



## EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN ARBA MINCH COLLEGE OF TEACHERS EDUCATION, SOUTH ETHIOPIA

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### Abstract

This study was aimed at assessing educational practices and challenges of students with hearing impairments in Arba Minch College of Teachers' Education in SNNPR, Ethiopia. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding academic practices and challenges and ways of improving that impede students with hearing impairments in integration setting. Qualitative research approach of case study design was used to analyze the data. Purposive sampling was employed to select a total of 28 participants; 6 students with hearing impairments, 4 hearing peers, 12 instructors, 4 department heads and 2 college deans. The qualitative data were obtained via interviews, focus group discussion and observation. The finding revealed that there is high communication barrier between teachers and students with hearing impairments. This communication barrier contributed for poor academic performances. The findings of the study revealed that, there is academic achievement gap between students with hearing impairments and hearing students. In addition, limitations of sign language skills, lack of planned financial fund and material support, absence of sign language interpretation, lack of hearing aids were the identified practice and challenges of students with hearing impairments. The study suggested that college administration and teachers can play a critical role in enabling students with hearing impairments to become meaningful participants in education system and society.

**Keywords:** Educational practices, Challenges, Integration, Hearing impairment

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and one of the main instruments of development in reducing poverty and improving the socioeconomic conditions of a country. The right to education is universal and it extends to all children, youth, and adults with disabilities (UNICEF, 2011). Accordingly, the Ethiopian Constitution (1994: Art. 41 and 91) also states the universal right to education and emphasizes the need to allocate resources and provide assistance to disadvantaged groups. In particular, the Constitution sets out the State's responsibility for the provision of necessary rehabilitation and support services for people with disabilities. The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy document (1994), states that the provision of education to all children is mandatory and special education and training will be provided for people with disabilities in particular and special needs group in general.

According to the academic journals of language and culture of Ethiopian sign language journal entitled "Ethiopian sign language and accessibility for the deaf community" indicated that deafness and hard of hearing are among the many types of disabilities that a number of world population might be a victim of



it at any age (Chimid, Wakuma, & March, 2014). In spite of the common recognition of Human and educational rights of citizens, students with hearing impairments were practically considered mentally and educationally deficient due to their inability to hear and to use spoken language. Bench (1992) also noted that it had been argued that hearing loss leads to problems of adjustment in children because problems with communication produce barriers to social development which are difficult to overcome. Moreover, Guest (2016) identified challenges of students with hearing impairment including classroom acoustics; lighting; language deficiencies; practical shortages; lip-reading/residual hearing; inadequate awareness and knowledge; social concerns; collaboration; shortage of adaptations curriculum and instruction and lack of resources.

In Ethiopian higher education, colleges and universities, students with hearing impairments were treated through the provision of cluster programs. Very few students with hearing impairments receive higher education with great challenges and they encountered academic, psychological, social and emotional and learning difficulties for the long term if it is untreated (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). Addis Ababa University admits these students under linguistic department in the field of sign language and deaf culture study for the last ten years. However, there were not considerable statistical data on the academic admission of students with hearing impairments in Arba Minch College of Teachers Education. Therefore, based on the aforementioned review work this study intended to assess the educational practices and challenges of students with hearing impairments in integrated classroom of the teachers' education college.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was assessing the educational practices and challenges of students with hearing impairments in Arba Minch College of Teachers Education. The main rationale that initiates to conduct on this problem was the encountering poor academic performance and challenges facing by students with hearing impairment in the college. Based on the researchers' four years observation and experience in the study area; there are absence of skilled manpower and assistive devices, absence of care taking stakeholders and professional assistance, lack of material provisions and application of modern science and technology are some factors that influence the academic performance of students with hearing impairments. The continuity of this problem may lead problem to cope up with the courses offered, low self-esteem and confidence. According to Tesfaye (2002) as cited in Mohammed Ahyte (2013), the biggest challenge facing these individuals are lack of acceptance and wrong attitudes and perception by their own parents, the society and different professionals in the field.

