



Dissecting the curriculum for Deaf student teachers at a Teacher Training College in Rwanda

¹James Maizere 

¹Special Needs and Inclusive Education, TTC Kabarore, Rwanda

¹Primary author: james.maizere@gmail.com

Abstract—Curriculum is a key aspect of teaching and learning for students. Central to the curriculum may be its clarity on its components and ability to address the needs of all students. A good curriculum must be explicit on its components, like resources or time. This study aimed to dissect the curriculum for a Teacher Training College (TTC) that included Deaf student teachers in all its teaching and learning processes. This study used an interpretive paradigm to allow the participants to provide their subjective views on the subject. It adopted a qualitative approach and used a narrative research design. One TTC administrator, tutor, and two Deaf student teachers were selected for this study. This study found that the National Examinations and School Inspection Authority assessed the Deaf student teachers before the TTC enrolled them. Still, no one was sure about the nature of the assessments. The study also found that The Deaf student teachers learned the same curriculum as the hearing student teachers with no formal adjustments. This study further found that TTC lacked the resources to implement inclusion successfully. The study recommended that the National Examinations and School Inspection Authority conduct audiometric assessments of prospective Deaf before enrolling. Moreover, the study suggested that the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) employ skilled tutors in Deaf studies who could adjust the TTC curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum, Deaf student teachers, Teacher Training College. Assessment, audiometric assessments

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE provision of quality education to students depends on the curriculum's nature. A good curriculum should specify the content, time allocation, teaching methods, and the requisite resources. A carefully planned curriculum may guide educators on what to teach, how to teach, which resources to use, and what time to spend. Careful planning of the curriculum may make teaching and learning successful. An ill-planned curriculum may disadvantage learners, particularly those different from the mainstream group. A diverse curriculum should include different learners' needs; for instance, a mainstream curriculum that provides for Deaf student teachers should ensure that their needs are covered. If the curriculum covers only the needs of the mainstream group of students, it may be exclusive and a hurdle in the teaching and learning of the other group. Considering this, a curriculum should be inclusive or modified to embrace the needs of all the students it represents. This study sought to dissect the TTC curriculum on how Deaf student teachers were included.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An audiometric assessment is critical before Deaf students are enrolled and throughout the education process. The audiometric evaluation ensures that the Deaf student is enrolled at an appropriate academic institution, an institution fully equipped with resources specific to that student's needs (Beigh et al., 2012). Deaf student teachers may need a curriculum that responds to their needs, including language human or material resources specific to them. These resources may only be determined after audiometric assessments (Beigh et al., 2012). Proper enrolment of Deaf student teachers, therefore, requires audiometric

assessments and results to assess their academic. An academic institution may be able to help students access the curriculum if that curriculum specifies the needs of the learners. The audiometric assessment results also assist educators in determining the student's development level, leading to the proper design of the student's academic programmes (Nkoma & Hay, 2018).

The education of Deaf student teachers in mainstream institutions requires calls for a curriculum that meets the needs of these Deaf student teachers. The guiding principle in designing a curriculum should be providing all learners with the same education and additional support (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994). Similarly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) (2006) reiterates that the curriculum and the academic institution should offer students the same education with reasonable accommodations regarding skilled personnel and all requisite resources. Further, the UN-CRPD (2006) affirms that institutions should facilitate the teaching and learning of National Sign Language. The Deaf students should, therefore, learn the same curriculum as the mainstream students, with the curriculum being adjusted to cater to their needs (UNESCO, 1994; Marschark & Knoors, 2012; Kumar & Siroman, 2024). Consistently, the World Federation of the Deaf (2018) calls for inclusive education for the Deaf, considering sign language as the primary language of instruction for Deaf students.

