



A Peer Reviewed International Journal of Asian
Academic Research Associates

AARJMD

**ASIAN ACADEMIC RESEARCH
JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY**



**USE OF SIGN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS AND LOW ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF PRE-LINGUAL DEAF PUPILS IN MASHONALAND
CENTRAL**

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Abstract

The study was set to assess as to what extent sign language was effective in the teaching of children with deafness in the regular schools. Zimbabwe Ministry of Education Policy Minute No 36 of 1996 saw the enrolment of children with deafness in their home schools. This has been a stride step by Zimbabwe towards the development of inclusivity of children with disabilities in regular schools. But whilst this is so, statistics has revealed low performance in the grade 7 examinations by pupils with deafness. One wonders why this is so, when in actual fact pupils with deafness are taught by specialist teachers in these regular school resource units. We have not come across any studies that had been carried out to explore causes of low performance in the grade 7 examination by students with deafness in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe. Hence the following questions backed the study: What causes low performance among pupils with deafness in regular schools? Are teachers of deaf pupils proficient in sign language? Are concepts effectively imparted in pupils with deafness through sign language? Are there sign language back-up system in schools? This study used mixed methodology and the type of mixed methodology was sequential transformative strategy and the design used was descriptive. Questionnaire and Interviews were used to collect data.

Key words: sign language, inclusivity, low academic performance, Sign Language

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