Moreover, different empirical evidences explored in the current study can share an instructor role in the practice and challenges of students with hearing impairments in integrated education and also the limitations of knowledge, positive attitudes, skills and confidences of instructors to the educational practices of integration. Therefore, the reason that initiated the researchers to conduct this study is that the relevant academic carrier and professional experience achieved by the researcher helped to see the gap between educational practices along with challenges and academic performance of students with hearing impairments in the college. In addition, the study gives emphasis on providing relevant recommendations that in turn help students to improve academic performance in particular and to reduce the challenge of students with hearing impairments.

### **Basic Research Questions**

1. How is the academic condition of students with hearing impairments look like?
2. What are the major challenges of students with hearing impairments in the study area?



3. What would be done to overcome barriers of students with hearing impairments?

## METHODS

### Design of the Study

The study was carried out by case study design of qualitative research methods. Creswell (2012) explains a qualitative approach is an appropriate method to study a research problem when the problem needs to be explored: when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or setting of participants. The researchers employed a series of cases with students with hearing impairments to elaborate their practices, needs and challenges and relevant to their academic performance.

### Participants

Target populations of this study were all students with hearing impairments (hard of hearing and deaf) in the college. The other key participants were department instructors who teach these students, concerned department heads (Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Amharic/Ethiopian language, Mathematics and Integrated Science and Psychology), academic dean & students' dean and hearing peers in the same classroom were the main participant of the study.

### Sampling techniques and Size

One of non-probability sampling techniques; purposive sampling method was employed to select 6 students with hearing impairments, 4 hearing peers, 12 instructors, 4 head of the departments and 2 College deans.

### Instruments

Semi structured interview questions were designed and employed to collect data from selected students with hearing impairments, hearing peers, and deans. Through focus group discussions additional data were collected from department heads and instructors by making two groups. Moreover, to get data related to their academic performance and their condition in different situation document review and observation were done respectively.

### Data Analysis

The collected data via interview, focus group discussion, observation and document analysis analyzed by narrative, quotations, descriptions and thematic analysis techniques

## RESULTS

In the first part of this session demographic information of students with hearing impairments, instructors, hearing peers', head of the departments and college deans presented respectively. Following background information, the qualitative data gathered through interview and focus group discussion are presented. These results are also complemented by data obtained from observation and document review.

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of students with hearing impairments

Cases	Sex	Age	Hearing Loss	dB	Age of onset	Dep't	Acad. Year	Parental Edu. Level	Parent Eco. level
AZ	M	24	HH	51.65	AB	SNIE	2nd	Illiterate	Poor

DB	M	22	PD	111.7	BB	SNIE	3rd	Grade 12	Poor
EZ	M	21	PD	108.3	BB	Math	3rd	Diploma	Medium
ML	M	20	PD	107.8	AB	SNIE	3rd	Illiterate	Poor
MT	F	21	PD	95.85	AB	SNIE	3rd	Illiterate	Poor
YB	F	22	PD	100	AB	Amharic	3rd	Illiterate	Medium

*M= Male, F=Female, HH= Hard of Hearing, PD= Profound Deaf, SNIE=Special Needs and Inclusive Education, PL=Post Lingual, PRL= Pre-Lingual*

**Table 2.** Demographic Information of Peers of students with hearing impairments

Year level	Sex			Age	
	M	F	T	15-20	21-25
Year II	1	-	1	1	-
Year III	1	2	3	-	3
Total	2	2	4	1	3

*M= male, F=Female, T= total*

**Table 3.** Demographic information of college deans, Department heads, instructors and supportive staff

Participants	Sex			Age			Educational level		
	M	F	T	30-40	41-50	Above 50	MA	Degree	Diploma
Deans	2	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	-
Dep't Heads	3	1	4	2	1	1	4	-	-
Instructors	9	3	12	7	3	2	9	3	-

*M= Male, F= Female, T= total, MA= Master degree*

### The Academic Condition of Students with Hearing Impairments

In line with interview and focus group discussion questions and inspection of the researchers here detail background and educational condition of each case are presented:

AZ's interview reports on academic background revealed that:

*“My father brought me to regular school. My parents encouraged me to continue my education. I before this school I didn't joined any special schools or units. I started to use sign language, finger spelling, and lip-reading in this college after sign language course I and II. Since I have no knowledge of sign language, little by little I started to practice sign language. However, I am good in academics. When the lesson delivered orally, I was unable to understand. In the meantime, instructors helped me in writing and follow up my lessons in giving due attention. Although, I tried to be involved in different activities like classroom tasks and home works”*

The interview report finding revealed that this hearing impaired student till he reach to college level he passed a lot of challenges without sign language skill. Through his natural abilities reached the higher education.