While international conventions, frameworks for actions, and governments call for the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), some of these international policy documents make a U-turn on the education of the Deaf. For instance, the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities (SREOPD) (1993) and UNESCO (1994) view education for the Deaf as being suitably implemented in schools for the Deaf owing to their unique special educational needs. Schools for the Deaf may offer requisite resources, including an adjusted

curriculum. Education for the Deaf in the mainstream is far from providing quality, relevant, helpful, and meaningful education to Deaf students due to a lack of resources and unwillingness to promote the use and learning of Sign Language (Deaf Zimbabwe Trust [DZT], 2017). Studies have also revealed that teachers and school heads preferred those Deaf students be educated in special schools or self-contained classrooms (Musengi & Chireshe, 2012; Mukhopadhyay & Musengi, 2012). This may suggest that implementing the curriculum in mainstream schools may further be influenced by the stakeholders' attitudes who may not welcome Deaf students in inclusion.

The education of Deaf students in inclusion may have a myriad of challenges. These may be mainly resource and language-based challenges. Language-based challenges involve the different communication modalities between the mainstream and the Deaf students. Considering this, the World Federation of Deaf (2018), SREOPD (1993), and UNESCO (1994) reiterate that the prime language of instruction for the Deaf should be Sign Language. The DZT (2017) notes that Deaf students' right to language continues to be violated because they are taught in spoken languages in scenarios that do not promote learning Sign language. In Zimbabwe, despite the enactment of the 2013 Constitutional Amendment Act (No. 20) recognising the sixteen languages as the official languages, the Deaf Community continues to suffer language rights violations as there seems to be no progress in the use and promotion of learning Sign Language (DZT, 2017). National Sign Languages are, therefore, mostly neglected and are not reasonably valued like other languages. To this effect, Musengi and Chireshe (2012) revealed that Deaf students' primary problem in mainstream classes was communication with mainstream teachers, school administrators, and hearing children who cannot sign. This may signify that Sign Language use and learning were not promoted. In Rwanda, the researcher must still find studies on using and promoting Rwandan Sign Language (RSL) despite the World Bank (2023) indicating that after ratifying the UN-CRPD in 2008, Rwanda pledged its support for educating students with disabilities. Nevertheless, pledging may be one thing, while implementation may be another.

Material resources are another key challenge in the education of Deaf students. The UNESCO (1994) and UN-CRPD (2006) revealed that material resource availability makes the school least restrictive and reasonably accommodative. Nevertheless, Musengi and Chireshe (2012) found that resources like hearing aids were scarce or outdated, losing efficiency, while human resources were not quite skilled. Mostly, incompetent teachers teaching Deaf students or those who are lazy are assigned to teach Deaf students or inclusive classes with Deaf students (DZT, 2013; Thwala, 2015). Inclusive classes may not be considered critical, requiring a skilled and dedicated teacher. In Italy, Anastasiou et al. (2015) found that a lack of materials led to the exclusion of Deaf students in the name of inclusion, as students were mainstreamed without the necessary attention to enable them to learn.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores dissecting the curriculum for a Teacher Training College that included Deaf student teachers in all its teaching and learning processes.

IV. METHODS

Research paradigm

The researcher used an interpretive paradigm based on the view that the participants had diverse backgrounds and experiences they would use to construct reality on the curriculum for the Deaf student teachers at the TTC. The different backgrounds of the participants would bring in varied perspectives that would require subjectivity in constructing reality on the curriculum the Deaf student teachers experienced at the TTC. The researcher, therefore, decided to adopt Interpretivism.

Research approach

To complement Interpretivism, the researcher employed a

qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach entails that data are not quantified but are expressed in terms of quality, with participants expressing their opinions and views on the subject, in this case, the curriculum that Deaf student teachers experienced at the TTC.

Research design

To allow the participants to express their subjective views while readers also get the subject construction of reality by the participants, the researcher adopted a narrative case study research design. A narrative case study research design allows the participants to express their subjective views in narrative form; hence, the readers may get their views from the narratives.

Participants

The study population comprised two academic TTC Administrators, two Deaf student teachers at the TTC, and eleven tutors who directly taught the Deaf student teachers. One TTC administrator, one tutor, and two Deaf student teachers were sampled from the population. The TTC administrators were selected because they were the chief implementers of the TTC curriculum, and the Deaf student teachers were selected because they were the ones experiencing the TTC curriculum. Tutors were selected to give the experiences of Deaf student teachers because they were the ones who were teaching them. Purposive sampling was used to sample one TTC Administrator, both Deaf student teachers, and two tutors to participate in the study.

