication barrier.

4.4. Interviews Conducted

In all forty-two (42) 100% subjects were interviewed. Out of this, ten (10); 23% of them were made of parents of children who are hearing impaired in Bechem School for the Deaf, and thirty-two (32); 76.19% of them were students in Junior High school (JHS) one to Technical three students of Bechem School for the Deaf. Respondents of interview are shown in the table 4 below:

4.5. Respondents of interview

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Students	32	76.19
Parents	10	23.81
Total	42	100

Table 5

4.6. Research question 5

What are the challenges that parents/ guardians of children who are hearing impaired face when communicating with their wards? To respond to this question, parents were interviewed. Out of the ten (10) 100% parents who were interviewed, five (5); 50% of them wished their children use Sign Language as the mode of communication. Three (3) 30% of them preferred talking and signing with gestures whilst the two (2) 20% preferred writing and gestures. Figure 4 shows mode of communication that parents would wish their children to use.

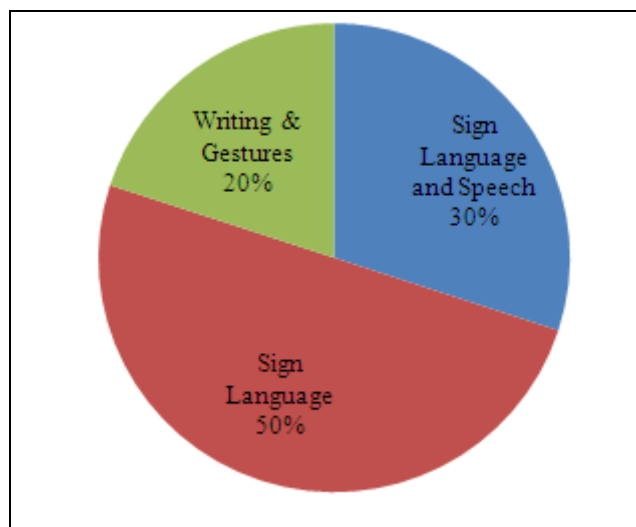


Figure 4: Mode of communication that parents prefer

In order to know why parents preferred those modes, five (5); 50% of them responded by saying that their hearing impaired children preferred to be talked to. Four (4); 40% preferred Sign Language because their children understand it better whilst one (1); 10% said it is very difficult to communicate with his child because he does not know how to sign and the child does not understand when he talks. Enumerating some of the problems they encounter when communicating with their children, seven (7); 70% out of the ten (10) 100% parents said they have to learn Sign Language because they find it difficult to understand each other because of different modes they use. One (1); 10% disagreed to that, saying that her child has speech and residual hearing as such can be talked to. Two (2); 20% said they usually forget the few signs they learn from their wards when they leave for school because they stay in school for long. The number of parents who have problems when communicating with their children are shown in figure 5 below.

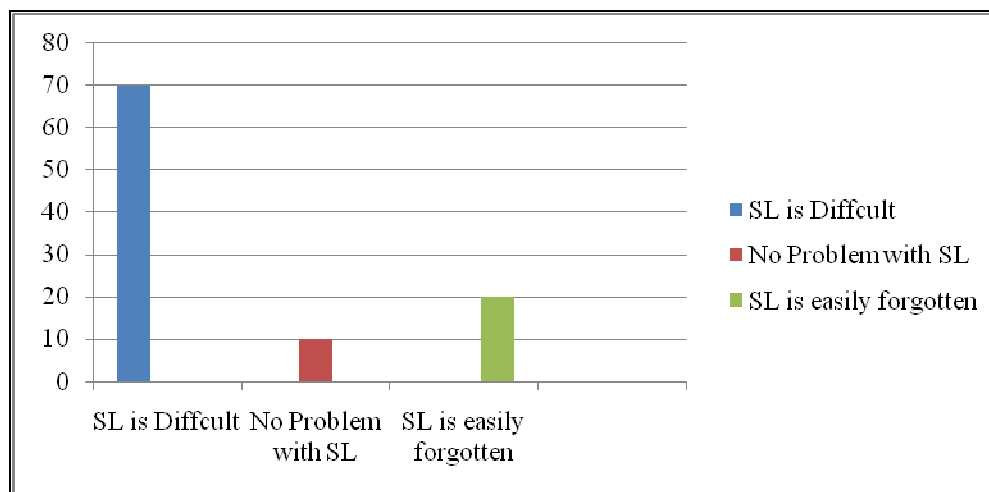


Figure 5: Number of parents who have problems

4.7. Observation

At Bechem School for the Deaf, it was observed that almost every student or pupil used Sign Language except few who did not know how to sign. Some of the post-linguals refused to speak. Just a few of them who became hearing impaired not quite long used speech alongside Sign Language when they were communicating with some of the teachers and social workers as they were not very proficient in the use of Sign Language.

Furthermore, it was observed that most of the post-linguals were losing the little speech that they had as they were interacted with them. It was also observed that materials and facilities in manualism were easier for the Hearing Impaired to acquire than are in oral communication as the facilities and equipment for speech training are not available.

5. Recommendations

In respect of what has come to light from the study, the following recommendations are made to promote effective mode(s) of communication to the Hearing Impaired in Ghana. Early identification of hearing impairment, management and decision taking on the mode of communication should be done early. Individuals who are hearing impaired should be allowed to choose their own method(s) of communication, provided they would benefit and also depending upon the individuals' level of hearing and preference. Before any mode of communication is chosen, the needs of the children who are hearing impaired must be taken into consideration.

Effective Sign Language teachers and books for Sign Language and in-service training of teachers in the various modes of communication which will benefit any specific needs should be in the schools. One mode of Sign Language should be focused on in order not to confuse those who use it. Parents should be given the right to choose the mode that can be used in the larger community by the Hearing Impaired so that they do not feel isolated when they go into the larger community. This would help bridge communication gap between the hearing impaired and the hearing community. There should also be a continuous programme to educate the parents of the Hearing Impaired to have the interest to learn the mode of communication that the children choose so that they can easily communicate with them at home.

Total Communication should be used in all classroom situations for all categories of individuals who are hearing impaired to benefit. Individuals who have residual hearing and such feel they can benefit from Oral speech must be given the opportunity and encouragement to do so. They must be exposed to the speech environment so that they can have enough exposure to speech with the help of an itinerant teacher. There should be speech therapists, speech rooms and auditory training units as well as intensive speech training or therapy in the schools. They must also be allowed to go out and socialize with people who have speech with the help of hearing aids which are regularly maintained as well as family support.

Separate schools for the Hard of hearing and the profoundly deaf must be created so that the Hard of hearing will have their own medium of instruction and methods of teaching and the Deaf will have theirs. There must as well be needs assessment so that facilities that are available and those that are not available to aid effective speech and language training and hearing assessment should be analyzed and made available.

Furthermore, series of research must be conducted on the different communication modes by experts, taking into consideration the needs of the hearing impaired children. There should also be a research to know the population of the various categories of Hearing Impaired in the country.

6. Conclusion

The education of the children who are hearing impaired cannot be taken for granted if we want them to live independently in future. It can however be seen from this research that there are so many problems militating against effective communication and education of such children in Ghana.

It is therefore the hope of this researcher that the recommendations put forward in this write up would be taken into consideration by policy makers and implementers to ensure effective mode(s) of communication for the Hearing Impaired in Ghana. Again, policy makers and implementers should not consider the children alone but give equal attention to parents whose complementary roles and decisions are important in the promotion of effective mode(e) of communication to their children who are hearing impaired.

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