When asked similar question DB's reported that:

*“When I was seven years old, I entered Arba Minch Special needs school. I had hearing test in the Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus Hosanna School for the Deaf by age of eight. The hearing test result indicated that I am profoundly deaf. After grade six I returned to my birth place Derashe district there I joined Ediget special unit in regular primary school. Completing primary and Senior Secondary Schools in Gidole town I joined Dilla college of teacher education. And then, I transferred to this Arbaminch teacher education college.”*

In addition he added that:

*Currently, in the college I got similar identify groups I can interact more with students with hearing impairments and less with some hearing classmates. Out of the classroom, most of hearing peers do not understand me, this caused for pain. My families encourage me to participate in all aspects of life social and environmental activities. I am positive in accepting advice and showing a little progress in different classroom activities when compared the present circumstances with the previous” I have been participating every year in drama during disability day’s celebration with hearing colleagues.*

The interview reports showed that he passed a lot of ups and downs in school life, like communication barriers, unfriendly environments and facing the challenges which comes from hearing peers and teachers.

The third student with hearing impairment **EZ**’s also reported that:

*“First I went to Arba Minch special needs school, after a year I got the opportunity to join Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus Hossana school for the deaf. There I attended from grade one to 10. At college, I got some assistance from my colleagues. In class career I perform tasks very well when told to do. In the college, I have good interaction with my hearing classmates, and deaf college colleagues.”*

Furthermore he explained that:

*Moreover, I had a good relationship with everybody in the college, since I had a good attitude for myself. I prefers sign language, lip-reading and finger spelling for communication. I participate in group activities as much as possible. There was common understanding and cooperation among my classmates and this makes me very pleased. Most of the time I passed my spare time studying at home and searching hearing impaired friends. In some cases, I had willing to communicate with the hearing students in written form.*

The study result indicated that the interview participant has a positive self-esteem and attitudes towards others. This helped to understand his surrounding environment in positive ways and he simplified the challenges he is facing

**ML**’s regarding academic background stated as follows:

*“I have been in the regular education for two years. In that setting I was not able to understand lessons well and group discussion as well. So, I was not happy, therefore my parents brought me to Botire Special Needs education unit after grade two seeking support from Special needs teachers. But from grade 4 to 10, I attended regular classes without appropriate support. This led me to poor academic achievements.”* Now, in college I am facing similar challenges.

The fifth HI student **MT**’s about academic background addressed that:

*“My mother taught me some letters in both Amharic and English. I joined the nearby special needs school in Arba Minch town. My mother brought me when I was seven years old to this school. The presence of sign language interpreter in the classroom contributed to know the subjects very well. In the school and out of the school compound I can’t communicate with others in oral language. But when I am with deaf classmates and my teachers I used sign language. I prefer sign language and finger spelling at school and oral language at home. In free time I have involved in every routine household tasks and I was not segregated from participating in school activities.”*

The last respondent **YB**’s also displayed that:

*“I was a student in regular primary school when I lost my hearing. My families play a great role to my education. My father brought me to Arba Minch special needs education. I had the ability to*

*understand verbal expression through reading facial expression and I tried to respond orally. As you can see from college document my personal file disclosed that I am one of the medium achiever in academic performances.*

The obtained brief information from hearing peers interview indicated that:

*“Students with hearing impairments were not excluded from higher education so far. To some extent they were equal access and reasonable accommodation provision and get the required knowledge and skills for social survival and employment just like hearing individuals. Majority of informant hearing students disclosed that hearing impaired students were need love, cooperation, intimacy to be involved in different aspects of their college life”*

When the educational practices of students with hearing impairments revealed by the college deans, instructors were not come with an alternate explanation by using sign language when students with hearing impairments were confused to understand and failed in academic achievement. Since they hadn't enough sign language skill training for communication, the enrollment rate of students with hearing impairments was less than 0.5%, because of less awareness. When we see their enrollment in the last three years; in 2016/2017 they were five in number, in 2017/2018 they were only one and in this year 2018/2019 no students with hearing impairments were enrolled”. This indicated that still a lot expected from society to bring HI (hearing impairment) to schools.