Data collection methods

The researcher used respective interviews with the TTC Administrator, Deaf student teachers, and the tutor to collect data on the TTC curriculum experienced by the Deaf student teachers. Interviews were chosen because they allowed the participants to narrate their stories and coconstruct their meanings with the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher used interviews because they let the researcher and the participants interface and understand each other on the TTC curriculum as Deaf student teachers experienced it.

Research site

The study was conducted at a TTC in the Eastern Province in Bugesera district, about thirty kilometres east of Kigali. The TTC had thirty-eight tutors, but none of them was a specialist in Deaf studies and could not sign. The TTC had a hundred student teachers and two Deaf student teachers, and they relied mostly on RSL for their communication purposes. The Deaf student teachers learned in the same class as the hearing ones in the same combination. Both Deaf student teachers were placed in the language education combination. Among the hearing students, only one who befriended herself to the Deaf student teachers could sign. She is the one who tutors as an interpreter to her Deaf friends.

Data analysis

The study presented the data in narrative form and analysed them using Riessman's interactional model. Riessman's interactional model entails that data should be presented in narratives for the researcher to maintain track of the meaning from the participants. This enables the researcher to coconstruct meanings with the participants and avoid researcher bias. Data analysis using narratives allows the readers to get information from the participants.

The researcher tried to ensure that the readers developed confidence in the findings. Using purposive sampling ensured that relevant participants knowledgeable in the TTC curriculum and how Deaf student teachers experienced provided relevant and quality data. Considering this, the findings were credible. The use of interviews enabled the participants to fully express themselves on the TTC curriculum issues after they understood what the participant meant by the discussion. Using interviews made the research findings transferable to similar participants in similar settings. Data were presented in narrative form, thereby maintaining its state from the participants and reducing researcher bias. Data analysis was done using an interactional model, allowing the researcher and the participant to coconstruct meanings of the participants' stories.

Ethical considerations

The researcher sought permission from the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) to conduct the study at the TTC. The TTC Administration also accepted that the researcher conducts the study at the TTC. Next, the researcher informed the participants of his intention to involve them in the study and brought the aim and objectives of the study to their attention. The participants willingly consented to participate in the study. The researcher also brought to the participants' attention that they could freely withdraw from participating whenever they felt like it. The researcher assured the participants that their identities would be anonymous, with no identity suggestion throughout the study. Furthermore, the data they were going to provide would be treated with confidentiality.

V. RESULTS

Enrolment of Deaf student teachers

The TTC enrolled both Deaf and hearing student teachers. The student teachers learned in the same classroom as the hearing. On how both the Deaf and hearing student teachers learned at TTC,

"Here, we practise total inclusion. Deaf student teachers learn together with the hearing student teachers. We get instruction from REB and National Examinations and School Inspection Authority (NESA) to enroll student teachers with disabilities" (TTC Administrator).

"I teach Deaf student teachers English language in the same class as their hearing peers" (Tutor 2).

The participants revealed that the TTC practiced full-time inclusion. The Deaf student teachers learned with their hearing counterparts every lesson. The TTC had no option on the enrolment of the Deaf student teachers or how to practise inclusion because it was a mandate from REB and NESA. Total inclusion requires a strong background of human and material resources. Human resources are critical in the utilisation of available resources and the implementation of the full-time inclusion process. Full-time inclusion also requires complementary efforts from REB and NESA regarding placement and procurement of requisite material and human resources. Without requisite resources, full-time inclusion may be total exclusion. Thus, there was a need to furnish the inclusion programme with the requisite resources for its functionality.

There may need to be an ecological assessment of the needs of Deaf student teachers before they may be enrolled in mainstream institutions to ascertain their academic needs. Ecological inventory may assist the audiologists and tutors in informing the responsible authority who may, in turn, procure and provide requisite needs for the Deaf student teachers. Ecological assessment of the Deaf student teachers' needs may involve audiological assessments. On the assessment Deaf student teachers underwent before enrolling at the TTC, the Administrator said the following.

