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An in-depth exploration of the first phase of inclusive deaf education in Tanzania

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Abstract

Since the inception of inclusive education in Tanzania, Deaf students have been attending either special schools for the Deaf or inclusive schools. Yet, due to inadequate support services in such schools, preliminary reports (Migeha, 2014; POLG, 2018; URT, 2018) have indicated that dropout and failure rates of Deaf students in secondary education are higher (47%) compared to hearing students. The goal of this research was to assess how the implementation of the first phase of inclusive education in Tanzania (2010 and 2017) has facilitated the learning accommodation for Deaf students. The theory of 'school culture' was used as the predominantly Theoretical Framework and therefore the following four areas were the focus: i) the learning engagement and cooperation among Deaf and hearing students; ii) the responsiveness of the learning environment; iii) the accommodation of visual needs of Deaf learners; and iv) the academic progress of Deaf students. To gain an understanding of these areas, this study used a qualitative research design in which interpretive phenomenology was adopted as the guiding research methodology. Four data collection tools were employed; observation, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis. The research sites included three schools – a school for the Deaf, an inclusive school, and a technical school - in which 85 students and teachers participated. Findings have shown i) inclusion of Deaf students in schools has not managed to promote adequate collaboration with the hearing school community, ii) there are no responsive learning environments for Deaf learners in all schools iii) curriculum is regular hence the whole teaching remains regular, and iv) that inclusion has posed a challenge on the learning of Deaf students and schools are affected by inconsistency and lack of uniformity both in policy, theory and practices. As a result, this study noted that 44.7 % of Deaf students do not complete their ordinary level education cycle while 82.5% fail in their Form Four National Examinations. Thus, it is recommended that the curriculum for inclusive education needs to be adapted for creating an enabling environment for Deaf students to study with hearing peers in an inclusive setting.