The focus group discussion of instructors and head of the departments forwarded that there is no support provision; except seating them in front of other students and speaking loudly. They didn't get additional financial and material support from the college as resources for them. In our comparison special needs/inclusive education department tried to enable students with hearing impairments to have clear social contact with others. They were commonly agreed on that, no practices of providing interpretation services, unable to communicate with them during the teaching learning process and unable to plan appropriate activities. Integration hinders hearing student's education, rather than helping. In college, Instructors are not well trained to teach the diversity of needs and to reduce confusions some among learners either using sign language. Instructors use the same curriculum to trainees with disabilities with out adaptations and don't provide extra class and time. Instruction adaptations are not a common activity in the institution. Teaching aids or materials are not used by instructors for teaching and learning processes. Moreover, these students less participated in group discussion. They did not get appropriate support as a result they can get better results in their academic performance.

These students could equally attend education in integrated settings with some exceptions. They couldn't always deserve an intensified support and follow up from instructors. Integration with hearing students in the same class could help to remove negative social stigma and discrimination that hinder hearing students' education.

The researchers' observation and document review disclosed that; AZ during school and free time has intimate relations with other students with hearing impairments to learn more about sign language. DB used gestures and handwriting methods for communication purposes with the college community. Thus, in such situation DB was able to receive and respond. Instructors pointed out that EZ was quite good in his academic performance and in the classroom, properly perform his tasks. ML was active during classroom activities. Instructors noted that MT performs tasks and becomes involved and participating in activities with both hearing and deaf peers. YB seems like hearing in the classroom. They enjoy equally with hearing individuals in co-curricular. Documents from registrar revealed that mean average CGPA of the six students with hearing impairments 2.51 and the mean average results of none hearing



impaired were 2.75. When the mean average CGPAs results compared of students with hearing impairments were less than that of hearing. Detail comparison of the two group’s academic performance is presented in the table below.

**Table 4.** Students with hearing impairment & hearing Students four semesters average score

No	Name	Degree of Hearing Loss			Character	Average GPA of HI	Average (x GPA of Hearing sts	Acad. Year
		Right Ear	Left Ear	Average				
1	AZ	50	53.3	51.65	HH	3.42	2.80	2 <sup>nd</sup> SNIE
2	DB	110	113.3	111.65	TD	2.65	2.75	3 <sup>rd</sup> NSIE
3	EZ	103.3	113.3	108.3	TD	2.28	2.77	3 <sup>rd</sup> Math
4	ML	118.8	96.7	107.75	TD	2.06	2.75	3 <sup>rd</sup> SNIE
5	MT	120	71.7	95.85	TD	2.30	2.75	3 <sup>rd</sup> SNIE
6	YB	100	100	100	TD	2.37	2.87	3 <sup>rd</sup> Amharic

*TD= Totally deaf HH= Hard of hearing, HL= Hearing level*

### Educational Challenges of Students with Hearing Impairments

Regarding the challenges according to AZ’s interview report disclosed that ‘he felt discomfort and kept silent when he lost to understand the lesson. He put himself inferior to other members of the classmates as being different. In such situation, he feels that he was the one that was to hear. He was delighted to be with every member of the college community, but sometimes he complained about his deafness. He felt as if he lost many things. In such events, he didn’t take part in the class with the hearing peers. In addition, he has shortage of interaction with his classmates, instructors, and administrator, but through louder voice he could communicate. Sometimes he asked unrelated questions because of communication barriers to the lesson, the instructors tend to ignore instead of correcting the mistakes.’