"NESA conducts assessments. We are unsure whether the assessments are audiometric or streaming by academic qualifications. We are not given any form of assessment results of the Deaf student teachers, neither are we given information about the Deaf student teachers regarding their special educational needs" (TTC Administrator).

NESA did the Deaf student teachers' assessment. Nevertheless, the participants were not sure of the nature of assessments the Deaf student teachers underwent before they were enrolled at the TTC. It was not clear whether they were academic or audiometric assessments. The assessments were possibly not related to the Deaf student teachers' SEN since the TTC did not receive any record of the assessments, and neither did they receive the academic programmes resources necessary for the education of these student teachers. They were assessments for placement purposes, benefiting NESA only at the expense of the student teachers. The assessments would be more used if they were used by both NESA and the TTC for the benefit of the Deaf student teachers, for instance, if they documented the SEN of the Deaf student teachers. The documented SEN would allow teachers to improve their teaching strategies to improve the quality of education for Deaf student teachers.

Nature of the TTC curriculum

Following the TTC's revelation above that they practice total

inclusion of Deaf student teachers, the researcher wanted to determine if the inclusion also referred to the TTC curriculum. To this effect, the TTC administrator and a Deaf student teacher expressed the following.

"Our curriculum is known as a Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). The curriculum focuses on the competencies of the student teachers. We use the same curriculum for both hearing and Deaf student teachers. There are adaptations to the curriculum. As I mentioned, we use total inclusion. Therefore, our curriculum should be the same for all learners" (TTC Administrator).

"Our curriculum is the same as that of hearing students. We are taught by the same curriculum by the same teachers under the same learning environment" (Deaf Student Teacher 1)

The curriculum was CBC, focusing on the student's competencies as a class. Nevertheless, Deaf student teachers were taught under the same conditions as hearing student teachers regardless of their differences and needs. The curriculum did not consider the unique needs of Deaf student teachers despite the curriculum being CBC. There was a need to revise teaching strategies and align them to CBC to focus on the competencies of each Deaf student teacher. There was also a need to revise the idea of 'total inclusion'. 'Total inclusion' without the provision of SEN may be total exclusion. 'Total inclusion' may entail the adaptation of the curriculum in terms of the special educational needs of the Deaf student teachers and the teaching strategies to suit their academic needs rather than adapting the Deaf student teachers to meet the curriculum. The TTC should redefine 'total inclusion' and move away from its notion that curriculum adaptation entails that student teachers may no longer be included because their curriculum is adjusted. Adaptations may be there just to enable the Deaf student teachers to learn the same content that hearing student teachers learned.

Compatibility of the curriculum to Deaf student teachers' needs

Deaf student teachers may have different academic needs from hearing student teachers. Nevertheless, they were taught under the same conditions as the hearing student teachers. Participants initially revealed that the TTC practised 'total inclusion'; hence, they used the same curriculum without adaptations to teach Deaf student teachers. On the compatibility of the TTC curriculum to the needs of the Deaf student teachers, the TTC Administrator, a Deaf student teacher, and a tutor revealed the following:

"We use the same curriculum for all the student teachers in the college. The curriculum is not friendly to the Deaf student teachers. While I initially indicated that we practice total inclusion, I am unsure if our curriculum is completely inclusive. I am not sure about being the CBC. It is a mandate to implement the curriculum as it is. We do not have resources for implementing an adapted curriculum" (TTC Administrator).

"The TTC curriculum is incompatible with our academic needs. We benefit mostly from extensive reading. During teaching and learning, there is little benefit" (Deaf Student Teacher 2).

"Deaf student teachers learn the same curriculum as their hearing counterparts. There are no adjustments to the curriculum despite the differences in the learning needs between the hearing and the Deaf student teachers; for instance, the Deaf student teachers may need auditory training or a different communication modality, which their hearing counterparts may not need. Therefore, The TTC curriculum is incompatible with the needs of Deaf student teachers" (Tutor 2).