The other student DB had no more faced challenges in his academic career related to his deafness, but sometimes misunderstanding of instructors hurts him. The third case EZ reported that:

*‘I had not good exposure to interact with persons outside the classroom. Hearing people undermine me and insult on me during classroom group discussion. They call me ‘dudda’ (meaning dumb or mute). At a time; I became offended and revealed a sense of inferiority. However, my overall impression about the hearing is not bad. Nevertheless, I didn’t categorize all the hearing with judgmental remarks. I do not feel to regret about their misconception about the deaf ‘deafness is not an insult.’ He puts; ‘I am deaf, so I am available in the college, I felt that I am equal to everybody. But when I was out of the college, I felt inferior to the hearing. It seemed that I was unable to adjust myself to the new environment and academic performance’.*

Practical observation of the researchers also assures that, he was non-interactive in the classroom tasks, he not provided responses, had a communication barrier. Out of the classroom, he frequently showed his interaction and physical contact with the same identity groups of deaf peers.



ML also indicated that:

*“I had no noticeable interaction with hearing students in the classroom. This happened, particularly, when I was with hearing persons without ability to sign. The hearing person’s responses not clear for me. I often perceived that my parents feel a lot. Their feeling that I am separated from mutual interaction of family as regards of my deafness. But if I fail to understand them, they became irritated. I feel that my deafness makes me different.”*

He also revealed that:

*“The instructors advise me when I sometimes get frustrated due to the lack of normal interaction with hearing peers and persons. In the college, most of the time I feel that I do not have good feelings on any hearing persons. Sometimes hearing peers threw me small stones from the back, considering that they were seeking my attention to communicate with them, but I was discomfort by their acts. I simply keep on walking, I fear that they could hurt me, and I simply ignore for their acts”*

The fifth case MT disclosed that:

*“I worried when I didn’t get my peers’ ideas and when they don’t communicate in sign language in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Concerning my classroom and social interaction in the classroom there were problem of group discussion with hearing peers and social contract limited only to my family. In the meantime, my family didn’t allow me out to meet hearing peers for an academic career. Because they worry about me as I could face problems. In addition, I have challenges to interact with hearing administrators who are not communicating with sign language.*

Similarly, YB revealed challenges as follows:

*“I felt extremely dislike in the classroom for some instructors who consider me as I am dependent on others. my inclination toward the lip or speech reading instead of using simultaneously with other approaches provided her with interaction problem, so I was in problem, most instructors didn’t understand my understanding of lip reading, this leads me in a disadvantageous position. But during classroom interaction unmet, I showed signs of frustration about my deafness.” In the classroom, she was not fully participating because some instructors didn’t properly treat her. Since the instructors doubt about her deafness, consequently they have avoided, no one can support her individually. She stated about hearing peers. In her summary “sometimes I felt, the hearing didn’t accept me. I observed that, they have their own code. They tease at me. This event seemed to have incomplete interaction.”*

Regarding hearing peer’s common narratives and reports the major challenges of students with hearing impairments in this college is communication barrier. The other challenges forwarded were inappropriate sitting arrangements and lag behind in academics and limitation in access information. Moreover, a problem of understanding hearing peers, problems of lip reading and an academic gap. Furthermore, feelings of uncomfortable in the classroom during lecture, note taking, absence of limitation of provision resource material, lack of hearing aids and noticeable problems of not participating actively in classroom discussions.

Responses of college deans on challenges indicated that there is no interpreter that could help them during the teaching and learning process. Lack of interpreter created the gap in academic achievement between





children with normal hearing and hearing loss. Students with hearing loss are not tested by an audiologist. No hearing aids. There is no organized fund or materials from the respected department for the hearing impairment. The College didn't provide appropriate support to them. The reason is not lack of resource however, lack of concern and awareness. Other challenges students with HI facing are listening problem, what their teachers speak in the classroom, in different meetings and celebrations. Because of communication barriers students with hearing impairment isolated from hearing students in group works and different cooperative leanings. Since college community couldn't communicate with hearing loss peers using sign language they feel alone, sense of exclusion and discrimination.

Focused group discussion of department heads of the selected departments and instructors pointed out that seating arrangement and interpretation services the main problems when deaf students attending in regular settings. Instructors weren't given orientation on how to assist their hearing impaired students. Students often tend to feel uncomfortable in the classroom when drawn attention to their hearing problems. Most of the instructors they don't have interest to support in providing information before hand lecture. In the school career students miss many academic opportunities due to their hearing problems.

### **Mechanisms to Overcome Educational Barriers**

According to hearing peer's suggestion "to make integration more effective for the future working on the challenges and the way of coping up to achieve valuable skills with knowledge for employment and social survival equal to the hearing learners need. Improving capacity and access to information of educators could overcome resistance to integration. Making comfortable and conducive classroom for teaching learning process is vital. In order to be successful in classroom, students need to learn how to communicate and work with their peers, regardless of any barriers that might face. Developing social acceptance and capacitating institute community for meaningful social interaction. Improving guidance & counseling services and resource center services is also very important."

Responses from college deans also indicated that for the future the colleges plan to enhance the education of students with hearing impairment by establishing well equipped disability centre, appropriate sign language skill training for instructors, diagnosis services of hearing, provision of hearing aids for students with hard of hearing, appointing interpreters and focusing on awareness raising to all college communities.

Head of the departments and instructors also suggested that developing strategic plan, improvement of service delivery to minimize scarcities of resource center equipment, employing sign language interpreter, multi-professional services, fulfilling teaching materials, hearing examination and hearing aid provision, adjusting sitting arrangement, making classrooms more inclusive through group discussion, awareness raising and sign language training are expected means to overcome the problem.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Academic Condition of Students with Hearing Impairments**

The major findings on educational condition of students with hearing impairments get the chance to go to special needs schools or units; they prefer lip reading and gesture in the classroom. Students with hearing impairments students displayed that when the lessons were delivered orally without using blackboard or white board majority of them unable to understand the instructions. According to MoE, (2012) assigning appropriate professionals to teach the courses and continuously upgrading those to do their job more



competently were sounded. Therefore higher education institution needs reforming. 50% of them have intention of participating in all aspects of life, such as academic, social and emotional.

Most of them passed their spare time studying at home and searching hearing impaired friends. The finding revealed that students with hearing impairments need to share information with their non-hearing peers. A majority of interviewer states that practices of students with hearing impairments in the college indicate that; they perform tasks in classroom similar to that of their peers and participate in group activities as much as possible; both findings of Gathoo (2006) revealed that; students with hearing impairments can face problems to: access, participation and equity, quality, relevance and management. In connection with this idea, there is a still a gap which needs further investigation. The finding from students with hearing impairments and other participants disclosed that there were not excluded from higher education enrollment; but scholars Knoors and Hermans (2010) concluded that deaf students in regular learning environments often feel themselves excluded and isolated from classroom communication and interactions.

The interview finding indicates that there were no key practices of financial and material support provisions in the college. In line with interview and MoE documents participants confirms that appropriate allocation of financial and material support provisions. Based on observation minimal resource center service is seen. Scholars (Carrington and Robinson, 2006) shows that resource center was a pedagogical center, which is equipped with specific materials and assistive devices as well as staffed with professionals to give support to special needs education learners, teachers and neighboring schools. Therefore; to fill the gap equipping resource center with specific materials and assistive devices as well as staffed with professionals were expected.

The finding from interviews and observation indicates that Inclusion of students with hearing impairments into classroom benefit instructor as well as regular students. According (Tirusew, 2005) inclusive education overcome attitudinal barriers and foster positive attitudes by promoting the value of appreciating differences, common sympathy, tolerance and helpfulness among all kids. Thus, from participants' findings and research findings inclusive education benefits instructors. In contrary to this some studies conducted in developing countries (Mushoriwa and Gasva, 2008) which found negative attitudes by regular teachers and pupils towards inclusion. Also Booth, Booth & Ainscow (2003) found in the Netherlands that many students with hearing impairment who had been included in regular classes wanted to go back to their special schools after suffering stigmatization and isolation.

In the college integration of students with hearing impairments should be the educational rights. Also international policy documents revealed that “the right to education is universal and it extends to all children, youth, and adults with disabilities (UNICEF, 2011).” Therefore attending in integrated classroom for SWHIs should be the educational rights.

The finding from interviews and observation displayed that SWHIs in education couldn't equally attend in integration setting. In contrary to this, The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy document (TGE, 1994) states that the provision of education to all children was mandatory based on their abilities and needs in equal bases. Therefore; schools have to work for equal needs of education in integrated settings.