The TTC used a common curriculum for all student teachers. The participants unanimously agreed that the TTC curriculum was not compatible with the needs of the Deaf student teachers. The TTC curriculum was, therefore, not suitable for the education of Deaf student teachers. The bigger picture was that it was a mandate to implement the curriculum. In other words, the curriculum was imposed upon the TTC. Hence, the TTC had no input. The participants only knew they were practising total inclusion using a CBC curriculum. However, they did not quite understand how the curriculum was CBC or how the same curriculum was inclusive. Moreover, it emerged directly from the Deaf participants that the curriculum was not compatible with their needs; as such, they engaged themselves in extensive reading to cope with the demands of their teacher training programme. It also emerged from the

participants that the TTC curriculum was incompatible with the needs of the Deaf student teachers because it was not modified to meet their academic, language, and communication modalities.

Challenges encountered during the TTC curriculum implementation

Resources

The implementation of a curriculum may encounter various challenges. The challenges a curriculum may make it incompatible with the Deaf student teachers. On the challenges posed by the TTC curriculum, the TTC administrator, a tutor, and a Deaf student teacher revealed that.

"We do not have resources to manage Deaf student teachers. We do not have the human resources skilled to teach them. Deaf student teachers complain that tutors want them to learn 'Amasaku' (speech sounds) when they cannot put them in their heads. How do they expect them to understand speech sounds when they do not know them? This is because the curriculum has not been modified again, and we do not have amplification devices to help them hear. Rwanda Education Board and NESA are aware of these challenges, but it seems they are here to stay" (TTC Administrator).

"The TTC curriculum is not quite inclusive. It favours the hearing student teachers, and for example, we are expected to learn 'amasaku' (phonics), which is basically about hearing. We do not have the concept of speech sounds because we have not experienced speech and will not experience it. We are not going to use 'Amasaku' anywhere in our lives. So, what benefit is this to us? We do not benefit from hearing aids. Teaching us spoken languages and phonics is consuming our time for no benefit" (Deaf Student Teacher 2).

"We are using the General TTC curriculum with no adaptations. Deaf student teachers, for example, are taught spoken languages when they cannot hear. They complain mainly about phonics to the effect that they ask us to first put 'amasaku' (phonics) in their heads before we teach them phonics. They also complain about music. As one of the English tutors, I know I am heading for a challenge when I teach the class with Deaf student teachers" (Tutor 1).

The participants unanimously agreed that the TTC curriculum posed challenges that made the teaching and learning of Deaf student teachers difficult. The curriculum was not adapted, leading to Deaf student teachers learning irrelevant content, such as speech sounds, they would not use in their lives. The student teachers were profoundly Deaf; hence, they did not hear or benefit from amplification. They did not have speech, and there were no hopes of having speech, even miraculously. Therefore, there was no reason to learn speech they had no idea of. Without speech, it would not have been easy for the student teachers to teach phonics. The Deaf student teacher, therefore, had justified reasons to complain about the curriculum. If education does not benefit the learner, it may not be worth studying or spending time on. In this scenario, it may be that Deaf student teachers spent time studying subjects and concepts that were not helpful to them. The Deaf student teachers had genuine concerns which needed urgent attention. The TTC also lacked resources for the teaching and learning of Deaf student teachers. The tutors at the TTC could not sign, so it was difficult for them to implement the TTC curriculum effectively. The Deaf student teachers could benefit from manual communication, yet the tutors could only use a spoken language. Teachers' inability to sign meant that Deaf student teachers had to spend more time reading to understand the lessons taught.

Communication

Communication may be a challenge in situations where people have different communication modalities. There may be a need to have someone who understands both languages. Considering communication challenges, a tutor, an Administrator, and a Deaf student teacher indicated that.

"Our major problem is that we are not able to sign. Rwandan Sign Language is not in the curriculum but is only done at a minimal scale during club time. Hearing people are not serious about it. The Deaf student teachers do not hear, and they use RSL. There may need for RSL interpreters to accompany the Deaf student teachers for their lessons. REB has employed no personnel to fix this challenge" (Tutor 1).

"Instead of wasting our time teaching us Amasaku [emotional], we should

be studying RSL, which benefits us regarding communication, but the tutors cannot help us in this subject. Maybe because they cannot sign, they are not interested in the subject. We need RSL on the timetable to study as our language subject instead of Amasaku; RSL is like any other language taught here" (Deaf Student Teacher 2).

The communication challenges arose because of the inability of the hearing tutors and student teachers to sign, while Deaf student teachers could use RSL. The only language of the Deaf student teachers was manual communication, while the hearing could only communicate in spoken languages. There was a language barrier due to different language modalities. To worsen the situation, the TTC had no RSL interpreters. The Deaf student teachers felt their time was not quite well utilised when they were made to learn spoken languages and their phonologies, yet they were not using these anywhere. Instead, they expected RSL to be on the timetable and be taught and learned like any other language in the TTC curriculum. Rwandan Sign Language, however, was not part of the TTC curriculum and was only a lukewarm club concept.

Managing the curriculum challenges

The TTC experienced communication barriers to implementing the curriculum. It was essential to harness the communication barriers to ensure Deaf student teachers benefitted from the TTC curriculum. On the strategies the TTC employed to ensure that Deaf student teachers were included in the curriculum, two TTC tutors and a Deaf Student Teacher expressed the following.

"I use spoken language complemented by writing and interpreters in the form of their friend who can sign. Only one hearing student teacher can sign. I must prepare comprehensive notes for the Deaf student teachers, trying to capture every detail of the lesson to ensure that they do not miss salient issues of the lesson. I encourage them to ask as many questions as possible when needed" (Tutor 1).

"I use whatever can help the Deaf student teachers to understand my lesson, like gestures, writing, and interpretations by a friend student teacher who can sign. This is, however, time-consuming because I must allow mini dialogues during the lesson which I must respond to" (Tutor 2).

"Tutors give notes that we have to read extensively to understand their lessons. We are allowed to talk to our friends who can sign. We appreciate their efforts" (Deaf student teacher).

Although the tutors were not skilled in Deaf studies, they tried their best to ensure that the Deaf student teachers understood their lessons. They employed different strategies like total communication, writing, or interpretations by a student who could sign. Many hearing people in the TTC did not take RSL seriously; hence, only one hearing student teacher who was earlier reported to be a friend of the Deaf student teachers could sign. It may be deduced that the hearing student teacher could sign out of her will and closeness to the Deaf student teachers because the RSL club was reported to be lukewarm, and no other hearing people from the club were able to sign. The Deaf student teachers greatly appreciated the tutors' use of various strategies during teaching and learning. Indeed, their positive attitudes towards achieving equal educational opportunities in inclusive setups should not go without appreciation. Nevertheless, they need compliments from the responsible authority regarding resources that may improve the teaching and learning of the curriculum, for example, skilled personnel, at least RSL interpreters or projectors to project videos and some illustrations.

VI. DISCUSSION

The study found that before the Deaf student teachers were enrolled, they were assessed by NESA. Nevertheless, none of the participants knew the nature of the assessments, whether academic or audiometric. The NESA would just send the student teachers to the TTC and claim that the student teachers were assessed. Considering this, Beigh et al. (2012) reveal that Deaf student teachers should undergo audiometric assessments to determine their hearing acuity, which may determine their academic programmes and resource needs. The academic

programmes and the resources determined may also determine the procurement of resources and how the educators may teach the Deaf student teachers. Similarly, audiometric assessments determine the level of development of the student teachers regarding their hearing and enable tutors to design relevant programmes such as the language of instruction, auditory discrimination, and training or the kind of curriculum content (Nkoma & Hay, 2018). Enrolling Deaf student teachers without audiometric assessments may lead to poor curriculum implementation. For instance, how were Deaf students placed in the Language Education Combination where they would learn about phonics? How were these Deaf student teachers going to teach phonics to the hearing students, and worse still, to the Deaf students, and for what benefit? This may be a sign that NESA's assessments for placements were compromised.