The finding from observation indicated that students with hearing impairments are better in academic performances in regular classroom. Scholars (Biklen, 1992) found that being integrated into regular classes could play a critical role in advancing better academic performance for children with disabilities

would do better when they sense that they were accepted and valued by their ‘normal’ peers.” Therefore based on findings inclusion could overcome discrimination, exclusion and negative social stigma.

The finding disclosed that students with hearing impairments when placed in regular classrooms, instructors willingness were decreased, this made poor performances in their academics. According to Florian (2004), findings; many schools resist the pressure to become inclusive, because they were concerned that doing so would have a negative impact on the academic progress of other students and lower academic standards. Therefore changing negative attitudes of instructors is the most important things.

The finding of the interview results revealed that instructors used the same curriculum without adaptation. hearing impaired students follow the same curriculum as their hearing counterparts with little or no improvement. In that, the needs of many students with hearing impairment implies that there should be profound changes in the curriculum, methodology and organization of the schools in order to accommodate the needs of all learners (Cawthon et al., 2011). The study results concluded that the curriculum should be inclusive with profound changes and the instructors should adapt curriculum and evaluation methods of hearing impairments. In addition to teaching methodology, organization of the schools system should accommodate the needs of all learners.

### **Educational Challenges of Students with Hearing Impairments**

Students with hearing impairments in integration classroom showed that signs of frustration when their needs remained unmet as the lack of hearing aid provision. According to Guest (2016) schools are not capable of supplying their deaf or hard-of-hearing students with the proper technology that could significantly increase the learning, development process. Therefore students with hearing impairments need proper technology supports.

Students with hearing impairments interview results revealed that they were worried when they didn't understand classroom conversation and feeling disappointed when some instructors deliver the course orally. This can be a challenge in an environment where essential information is delivered entirely by word of mouth. Communication difficulties and adjustments lead to anxiety in performing in front of others. Therefore, to overcome barriers such as anxiety and communication difficulties instructors ought to use total communication or interpretation services to minimize frustration of the learning.

The interview responses of students with hearing impairments revealed that there is no hearing test equipment and provision of hearing aids. The researcher work experience also confirmed that there are no audiometer and hearing aids in college to support students with hearing problems.

Finding from all respondents disclosed that students with hearing impairments are academically lagging behind when compared with their hearing peers counterparts because of limitation access to information and problems of sign language knowledgeable instructors This contributed for lower academic performances. Cawthon et al. (2011) in his research found that in all integrated schools in average, children with hearing difficulties had a lower grade point average than their school mates. In addition, Ministry of Education the academic performance of children with hearing impairment is lower than those without hearing impairment (MOE 2013). Other scholars such as John & Sylod (2013) pointed out that, the level of achievement is related to parental involvement and the quantity, quality, and timing of the support services children receive. However, Therefore, based on findings the gap in academic



achievement between children with normal hearing and those with hearing loss usually widens as they progress through school.

The majority of participants interview responses revealed that there is no multi-disciplinary services in the college. As MoE (2012) document confirmed that there is acute shortage of professionals, and support staff in SNE/IE at all levels. Many scholars agreed that multi-disciplinary team professionals support determine the child's eligibility for special education service.

The finding from students with hearing impairments interview and classroom observation revealed that majority of instructors didn't facilitate lip-reading skills for deaf learners. Guest (2016) indicates that "teachers often hypothesize that their deaf students are skillful of lip-reading" – which can be true – but it is essential to keep in mind that only 30-40% of spoken English are distinguishable on the lips. In addition scholars like (Ysseldyke & Algozine, 1995) revealed that "teacher should speak clearly and naturally without exaggerating lip movements or volume." Therefore, during teaching and learning process lip reading require not exaggerated lip movement and volume with clear articulation and slowly.

The study indicated that instructors were not considering seating arrangements and how to assist of their hearing impaired students. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students need full visual access, so the best seating arrangement for full participation, engagement and access by these students is to arrange desk in a "U" shape" (Guest, 2016). The interview response from students with hearing impairments and observation confirms that adjusting seating arrangements in front row of a classroom helps their learning.

The interview results of students with hearing impairments indicated that they miss many opportunities due to language barrier. According to Tirussew (2005) deaf people have missed many opportunities due to the fact that they were being left out because of the gap that language barriers created. Therefore, the findings addressed that attention must be given to minimize language barrier through sign language training.