On the nature of the curriculum, the study found that Deaf and hearing student teachers were subjected to the same curriculum under the same conditions. The finding is consistent with recommendations by UNESCO (1994) and UN-CRPD (2006) that Deaf student teachers should learn the same curriculum as mainstream student teachers with the provision of reasonable accommodations as required by the individual student. The UNESCO (1994) guiding principle for curriculum designing should focus on providing all students with the same education with additional support, thereby providing quality inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994; Kumar & Siroman, 2024). In line with this, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) (2018) recommends educating Deaf students in mainstream setups and considering Sign Language as the language of instruction for these Deaf students. However, the DZT (2017) argues that educating Deaf students in inclusion negates relevant, quality, and helpful education due to the lack of the will to promote the use and learning of sign Language in mainstream classes. Considering this, teachers, head teachers, and hearing students in mainstream schools could not sign (Mukhopadhyay & Musengi, 2012; Musengi & Chireshe, 2012). Furthermore, the SREOPD (1993) and UNESCO (1994) view the education of the Deaf as suitably provided in special schools for the Deaf where they may exercise their own culture, with everyone signing. Using sign language as the language of instruction could help the students understand the concepts because they are taught the language they know better.

On resources, the study found that the TTC mainly lacked human resources skilled in the education of the Deaf. The use of RSL as the language of instruction was, therefore, compromised, thereby going against the views of the WFD (2018), the SREOPD (1993), UNESCO (1994), UN-CRPD (2006), and DZT (2017). These view Sign Language as the language of instruction and the cornerstone in teaching Deaf students. Lack of skilled tutors who could translate to the reasons for communications. The availability of hearing tutors who could sign could have acted as a role model in signing for the hearing student teachers. Instead of learning RSL, the Deaf student teachers were taught other languages like French, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, and English. The Deaf student teachers claimed that these languages were not relevant or useful to them since they were not using them anywhere. They would not use speech in their lives; hence, the concept of amasaku was an irrelevant section of the curriculum for Deaf student teachers. Considering this, Marschark and Knoors (2012) and Kumar and Siroman (2024) appreciate the significance of curriculum adaptation to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of Deaf students. Similarly, the DZT (2017) laments that Deaf students are exposed to irrelevant curricula. Hence, most of them are found engaged in petty vending or begging. This could be a sign that the curriculum was irrelevant to the needs of the Deaf students. Despite the tutors not being skilled in Deaf studies, they engaged themselves in some sort of curriculum adaptations through using interpreters, written communication, or providing detailed notes for the Deaf student teachers. This is a sign that if these tutors had some significant other, they would do well in curriculum adaptations.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study found that NESA assessed Deaf student teachers before they were enrolled at the TTC. Nevertheless, the Deaf students were placed in the language combination, where they struggled. The study concluded that the Deaf students were wrongly placed in a combination that would render them functionless by being unable to teach the combination they specialised in.

On the nature of the curriculum, the study found that the Deaf student teachers learned the mainstream curriculum with each tutor teaching in line with his/her abilities. The study concluded that there were no formal curriculum adjustments, and each tutor made the adjustments s/he could. These were curriculum adjustments through being innovative to the extent that the less innovative tutors would let it go without any adjustments. Similarly, the study concluded that adjusting or modifying the TTC curriculum was not a mandate.

The study further established that the TTC lacked skilled tutors to teach the Deaf student teachers, leading to communication challenges between the Deaf student teachers and hearing people, including during teaching and learning sessions. The study concluded that Deaf student teachers heavily relied on written communication for their learning purposes, making it necessary to prepare and provide quality comprehensive notes for them.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the study recommended NESA and Rwanda Basic Education Board. First and foremost, The NESA should subject Deaf student teachers to audiometric assessments to ensure they receive appropriate academic programmes in line with their acute hearing. In line with this, the Rwanda Basic Education Board and NESA should have an ecological inventory of the needs of the Deaf student teachers and provide these to the TTC to facilitate their teaching and learning. Finally, the study recommended that the Rwanda Basic Education Board and NESA allow curriculum adjustments by Deaf Education experts to enable Deaf student teachers to receive relevant education to their lives and conditions. The Rwanda Education Board should prioritise employing tutors competent in Rwandan Sign Language or at least RSL interpreters to ease communication challenges during teaching and learning processes and other vital events in and outside the TTC.

IX. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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