Interview responses of students with hearing impairments disclosed that instructors couldn't incorporate visual and kinesthetic activities in teaching and learning process. The classroom observation also confirms that sign language limitation in teaching and learning process highly prevailed. Participants of this study were worried about signs language shortage for classroom use. This study also revealed that there is a communication gap between the deaf and their instructors. Therefore, visual teaching materials with sign language in teaching and learning process very important to better academic performances.

### **Mechanisms to Overcome Educational Barriers**

The major findings of the study revealed that to overcome educational barrier improving peer interaction, changing attitudes of teachers and peers, increasing supports from counselors, provision of appropriate teaching materials, creating friendly learning environment, and facilitating classroom arrangements.

Furthermore, enhancing academic performance, provision of sign language interpreter, sign language skill development among instructors and establish the disability centre to support with necessary materials. In addition, in order to reduce the challenges testing hearing level and provision of hearing aids are helpful to provide appropriate intervention. Improving access to information, developing social interaction, improving resource center services and zero rejection are supportive for academic achievements. Developing individualized educational program in the college also helpful for their survival in education. Adaptation of



the curriculum, improving evaluation and teaching methods could improve the learning condition of the hearing impairments.

The finding discloses that there were no strategic plans in the college to improve service delivery. According to (Ysseldyke & Algozine, 1995 as cited in MoE, 2013) a document illustrates that the issues in deaf education are very complex, and the population is far from homogeneous. Flexible delivery of teaching materials via electronic media is also particularly helpful for students who have difficulty accessing information in the usual ways. For deaf students new technology and the internet in particular, could be used to bridge many gaps. There is no strategic plan of the college to improve service delivery, so it needs attention. There were scarcity of resource center equipment, facilitating rehabilitation and other services. Therefore, majority of participants and observation reflected that fulfilling services as well as materials might create a safe learning environment for students with hearing impairments.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the educational practices and challenges of students with hearing impairments in Arba Minch College of Teacher Education, Gamo zone SNNPR. The study assessed their educational practices and challenges in inclusive education settings. In addition, it provided information to address quantitative approach with a research interview questions. It produced data that could inform decision makers, teachers, department heads, deans, college of education administrative staffs and higher institution about current status of students with hearing impairments practices and challenges.

Regarding academic practices of students with hearing impairments there is limitation of sign language that create communication barrier between teachers and students with hearing impairments. The limitation of sign language skills of instructors to communicate with hearing impairments contributed for poor academic performances. The findings of the study revealed that, there is academic achievement gap between students with hearing impairments and hearing students. This limitation of sign language bewilders social interactions and their academic achievement. Moreover, absence of sign language interpretation services, adaptation of the curriculum and limitation of using visual teaching aids dissatisfied during teaching and learning process the learners. This dissatisfaction led students with hearing impairments to less interest of learning and fewer achievements.

Concerning challenges of students with hearing impairments, the educational opportunities for students with hearing impairments in integration have both psychological and social advantages. Integration education brings the child into the community, creates the enjoyment of working with peers and opportunity to no longer feel excluded, opens opportunity to communicate and share common understanding. Furthermore, leads to better academic performance and social acceptance. However, the finding revealed that students with hearing impairments often tend to feel uncomfortable in the classroom instructions because of communication barriers and administrative staffs are not in a position of fulfilling the needs of students.

Furthermore, the finding disclosed that there are a lot of challenges students with hearing impairments facing in integrated classrooms such as limited supports from classroom instructors, absence of interpreter and rigid curriculum, lack of teaching aids, communication barrier and lack of access for information were major challenges in teaching and learning processes.



From this study it is clear that instructors feel that achieving this complex task requires action at all levels; proactive leadership in the college; removing communication and interpretation barrier, creating responsive support system ; ongoing professional development in sign language skill and time for joint planning; developing collaborative relationships between teachers and heads, support from concerned agencies; and effective interventions by support agencies and adequate and planned funding needed to facilitate equal educational participation. Societal responses to diversity need to be multifaceted and college administration and teachers can play a critical role in enabling students and hearing impairments to become meaningful participants in education system and society.

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